



## EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

### INTERVIEW WITH LESTER HYMAN

October 6, 2008  
Washington, D.C.

#### **Interviewer**

James Sterling Young

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TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH LESTER HYMAN

October 6, 2008

**Young:** This is an interview with Lester Hyman, in Washington, on October the 6th. We've just had a conversation about the ground rules for the project, which are agreeable to Mr. Hyman. I have just also left a detailed write-up of the project purpose and goals, as well as the policies and procedures that govern the project.

Let's begin at the beginning. If you could just talk about how you came to connect up with Edward Kennedy, and that doesn't mean you can't go back. You had an association with John Kennedy.

**Hyman:** That is correct.

**Young:** Much earlier.

**Hyman:** Yes.

**Young:** So maybe you ought to talk about how you got connected with these people.

**Hyman:** I think it all started back in 1955. I had just gotten out of the Navy, and I became an attorney with the corporation finance division of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission here in Washington, but I knew that I wanted to go into politics. It was something that I had wanted to do since I had covered the Democratic and Republican National Conventions in 1952 as a youngster, just out of college, for a radio station. I met Adlai Stevenson then and got very excited about going into politics.

While I was at the SEC, I decided that the best way to go into politics was to find a mentor. I looked around, and although I'm a native of Rhode Island, I've always wanted to live in Massachusetts. Most of my friends are from there. I looked around there in 1956, and I recognized that John F. Kennedy was a United States Senator who in my opinion was going places. So I tried over and over again to get to meet him, and never could get an appointment, until one day I went to see his then administrative assistant, Ted Reardon, and I said, "Ted, why can't I get an appointment with Senator Kennedy?" He said, "Because you're not from Massachusetts." I said, "Oh, I hadn't thought of that. Well, I am from Rhode Island, but I'm going to live in Massachusetts." He said, "Why didn't you say so?"

And the next day I had an appointment with JFK, and it was really quite thrilling to meet him. I was a very impressionable youngster and he just immediately struck me as a star, as someone

who was going to go right to the top, and although he could be extraordinarily tough with contemporaries, he was very nice to kids and I was a kid. He agreed that he would help me, and asked me to come meet with him when I got out of the Navy and he would help me in my career.

So when I got out of the Navy and I went back to Boston, I asked for appointment with him and, by God, they granted it, up at 122 Bowdoin Street, which as you know, is the place where the Kennedys kept their official residence, although I doubt if any one of them ever stayed overnight in the place. It was a rundown apartment up near the State House. So I met President Kennedy there, then Senator Kennedy, and we had a long talk. He said, "OK, you're going to start at the bottom and learn your way up, and I'm going to put you together with my old Navy shipmate, Eddie McLaughlin," who was running for City Council in Boston. And that's how it all started. I went to work for him and Kennedy supervised every single move that I made in politics from then on.

**Young:** Now you went to see him when, what year was that, the second time?

**Hyman:** When I got out of the Navy?

**Young:** Yes. When you got out of the Navy.

**Hyman:** I got out of the Navy in '56.

**Young:** In '56, OK.

**Hyman:** Yes. At any rate, so here we are now, I'm back in Boston. I'm getting involved in city politics and I belong to an organization called the State Club. The State Club was an old-fashioned group of Democrats and Republicans who met regularly to discuss political issues. Ted Kennedy came to speak to that group, and I believe it was 1957. I think it's the first speech he ever gave in Massachusetts. He had just returned from a trip to Africa, and I remember sort of chortling to myself because he had that same Kennedy accent, of course, and he was talking about "Lumumbar," and we had no idea what a Lumumbar was until we realized it was Patrice Lumumba he was talking about. Anyway, that's when I first met him. We just said, "Hello, how are you," and that was that.

The next time was in 1958. By that time I had become campaign manager for Endicott "Chub" Peabody, who was running for Governor of Massachusetts, and I was running his campaign. I got a telephone call from Ted, asking me if I could come up and talk with him. So I did and we had a lovely talk, and at the end of it he said he wanted me to help him run for the United States Senate. I said, "I'm sorry, I'm campaign manager for Peabody, and that's pretty much a full-time job." But, I said, certainly, if I had any time left over, I'd be glad to help him and I would support him, knowing that he was going to be running against Eddie McCormack, who was another prominent Massachusetts political figure.

I remember Ted's words to this day. He looked me right in the eye and he said, "If you work for me, you work for me alone." I got up my courage and I said back to him, "Ted, if I did that and then someone offered me a better deal than you did, you don't want that kind of person working for you. I'm going to do this for Peabody." He said something to the effect of, "Thank you very

much,” and he obviously was angry, but I think I got his respect and I think each of us knew that at some point we’d get back together again.

**Young:** Had he announced at that point?

**Hyman:** I believe he had. I don’t know whether technically he had, but everybody in Massachusetts knew he was running.

**Young:** This would have been for the primary?

**Hyman:** Yes.

**Young:** He was running to fill John’s seat.

**Hyman:** John’s seat was filled by Ben Smith, they put him in as a keeper. Ben was there knowing that he had to give it up.

**Young:** So this would have been in ’62. Sixty-two was his first campaign. And that was the same year, presumably, that Peabody was running.

**Hyman:** That’s right, it was the same time. That was when we first started, first got together.

I should go back to just one other earlier recollection.

**Young:** Sure.

**Hyman:** The other time that I met Ted early on was when Jack Kennedy was running for reelection to the Senate, in 1958. Ted was the “campaign manager.” It was clear to me that that was in name only, that the old man was running the campaign. I would see Ambassador [Joseph] Kennedy walking across Boston Garden, at the end of a long, long day. He stayed at the Hampshire House, I believe, while he was there, and then he’d walk over to the headquarters. So that’s when I really got to see Ted in action. He was very helpful in the campaign, but he clearly wasn’t running it.

**Young:** So, I was going to ask. You brought up Joe, Ambassador Kennedy. I understand he was very much behind Ted’s running for the Senate, getting in the Senate, too.

**Hyman:** Yes. The brothers were not so happy about it at all.

**Young:** And their staff, John’s staff, wasn’t at all happy.

**Hyman:** That’s right, absolutely correct.

**Young:** But Joseph Kennedy apparently prevailed.

**Hyman:** And, of course, I always remember, when I went up to see John Kennedy early on, when he was in the Senate, Frank Morrissey was the doorman. You’d knock on the door at 122 Bowdoin Street, the apartment door, and the door opens a crack and Frank Morrissey is there and he says, “Who are you and what do you want?” I said, “I’m Lester Hyman and I have an

appointment to see Senator Kennedy.” He’d look down on his piece of paper to see if it was true, and if it was, then he’d let you in.

And, of course, later on he became a judge, and that was all terribly controversial. I actually tried a case before Frank Morrissey, when he was a Municipal Court Judge in Massachusetts, and he had no idea what the law was about. I won’t go into the whole story of that case, but it was clear that he didn’t know it. John Kennedy did not want to appoint him to the Federal Bench, but the old man wanted it and when the old man wanted it, he got what he wanted. Frank was turned down because he was totally unqualified.

**Young:** I think it all came down to Ted having to push for it.

**Hyman:** Yes. Robert [Kennedy] stayed out. He was smart.

Since you mentioned the father, Joseph Kennedy, I should tell you that at one point—we’re in 1968 now. After he had had his stroke, it was a terrible thing for everybody. One day Ted needed to talk to me. At that time I was Chairman of the Democratic Party. And Ted said, “Why don’t you join me? I’m going to fly down to Hyannis Port to visit with my father, and we can talk on the way down.” So the two of us got into this tiny airplane and we went heading down to the Cape. When we got to the house, Ted said, “We’re going to have lunch now. Come in.” He sat me down. It was he and his father and I. It was so sad to see the poor guy, because this extraordinarily vital man couldn’t speak. You knew he could think perfectly, but he couldn’t speak, and he would drool and make noises. I always remember Ted being so patient and just talking at him, telling him everything that had happened and telling him stories. I was told later that of all the children in the family, he was the one who most came to see the father, over and over again.

