

KUNHARDT **FILM** / FOUNDATION

MARK SALTER INTERVIEW
JOHN MCCAIN: FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS
KUNHARDT FILM FOUNDATION

MARK SALTER
McCain Collaborator and Co-Author
November 8, 2017
Interviewed by Peter Kunhardt
Total Running Time: 2 Hours 11 Minutes

START TC: QT: 01;00;00;00

QT: 01;00;00;14

CREW:

Take one, common mark.

QT: 01;00;10;14

TITLE

Meeting and working with McCain

QT: 01;00;16;12

MARK SALTER:

We met in New Orleans in 1988 at the republican convention, George H.W. Bush's nominating convention. I was working for Ambassador Jean Kirkpatrick at the time and I sort of met down there his then press secretary Tory Clark. She introduced me to him down there and they hired me to sort of—I had a freelance writing side line. And they—they hired me to write a couple of speeches. We hit it off in '88. And in 1989, he asked me to come on to be his foreign affairs legislative assistant. And I've been working for him in one capacity or another ever since.

QT: 01;00;56;20

TITLE

Salter is sometimes called McCain's alter ego

QT: 01;01;01;03

MARK SALTER:

I assume they think that we share a sensibility or an outlook on politics. I think we do to a large extent. I'm not his alter ego. It's flattering I guess, but I'm—I'm not. He's—he's as independent minded with me as he is with everybody else. We don't agree on everything and he doesn't always listen to my advice, but I think because we read the same kind of books, we view politics in very similar ways and the purposes or what ought to be the purpose of public service, we're pretty like-minded.

QT: 01;01;42;08

TITLE

Defining McCain, his values and motivations

QT: 01;01;47;04

MARK SALTER:

Well I think he does understand himself in a way. He's—like all of us, he gets more reflective with age. I don't think maybe 20 years ago or 30 years ago whenever it was I first got to know him he did, but he's very—he's—he's—If you really want to really know him, his favorite book is, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. And the protagonist in that, Robert Jordan—I asked him once for a book we were working on who were his biggest heroes outside of his family? And Robert Jordan was the first guy he mentioned.

QT: 01;02;29;13

MARK SALTER:

And I—the name sounded vaguely familiar. And he said—and he explained, "He's the hero of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*." I said, "Well he's fictional." He goes, "I know, but he was important." And Robert Jordan goes to fight in Spanish civil war on the Republican side and is very aware that there are bad actors on both sides of that civil war, but he fights for the people he's fighting with, especially a woman named Maria. He knows that it's a hopeless cause and yet he gives his life for it. That's—that's a very McCain-esque view of himself in the world. The harder the cause, even lost, the better the cause.

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QT: 01;03;23;18

MARK SALTER:

And he is motivated by, ya know—people mistakenly I think view him as just a former career long naval officer who's a hawk. His first solution for any international problem is a military one. That's really not true and not fair. He does, though, feel that it's important that this liberal, international order that the United States has superintended for 70 years be maintained and that there are the values that—that—that order protects human rights, are the birthright of all and we ought to speak up for people that are being deprived them. That's not always a military response, but it's a great motivating factor. And you—ya know, I have a daughter in the peace corps. I'm sorry.

QT: 01;04;26;22

PETER KUNHARDT:

You can take a second.

QT: 01;04;28;09

MARK SALTER:

I have a daughter in the peace corps and she's in Cambodia and there was a—she teaches English at a school, and a Cambodian—one of the Cambodian teachers there, ya know, they were discussing politics, and Cambodian politics. She's not allowed to—she's only allowed to listen. And he said, "You know, we need more influence from the United States. You know, John McCain, he'll try to help us." There's just some random guy—some random guy in a rural province in a third world country that knows who he is, knows he'll fight for him.

QT: 01;05;18;04

TITLE

On the new McCain book

QT: 01;05;22;21

MARK SALTER:

Well it was before his diagnosis. It's usually our publisher John Karp at Simon and Schuster who decides those things and comes to us and says it's time. So we were working on what was at the time kind of a foreign policy and some of the things I had just mentioned, the cause of liberty and justice in the world. And—and there still is a component of that there. But it's more. He's going to write about his last presidential campaign. And he's going to use the book to speak directly to the American people who he served for 60 years and about—about ya know, what our politics have become and what's wrong with it and what it still can be.

QT: 01;06;25;01

TITLE

Explaining McCain's cross-party appeal

QT: 01;06;29;04

MARK SALTER:

He's authentic. He can't help himself. Sometimes his authenticity is a political problem and other times it's a great advantage. People I think sense that and they see him again and again recognizing that in this country, the way our system of government is formed, there is no hundred percent solution for either side. You know, it's set up for restraint and compromise.

QT: 01;06;56;04

MARK SALTER:

And you can make incremental progress on our problems by working with people who have different views of politics than you. It's the only way to get anything done. And I think people recognize that he's honest about that and does try to operate in that fashion. So I think that's the nature of his cross party appeal.

QT: 01;07;12;15

TITLE

McCain does not appeal to the either party's fringe

QT: 01;07;17;17

MARK SALTER:

He's never been liked by the fringes in either party ever. I mean, it's not a new phenomena. It's been going on for as long as I've known him. You know, the people who think you can get it all the way. The more naïve, angrier activists in either party are not really his audience.

QT: 01;07;43;12

MARK SALTER:

He's the kind of guy that ya know—let's get **(Expletive)** done, ok? Instead of constantly, constantly, constantly posturing and preening and all the nonsense that goes on in politics.

QT: 01;07;59;14

TITLE

McCain as a risk taker

QT: 01;08;04;23

MARK SALTER:

I guess you're a risk taker to be a naval aviator just sort of—that ya know, by—you're a risk taker. It's—the job is a risk. John's—in politics, he will do things that will get him in trouble, make things more complicated for himself. Immigration, he goes back to it again and again even though the trend in the base of the party—again and again, every national poll shows that immigration is reform along the lines of what John's proposed is popular. But in the activist wing of the Republican Party, it's not that popular. I don't think it's the killer issue any immigrants believe it is, but you know, I think three times he sponsored that.

QT: 01;09;09;00

MARK SALTER:

Campaign—campaign finance reform didn't win him any friends. It won him—didn't win any friends among the donor class republican parties. We've had a little difficulty in a way raising the kind of money we would need to run

against the most well financed candidate in the history of politics. But he felt strongly about it.

QT: 01;09;30;04

TITLE

McCain on torture and respect of his national security views

QT: 01;09;35;19

MARK SALTER:

So the torture debate, one thing McCain has always been, even with republicans, ya know, more conservative republicans that might have objected to some of his other stances, I think they've always largely respected him on national security. Now that's beginning to change now as the sort of populist wing, 25% or so, are becoming isolationists. But for most of his career, that wasn't the case. But he even risked losing some of that support by being so outspoken against the detainee treatment under the Bush administration. And he fought very hard to stop it.

QT: 01;10;16;13

TITLE

On the purveyors of anger and animosity directed towards McCain and others

QT: 01;10;21;01

MARK SALTER:

Sure, but I think that's the case for just about anybody with national name ID in politics like that. I'm sure they all get a dose of it. He gets a dose of it and it's usually the sort-of conspiracy theory, the arising crazy. You know, and then the guys that are just—ya know, just—they make a living off it. There are two kinds. There—there—genuine—there are three kinds. There are people that genuinely fall for that nonsense, and then there are the lunatics, you know, who think that an international order that has resulted in greater people living in freedom and prosperity than ever before in the world and has accrued incomparable power and wealth to the United States, they've got a better idea and you know, we'll just pull out of all that 'cause these guys are

ya know, **(Expletive)** around some afternoon and came up with some other idea. There are those types, you know? And then there are the kind of guys that just make a living off FOX or whatever, ya know, that's just a cynical, ya know, let's play the rubes. So yeah, you get a lot of that stuff. And they have audiences and everybody tweets, so you know, you get a lot of that nonsense.

QT: 01;11;39;01

TITLE

McCain's favorite movies

QT: 01;11;44;04

MARK SALTER:

John does like movies, yeah.

