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Paul Tsongas

August 20, 1981

Provincetown Town Meeting--after which I drove him home.

✓  
Main idea  
"convincables"

"In the Becker poll, I have the highest ratio of favorable ratings to unfavorable ratings of anybody in the state. I think people are with me because of respect and not out of any dedicated enthusiasm. Ted Kennedy has fewer people who rate him favorable, but they are devoted to him. He also has a lot more people who feel unfavorably about him than I do. I get a lot of votes from people who instinctively vote Democratic. The trick is to move out from there to get the convincables, people like those who came tonight people interested in the issues. I get a lot of support from the issue oriented."

✓  
"If you look at my contribution list from last time, most of my money came from businessmen--because of the economic development work we had been doing. They didn't agree with me on most of the issues, but they respected my ability to get things done. And they knew I would work with them."

Does Globe cover you?" "When I was in Congress, I might as well have not existed. It isn't that bad now. But with Ted and Tip, it's hard to see why they would want to cover anyone else. We've noticed that other papers will write about what I do or say--the Time<sup>s</sup> or the Post--and then the Globe will pick it up afterward."

"In a perverse way I'm looking forward to running again. I'm going to be targeted by the right wing and I can't wait to have it out with those guys... I think you make a great mistake if you don't fight back when they attack you."

✓ "I expect primary opposition too. Half of the Democratic Party think I'm a fluke. The politicians do. At least the organization politicians do. They think I can be beaten." But he didn't think they would be effective.

Actually you campaign for six years. The last year all you do is go through the motions. If I do a town meeting then people say "He's doing it because he's running." But if I do it now they don't say that. But the effect is the same. People get an idea of what you are like. We've gotten into a lot of different areas since I've been in the Senate. As far as I'm concerned things couldn't have gone better."

Town meeting exchange re use of Off Road Vehicles in National Seashore.

Ap? PT was getting flak from frustrated ORV users, etc. complaining about NPS shutdown of 16 miles of seashore to such vehicles. Very emotional local issue. The next night, it was the feature closing story on NBC news, August 20, 1981. PT said he didn't know specifics, couldn't take a position, suggested they get a committee together to meet with his assistant Peter Aucello and that then his staff would get together and hear Park Services side of it and see if something could be worked out. But he wouldn't commit himself to their position without the facts. They wanted to sound off and he let them. Then:

PT: Well, look we're getting nowhere here... I haven't read the study so obviously I can't give you an answer. Let me suggest this. Why don't you get maybe four or five people who represent your concerns and we'll get the committee that's here and find out what your arguments are. And then we'll sit down with the Park Service and see if something can't be worked out. But I--

Citizen: (interrupting) I'm sorry to take more time.

PT: All right, go ahead.

Citizen: I'll leave after I say one more thing.

PT: Wait a minute. You can't leave. You come in here and they listen to you.

Citizen: I know they want to get off the subject. However, there are 65,000 sportsmen in the state of Massachusetts that are very well interested in this and pay their taxes. We had a problem similar to this years ago when they tried to take our guns away. And-uh-that problem backfired. What I'm trying to say, Senator, is: they feel that they should enjoy what the seashore was made for, and if we don't get it, exactly the reasons why we paid for and enjoy it then I think some of the people who are in positions now will not be in positions two years from now.

PT: Let me respond to that. First, I'm not up for four years, so I assume you're not talking about me. Second, there are some of us who feel that if that is an implied threat, that what you do is to put us in a position where if I agree with you it makes it more difficult because it looks like I am bowing to your threat. I would simply suggest that before you use that technique on public officials, you have some sense of where they are coming from. (Applause) Let me say one more thing. And that is, a person who will bow to your threat will bow to somebody else's and somebody else's and somebody else's, and you won't have a government worth anything."

That was the most tense moment of the meeting. Afterwar, it was the first topic mentioned in the car with Wayne Miller (Cape Cod Standard Times reporter). Jerry Robinson, PT and me.

"I don't mind people beating on me. But the one thing I cannot abide is that kind of threat. I've only been threatened three times--once on abortion, once on gun control and tonight."



Said he was used to being confronted with hot local issues. "We once spent an hour going over the location of telephone poles."

He and Jerry talked about human rights and cartooning till we dropped Jerry off in Truro.

✓ On the way to <sup>a</sup>Horwich, lot of talk re kids.