Finally, I asked Ted if I could see him in the other room for a second. I got up and he came in the other room and I said, “Look, I’ve met your father before, but he doesn’t really know me, and it must be embarrassing for him to have a relative stranger sitting there. Why don’t you just have lunch with your dad alone?” I remember Ted sort of misted up a bit and he said, “That is very sensitive of you. I really appreciate it.” So I had my lunch in the kitchen while they spent the time together. But again, I was extremely impressed by the way he dealt with his father.

**Young:** And the same way with his mother when she got very old.

**Hyman:** Indeed.

**Young:** Many people have commented. He would read to her.

**Hyman:** I’ve got a great Rose Kennedy story that involves Ted, that Ted told me.

**Young:** Go ahead.

**Hyman:** I guess this was when I was State Chairman. I made some comment to Ted, I said, “Gee, your mother is just the loveliest, sweetest person.” He said, “My mother is lovely and sweet?” I said yes. He said, “She’s the toughest bird you’ll ever meet in your life.” And I said, “Really?” He said, “Yes, let me tell you a story.” He said Eunice Kennedy used to run this

Candles for Hope business, and they would sell candles and the money would go to help the mentally challenged. There was a man named Ollie Cohen, who headed up King Discount Stores. It was a big chain of stores in Massachusetts. Ted said that Ollie was a very clever fellow and he knew how to get publicity, and he called Mrs. Kennedy, Rose Kennedy, and said, "Mrs. Kennedy, I know what wonderful work you've done selling these Candles of Hope. What I would like to do is have the Candles of Hope sold in the King Discount Stores, and to launch it, we would like you to be the salesperson for the first day, be at the counter, and we would publicize it. What we would do is that every cent that comes in from the sale of the candles, of course, would go to the Kennedy Foundation." And she agreed.

So the day comes to have the event. The entire press corps of Massachusetts is there, television cameras, radio, the whole thing. Her limousine doesn't go in the front way where they all are. She goes to the side entrance. And Ted said she went in to see Mr. Cohen, who was just thrilled at what was going to happen, and he said, "Mrs. Kennedy, I'm just so happy we can do this and we can give you the money from the candles for the Kennedy Foundation." She said, "Mr. Cohen, I'm sorry you didn't understand. It's the entire profits of the store that are going to go to the Kennedy Foundation." And he said, "No, Mrs. Kennedy, you don't understand." She said, "No, no, Mr. Cohen, you don't understand, because if you don't do it, I am leaving now." And he did it. And Teddy laughed like hell. He said, "That's my mother!" I thought it was a great story. Anyway, back to the '50s or wherever you want to go.

**Young:** Honey [John Fitzgerald] Fitz's daughter was speaking. [*laughter*]

**Hyman:** You bet.

**Young:** That's a great story. Getting back to Ted's beginnings as a Senator and his connection with Massachusetts politics. Can you talk about the state of the Massachusetts Democratic Party at that time? That could be a tall order.

**Hyman:** That's a tough question, but generally speaking, it was a bunch of individual fiefdoms. Everybody staked out his own area, and God forbid someone else would invade your area. Then you'd really get upset. There wasn't terribly much party unity. The legislature was a body unto itself and had nothing to do with the Democratic Party. The whole idea that Ted had was that we've got to form a real party, we've got to have everybody working together, and we have to not just react to things, we have to be proactive and make suggestions.

**Young:** Jack had appealed to independent votes, not just the old Democratic Party, I think.

**Hyman:** Yes. The Kennedys never used the Democratic Party at all, because they thought it was not effective, and also they wanted people who were totally loyal to them, and so all the time it was individual effort.

**Young:** Why did they support him?

**Hyman:** Why did they support Teddy?

**Young:** The Kennedys, or did they?

**Hyman:** Well, the Teddy-Eddie fight, it divided the whole place up. Most people were sympathetic to Eddie McCormack, who was an outstanding Attorney General. I remember a piece of literature that Eddie put out. On one side it listed all of his achievements, which were many, and on the other side it said, “Edward M. Kennedy, brother of the President,” period. There was a lot of anger, there was a lot of hatred, so the party really did not, the party regulars did not necessarily support Kennedy, it was the people who voted for him.

I remember the night of the debate, the famous Teddy-Eddie debate, when McCormack said, “If your name were Edward Moore, your candidacy would be a joke.” I remember seeing that debate and Ted almost fell apart at that point. You could see that this rocked him, and it looked as if he was going to cry, and so we all figured, that’s the end of it, Eddie McCormack has won. But it was just the opposite, particularly the women. You know, you don’t do that to a Kennedy. Kennedys can do no wrong, and it just turned the other way around. And that’s how Teddy won the nomination.

So having a political party was something unusual to Massachusetts. When I got to be chairman, that was the whole idea of the thing. Teddy wanted to do something about making a real Democratic Party. I was working in Washington at the time. I was a senior consultant to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and I had heard via the grapevine that for whatever reason, Gerard, Gerry Doherty, was no longer going to be chairman. I never knew the story about that, whether he wanted out or whether he was pushed out. I just don’t know, because I believe at the beginning, Gerry was sort of resentful of my coming in. We’ve since become—

**Young:** You succeeded him as chair.

**Hyman:** I succeeded him as chair, right.

**Young:** Were the Kennedys behind that?

**Hyman:** Oh, totally. What happened was that when I heard that Gerry was not going to be chairman any longer, I sent a note to Ted. I said, “Here is what I would do if I were chairman of the party, and I’d like you very much to consider me for it.” I felt there was no chance whatsoever. My predecessors were Gerry Doherty, Patsy [Patrick] Lynch, Charlie McGlue, and Onions [William] Burke—and no Lester Hyman was going to be Chairman of the Democratic Party of Massachusetts. But God bless Teddy. He said he agreed with everything that I said about creating a real party, and he was the one who got me that nomination. I never would have had it but for Ted Kennedy, and I thought that was something really great that he did. I don’t know if I have it here handy, but there was—somebody mentioned it in a book. It was Burton Hersh, *The Education of Edward M. Kennedy*. This is what he wrote:

“The chairman of the Democratic State Committee, and therefore ipso facto, Edward Kennedy’s personal choice to run the Massachusetts Party, was Lester Hyman. When Hyman replaced Doherty, the pros around the State House glazed uniformly with culture shock. After years of exposure to Doherty’s mud flap personality, dealing with Hyman was like taking a stroll through steaming, hanging gardens. Lester is a tall, swarthy, rather epicurean young man whose close set, warm eyes looked glued to the sides of a nose sizeable enough for a cheese connoisseur. Careful about his tailoring, he has a way of dealing affectionately on his rich, wet vowel sounds that

produced in Kennedy headquarters a barrage of anti-Semitic hate notes from denizens of Chelsea and South Boston walkups, heartsick to have to believe that the party of Jim Curley and Onions Burke was willingly replaced by a fellow Irish, in the hands of this reincarnated Israeli....”

So you can see what I was up against, and the mail was horrible. I mean some of it was frightening. All kinds of things.

**Young:** This is interesting. It’s a choice he’d made on the basis of what you would do.

**Hyman:** That’s correct.

**Young:** Not who you were so much, but on the basis—

**Hyman:** Well, I guess some of it had to be—do I have the capacity to lead, can I get along with the pros? I had demonstrated that in God knows how many campaigns I had been involved in before, and of course, when I was with Endicott Peabody, I was his chief assistant, so everybody knew who I was.