QT: 01;11;46;00

MARK SALTER:

And I know his favorite movie is One Eyed Jack and he can recite whole snatches of dialogue of that movie. That's a Marlon Brando movie. No, it's one of his favorite. His all-time favorite is Viva Zapata with Marlon Brando playing, to my mind not a terribly convincing Zapata. But he loved that movie, yeah. And there's another guy that fights against all odds. He likes underdogs fighting against all odd themes in literature and film and—and probably music. He loves the song 'My Way' by Frank Sinatra.

QT: 01;12;28;17

TITLE

McCain's childhood

QT: 01;12;32;11

MARK SALTER:

I've talked to him about his childhood and he was a pugnacious kid and ya know, a rebel without a cause, but he has an easy time making friends. I think he always did even if he was somewhere for ya know, less than a year in some schools. His parents sent him to a boarding school for high school

though for three years I think at the Episcopal high school. And he had a—you know, they called him McNasty and Punk. Ya know, and I think he had an edge to him. I think he had that edge in the Naval academy as well, but he made a lot of friends.

QT: 01;13;14;05

TITLE

On the developing of McCain's edge

QT: 01;13;18;10

MARK SALTER:

The obvious assumption would be that—you know, you have to—you know, kids being kids. You're going to new school after new school after new school, you have to establish yourself pretty quickly. He boxed and wrestled and I imagine got into a few fist fights, extracurricular fist fights. That's how you sort of—I mean, it's not like prison, but they always say go hit the biggest guy you see in prison and get a rep and you'll get left alone, but—

QT: 01;13;47;00

TITLE

On his father's absence

QT: 01;13;52;09

MARK SALTER:

He always treats it respectfully though and understood it. I'm sure. I mean he told me a story once that even when he was home, his father—you know, these were—these were eventful years and his father was a senior naval officer. And he told me at Christmas, if you were at home at Christmas, if he wasn't at sea or at war, you know, they would open his presents in the morning and his father would go upstairs and get in his uniform and go to work, ya know, after that. [Inaudible]. So there's a sense that people in the military aren't allowed to have the sort of leisurely and maybe really intimate

family lives that other people are allowed. That's one of the sacrifices you make for your country.

QT: 01;14;52;23

TITLE

The McCain family legacy

QT: 01;14;58;02

MARK SALTER:

He had a great, great, great, great, great something or another. I think on Washington's staff, I think he's related on some side of the family to ya know, a distant cousin of George Washington. There's been a McCain in uniform in every generation since the founding of this country. And they fought for the confederacy, the McCain's. Not all branches of the family, but the McCain's did. They eventually settled in Mississippi. He had an uncle who was I think the quarter master general, a great uncle or a great, great uncle; another one who's head of the selective service in World War I. They were all West Pointers, including his great uncle. His grandfather's brother was a West Pointer.

QT: 01;15;51;22

MARK SALTER:

His grandfather took the exam for the naval academy to prepare for the exam into West Point, but passed and was offered a place at Annapolis and took it, and that began the sort of naval branch of the McCain's, but up until then, his great-uncle who they called Wild Bill McCain rode with Pancho Villa, and rode with Pershing against Pancho Villa in Mexico. He was rumored to have ridden his horse. He was in the cavalry, and ridden his horse up in to his future father-in-law's front porch to ask for his daughter's hand in marriage, and was quite a character, I understand.

QT: 01;16;36;04

MARK SALTER:

His grandfather was—was—you can just see in any photograph of him, ya know, was a salty, a real character, and loved his life and I think John's mother told me once that she was listening to a conversation between John's grandfather and grandmother, and he had suffered from an ulcer or

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something. His grandfather and his grandmother was reading from some magazine article, a new treatment for ulcers and he slammed down the newspaper and said, "Not one dime for doctors. I'm spending all my money on riotous living." He gambled and drank and he cursed. He had the crushed cap.

QT: 01;17;25;07

MARK SALTER:

And his—John's father reportedly idolized him, and was quite open about it, and John's mother once said—she'd—she'd—said to him, "You love your father more than me." And he just matter of factly said, "What? Yes I do." Ya know, so it's—that's an intense thing to be born in to. I could see how you would be both attracted and try to resist it, you know? It can consume—subsume your individuality, and I think—I think there was a lot of John that did kind of resist being drawn into that. But it came for him anyway.

QT: 01;18;15;01

TITLE

How McCain learned to lead

QT: 01;18;19;06

MARK SALTER:

Observation, I'm sure, ya know, from—from examples of people close to him, his own father and—I mean, he was five or six, I think—how old would he had been when his grandfather died in '45? I guess he would have been about nine. You know, he understood the sacrifices involved in being a leader, but he had two guys with sort of natural leadership traits, and I think he does too, and even at Annapolis; his best friend at Annapolis was their brigade commander, I think they call it—

QT: 01;19;03;03

MARK SALTER:

--who was one or two in their class, Chuck Larsen, who went on to be a four-star admiral in CINCPAC, his father's old command, which is the largest

military operational command we have in any branch of service, and superintendent of the Naval Academy twice. He was a squared away midshipman, broke no rules, had no demerits. Did everything by the book, you know, and was military aide to a president eventually. His best friend was John McCain who was fifth from the bottom of that class, and jumping over the walls, and breaking all the rules, and marching hundreds of miles of extra duty because of all the demerits he accumulated, almost enough to get him tossed out of the place, but not quite. And he always pulled up just short of it. And he said, you know, there were both—and people that were friends, their mutual friends, would all say they were two sides of the same leadership coin, you know? They both were leaders in their way, you know?

01;20;10;10

MARK SALTER:

Chuck was a leader for good, and John, I think, was a leader for not so good, but at that time in his life but he did draw people to him and they followed him over that wall, including guys like Chuck Larsen. And—I—I—ya know, some of its innate, some of its inherited. And I know at one time he went to Chuck somewhere before he went to Vietnam, but after he'd been in the Navy for a while and was worried that he wasn't being taken seriously as a naval officer, as a career naval officer, and he was contemplating how to remedy that, or if he should not even stay in the Navy I know at one point fairly early in his career, and I think he made conscious decisions to be a little more squared away.

01;21;08;03

TITLE

McCain's time at the Naval Academy

01;21;13;09

MARK SALTER:

You know, it's funny, because you know, we worked on the first—when John and I were working on the first book, which was all about his childhood and his naval career, and his time at Annapolis and his time in prison in Vietnam, it ends with him getting out of prison. You know, the stories of Annapolis

were the stories of the things he didn't like about the place, you know? And I'm sorry about that—the things he didn't want—he thought were—even today were not right or silly, or some guy that's a year older than you gets to order me around, just because he was born a year before me. He was a rabble-rouser and a rule breaker, and pretty outspoken about it.

01;22;10;01

MARK SALTER:

But you know, you hear a lot of people say—I think there's in Bob Timberg's book who wrote—another Naval Academy graduate who wrote a book about several people who had graduated from the Naval Academy, including John, said—everybody said, when you're there, especially a plebe year, I hate this fucking place. And—but they all have some kind of attachment to it. So they pick up something there, and he speaks about it now. I don't know what it was, but I got something and when I needed it, when I really needed it, it was there. They—somehow it helped strengthen or impart a sense of honor and what honor costs, and when they're in dilemmas, which are imposing costs on them to act honorably when it's a risk or they have to suffer for that. Sometimes the academy comes to mind, and there's some attachment there.

01;23;26;11

MARK SALTER:

Obviously, he was very close to Chuck Larsen who passed away a few years ago, and he had been—Chuck Larsen had been, as I said, superintendent at the Naval Academy and one day just told John, "I bought some plots at the cemetery. It's a small cemetery, and it's getting kind of crowded. I bought some—I reserved some plots, and I reserved one for you and Cindy there." And John thought okay, great. It's a good place to be. It looks at the Severn River.

01;24;00;21

TITLE

What he learned at Annapolis coupled with his rebelliousness helped him later in life

01;24;08;15

MARK SALTER:

I mean they paid dividends for him, first in prison—and not just the sort of code that you imbue there, I mean his cussedness, his rebelliousness, which he still has. Tempered now and not like it used to be, but he still has a streak of it. In prison, it was—it's the way he dealt with things. I remember a POW once telling me, "You know, sometimes when you just took a beating, and they had you for a couple of days in the ropes, or whatever, you get back to your cell, you just want to lay low."