! ✓ "My seven year old asked me the other day if I was going to run against President Reagan. I told her not in 1984. Then I went on to tell her how that later on I might or I might not--that I didn't feel any need to run for President. And she said to me, 'You mean you don't have to run for President.'" (laughter)

Said that the kids felt they had three homes--Lowell, Washington and Harwich and that they seemed to have no trouble thinking about all of them as "home." He said, indeed, they felt lucky to have so many homes.

"I asked Ashley how she would feel if we moved back to Lowell and she went to school there. She asked me if she could still come to Harwich in the summer and if she could visit her friends in Washington. When I said, 'yes' she said that would be fine. I don't think leaving Washington would be any problem except for her friends."

✓, <sup>SISTER</sup> He was sleeping in a tent "a present to the two girls from their baby ~~sister~~" and getting to bed at 9:00 with them. He took pillows from house and "I slept like a log."

He talked about not opposing Watt's confirmation because he had opposed Haig and he wanted that opposition to be taken seriously. "I wanted to isolate the Haig vote. So I didn't want to be written off as a knee jerk administration opponent." Said his wife was opposed to his Watt decision. "I was opposed by all the members of my staff and by my wife. Normally, she doesn't interfere."

Philosophically, we agree; and we don't differ on many issues. But she

was outraged. When the Wilderness Society heard about it, they sent her a bouquet of flowers.

I asked him whether he thought his interests affected the questions or whether people asked about whatever was current. I noted energy emphasis in 1980 and none tonight. "People ask about current problems. They asked about arms control tonight because it's on their minds. They had no way of knowing that I was interested in it because we're never sent out a single press release on the subject."

He asked me, on the way to Truro, how Bill Cohen's book was selling (his first question to me). I mentioned how it was panned and he called it a "diary." His book will be out in September. "Some people have read it; and I think it will be taken seriously. The Book of the Month Club is looking at it but they won't decide till the reviews are in." He says they will get back the royalty they paid him.

He said they cut last chapter where he went into analogy of ship having a keel and righting itself after it lists to one side for a while--appropos of swing to conservatism and back again.

At end, I asked him about Alan Sisitsky. Said he was worried about him. "His trouble is that he compares himself to his classmates (Yale law) and sees some of them as high priced lawyers and me in the Senate. I tell him to stop it. I told him, 'If Brad Morse had wanted to stay in Congress, I'd still be a city councilman.'" The role of opportunity in politics.

He set the informal mood of the town meeting when he opened, in part, by saying "To give you some parameters of what a town meeting is like and why I appreciate your coming, I once, as a congressman, did a town meeting in which two people came. And one was lost--wrong room. And the other person had a social security problem which we resolved in three minutes. That was an exceedingly uncomfortable two hours. So after that it was all down hill."



A couple of examples of Paul's quick wit occurred when the group was getting heated about the Park Service restrictions.

1. Citizen: ...we have 30000 signatures saying that the rules and regulations should be reverted back to 1980 so that the beach is accessible not only to the artist or the bird watcher or the lover or the fisherman or the hunter or the sportsman but to the man who wants to tak his family out to the Park and enjoy a day at the beach.

PT: Sir, those are the same people (laughter).

Citizen: Could be.

PT: It's possible to be a lover and have a family.

2. Citizen: Senator, an interesting question for you: about the area of the beach they closed down from Wood End out. A few years ago, I used to take my boat out there--I'm fortunate though to have one--I take my boat out to the Wood End and beach it. I go out there. I see families. I see children, people fishing, people having a great time. I don't see any damage, not any erosion anyway... Now they closed that area down. No vehicles are allowed to go out there not even the Park Service is allowed to go in vehicles. What do I see. I took my fiance out there this year. She told me to take her home. Everytime I turned around someone naked up in the grass. There's two guys over here doing whatever they want to do, two girls over there. Is this what a National Park is for?

PT: I don't think that was in the bill. (laughter)

In town meeting re his voting. "If I were to ask you 'do you want me to vote or do you want me to vote my conscience,' it would depend on the issue, right? If you were part of the majority view you'd want me to represent my constituency, but if you were part of the minority, you would want me to vote my conscience. It depends on whose ox is getting gored at the time. And

my view is that I was elected to use my head and instinct, and to use my judgment and vote accordingly. At the time that judgment is no longer acceptable, you can throw me out. The one thing I would have great disrespect for is members of Congress who think there is no life after Congress and who hang on desperately. If you ask them to vote for the dooms day machine, they'll vote for the doomsday machine."