**Young:** So you were a known quantity as well as somebody with an idea of what was needed.

**Hyman:** Right. And I think Ted also saw communication was very important to him, that here’s someone who could appear on television and radio and do well. Indeed, I did that. First of all, I was the first state chairman who ever did it as a full-time job. When Gerry did it, he was still practicing law and lobbying in the legislature. I said to Ted, “I don’t think that’s good. I think it should be full-time.” We agreed on that. We also put together an advisory council, which had never been done in Massachusetts, of some of the greatest people. We had John Kenneth Galbraith.

**Young:** Talk a little bit about that advisory council.

**Hyman:** We decided that we needed to be proactive in having a program for the legislature, a Democratic program. It was Ted’s idea. He said, “Let’s get some of the best minds in Massachusetts, and we’ll form an advisory council, and you and I would meet with them regularly and solicit ideas from them.” We had Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who was then teaching over at the Urban Institute at MIT. We had the head of Arthur D. Little, who was the great general who parachuted into—I’ll get to it. We had Paul Samuelson, the great economist, and I forgot who else.

**Young:** Was Sam Beer on it? He was a Harvard professor.

**Hyman:** I don’t think Sam was on that.

**Young:** Ken Galbraith.

**Hyman:** Ken Galbraith was, yes.

**Young:** Was Bob Wood on it?



**Hyman:** Bob Wood was not at the time. He was in Washington then. He was the Undersecretary of HUD, because I worked for him when I was in Washington. Anyway, we would meet fairly regularly at Ted's house, when he was living down at Charles River Square, and discuss various initiatives that we could come up with. And then my job was to take them and try and sell them to the legislature and have them embrace the program. Of course, there were terrible suspicions between the legislature and the advisory council. They thought the advisory council was "pointy-headed intellectuals," I think was the phrase that they would use. But we finally got them to begin to do it, and it was pretty exciting. And then after they would come up with the program, my job then was to help sell the program throughout the Commonwealth. I would go around every single night, speaking in various communities, doing radio, television, "This is the Democratic program."

**Young:** Who was your audience when you would go out?

**Hyman:** Oh, it would be Chambers of Commerce, members of Rotary Clubs, Veterans of Foreign Wars, local Democratic committees, and then I'd do a newspaper review and a radio station, and if I could get a TV appearance, I'd do that.

**Young:** There were, at this time, the Greek communities, the—

**Hyman:** Yes.

**Young:** Was that part of—

**Hyman:** Not really. That's an interesting question, because I don't believe I was ever invited to an Italian-American group or a Greek-American group. I was invited to a lot of Jewish groups because I was the first Jew ever to have this position.

**Young:** So, this was sort of a reform.

**Hyman:** It was a total reform.

**Young:** A reform effort in Massachusetts.

**Hyman:** And there were a lot of people who didn't like it in the legislature. The next step was to see if the legislature would allow me to sit in on their meetings, when they discussed strategy. They had never allowed the chairman of the Democratic Party to come in to the Democratic Caucus, ever. I went to Maurice Donahue, who was President of the Senate. They called him Mossy, Mossy Donahue, and he was a wonderful man. I loved Mossy Donahue. After the end of the day, all the pros would go over to what they called the Bell-A-View Hotel, the Hotel Bellevue, and they would drink. I once asked him, "Mossy, do I have to go over there every day and drink with these guys?" And he looked at me and he said, "Only if you want to be an alcoholic."

So there was Mossy Donahue, and then on the House side was Jack Davoren, who was Speaker of the House, and these guys finally agreed, and I have a picture that I treasure, of me meeting for the first time—and Ted was there too—with the heads of the Democratic Party. And they began to work on all of that stuff, and then, of course, 1968 came and blew everything up,

because of the Bobby Kennedy business. The pros were very unhappy about Bobby announcing for President. They wanted to support Lyndon Johnson. Then you had the liberals, who were supporting Gene McCarthy. It was a horrible time.

**Young:** So that sort of derailed the reform effort.

**Hyman:** It did. It derailed it completely, which was a pity, because we were really beginning to get somewhere. Now I left out a piece in between, about Ted. In between those two times, I ran for Attorney General.

**Young:** Oh, I didn't know that.

**Hyman:** This would be in '64, I think '64.

**Young:** That was when he was running. He ran too, his first—

**Hyman:** It must be '64.

**Young:** Yes, because that was—

**Hyman:** I'm thinking '64 or '66. I told you, I'm very bad on dates.

**Young:** Well, '64 would have been when LBJ was running for a full term.

**Hyman:** Yes.

**Young:** And Ted was running.

**Hyman:** That's right.

**Young:** For a full term in '64.

**Hyman:** Well, it was '64 or '66. But the point is, I announced for Attorney General, and, of course, the other candidates were Michael Dukakis, Francis X. Bellotti, and Bob DeGiacomo, and the ex-Governor, Foster Furcolo. It boiled down to Bellotti, Dukakis, and myself, but when we got to the state convention, Ted decided that he would come and see if he could put together the ticket. Have you interviewed Bob Healy of the *Boston Globe*?

**Young:** Yes, we have interviewed him.

**Hyman:** Because Bob told me a lot of what happened. I was at the convention. I knew that we were going to lose, because Dukakis and I split the liberal vote, and Bellotti came right down through the middle, so I knew things were bad. Ted came in to try and put it together, and he proposed McCormack or Joe Ward, I forget which one, for Governor, that Dukakis would run for Lieutenant Governor, and I would run for Secretary of State, and this one would run for this one. So it would be a balanced ticket, ethnically, religiously, in every way, and basically they told him to go to hell, the leaders of the party. Healy told me that he knew about the meeting, where Ted came in the room and tried to put it together, and they just practically threw him out. He's the

United States Senator, you stay in Washington. So you knew that there was trouble ahead, and that didn't work.

Then Ted arranged for me to go to Washington, to work as a consultant to HUD, on the Model Cities program. I asked him, "Why is it so important?" He said, "Because the Democrats are going to lose this fall and I don't want you to get tarnished with it." So he was always thinking ahead, always thinking ahead, very political.

**Young:** But the reform effort came after you ran as Attorney General, or before, in '68?

**Hyman:** The reform effort came afterwards, when I became a chairman, in '67. So I was chairman in '67 and '68, and then after that, at the end of '68, I decided that I really had had it—I told somebody I had holes in my back. It was really rough, and I decided that I really wanted to go to Washington. I liked it so much when I was there. And with great temerity, I told Ted that I would like very much to go to Washington, figuring he'd be all upset. Quite the opposite, because he told me he was intending to run for President in '72, and it would be great to have me in Washington because I could work with him. So that was a great relief to me.

He even tried to get me into the law firm that I would join in Washington. I got a call from Edward Bennett Williams, asking if I would come to see him. He wanted to discuss a partnership. I said, "Why me?" Well, the Kennedys had talked to them. I decided that I did not want to be beholden to them for anything. I learned long ago that you either work *with* the Kennedys or *for* the Kennedys, and I wanted to work *with* the Kennedys, and so I didn't take Ed Williams' partnership, and Ed was furious at me. He couldn't understand somebody turning him down. I went with a firm called Leva, Hawes, Symington, that Milton Katz at Harvard Law School had suggested to me as a fine firm, and that way I didn't owe it to the Kennedys.

I probably will put a contingency on this story, but remember I told you we had this advisory council?

**Young:** Yes.

**Hyman:** The first meeting we had was at Ted's house, and I came early so Ted and I could discuss what we were going to do with these guys. Ted said, "Lester, we're going to have the meeting upstairs." And as he would put it, "I don't think we have enough chairs upstairs." And I said, "I guess we don't." And he looked at me and he said, "Would you take some of these chairs and carry them upstairs?" I knew that this was a big test, and I just screwed up all the courage I had and I said, "Ted, you can have one of two things. You can have a Democratic State Chairman or you can have a chair mover. Pick one." And he was pissed, and that was the last of it. He got somebody else to take up the chairs. He didn't talk to me for a couple of weeks, but I think I gained his respect. And from then on, I would always work *with* the Kennedys, and that was great.