01;24;59;19

MARK SALTER:

And not—not get in any more trouble for a while until you get back to your strength back. But you know, you'd come back to your cell and there'd be McCain tapping away at ya trying to get you to communicate which was just—keep fighting. Give it right back to them. Ya know, it's—and I've heard people tell how he'd be cussing at them as they took him down there and cussing him as they brought him back to his cell when they would take him down for an interrogation or ya know, an unpleasant physical encounter.

01;25;33;12

MARK SALTER:

He said the first—I think it was his first year in prison he talked about he had this one turnkey, this guard that brought him the food or whatever it was every morning unlocked his cell when he was in solitary and expected him to bow. And he would refuse to bow so every morning the guy would hit him in the face. John would stand there and be hit in the face and refuse to bow. It went on for a long time before one day he just said, "To hell with it." and bowed a little. But I mean that's—there's a—there's a real cussedness to the guy that I think was on display at Annapolis that has been a strength for him. And he's a very, very resilient human being. The two traits to him that I think are the most predominant in his personality is a restlessness, an aversion to complacency; and a need to be in motion is what I mean by restlessness. And the other is his resilience.

01;26;40;17

MARK SALTER:

The guy can take almost anything and get through it, get past it, put it in his rear view mirror and not dwell on it, not let it affect him. He's greeted every single disappointment or worst experience in his life that way.

01;27;02;03

TITLE

McCain's temper as a child

01;27;06;22

MARK SALTER:

According to Roberta, his mother, he would have these temper tantrums, ya know, when he was very little, a toddler really. And she would throw him in a bathtub of cold water which you know, broke the fever so to speak and he would settle down. But she was repeatedly throwing him in the bathtub water, so it wasn't really a teaching tool, you know, but it did—it did stop the temper tantrum.

01;27;36;09

TITLE

The McCain men were all scrappy and pugnacious

01;27;40;20

MARK SALTER:

I think every human being has some—something—insecurity. I don't think anything major that I know of. You know, their—his grandfather wasn't tall either and they were all scrappy; John's 5'9, 5'10, whatever it is. They're all sort of scrappy and prove themselves. I think Tim Burg, the Tim Burg book again, he has this description of these had these boxing smokers, your plebe summer at Annapolis and I think this is verbatim from the book in describing John's method as a boxer.

01;28;29;08

MARK SALTER:

I think it was, "Unschooling as a boxer, his style was to charge to the center of the ring and throw punches until somebody went down." I think there was a little bit of that in all of them that they could be pugnacious and scrappy and don't underestimate me as a personality or as a physical presence, ya know.

01;28;49;06

MARK SALTER:

I don't think John's height had any bearing on that. I think you know, I think he—ya know, very influential men in his life were that way and his mother is a dynamo, fills a room, ya know, and they all do. They've got outside personalities.

01;29;13;04

TITLE

On reading, adventure and McCain's mother Roberta

01;29;18;11

MARK SALTER:

And his curiosity, both his father and his grandfather are both extremely well read people, and learned, although didactic in their way, but you know—their—it came from a culture—very literate. And they all had their favorite poems that they could recite, you know? And—but his mother was the adventurer really. She was responsible for all their—for moving them, the constant moving. They would often cross country from New London, Connecticut to Long Beach, California and back. She would pile three kids in the car and off they'd go. And his father would have already been, you know, deployed.

01;30;03;08

MARK SALTER:

And she would always stop at some natural wonder or some museum of interest and drive 100 miles or 200 miles out of their way to go see it. He tells a story about once she decided—they were in Texas. "Let's go see Tijuana." No, it was Juarez. It wouldn't have been Tijuana. "Let's go see Juarez" and she

goes—to see some church or some cathedral she wanted to see in Juarez, which is well out of their way, but they crossed the border.

01;30;31;23

MARK SALTER:

And she gets lost in Juarez somewhere and she's in a neighborhood with all these characters in zoot(?) suits, ya know, looking sort of malevolently in their direction. And you know, and you know, John remembered that, you know? But she's a very curious, vibrant, vital, restless person who traveled until—she's 105 now and traveled until she was well into her 90s, independently, overseas every year. she kept a car in Germany because she was too old to rent a car.

01;31;07;17

MARK SALTER:

She got pulled over for speeding outside of Flagstaff one Christmas on her way to see her twin sister in California and she was going 100 miles an hour. He is—not surprisingly, he spent much more of his childhood in the presence of his mother than his father.

01;31;24;21

TITLE

McCain's enthusiasm for life

01;31;28;16

MARK SALTER:

He has an enthusiasm. He's got a romantic streak. He's got an ironic streak as well, but he definitely has a romantic streak and a great exuberance and enthusiasm for—he'll describe things sometimes in sort of grandiose, you know, a depiction of say a waterfall or something. And then you go and see the actual thing and it's not quite as glorious as—as is made out to be. But he's got a real fascinating, beautiful—

01;32;14;22

MARK SALTER:

Whenever you travel overseas with him, he's intrigued by all manner of things and al—you know, always wants to understand a culture and traditions in the places he is. He's got a great curiosity, a great enthusiasm for life. And life is a big adventure for him. He always depicts it that way, even now when he's in his 80s and he's got cancer. When he talks about his life in reflection, it's a giant adventure that he's been on and it's had some bumpy parts and there have been some dangerous parts that he was lucky to have survived, you know, and—but on the whole, he's enjoyed as he says, “Every damn day of it.”

01;32;59;04

TITLE

McCain's trips with other politicians abroad

01;33;04;11

MARK SALTER:

What they're mostly meant to do I think because he will often take newer senators is to get them involved in world affairs, help them establish relationships that will keep them involved in world affairs because he thinks that's a very important part of what they should be do—what senators should be doing. And he's always mindful of any—returned to—ya know, any attempts to try to withdrawal from the world, he thinks that's foolish and will hurt the United States immeasurably. So that I think is why he does it more than any other reason, but yes, he also thinks that, you know, when you're voting on what will turn out to be life and death issues for men, women in the United States Armed Forces, you ought to be familiar with what they're experiencing over there. You ought to go see 'em, you understand what they're suffering on your behalf. And I think that plays a big part in it. But his—does his curiosity—yeah, yeah, absolutely. Yeah. It's insatiable, his curiosity. It's never—it never tires, just never, you know.

01;34;28;23

TITLE

McCain moves ever forward and puts the past behind him

01;34;33;05

MARK SALTER:

I don't know if he reflects on it, but he is purposefully not looking back. Yeah, he doesn't—he doesn't—I mean once in a while, you get old or you reminisce a little bit, but it's funny stuff that he wants to remember. Here's a prime example of it. So when we were working on his first book, and the largest section of that book was about his captivity, his imprisonment in Hanoi. All I could get out of the guy, were like funny stories. I didn't know people had that good a time in prison.

01;35;07;00

MARK SALTER:

But there was a guy in the cell next to his for a long stretch of it when he was in solitary named Bob Craner who's passed away many years ago, to whom he became very, very close. And he would just tell me the jokes they would whisper to each other and the funny takes on things they would have, and little practical jokes they would even play on each other.

01;35;34;14

MARK SALTER:

You know, and you had to really push him for, "Yeah, they knocked me around a little." "Yeah, they knocked me around but other guys had it worse," You know, and not—just, he doesn't want to remember, he doesn't want to think about—and so I don't—you know, he always says this thing and I think it's people—some people who've suffered the same experience might take it the wrong way, but he always says, "The minute I landed at Clark, I put that behind me." Which was Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines, which was the first stop for the POWs when they were liberated, when they were coming—being released.

01;36;14;14

MARK SALTER:

He said, ya know, "And everybody wanted to—steak, a malt," and whatever it was. "I wanted a newspaper. I just wanted to read a newspaper that wasn't you know, full of propaganda." Or ya know, "Actually tell me what was

happening and what have I been missing?" You know? And he ended up after he came back, he was in physical therapy for a long time before he could regain flying status. He went to the war college, Naval War College, because he wanted to read and understand the Vietnam War, and he designed his own tutorial.