Also in '68—I'm trying to think of things that show an insight about Ted. When Bobby announced—first of all, I don't think Ted thought that Bobby was going to announce for President. I know he was counseling Bobby not to run, and I think he was really taken by surprise when the announcement came. Ted called me one day and he said, "Bobby's coming to Boston for the St. Patrick's Day parade"—this was right after Bobby had announced—"and

we've got to get ready for him." So I went over to the house, and Gerry Doherty was there, I think, and his cousin, Ted's cousin.

**Young:** Joe Gargan?

**Hyman:** Joe Gargan, thank you very much. We had to get ready for Bobby and Ted said, "We don't have any signs." And of course all the stores are closed, it's St. Patrick's Day, and literally, Ted took the paper lining out of drawers in the house, and we sat with crayons, writing up signs, "Welcome Bobby!" and this sort of thing, so there would be some signs available for the parade. Then when Bobby was coming into town for it, Ted decided that we should go out to the airport and pick him up. He asked me if I'd like to come and I said yes. So I got in the car and Jack Crimmins was the driver, God bless him. He was the worst driver in the world, but they kept him on out of total loyalty, and he was one of the originals. So we got in the car and Jack tried to start the car. It wouldn't start. I remember Teddy putting his head down and then up again as he said, "The fucking Kennedy machine rides again."

So we go out to the airport and we pick up Bobby, and I didn't know Bobby well. I had met him many times, but I really didn't know him. He and Ted sat in the back seat and I sat in the front seat with Jack Crimmins, and we drove back into town. Robert Kennedy just teased Ted all the way in. First of all, he was the only person in the world who could call him Eddie. He never called him Ted or Teddy, it was Eddie. Bobby would say, "Well, I see in the *Boston Herald*, Eddie, that you're in some trouble here. What's wrong, can't you control these people?" Ted was the kid brother. It was so interesting to see that dynamic, because when Bobby was not around, Ted was full of leadership, but he would always defer to Bobby, which was nice to see.

**Young:** You mentioned earlier that Ted was thinking about the Presidency himself in '72.

**Hyman:** Oh, yes.

**Young:** So Bobby's entry also threw that out.

**Hyman:** Sure. Well, you've got to go back to the '68 convention really. That's important, because here Bobby had just died, and I was part of the Massachusetts delegation that went to Chicago. In the middle of that convention, all of a sudden the rumors started going around that Ted Kennedy would be nominated for President, in '68. Steve Smith came to Chicago and he got a few of us in a room. One of them was Joe Garrahy, who was the Lieutenant Governor of Rhode Island, and myself, and I forget who the others were. And Steve said, "Look, there's a rumor going around that people want Ted for President. Let's find out if it has any merit."

So we divided up the delegates among ourselves, and we went out and polled them, to see would you actually vote for Ted Kennedy. We came back and met with Steve at the hotel, and we put together all the information that each of us had brought back. The conclusion was that Ted Kennedy had the votes to be President, to be nominated for President.

At that point, Steve went into the next room to call Ted obviously, and he came back in and he said, "No. Senator Kennedy does not want it." I couldn't believe that because the Kennedys always took everything that they could take, when it was available. So I went in the next room and I called Ted in Hyannis Port. And the reason I tell you the story is that it tells a lot about

Edward M. Kennedy. He came on the phone right away, and I said, “Ted, do you believe that we had the votes, that we’ve got the votes?” And he said, “Yes, I do believe that.” I said, “Then why won’t you do it?” He said, “For two reasons. Number one, they wouldn’t be doing it for me, they’re doing it for Bobby; and number two, I am not yet qualified to be President of the United States.” I thought that was incredible, and that was where my loyalty to Teddy really cemented. So that was very interesting.

**Young:** [Richard J.] Daley had been trying also.

**Hyman:** Yes. I was not aware of that at the time, but I did find out later.

Excuse me. Re the Advisory Council, the name of the guy from Arthur D. Little was Jim Gavin, General Gavin, and the other person was Eli Goldstone, who was head of Eastern Gas and Fuel. Those were the people.

**Young:** You haven’t mentioned McCarthy, Gene McCarthy, who was in that mix of Bobby and Gene and—

**Hyman:** Well, what happened was that—this is in ’68, of course. I guess it was before McCarthy had announced, but the rumor was around that he was going to. Ted called me and said, “McCarthy is coming to Massachusetts to speak at Harvard. Can you somehow find out whether he’s really serious, whether he’s going to run for President, whether he’s going to announce?” I said, “Well, OK.” And I figured, *what is the easiest way to do that?* I called up Jerry Eller, who was Gene McCarthy’s administrative assistant in Washington, and I said, “I’m chairman of the Democratic Party in Massachusetts and I see that Senator McCarthy is coming to Boston to give a speech at Harvard, and I’d like to extend courtesy to him. Would he like to come over to my house and have lunch, and we’ll have a few interesting people there.”

So they said yes, which surprised me. I remember the day of the lunch, because half the press corps was in the front yard with cameras and all that sort of thing. Gene came and I had some social people, in other words not political people, for lunch. Then when it was over, I asked Gene if he would like to come upstairs and have a little chat. He said yes, and so we went upstairs to my study and I started to talk about Vietnam, suggesting that this is what was compelling him to do what he was doing. He said no.

He said, “Do you know how Lyndon Johnson treats me like cattle?” And it was all personal stuff. I was shocked. And then I said that I had heard that at the speech in Cambridge, everybody was talking about this children’s crusade that he was going to lead. I said, “If I wasn’t mistaken, I heard your speech, and you said, ‘I will *not* be leading a children’s crusade,’ with contempt.” And he said, “You’re the only one who caught that. You’re absolutely correct. But the press turned it into a children’s crusade and that’s good for me.” By the time we were finished it was clear to me he was going to run. I called Teddy and told him that there was no question in my mind that McCarthy is going to run. And then that was a real problem.

Nineteen sixty-eight was the worst year of my life, between Martin Luther King and Bobby and Gene McCarthy. We had a situation in Massachusetts where Bobby had not yet announced. The regulars of the party wanted Lyndon Johnson. I’m a Kennedy person. So finally, I told Ted—Ted suggested that I stick with Lyndon Johnson, and I said—“Well, I can’t do that because I’m for

Bob Kennedy.” Ted said, “Yes, but I need to get you reelected as state chairman, because I want you to go out and campaign for Bobby all over the country, and if you come out for him now, you may not get reelected as chairman, and therefore, I won’t have you.” He was utterly pragmatic, and that was the only time we ever clashed.

I said, “I’m sorry, I’m going to do what I think is right,” and I came out for Bobby. It was totally misinterpreted in Massachusetts. Paul Szep, the cartoonist for the *Boston Globe*, showed a cartoon of me sitting in a chair with Bobby on one side and Teddy on the other side with whips, saying, “You will support Bobby Kennedy!” In other words, they all thought that the Kennedys made me support him. It was precisely the opposite. They didn’t want me to do it. But that showed the pragmatic side of Ted. Then I had to decide who goes on the ballot.

**Young:** When you talked with McCarthy, Bobby was not yet in the picture, was he?

**Hyman:** Not officially, no. No, not at all. The whole thing was so screwed up, frankly. I’m trying to remember now and I’m trying to focus on it. I was called to the White House, that’s what happened. I was called to the White House and met with Marvin Watson, who was Lyndon’s assistant. The question was, would Johnson go on the ballot in Massachusetts along with Gene McCarthy? Marvin Watson told me that Johnson would not go on the ballot in Massachusetts. I had suggested that he should. Then we decided who could we get, and Marvin said that he wanted to get Morris Donahue, who was the Senate President, to be the stand-in for Lyndon Johnson. And I said, “I can assure you right now that he would not do that.”

Then, finally, Marvin Watson looked at me and he said, “What’s the *matter* with you?” I said, “There’s nothing the matter with me.” He said, “No, no, no. What’s the *matter* with you?” I said, “There’s nothing the matter with me. What are you talking about?” What he was trying to say was, “What’s the matter with *you* going on the ticket as the stand-in for Lyndon Johnson?” That took me absolutely by surprise, and I finally said, “No, I don’t think so.”

Then when I got home, I called Jim Rowe, who I love dearly. He was always a straight shooter, even though he was there for Johnson. I said, “Jim, I may have made a terrible mistake. Watson wanted me to go on the ticket for President Johnson, as a stand-in, and I said no. Did I do the wrong thing?” And God bless Jim Rowe. He said, “You did exactly the right thing.” He said it was a clever game on their part. “What they wanted to do was have you on the ballot and if you won, you were there for Lyndon Johnson, and if you lost, it was Lester Hyman’s fault.” So he said, “You did exactly the right thing.”

So then I had to decide who to put on the ballot. Johnson didn’t want to, Mossy Donahue didn’t want to. Finally, the deadline came and I went up to the State House, and that was the biggest coverage I ever had in terms of press being there, national and local. The Secretary of State, Jack Davoren, said, “Mr. Chairman, do you wish to file a slate for President of the United States?” And I said no, and that was the end of that. So, therefore, Gene McCarthy did have a slate. Since there was no one else running, McCarthy got the Massachusetts support, and they were committed by law to vote for him on the first ballot, which drove all the Massachusetts politics absolutely berserk, because this was the last guy in the world that they wanted.

To know the Democratic Party back then is really astounding. To just give you one example, if I may. I had to choose the delegates from Massachusetts to the national convention in '68. That was the state chairman's job. Ted wanted me to put on Ken Galbraith, John Kenneth Galbraith, who was a friend of mine. I loved him. He had just made a speech in which he called the leaders of the Democratic Party in Massachusetts "a bunch of hacks." And I said, "Ted, if I put up Ken Galbraith's name, we're going to get clobbered." Ted said, "I want Galbraith on the list." And that was the other time that I said no. I said, "I can't do it, Ted. I've got to have a good list going." So Ted finally yielded. Ken Galbraith wouldn't talk to me for a year, and then we finally made up. He invited me over for sherry one night and we made up.

It was just awful, all this stuff. I remember the Democratic State Committee meeting, where I was to work with them to choose the delegates. It got so bad. It was at the Parker House. It was so vicious that fisticuffs were about to break out. Somebody had actually lifted up a chair to go hit someone else, and this fellow named Peter Cloherty, who was a member of the State Committee, and he was a McCormack man—and remember the McCormacks hated the Kennedys. Peter raises his hand, "Mr. Chairman, Mr. Chairman."

Normally I would never recognize him, but I was desperate, and I knew fisticuffs were going to take place, and the press was there. I figured, *Well, what the hell*, so I said, "The chair recognizes Mr. Cloherty." This just shows you Massachusetts politicians at the best. Cloherty gets up and he says, "Mr. Chairman, I propose that we have a moment of silence in honor of our dear, departed President, John F. Kennedy." Everybody put down the chairs, everyone sat down. Peace came to the group. That's Massachusetts politics. I've never seen anything like it. There was a joy about it. People loved it. Teddy loved politics. He loved it and thrived on it.

There was one story I used to tell, about how I got out of politics, and Teddy would always tell me, "Lester, tell me the Bridget Fitzpatrick story." He liked to hear it over and over again.

**Young:** Well, tell it.

**Hyman:** When I was running for Attorney General, there was a woman named Bridget Fitzpatrick, who was in her probably late seventies, and she lived in Worcester, Massachusetts, and she controlled all the votes in that area, the votes to the state convention. She was a notorious anti-Semite. I was in Worcester one day and I figured I'd better go see Bridget. So I went to her house and I knocked on the door, and the door opens and this old hag looks out at me. She looked like the witch in *Snow White*. She even had a wart on her nose. And she said, "What do you want?" I said, "Bridgie, it's me, Lester Hyman. I'm running for Attorney General. Could I come in and see you for a minute?" She said, "All right, come in."

So I went into the house and right near the door was a bridge table, and on the bridge table were all of Bridget's religious statuary: Madonnas, virgins, Christ child, the whole thing. And I'm a klutz. I caught my foot in the bridge table as I went in, and the whole thing went smashing to the ground. I was in shock. Bridget looked down and looked up, and she said, "You dirty Jew, you ruined all me fuckin' Madonnas." And I said at that point, I decided I should get out of politics. That's the Bridget Fitzpatrick story and Ted loves it.

**Young:** It's a different day in Massachusetts politics now.

**Hyman:** Oh, it is so different. There's another one I was going to mention. At one point, when I was state chairman, we tried to not just have contributions from wealthy people, but to try and get a membership, and so I published a newsletter every month and we had events for the people who would spend like \$10 to be a member of the Democratic Party of Massachusetts. So I had this idea. Let's have a picnic and invite everybody, and get an attraction. I saw that Louis Armstrong was playing at this nightclub, and I invited him to come and do a benefit at the picnic, and he said no.

So then I called Steve Smith. If you need anything, you call Steve Smith. Steve said, "Let me see what I can do." And it seemed like an hour later, he called me back and he said, "He'll be there." I don't know what he said to him or how he did it, but it was Louis Armstrong and his orchestra, the whole thing. They came and they gave the most fantastic concert. Unfortunately, we had fewer than 100 people there. We had expected 1,000. That's how difficult it was to get people to join the Democratic Party in those days.

Ted was getting very upset because Armstrong was having a great time and kept doing encore after encore. Ted was late for an appearance in Boston, but he was sitting right next to me in the front row, and he didn't want to get up. So he turned to me, "Lester, can you tell Mr. Armstrong to stop?" I said, "Me, tell him to stop?" And he said, "Well, do something." So I just jumped up in between the last encores and I said, "Mr. Armstrong has an obligation to play this evening at the [blah blah], and we've really kept him long enough, and so this is the last song." And then Ted got me to go with him. We ran, literally, across somebody's lawn, to catch the *Caroline*. The plane was waiting to take him to Boston, and I flew to Boston with him. I believe it was the last flight of the *Caroline*, before they contributed it to the Smithsonian. So that was quite an event. And I got a letter from Louis Armstrong, which I have preserved. It's in his handwriting.

"Dear Mr. Hyman, Your letter to me was enjoyed no end, when I received it this morning. Man, my All Stars and myself had a ball Sunday, swinging for the folks, and Senator Kennedy was right in there wailing with us. A day I shall never forget, believe me. From Satchmo, Louis Armstrong."

I treasure that, but you know, that's another thing I did with Ted. Can we talk a little bit about right after the Mary Jo Kopechne situation?

**Young:** Sure.

**Hyman:** Because that was really interesting. We had a summer house in the Berkshires, and we heard on the radio that there had been an accident. I put in a call to Hyannis Port, and I don't remember whether it was Dick Goodwin or Milty Gwirtzman who took the call. I think it was Milty, and they confirmed what had happened. I said, "For God's sake. From everything that I can sense from what I'm hearing, Ted was in shock after this thing. Put him in a hospital right away, please." I'll never forget, it was Milty, and he said, "Oh, don't worry. It's a one-day story." That was a bad miscalculation. I was so upset. I wanted to go down there to Hyannis Port, but they weren't interested. I think the only Ted Kennedy person there was David Burke, who was the best. I'm sure you've interviewed him.