01;36;54;00

MARK SALTER:

He's just a—he has, again, an insatiable need for information. When you work on a Senate staff, "What else? What else? What else? What else?" You know, you're talking to him or you've had a big accomplishment or something, say, McCain-Feingold passes. The next day, it's done. It's done, forget it, we did it. You know, "What else, what else?" is what he's always saying to you, "What else, what else can you tell me, tell me something else." He's just—he's wired differently from other people that way.

01;37;33;12

TITLE

McCain's relationship with his siblings

01;37;39;09

MARK SALTER:

It's good, they're, you know, younger brother, ya know, spend a lot of time apart, ya know, but—as they all did in that family. But.

01;37;46;22

MARK SALTER:

Sandy, and I don't—I don't think Joe was— made it to Annap— John gave a— spoke to the mid-chairman at the Naval Academy a few days ago and Sandy, who lives near Annapolis was there, yeah. An older sister, Sandy, but she's good.

01;38;04;06

TITLE

The USS McCain destroyers

01;38;08;05

MARK SALTER:

I think there have been two or three destroyers now that bear the name the USS John McCain—John S. McCain, named for his father and grandfather, the current Aegis—class destroyer. The first one though was commissioned in the 50s, and I think John was at Episcopal, and they went to the commissioning at Bath Ironworks, the Naval shipyard in Bath, Maine. And Admiral Halsey, that ship was just named for his grandfather, not his father, who had been a commander of all of Halsey's fast carriers in the Pacific.

01;39;02;08

MARK SALTER:

And they commissioned it; I think John was 16 or something like that. And Admiral Halsey, who was nearing the end of his life then too, who had been very, very close to his grandfather, couldn't really even—I think got up to speak about him and was choked up and had once referred to John's grandfather as, "My right arm," and they were—they were old school sailors. And at the reception afterwards, if this is the—I think the story you want. And at the reception afterwards, Halsey asked John, "What do you drink?" John of course was underage, and John said, "Well," and he didn't give it an answer, and he said, "Well your grandfather's drink was bourbon and branch water, you'll have a bourbon and branch water." Something like that.

01;40;04;00

TITLE

On riotous living

01;40;08;23

MARK SALTER:

I don't think he was ever much of a drinker. His father had a problem with alcohol and I think that affected him. And so I don't—he said even then, he drank a little, but he was a rabble rouser. He was rambunctious and he would

go out and it was sort of 'riotous living', his grandfather would have called it. I don't think he himself was drinking all that much at the time, he was just riotous sober. And I don't know if he was a hot dog pilot or not, I think everybody's kind of a—when you fancy yourself a Naval aviator and you're being trained to be a Naval aviator, I imagine there's a little more self-confidence than in other folks. But he did sort of live a—he was the kind of guy that would show up after being out all night on the flight line and kick the tires and, "Let's go." Ya know, there was that, definitely that—that attribute.

01;41;21;02

TITLE

McCain's marriage to his first wife, Carol

01;41;25;14

MARK SALTER:

Yes, he got married to—I think Carol had been married, his first wife Carol had been married to a classmate of his I think? And they must have known each other socially, and I think—[Inaudible] boy I'm—Peter, I'm not—I think he was at Meridian, he was a flight instructor himself at Meridian at the time, and I know she lived in Philadelphia and he was flying up to see her when he had leave, quite often. And I think it was probably right about the time he had done several Mediterranean deployments and had enjoyed those, ya know, when he was living around Virginia Beach, I think he literally was living on the beach. But in the Timberg book, Timberg writes that he was well known in certain casinos in Monaco and they would be greeted by name when they—you know? And so I think he had continued sort of his adventurous, heavy social life when he wasn't flying.

01;42;34;17

MARK SALTER:

And I think it was probably right around that time that I think he might have discussed with Chuck Larson that he was worried he wasn't being taken seriously and he wanted to start being taken seriously in the navy. And he met or re-met Carol and it was a—you know—they got married not after a long courtship, I believe is the case. She had two sons, Doug and Andy from her first marriage that John adopted when they got married.

01;43;09;15

MARK SALTER:

They had one child together, Sydney McCain, yes.

01;43;12;13

TITLE

McCain's regret around signing a forced confession as a POW

01;43;18;08

MARK SALTER:

For a natural resister, and he's been a natural resister all his life and to an extent continues to be, he resists trends or resists authority that he thinks is not employed in good causes or whatever. For a natural resister, being unable to resist and giving into what had happened, I imagine is psychologically impactful. And he does say that it's absurd, you know, that he would say that, but he did, he made—ya know, he made a confession in a tape and he's been unhappy about it ever since.

01;44;10;07

MARK SALTER:

I don't think he dwells on it or anything, just yeah, "I'm sorry I did it." A lot of them did as they'll all tell you. You resist as best you can for as long as you can, but eventually they'll beat it out of you. He's—there's a—you're probably using it. There's a fairly well known filmed interview with John, a French journalist did right after he'd been shot down. He's in a cast and he's in a hospital bed. He's quite emotional at one point in it. There are parts of it where he's joking around about the food, but when he sends a message to his wife, he's quite emotional.

01;45;01;20

MARK SALTER:

And he hates seeing that. And it's been used—we've used it in campaign bio-spots. He hates it. People don't know that they just ... "I'm in that cast. They just set all my bones. I had no anesthesia. It was really painful" and I said, "No one's take away is you're some kind of wimp." ya know? It's very ... It elicits

nothing but sympathy and admiration for you. "People don't understand what bad shape I was in." I think we have the idea. He's that kind of guy.

01;45;40;10

TITLE

The band of brothers mentality and McCain's motivating beliefs

01;45;45;01

MARK SALTER:

That was sort of their creed, their mutual creed that they all-

01;45;48;00

MARK SALTER:

Well I mean, it's unique to that. I mean at least—to his friends in prison who are still alive, ya know, many of them have passed away. I mean that was unique to them. They're not—they're not—I mean, they are in campaigns and stuff, but they're not part of his political service, his public service. He's got, ya know, conventional Christian faith, I know he still holds. And he believes in the country. And more importantly, he believes in the country's cause. He believes in the country as a set of ideals, ya know, not blood and soil. That's anathema to him. That it's you know, you don't suffer. You don't risk your life. More importantly, you don't send other people to risk their lives for some tribe. Ya know, it's offensive to him.

01;46;58;13

MARK SALTER:

He would tell you whether you agreed or disagreed with the Vietnam war, that's not what he was doing, or that's not the cause he thought he was serving. So of those three, he is a passionate believer in an exceptional America that embodies its ideals, and protects him at home and advances them abroad. That he thinks is the greatest cause that anyone can serve. Yes, I think that more than anything else will always motivate him.

01;47;40;10

TITLE

McCain's vision of America was shaped by his POW experience

01;47;45;00

MARK SALTER:

And certainly his vision of America and the world and the causes that we should be involved in, not always militarily, but we should support and defend and do what we can, was certainly shaped by that experience. He knows torture. He knows what it's like to be tortured. And when we were in the middle of all that torture debate, he said, "Ya know, one of the ways you get through it, we got through it, or at least I got through it, you kind of tell yourself if the position were reversed, we'd never do this. And it gave you a moral superiority. You didn't have physical superiority, but I had a moral superiority over the people that were doing this to me and my friends."

01;48;29;15

MARK SALTER:

And that was important to him and he did not want to see that squandered. That America conducts itself differently than other countries do in this world; we're supposed to be an example, a shining city on a hill. And I think being deprived of his liberty, he's very moved when he sees people fighting for their freedoms and for their human rights, for their—for equal justice, for opportunities that we take for granted. It very—it personally touches him. It moves him to tears, ya know. And I think sure, how could it not? He knows what it's like to be deprived of all your rights, you know, your freedom, no justice, to be alone and facing an overwhelming—a power that can overwhelm you.

01;49;26;14

TITLE

Re-acclimating after his return from Vietnam and the end of McCain's first marriage

01;49;33;06

MARK SALTER:

He re-acclimated to America instantly as he always says it. I was back and reading everything I could get my hands on. I know he wanted to regain flight status, so he went through what has—what others have described to me as pretty painful rehabilitation. He had very limited mobility in one of his knees and—but apparently an extraordinary tolerance of pain. And he did get enough—he had to be able to reach up and pull a curtain in case of ejection and was able to do those things.