**Young:** Yes.

**Hyman:** He's a wonderful man, but most of them were John Kennedy people. I believe that they were there to preserve John Kennedy's reputation, not Teddy's, and I think they disserved him.

But anyway, now it's all over and Ted is back at the Senate. His first day back, he invited me to have lunch at his desk. So, I went up and we started to talk. He raised his hand just like a little kid and he said, "Lester, I swear to God, I had nothing to do with Mary Jo Kopechne, and I was not drunk." I said, "Ted, I believe you, I really do. But the problem is not so much that but your conduct afterwards." And he said, "Well, let me explain that to you." I said, "Good." At that point, the buzzers rang in the Senatorial office for a vote call and he had to leave. By the time he came back, he wasn't ready to talk any more, and I always wondered what he would have said.

I do know that prior to the Chappaquiddick incident, when he went to Alaska and got drunk on the plane coming back and was outrageous in his behavior, John Lindsay of *Newsweek* magazine called me right after that trip and he said, "I want to tell you that your friend Ted Kennedy is in deep psychological trouble. Everybody else is just saying, 'Ah, he just had a few drinks.' This is a guy who is suffering, and if you guys don't do something soon, something terrible will happen." And by God, it did. Chappaquiddick, and Lindsay had spotted it.

**Young:** That time, between, it was just a little more than a year to the day between Bobby's death and the Edgartown races, the accident at Chappaquiddick. It's kind of interesting to ask what Teddy was doing with himself during that period of time, after the initial grieving was over and he returned to the Senate.

**Hyman:** Right.

**Young:** What I see is somebody who is just driving himself, taking up all of Bobby's causes.

**Hyman:** Yes, absolutely. That's why he went to Alaska.

**Young:** The Alaska trip, everything.

**Hyman:** To finish Bobby's commitment, yes. My theory has always been that Ted Kennedy never wanted to be President of the United States, that he felt he owed it to his brothers.

**Young:** Talk a little more about that.

**Hyman:** Well, I can't prove it. There's nothing that can prove it, but I always thought that he was so happy in the Senate, and I know he was happy in the Senate. He loves it. Most people would hate that kind of legislative minutiae, and you know, he's back in Massachusetts every weekend campaigning. He loves it. I just think that he felt finally free of the obligation to his brothers.

**Young:** When he lost the nomination?

**Hyman:** Yes. I didn't agree with him running then and I didn't agree with the way he handled himself at the convention. Last year I got really angry when he came out for [Barack] Obama. I didn't say anything, obviously, but—

They all criticized Hillary Clinton for not supporting the nominee well enough. Well, Ted sure didn't. He wouldn't even shake hands with Jimmy Carter. I thought that was terrible conduct, but what could I do? That was what he felt and he was very serious about it.

**Young:** It's interesting that, as I understand it, he was one of those who had counseled his brother not to run against—

**Hyman:** Yes.

**Young:** This was not the time. He might lose.

**Hyman:** Right.

**Young:** Running against an incumbent Democratic President. All of that advice that was coming, not just from him, but from a number of others.

**Hyman:** Yes, I agree.

**Young:** And then he turns around himself—

**Hyman:** And does the same thing. It's inexplicable.

**Young:** And starts very late.

**Hyman:** I gather that was because the labor unions had come to him—this was my understanding—and said, “All you have to do is put your name on the ballot, and we'll make sure that you're the nominee.” He fell for it, and of course the labor unions never have been able to produce their rank and file. Only the heads of the unions were for him. I remember talking to Allard Lowenstein at the time. Al was a very close friend and he was in agony about the whole thing. He wanted to be for Bobby Kennedy. He loved Bobby Kennedy, but he wouldn't leave McCarthy. He said, “You know, Bobby had his chance and he missed it.” But I myself think Bobby, if he had lived, would have been President.

The other thing I wanted to mention about the Chappaquiddick thing that is of some interest—the restaurant that we all used to go to in Washington was Sans Souci Restaurant. It was almost like a club. One day I was in there, sitting on the floor level, and there's a balcony above you, and sitting above me was Gene McCarthy, having lunch with a couple of people. I'll never forget it. I could overhear him talking about Chappaquiddick, and dripping with sarcasm. He said, “Isn't it ironic that the entire Kennedy dynasty has been brought down by a mere Polish secretary?” And you know, you wanted to get up and choke the guy. Gene McCarthy was a mean spirited person, he really was. Ted told me a story about it, and that's why I thought it might be of interest.

Ted was the Whip for a bill that was on the floor of the Senate, and he had to round up the votes. It was an important bill. I think it was a civil rights matter, and it appeared that it was going to be very close. So Ted was looking for every Senator, to get them in there, and he found that Gene McCarthy was sitting in the Senate dining room. I think he was having lunch with Robert Lowell, the poet, and some other folks, and Ted went up to him and said, "Gene, we need you for a vote. It's really important." Gene said to Ted, "Senator, I'm having lunch." And Ted said, "You don't understand, Gene, this is a key civil rights piece of legislation, and your vote may make the difference between winning or losing." McCarthy said, "You don't understand, Senator. I'm having my lunch." That's Gene McCarthy. Ted told me that story. So he was not a very nice man.

There was one thing that might be of interest to you. This is much more contemporaneous. One of my best friends was a woman named Eppie Lederer, who was Ann Landers, the columnist, and she loved the Kennedys. One day she evidently was interviewed for the *New Yorker* magazine, I believe. The question was something about John Kennedy, and Eppie said something to the effect that he really screwed around with women all the time, and it was terrible, which she shouldn't have done, because it was after his death.

At any rate, I got a call from Ted, who said, "Lester, Eppie Lederer is a friend of yours, isn't she?" I said, "Yes, Ted, she is." He said, "I didn't appreciate her remarks about my brother that were in the *New Yorker* magazine article." I said, "I don't blame you." He said, "I hope you'll convey to her my feelings about this." And I said, "Yes, I will." So I told Eppie, and she said, "Aw, forget it. It happens to be true. He did screw around." I said, "Yes, that's true, but you didn't need to do it after the man is dead. Maybe leave it alone. I think you should apologize to Senator Kennedy." She said, "No, I won't do it. I refuse." I said, "OK. But you'll never hear the end of it." She said, "That's ridiculous."

So we had to go to the Kennedy Center Honors, and I took Eppie with me, and just ahead of us, as we were going through the monitors where they cleared us, were Ted and Vicki [Reggie Kennedy]. Eppie said, "Oh, there's Ted Kennedy. I'm going to go say 'hello.'" I said, "I wouldn't suggest it." She said, "Oh, come on. You don't know." I said, "Yes, I do know." Anyway, she went up to Ted and he just turned 180 degrees and walked off. She came back to me and she said, "Oh, my God. You were right." I said, "Yes, I was right." She said, "What should I do?" I said, "Apologize to him." "I won't do it." I said, "Eppie, let me make a suggestion. You don't have to apologize. Why don't you write him a letter and tell him that you're very sorry if he was hurt by what you said in the article." She said, "OK, I guess I could do that." And she did, and all of a sudden everything is fine again between Ted and Eppie.

Weeks pass, the telephone rings, it's Ted Kennedy. He said, "You know, my niece Caroline [Kennedy] has written a new book." I said, "That's wonderful." He said, "I wonder, Lester, if you would like to tell our friend Eppie that Caroline has written a new book that she might want to mention in her column." I said, "Ted, Eppie never does that. She never mentions books." "Tell her I asked." I did, she did, the book became number one on the *New York Times* Bestseller List overnight. That's another side of Ted.