01;50;19;21

MARK SALTER:

And Eventually he commanded an air squadron, a replacement group squadron they call them. A large one, one of the largest in the navy I think. Before that he did this year at the war college and this tutorial on Vietnam that he designed for himself so he could understand the conflict he had just been captive to for five and a half years. His marriage broke up subsequent to all that when I believe the navy's liaison to the senate and worked in the Russell Senate office building. We've never discussed it. He said it was all my doing. That's about all I know about it that it was his fault. I think he admitted he was not faithful to his wife. But their marriage broke up. He married shortly for the second time shortly after his first marriage broke up.

01;51;29;12

TITLE

McCain's time as Naval liaison

01;51;35;06

MARK SALTER:

Part of the liaison's job, obviously his chief focus is the activities of the senate armed services committee which authorizes the navy's budget every year. He got to know the members of the committee very well. It's when the seeded an interested in politics, his own interest in politics then. And then he—as part of any liaison's duties, they will escort senate delegations overseas, on overseas trips. He got to know socially as well as professionally members of the armed service committees, some of the more senior members.

01;52;25;14

MARK SALTER:

But he became good friends with younger members like Gary Hart, Bill Cowan. He also became almost a protégée of Senator Tower who was a senior member of the committee and was chairman and a ranking member at one point but he knew Goldwater and he got to know Scoop Jackson and Jake Javits. And he traveled with them and knew their wives. And—and he always tells me, "I would see these markups for a bill, a defense authorization bill, and you would see a senior member of the committee confer with another member or a staff or something and scribble something out on a piece of scratch paper and there; there's another \$1 billion for whatever it was.

01;53;13;20

MARK SALTER:

There were—or here's a—you know, redirection—you know, some security policy was changed just like that." I said, "Boy that is direct and immediate influence over the security of this country that made a lasting impression on him and drove his eventual entry into politics himself."

01;53;35;10

TITLE

McCain's ability to forge relationships and the importance of travel

01;53;40;21

MARK SALTER:

Yes, John is a man of—he does forge relationships. His closest friendships, or most of them have been forged in travel. It's a good way to get to know members. That's why he has as many democratic senate friends as he does republican friends. They don't agree on a lot of things. And you know, some of them would disagree quite strongly on some of his positions overseas, but first and foremost, he wants everybody to operate from the same set of facts and common experiences and common relationships with allies that will make them better defenders of our security and our relationships abroad, our alliances abroad. That—but yeah, you travel, you dine together. He's got a quick and tireless sense of humor, so all the trips are exhausting. He always tries to do at least two countries too many. You have fun at dinner and on the plane.

01;55;00;16

TITLE

On the decision to leave the Navy

01;55;07;03

MARK SALTER:

And he speaks as he speaks about anything in his past, matter of factly. But I think the day he was newly remarried, he had made the decision that he was going to leave the navy and move to Arizona. And sometime not long after that decision his father died on a heart attack on a trans-Atlantic flight returning to the United States. The day of his funeral was actually the day I think John formally left the navy, went to the bursar or whoever you see and signed the retirement papers and the next day I think moved to Phoenix. I imagine that day was a memorable one. He never dwelled on it when he talked to me, but I imagine it was an emotional day.

01;56;12;03

MARK SALTER:

'Cause neither his father nor his grandfather had wanted to retire from the navy.

01;56;15;22

TITLE

McCain's entry into politics in Arizona

01;56;20;04

MARK SALTER:

Oh, I think not long after he got there, he started getting to know the people he would need to get to know, and sort of developing a local profile so that if an opportunity arose, he'd be in a position to try to seize it. When Rhodes announced his retirement I think he bought a house in that district. Quite possibly Cindy bought a house in that district, maybe, that afternoon. And he'd already started—he'd done a lot of public speaking and rotary club type

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stuff and getting around, and getting ready for it, and announced he was running for the seat and there was a crowded primary of people that had, obviously, been in Arizona longer and more experienced.

01;57;14;16

MARK SALTER:

Some of them, probably politicians. But he outworked them. He approached it in a classic McCain way. "I won't just out work them, I'll work harder than anybody's ever worked before on a campaign." So he knocked on a gazillion doors and just ran his campaign staff ragged and everything and won the primary and won the general.

01;57;42;19

TITLE

Running for Barry Goldwater's seat and accusations of being a carpetbagger

01;57;46;19

MARK SALTER:

When Barry Goldwater retired, again, he faced a primary and then a general election in which his opponents—you know, when the rap against him was he just he's been in Congress for two terms, but he just moved here when he was, I think, in his forties. And he had a—you know, a carpet bagger—you know, he was accused of being a carpet bagger. And it was in a debate, with—I think the guy's name was Richard Kimble, and—who was sort of either explicitly calling him a carpet bagger or sort of describing him in terms that we would call carpet bagging.

01;58;39;09

MARK SALTER:

And he spontaneously had a pretty good response to it. He said, "Well, you know, I grew up in a Navy family and I wish I could have grown up somewhere as wonderful as the first district of Arizona, but when you're in a Navy family you have to move around a lot. And come to think of it, the

longest place I ever stayed in my life was Hanoi when I was a prisoner of war." Words to that affect and that was quite an effective come back.

01;59;09;19

TITLE

McCain as a young Senator

01;59;14;12

MARK SALTER:

Energetic, you know, involved in a lot of things. Still, predominantly, more of his time on national security issues, but was involved in all kinds of things. I got to know him, went to work for him, in late '89, which would have been about two years into his—a little over two years into his first senate term. And he was actually at that point, just entering what was called the Keating Five experience. I don't think the ethics committee had started. They might have been investigating, but the hearings were a ways off. That was in '90 and '91, I think it might have bled into it, it went on for a while.

02;00;08;18

MARK SALTER:

So that kind of put a damper on it, but up until then with, like everything else, running a mile a minute, involved in dozens of different issues, and making a name for himself, you know, and accessible to the press, all the sort of known McCain traits as a member of the Senate were all there. You know, facile sometimes, but quite effective communicator; very candid, always appeared to be himself, and just running at 78 rpms while everybody else is at 45, is usually how he has behaved with any new experience and I don't think his first senate term was any different.

02;00;58;07

TITLE

Working as a young staffer for McCain

02;01;03;13

MARK SALTER:

No, 'cause I was one of about 25. Obviously I was foreign affairs, LA, and I did a lot of writing around the office. So I was involved in things that weren't issues I had ever been involved in before, just as a writer. I didn't know him all that well. I like him. When he hired me it was just classic. His office was full of people. Everybody in the office called him by his first name, including the interns. There was no officiousness to anything, there's no snobbiness, he had an open door policy, so his office was always crowded with people and—

02;01;39;21

MARK SALTER:

Ya know, he called me into what I thought was to—he asked me to come see him. I thought he was going to ask me to work on another speech with him and he said, "Hey, you know, my foreign affairs guy, Loren Kraner, he's going over to the state department, I need a new one and I want you to take the job. Talk to Chris about the money." Chris was his administrative assistant at the time. I said, "Well, can I have a little time to consider it?" He said, "Okay, let me know tomorrow." And that was it, you know. And then on to the next 20 things.

02;02;14;19

MARK SALTER:

But he—ya know, he was—It wasn't—you know, it's funny, just walking next to him is a little bit of a chore, you know? Because he has this weird gait that accelerates him—at a—it's a walking gait but it's just faster than anybody else's. So, everybody else has to sort of trot to continue talking to him as your—half your conversations, or more than half, are with him as he's in motion. You know, and so you know, there's that. And the hours were long, they were typically 12 hour days. He's a really hard worker. And he—and he got—ya know, he would be in one fight after another on the floor and if it were your issues or something you'd be down there, you know, with him.

02;03;09;15

MARK SALTER:

So, it's just a—it's a burst of activity. You get accustomed to it, though, time flies. Ya know? And before you know it you've been there five years, you know? And there's a lot—I—I think I'd been to Canada before I went to work for him and I've certainly seen parts of the world I would have never taken myself to on my own—ya know, initiative, I can guarantee you that. I never went to Paris or Rome or anything, but I've been to Rangoon a couple of times and I've been to Vietnam a lot and that's fun. It was a fun, interesting, fascinating, life—ya know, I got to have because I worked for him. But no, you get used to the pace.