**Young:** These are wonderful stories.

**Hyman:** Oh ,God, and you have to love them. They're so good, what he does.

**Young:** You kept up contact with him over the years.

**Hyman:** Oh, yes.

**Young:** What are the kinds of things that would bring you together, or he would call you and you would come?

**Hyman:** Oh, well, we would see each other at so many events. Once, for example, in the second Clinton Administration, I was being considered for an Ambassadorship to Chile of all places, and I was very interested in getting it. So I asked Ted if I could talk with him about it, if I could get an appointment. Now, in all the years that I've seen Ted operate with people, there was always someone else in the room, which is smart. I was really complimented, because when I got up there, he came in the room and we went into his private room and we were alone.

I told him what I wanted, and he said, "Of course I'll help you. But I want to tell you precisely where I am on this thing. You're going to be my second priority. My first priority is my sister, Jean [Kennedy Smith]. I want to get her to be Ambassador to Ireland, and that's the first favor I'm going to ask. When they do that, the second favor is going to be for you. And I wanted to tell you that straight out." He did put in a good word, he did indeed. It ended up that there were over 100 people who were up for that thing, and it boiled down to two: me and the man who ultimately got it, a man from New Hampshire who had contributed millions of dollars to the Clinton campaign. So I had no complaints. But again, it was Ted's frankness, you know. He never tries to bullshit you.

Then I remember the next time I saw him was at a dinner, where I was sitting with Eunice and Sarge [Shriver], I forget what the occasion was, and Ted comes over to us. We were at a table off in the corner so we could have fun and talk and nobody would bother us, and Ted comes over and he's in high spirits. "Lester," he said, "I have no more clout in Washington. Hell, I called Madeleine Albright. I couldn't even get you an Ambassadorship, that's how bad things are." He just is terrific. But that's the way, I see him at things, and I always go and we exchange letters quite often, and he always responds. I was very sad. I wrote to him down in Hyannis Port just recently, and it's the first time in all the years that I didn't get an answer, so I knew he was pretty sick. They had a form letter that they sent out to everybody. That was too bad.

**Young:** During this, thinking about the '60s, he was a very young man when he went to the Senate.

**Hyman:** Right.

**Young:** And just nothing goes right, the universe explodes, his own universe—his brother is killed then his other brother is killed, and pretty soon after that his son, Teddy Junior, gets cancer.

**Hyman:** And then later his daughter gets cancer.

**Young:** And then later, that was much later, Kara [Kennedy]. Then his marriage is falling apart, I think in the '70s.

**Hyman:** Yes.

**Young:** With Joan's [Kennedy] problems, maybe their problems. Some people have said that after that it was a black period for Ted. I just wondered to whom he could turn. Did he have anybody he could turn to?

**Hyman:** I don't know, I really don't know. Orrin Hatch takes credit for—

**Young:** Well, Orrin takes credit, yes.

**Hyman:** I'm not sure that that's accurate, although he was a great friend of Ted's, and he did, I think, tell him that he needed to get help. My understanding, and I don't know where I got it, was that Ted refused to see a psychiatrist or anything like that, because there was just so much. He didn't think he wanted to open the can of worms. I can think of 12 tragedies in that family, at least, just one after another after another, and the only one that almost broke him was John Kennedy, Jr. I know there was someone on the boat when they went out to find them, and Ted broke at that point. I don't know how he can take all these things.

**Young:** And keeps going.

**Hyman:** Part of it, I guess he inherited that same faith from his mother. That's what got her through. One of my clients is Bob Novak, and Bob has the same thing that Ted has. Bob converted to Catholicism. He was originally Jewish. Bob is very serious about it. I asked him what happened, and he said, "The Holy Spirit came to me." And he meant it. I visited with him last week, and I said, "I really envy you in a way, because your great faith sustains you through this." And he said, "Absolutely." I think that's a good part of what happens with the Kennedys. I think Ted really believes. And, of course, you have to give Vicki a hell of a lot of credit.

**Young:** That was a real turning point for him, too.

**Hyman:** She's just wonderful for him. I know there are women in this town who don't like Vicki, because they feel that she keeps them away from Ted, and that's exactly what she should do. I remember one night—this is another one I'll put the cap on. Ted told me early on in the marriage, we were talking one night, I always liked Joan, but she was so fragile, and there's no question that her alcoholism was a genetic thing that was in the family. I saw evidence of it during their marriage. I went to their house one night out in McLean. There was a party, and Joan came over to me, and she had a water glass, and she said, "Could you do me a favor?" I said, "What's that?" And she said, "Take this water glass and just fill it with vodka, please." I said, "Joan, do you think you should?" She said, "Please, just do this for me, and don't tell Ted." What do you do?

I remember one day, back when we were in the advisory council days, so that's early on in the '60s. I was over at the house one day to see Ted, to do some business. It was in the late morning, and all of a sudden Joan came down the stairs wearing just a nightgown. Ted got furious, and he said, "You go back upstairs. Don't you ever come in the room dressed like that." That was the old

fashioned Irishman in him. I started to say something. I said, “Ted, hey—” And Ted said, “Don’t say a word, please.”

But it is astounding. Some people are survivors. Some people get broken by events. Ted learned from them, grew from them. The people who are talking about him now—who in their lives ever gets all these wonderful things told about him while you’re still alive? I’m sure that sustains him. But I gather he’s as optimistic as ever right now.

**Young:** He’s a survivor.

**Hyman:** Yes, absolutely. He’s truly a great man. I was just trying to think if there were any other things that we’ve left out. There was one that was very funny. This was in ’68 again. Besides the New England states, I had Michigan, together with Joe Crangle, who was head of the New York Democratic Party, and Joe and I went out there. [Hubert] Humphrey was very popular in Michigan. We worked it but we weren’t getting too far, and we decided we’d better get Ted out there. So we called him and said, “You’ve got to get out here.” And Ted arrived at 4:00 in the morning, by private plane, came to the hotel, and he got into the bathtub. He always would soak, because his back was always in pain, yet he never, ever complained.

In the morning, there was a breakfast that Hubert Humphrey was holding with the Michigan delegates, and Ted decided that it wouldn’t be right for him to be there. That it was Hubert’s affair. But he wanted me to go and then tell him what went on. So I went and came back and Ted said, “Well, what did he say?” I said, “Well, Hubert said that he was the man who really started the Peace Corps.” Ted said, “Oh, really?” I said, “Yes, and Hubert said that he was the guy who really created the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.” “Really?” And I went on and on, and Teddy looked at me and then gave this big smile, and he said, “I’m for him.” It’s that wonderful sense of humor that the Kennedys have, the joy of politics.

By the way, on Hubert, it’s so interesting because I liked him tremendously, too, but I didn’t want him to be President. I didn’t think he was disciplined enough to be President, but he sure helped me as chairman, even knowing that this was a Kennedy state. He was always fighting the Kennedys.

I remember that maybe two days before Bobby announced for President, I thought I owed it to Hubert to tell him that I was going to support Bobby, and I found that Hubert was going to be in Rhode Island at the Biltmore Hotel at some event. I went down there and there was a huge crowd. I went over to him and I said, “Mr. Vice President, could you go off in the corner for just a second, I have something to tell you.” He said, “Is it important?” I said, “Yes, I think so.” So he handed me the key to his room and he said, “Why don’t you go down to my room and I’ll be finished in a few minutes and I’ll come down and then we can talk.”

So I went to his room. He came back and he practically stripped to his undershorts and he poured a martini for me and one for him and said, “Now tell me what you’ve got to tell me.” And I said, “I’m going to be supporting Bobby Kennedy for President. As you know, he’s going to announce.” And Hubert said, “No, I didn’t know he was going to announce.” Now whether that was just simulation, I don’t know, but then I said, “But I will be supporting him and I owed it to you Mr. Vice President, because you’ve been so nice to me all these years.”