02;04;04;23

TITLE

The Keating Five Scandal

02;04;09;13

MARK SALTER:

First and foremost, that's what it did. It was a matter of honor. The second thing it challenged was his restlessness and patience. It just dragged on. He needed to get to a place where he could put it in his rear view mirror, like he put every bad thing, you know? Behind him and moved on. And that—the hearing—when they decided to go to—then public hearings and it was just a slow drip-drip, of—it just didn't get adjudicated anywhere quickly enough for him. He felt and to an extent the guy that had been hired by the ethics committee, Bob Bennett, a prominent trial attorney here in Washington, to be sort of the special counsel to the committee, you know, had recommended that the committee drop—there were five senators involved.

02;05;08;09

MARK SALTER:

And he recommended to the committee that they drop two: Senator Glen and Senator McCain, that they were guilty of nothing worse than bad judgment, the two attended the meeting, they took no action, did nothing inappropriate for the—for Charlie Keating. They didn't do that because there was only one republican involved, John McCain, and if you had dropped him the remaining members were all democrats, so the democrats were never going to agree to

that, so they kept him in there and then the whole process just dragged on. And I mean it went on for well over a year. And it was painful to him.

02;05;50;21

MARK SALTER:

And I remember, and I was very new, but I remember we were walking, he was gonna give some statement on the floor that I drafted for him, it was a foreign affairs issue so I'd been the LA involved, and we were walking back outdoors from the Capitol to the Russel, across Constitution Avenue to the Russel Center office building, and he wasn't his—it—we—we were deep into the Keating experience and he wasn't his usual viable self. He wasn't talking, we were walking in silence. He hadn't said anything on the entire walk and as we were about to enter the Russel building, he stopped and he just looked at me for a minute and said, "This won't last forever. I want you to know that." I knew what he meant, I knew it was a reference to the Keating thing. I said, "Yeah, okay." But he was just, in his mind it's just I got to get this behind me.

02;06;53;12

TITLE

The normalization of relations with Vietnam and MIAs

02;06;59;04

MARK SALTER:

It was controversial with some, the normalization of relations with Vietnam. But as McCain, I think intuitively understood or politically understood, not controversial with most people, even most veterans. And he got involved in it. We were going to Vietnam and—on a trip and right before, literally I think we were in Bangkok, right before we got to Vietnam he got a call from someone at the State Department, I think from Brent Scowcroft actually, for then President George H.W. Bush, his national security advisor saying, "We are going to New York." We had no relations, formal, diplomatic relations, and we had a trade embargo on with Vietnam hanging over us since the war.

02;07;53;15

MARK SALTER:

And Scowcroft, I think it was Scowcroft, called to say, "We are going to send someone from State is going up to New York to meet with the Vietnamese UN delegation say in exchange for cooperation on determining the fates of missing in action and POWs, and for withdrawing their forces from Cambodia and we will take certain steps that will eventually slowly lead up to lifting the trade embargo and eventually normalization of relations. Would you sort of tell them that we're gonna do that and could you sort of endorse it?" And he said, "Well only if you add us a condition emptying the last of the remaining re-education camp prisoners that the Vietnamese have been holding since the end of the war since 1975."

02:08;46;00

MARK SALTER:

South Vietnamese political and military types, government and military officials who they've been holding in re-education camps for 16 years, I think at the point. They agreed, Bush administration agreed and so he went in and just said, "You're gonna be presented with this road map for normalization, ya know, which will require reciprocal steps and I want you to know I support that." And then it became a matter of the United States had given its word. And I think he looked at it first and foremost like, they did A, we said we'd do B, okay, that's how we operate in this world. But then he became invested in it in a more personal way.

02:09;29;22

MARK SALTER:

And it was controversial because it was sort of a precursor of the crazy conspiracy theorizing that goes on in our politics today, which has always sort of existed on the fringes but now thanks to social media it's in your face all the time. And there's pizza-gate and all this other nonsensical crazy **(Expletive)** that, you know there appears to be some multiple millions of Americans are quite gullible and believe. There was this theory that the Vietnamese were holding thousands of Americans still prisoner, which McCain intellectually understood, informed by experience, close acquaintance with the North Vietnamese was highly implausible and he said, "The Vietnamese are perfectly capable of being cruel. But they're not capricious. Why would they do the one thing that would draw the United

States back into a military confrontation with them, why?" So he was skeptical and wisely so.

02;10;41;17

MARK SALTER:

And as we got into the issue, they formed a special committee in the Senate. Senator Dolan Mitchell did, he was on it with Kerry to investigate these claims. And the more he saw, he saw that most it was either sort of—crazy conspiracy theorizing or they were people making money off the deal. Not tons of money, but scamming people. And what that was doing was convincing families who had MIAs, a father, a husband, a son, to keep hope alive where hope wasn't really warranted. They needed to bury their dead. And they could never, you know, I hate the word closure or anything, but they could never process their grief the way people normally process their grief because they were always holding out, being fed a false hope that maybe someday they would come back.

02;11;38;09

MARK SALTER:

He found that offensive. So he really went after some of these characters. But anyway, the Bush administration was defeated by Bill Clinton and Bill Clinton was President and Bill Clinton's political advisors are telling him, "Oh you can't normalize relations with Vietnam. We'd reached the point where it was time to lift the embargo. And you can't, you were a draft dodger. Veterans will march on Washington and handcuff themselves to the White House fence or whatever. And why would you want to, don't even mess with this."

02;12;10;08

MARK SALTER:

But Kerry, who was very adroitly lead that committee and got every member, including some people that believed some of the conspiracy theories to say there is no compelling evidence Americans were left behind against their will. We made a few trips down to the White House to sort of lobby the President and often a cast of—scores of other. In the last meeting, and they still hasn't convinced Clinton to do it, it was just Kerry and McCain and each man had one aid and I was the one aid for McCain, in the Oval Office. Kerry made the lawyers brief for the normaliza—lifting the trade embargo informed. Logical, compelling case for it.

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02;13;01;10

MARK SALTER:

And then Clinton turned to McCain, and I'll always remember it because it was just short, McCain's very sensitive to consuming time of the President of the United States and he never wants to belabor a point, he just said, "Mr. President, I'm tired of looking back at Vietnam and I'm tired of my country looking back. It's time to move forward. And if you normalize relations, I will defend you every step of the way." Clinton was moved by it and shortly announced the decision to lift the trade embargo.

02;13;39;11

TITLE

On the decision to run for president in 2000

02;13;43;09

MARK SALTER:

As he jokes, and every United States Senator, unless he's under indictment or detoxification, has some plan somewhere to run for President. So notionally, but not well considered or thoughtful. Just maybe someday I will and ya know, we got to 2000 and it didn't look to be a lot of people running. Just one guy that had all the money but he had gotten his name ID, he'd gotten some national name ID, wasn't as well-known obviously as he is today, but he had made a reputation for himself. And just felt right.

02;14;26;02

TITLE

The 2000 presidential primaries

02;14;31;08

MARK SALTER:

When you have a really positive experience like that, I'm sure it requires a grandeur that it maybe it didn't have at the time. Running for President is a— there's a lot of stress involved. You're drinking from a fire hose, especially if

you catch fire. I mean, if you're just a guy that never gets anywhere, I guess it's not so stressful. We curiously decided, or he decided that he would run on—well, everybody runs on reform. Every election is a change election when you're not the incumbent and—but he ran on political reforms, but chiefly campaign finance reform, which he'd already been involved in. That's kind of a curious issue to make something up, but people responded to it. And mostly, they responded to his accessible style.

02;15;34;08

MARK SALTER:

He—he—all the traits of his personality, they'd been hallmarks of his Senate career to date, his open access to the press, to the public, his industry. I'll just outrun these guys. It was the only response he could think of to ya know, a guy who had all the endorsements, had built a very effective, very large, very comprehensive, and extremely well-funded campaign, and was not going to abide by spending limits because he wasn't going to take the public money. I think he was going to—in the primaries so he could overwhelm everybody with endorsements, and money, and ads, and all the things money buys was for McCain to just work harder, and be more accessible, and try to—try to catch fire.

02;16;32;16

MARK SALTER:

And so we had this strategy of, when he was nowhere in the polls, of just talking to everybody in New Hampshire. Iowa was much more money intensive and much more—it's much more of an organization game in Iowa because it's the caucus. I'm from Iowa. It's a decidedly un-Iowan thing to do to go into somebody's school basement and get yelled at by strangers or something. It's just un-Iowan, so very few people do it in Iowa. It's the secret of the Iowa Caucus's heart that a tiny, tiny percentage of Iowans actually participate, and it's very labor intensive. And we didn't have the resources to do Iowa, so we were going to start in New Hampshire. And he was going to essentially do it by talking to every single voter in the Granite State.

02;17;24;07

MARK SALTER:

So he had these town halls everywhere where he took any questions, and they let them go for as long as people wanted to ask him questions. He's got a

quick and wicked sense of humor, and he would have them laugh. He would go through his stock sort of boarish built jokes that he's retelling for decades now, and get everybody jolly, and take on all comers. They started to get bigger, and bigger, and bigger. I mean, the first book came out, it was unexpectedly successful. So, he was showing up for book signings when he knew something was happening that were—you know, there would be a thousand people or something and lined up to get a book signed.

02;18;14;08

MARK SALTER:

And in the—as predict—ya know, the town halls just started getting bigger and more colorful, there are all these—New Hampshire's got—they're there every four years, these cast of characters that wear boots on their heads, and do funny things, and dress in costumes. And he would pull them up on the stage, and the more and more press because he was rolling around. And when we weren't doing a town hall, we were on a bus talking to every reporter that had a question for him, because we needed all the earned media we could get because we didn't have a lot of money to buy a lot of ads.

02;18;52;06

MARK SALTER:

So, we had these sort of rolling hours long press conferences all day long. Eventually, we'd have a second and third bus where we'd rotate shifts or reporters on. We were getting a lot of coverage, and that was drawing crowds to the town halls and they were getting bigger, and bigger, and bigger and spilling out into the streets. You could just sense something was happening. You know? I think they're consummate professionals over there in the Bush Campaign, and they know what they're doing. And I imagine their thinking was, "Yeah, he's catching some fire in New Hampshire, but we'll win Iowa and that'll settle that shit down and we'll roll into New Hampshire a week later," whatever it was, two weeks later, I don't remember now, you know, "We'll put him away."

02;19;42;00

MARK SALTER:

It was too late. He won Iowa handily. I don't know where we place in Iowa, but we put nothing into it. And nobody penalized us for it because we were open about it; we're not playing in Iowa. We're going to start this fight in

New Hampshire. And I remember the night before, the last event we did was—probably ended at about eight o'clock at night or something, seven o'clock at night maybe, in Bedford, New Hampshire. And we did at the town hall there, and I stepped out of the town hall and the cement staircase that leads down to the street. And the streets were filled with people. New Hampshire is a tiny state, you know, I mean population wise, you know and we were like, everybody—It looked to me like everybody within 50 miles was standing out there in the cold. Couldn't get into the thing, but it was just the street—you couldn't drive on the street or anything. It was just crazy. I go, "Wow."

02;20;48;12

MARK SALTER:

And we were getting our polling was telling us we were going to win, but we weren't getting the number as it actually turned out to be. When we got the exit polls the next day, I just remember I was with John Weaver, I think, and I can't remember the reporter that gave it to us, but all of a sudden we're getting calls. We had cellphones then, but they more rudimentary than they are today and you couldn't get online with them or anything. We were getting calls, and we got the exit polls and it was like a 20-point lead. We were like, "Wow." I said, "Well, I better write a victory speech." So, I had one in mind. So I quickly dash it out, and I took it up to him—No, no, I had already written the speech. We had already decided we were going to win, so I had written it. That's right.

02;21;55;23

MARK SALTER:

I had written the speech, and I went upstairs to give him the exit polls to his suite. We were in Nashua, New Hampshire at the Crown Plaza. He was in the bedroom rehearsing his speech. I said, "I got the exit polls," and he said, "What are they?" And I said, "You're going to win." He goes, "Yeah? How much?" I said, "You're going to clobber." "Well, that has implications." I said, "Yeah, like you could be President. It has that implication." Ya know, he laughed, and then—but typical for McCain. That would have been a great night to just drink yourself blind in Nashua, New Hampshire, have a good time. It was a lot of hard work to get there, the hardest worker being the candidate, and celebrate. We got on a plane to do a midnight rally in South Carolina, because he'd gotten there by outworking his opponent. He was only

going to keep winning, in his mind, if he could outwork him. So, we hugged each other, and everybody got on the airplane and showed up bleary eyed in some—I don't know, it was Greenville or somewhere in South Carolina for a rally with a bunch of college kids.

02;23;29;18

TITLE

McCain tried to run a clean campaign in 2000

02;23;33;15

MARK SALTER:

Yeah. We did. We didn't want to run any negative ads. We didn't have that much money for ads anyway. We had a personality sell, which was more effective to us than running negative campaigns. I assume they ran some against us in New Hampshire, but I don't remember them being overly rough or copious either.

02;23;58;18

TITLE

South Carolina in the 2000 primaries

02;24;03;06

MARK SALTER:

It was entirely—they went all negative in a million ways, which is—you know, I mean, that's right in the campaign playbook. You know? Okay, well this guy had a free ride, free ride over. You know? They had the resources, and they had support from some sort of political evangelicals, Falwell, and Pat Robertson, and others who were very influential and active Christian Coalition, in South Carolina Republican Primaries and they had a lot of other Republican interest groups and grassroots stuff. They had a ton of money. So, all Presidential campaigns, once you're serious, once you're seriously in the running or something, it's all drinking from a fire hose and that was really—it was like, "Wow." He just couldn't turn on a radio or TV, I mean, it was just one damn thing after another. And then there was all this kind of under the

table—or sub rosa stuff, or the phone calls and stuff that were libelous and nasty and cruel at some point. Politics is not the most gentle of professions.

02;25;26;20

TITLE

South Carolina in the 2000 primaries and the attack ads about McCain's adopted daughter

02;25;31;14

MARK SALTER:

Yeah, you never knew. Ultimately, you know, if people are doing things for you, you're ultimately responsible for them, but this was most likely just "let a thousand flowers bloom." Everybody go out there and get after the guy and some related—some person or related interest group, or political committee of some kind, were making a lot of phone calls and, "Would you still vote for Mc-" and called "push-polls," where they sort of push—push-polls are okay if you're just sort of message testing, you know? You know? Right? Giving the respondent information that might affect their initial opinion of a candidate.

02;26;15;16

MARK SALTER:

But these were just to disseminate false—just lies about him and John and Cindy had adopted, from one of Mother Teresa's orphanages in Bangladesh, a baby daughter who was Bangladeshi—Bengali. A person of color. One of the people were getting calls were saying that she was his illegitimate daughter from a relationship with an African American prostitute. Now I'm not—I don't think George Bush or Carl Rove ordered that done or anything, it was just some—South Carolina plays a particularly rough brand of politics and they're not—you know, they're—they don't have any problem hitting below the belt or being dishonest. Some people there. Not everybody, a lot of good people down there, but—

02;27;26;15

TITLE

The Confederate Flag issue in the 2000 South Carolina presidential primaries

02;27;31;15

MARK SALTER:

I think we were doing Face the Nation or something and he got asked about the confederate flag and he said something like, "We've got to take it down," or something. Or "It could be a symbol of division," or "It's a racist symbol to some," I can't remember exactly how he worded it, but it at least implied that he was for removing it from the state capitol, which at the time was becoming a rather prominent local issue, state-wide issue.

02;28;01;11

MARK SALTER:

I think it was Weaver, ya know, immediately heard from our campaign people, they're like, "God, that's going to cost him the primary," or something. "You've got to get him to walk it back." So, we knew we could—or, we didn't trust him to walk it back, so it wasn't me, I can't remember who wrote it, but somebody wrote out a statement for him. And I convinced him, along with Weaver, and I think Rick, and others, he had to read this, you know, or put out the statement. Or I think we just put him in front of a camera with somebody who was covering us and said, "Read this." So, he did. He argued with it, was angry about it, and crumpled it up at one point, and stuffed it in his pocket.