He looked at me so sadly, and he said he said, “You are a very young man and Bobby Kennedy is a very young man, and I think that this has become a young man’s world. As Vice President of the United States, as head of your party, I should probably tell you that you shouldn’t do it, that you should stick with the administration, but I’m not going to do that. You do whatever you think is right, and remember that I’ll always be your friend.” He cried and I did. It was awful, because he was a nice man.

Bobby did one of those things for me, too, and I never can talk about it without just going crazy. I was working on the road for him for President, and I got home one weekend and my son David [Hyman], who was about nine years old, had a black eye. I said, “What happened, Dave?” He said, “Oh, I got in a fight in school.” I said, “What was it about?” “Well, all the kids in school are for Gene McCarthy, and I’m for Bobby Kennedy.” So I said, “Dave, look, just because I’m for Bobby Kennedy, you don’t have to be. If it’s easier, why don’t you say you’re for Gene McCarthy, and you’ll get along.” He said, “No, Dad, I’m for Bobby.”

So I ran into Bobby a couple of weeks later and I asked him about it. I said, “Do you ever have troubles like this with your children?” And he looked at me with those cold eyes of his and he said yes, and he walked off. And I thought. *What an unfeeling person you are.* I got home a few days later and the family was in ecstasy. What he had done is gone in the next room, and Bobby had handwritten a letter to my son, It said:

“Dear David, your Daddy has told me how much courage it took for you to stand up for me against all odds, and I will never forget you. Your friend, Bobby.”

So then I saw him again the next week, and I said, “Bobby, why didn’t you tell me that? I was so angry at you. I thought you were so insensitive, and here you did this beautiful thing.” And he looked at me again with those eyes of his, and he said, “You’re not the problem, your kid is.” I said, “Yes, that’s true.” He said, “What I want you to do is, I’m going to be coming to Boston in June, and I’m going to be giving a speech at the old Statler Hotel”—which is now the Park Plaza. And he said, “I want you to put your son in a room and I want you to come give me the key to that room. I don’t want you there, and I’ll go spend some time with him after the speech.” And, of course, he never got there. So, there are great things about the Kennedys as well as bad things.

**Young:** The brothers were very different as far as you can see.

**Hyman:** Yes.

**Young:** But yet there was something similar to them.

**Hyman:** Did you know Helen O’Donnell, Ken O’Donnell’s daughter? Helen wrote a biography of her father and she asked to interview me for the book. She threw a question at me that I’d never been asked before. She said, “Compare John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Edward Kennedy.” Just like that. And it just came out. I said, “John Kennedy was the ultimate pragmatist. Bob Kennedy, when he changed, became the ultimate man of passion, and Ted Kennedy is the perfect amalgam of the two of the them, the pragmatic side and the passionate side.” And I believe that. They are terribly different, but that clan loyalty—you know, family above everything.

**Young:** But also, he was the youngest.

**Hyman:** Yes.

**Young:** And it was also a very competitive family in many ways.

**Hyman:** Oh, it frightened me to read about the competitiveness. I mean the fights. They were real fights.

**Young:** So, being the youngest had its advantages but it also had its disadvantages.

**Hyman:** Disadvantages. I'm sure he got beat up a lot.

**Young:** Yes.

**Hyman:** Here's another one that you will find interesting. It was at the convention now, 1968. Remember I was talking about the fact that they thought he might be a candidate for President. Mike Wallace of CBS was prowling up around the aisles of the delegates, and he came over to me and he asked if he could interview me, and he started talking about the Kennedy boom. I had in my hand the piece of paper that had the number of delegates that we had for Ted, so I just dropped that to the floor because I didn't want to be seen with that. This is after Ted had told me he didn't want it.

So Mike Wallace said, "I assume that Ted Kennedy's name is not going to be put in nomination." I said, "No, it's not going to be put into nomination." And he said, "Oh, come on." I said, "I can tell you with certainty, Mr. Wallace, that under no circumstances will Edward M. Kennedy be a candidate for President of the United States this year." Well, a good story, and off goes Mike, and every state chairman has a telephone next to him at the convention. The telephone rang, I picked it up, his voice came on, "Lester, take it a little easier next time, hey?" What he was saying was not that he changed his mind about running, but he didn't want people to know that he wasn't going to run, because he wanted to preserve his power. That's another perfect Kennedy story.

**Young:** Yes, exactly.

**Hyman:** So there we are, that's about all I can think of. Oh, there is a last thing. I got divorced in 1979. My daughter came to live with me, and she was about 13 years old at the time. She's now a wonderful lady of 42. I wanted to know what to do with her for the summer, so I called Ted and I said, "Look, I've got Elizabeth [Hyman] here and I know that millions of kids try to get a job in your office. I'm not talking about that because I know you've decided all that six months ago." I used to have plenty of people ask me if I could help them get in his office for the summer. I said, "Could you just do me one favor? Could you look around the Capitol and find something that Elizabeth can do?"

Again, without missing a beat, "Lester, she comes to work for me tomorrow." And she did, and he took care of her. She used to come home every day, "Senator Kennedy gave me candy today." I said, "Did he eat any, Elizabeth?" "He ate more than I did." *[laughter]* Because he was terrible with candy and ice cream. I still don't understand the weight thing. It has to do with what's gone



on in his life, obviously, but he's content with it, I guess. When he runs for election he drops 20 pounds. Vicki put a gym in the house and she gets him on that. Anyway, they're a rare family and I just consider myself very fortunate to have known all of them.

John Kennedy autographed *Profiles in Courage* for me. I saw him do it. You know, they use autographs all the time. Somebody asked me what would happen if there was a fire in my house, what would I do? I live alone now and I said, "I'd just take the dog and my copy of *Profiles in Courage* and run." And I still have on the wall the two candles that we held up at Bobby's funeral. Remember the funeral train came in late, and so we had to have candles lit. So I think that's about all I can tell you, unless you have any questions.

**Young:** No. I just think this is a great addition to the oral history.

**Hyman:** Oh good, I'm so pleased.

**Young:** It gives a sense of the people.

**Hyman:** Of the people, right.

**Young:** The people, and they're real people.

**Hyman:** Oh, yes.

**Young:** So much of the outside world sees all of this as caricatures.

**Hyman:** Exactly, that's exactly right.

**Young:** They don't understand what the life is like in politics. It's a wonderful project in a sense, because Ted loves people. He has a wonderful sense of people and he can play anybody's part. He's got the accent. You have the same.

**Hyman:** Oh, I love to do it. I love to play the accent. I love to do it.

**Young:** You have the same thing too.

**Hyman:** And he can be so funny. There's a wonderful, childlike, not childish but childlike, quality about him that I love. He used to take a shower and then comb his hair right away, so it was always slicked back. And all of a sudden one day, I was in the office with him and we walked to the elevator, and he had obviously blow-dried his hair and it looked beautiful. I said, "Ted, your hair looks terrific." His back was to the elevator and I was facing him. Little did he know that the elevator had arrived and the door had opened, and there were a bunch of tourists, and I think they realized that that was Senator Kennedy and they just stood there, Ted not knowing it. And I said, "What happened about the hair?" And he said one of Sarge's sons, I believe, is in Hollywood and he told him how to take care of his hair. He said, "Lester, he told me how to put mousse shit in it." [laughter] I just broke up, mousse shit? That's Ted. Anyway, thank you.

**Young:** Thank you very much.

**Hyman:** It was a useful, cathartic thing for me, and I apologize for getting emotional.

**Young:** No, don't. Many people have.

**Hyman:** Really?

**Young:** Oh, yes, many people. It tells you something about the kind of person he is.

**Hyman:** Absolutely.

**Young:** Well, thank you very much.

**Hyman:** My pleasure, sir.

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