02;28;44;11

MARK SALTER:

But we eventually, you know, "Okay, you've got to read this." And it wasn't a "No, no, let it fly." But it was just sort of a wishy-washy, "Oh, ya know, I think the people of South Carolina can decide for themselves." Or some—I can't remember, some **(Expletive)** we strung together that we thought would take a little of the edge off of it. He made the show of pulling out this—it's almost like he was blanking torch, or in morse code, pulling out this crumpled piece of paper and then reading it in a kind of stilted, wooden, uninflected, it just ... You know. To take it to us, you know? "Okay, here, you **(Expletive)** for making me do this." And it just bugged him.

02;29;35;15

MARK SALTER:

And we thought, "Oh God, any time they ask him this question again, it's gonna—he'll—ya know, he'll just revert or what's going to happen?" People would ask him and he'd sort of bump around it and stuff, but almost nonsense would come out of his mouth. You know, it wasn't—and anyway, when eventually the whole thing was over and he had withdrawn from the race, after Super Tuesday, some months down the road, or a couple of months down the road, I guess, we had a meeting. I think the first day back in Washington, back to the senate. He called us all in and said, "Look, I want you to schedule—I want to go to South Carolina at the earliest break in my schedule and I want you to find me somewhere to speak. I want to apologize for that crap I said about that flag." It was the first order of business. "Okay."

02;30;37;14

TITLE

The staff and size of the 2008 campaign

02;30;42;12

MARK SALTER:

Yeah, well the campaign started out in 2008. He was the presumed front-runner. We sort of built a front runner's big battleship of a campaign.

02;30;56;00

MARK SALTER:

Anyway, we had hundreds of people on the payroll, probably, or somewhere north of a hundred. You know, we weren't raising enough money to keep it going. He was very unhappy with that. So, he wanted the campaign stripped down to its essential element. Some people were let go involuntarily and some people, including John Weaver, who was the strategist for the campaign, left of his own accord after that.

02;31;36;14

MARK SALTER:

It was—there were some personality clashes involved and unpleasantness, which seems to affect the front runner's campaigns more than they do the scrappy underdog campaigns, because you can't really afford to be pissed at your allies. You know? There's just a handful of you. But this time it was not a

campaign he was comfortable in, not a role he was comfortable in. He was upset about the size of it and the spending and the inability to—we were sort of spending everything that came in. So it got downsized in July and then it was down to—Rick resumed from—he had been the campaign chairman, became the campaign manager.

02;32;23;02

MARK SALTER:

Steve Schmidt was brought on as kind of the strategist and ya know, kind of the superintendent of all the communications aspects of the campaign. Fred Davis became the media guy. Bill McInturff was the pollster, and I was kind of the writer and ya know, I functioned—I traveled with him. I sort of split the traveling for—I did most of it for a while and then Nicole Wallace came onboard and she would go out for a week and then I'd go out for a week with him, but you would just kind of stay with the Senator and did the writing and did you know, kind of the guy on the plane type of consultant.

02;33;06;08

TITLE

The changed relationship between McCain and the press in 2008

02;33;11;07

MARK SALTER:

I—well, I mean, I've got theories about why it went the other way. I think you know—I think most reporters of my acquaintance are decidedly not conservatives. There are few, but not many. They are more closer to being liberals than conservatives. Some of them are sort of centrists. Not fringy or anything, but I think most of them are, I think that's, to pretend otherwise is just foolish. But nevertheless, they appreciate character and accessibility and honesty and candor. I think they like McCain. They definitely liked him in 2000. I think we definitely benefited from that. We got a lot of coverage when we were at 5% in the polls that most guys at 5% in the polls would never have gotten. That helps us because we didn't have the money to buy attention.

02;34;14;04

MARK SALTER:

Ya know—and—and there—the nature of that campaign was different. I had more than one reporter who'd been around, a political reporter who'd been around for a long time. Compare that campaign to Bobby Kennedy's, what it was like to Bobby Kennedy in 1968. Even, some of them say, except with more access than Kennedy gave us. But it was personality-driven and professionally-driven to the extent that here's a politician who's answering our questions in what appears to be, even if he's not right, in his view, openly and honestly without artifice and is entertaining as well.

02;35;00;20

MARK SALTER:

I think for a lot of Americans, including most of the press corps, looked at Barack Obama certainly in the primaries as an enormous leap forward for civil rights in this country, for the solving the sort of original sin, the racism that's marred our history. They looked at it as extraordinarily talented, eloquent speaker, Lincoln-esque, as they would often assert. Ya know, intelligent, reasoned guy that had enormous appeal with people that typically wouldn't vote for a very liberal presidential candidate. They wanted him to win. I don't think it's any more complicated than that. They wanted him to win. They put their thumb on the scale for him in the primaries, and they put the thumb on the scale for him in the general.

02;36;13;09

MARK SALTER:

We were out there doing everything we could to sort of show, "Hey, this is a different kind of Republican." You don't want to carve up just a bare minimum, turn out his base with whatever, and just barely get over. When the Democrats were still having a live primary and Romney had gotten out, McCain was the presumptive Republican nominee, we were going to the black belt of Alabama. We were going to the little town in Kentucky where LBJ announced the war on poverty. We were doing all these events trying to show ... We were giving big climate change speeches. We even disastrously decided to turn everything green at one of them, and it looked like hell on TV. All we heard about it from the press was, "My God. What are you idiots doing?"

02;36;57;22

MARK SALTER:

And they—they paid virtually no attention to it. Any of it. Any of it. It was a change election. The country was deeply unhappy. Barack Obama was the biggest change on offer. On the face of it. On the face of it. So that was sort of, you know, pissed me off at the time, but I get it. I get it, you know? And I think McCain didn't much like it at the time, but what are you going to do about it, you know? That was just a fact.

02;37;30;10

TITLE

Refuting the criticism that McCain was more negative towards Obama than he was with Bush in 2000

02;37;37;03

MARK SALTER:

Sometime, go look—go back and look at the Democratic Convention in Denver that year. People who are friends of his, close friends of him, all the speeches were attacks on McCain, all of them. McCain barely mentioned Obama in his speech, including Obama's. Barely mentioned him. And most of the mentions were rather flattering. We were getting ads and stuff. We had started out, both of them had said, "Well, you know, let's ... " Well, first, there was the campaign finance decision. Both had pledged to take public money and abide by the limits. Right off the bat, Obama said, "Nope. Changed my mind."

02;38;25;05

MARK SALTER:

I get it. I mean they had tons more money than we had. They didn't want to surrender that extremely important advantage. They're professionals. Their job, campaign staff and candidate, is to win the election. I'm sure they did it in a way with all the hope and change stuff, and all that very positive stuff that they thought was going to help lead to making this a better country. I get that too. But they were going to throw every punch they possibly could to make sure McCain never got any, "Hey, this is a different kind of candidate too." Ya know?

02;38;58;01

MARK SALTER:

So we had proposed and they had agreed I think at one point or said notionally or they had said, "Oh, yes. If McCain's a nominee, I respect him, and if Obama or Clinton," whichever was the nominee, I'd like to— McCain said, "I'd like to travel on the same plane, and we'll just go to town, do town hall debates, all across the country." That's what Kennedy and Goldwater were going to do. "Let's do that. It'd be great for the country." But that would've given McCain the imprimatur of change too.

02;39;23;23

MARK SALTER:

So all of they had sort of—oh, yeah, it sounds like a swell idea once upon a time. When it came time to doing it, they agreed to do one on the Fourth of July, on the afternoon of the Fourth of July, and I can't remember where it was. And there would be no arriving on the same plane or anything like that. There'd be none of that because that would've been—it would've looked to voters like, "Wow. This is a different"—ya know, and, "Look at this guy." This guy—ya know—they were telling us who was this garden-variety conservative or something. Look how easygoing he is in a town hall. Look how funny he is. Look how sincere he is. I get it. I wouldn't have done it either if I were them, I suppose. But those were all things he proposed and tried to do, and all these things and all we ever heard was every time some **(Expletive)** in a rally called Obama a terrorist or whatever, a terrible name, we heard about every one of those. Every one of those.

02;40;24;03

MARK SALTER:

At one point, a man he deeply admired and wrote about in one or the two of his books, John Lewis, compared his campaign to the people who killed three little girls, black girls in a church. Ya know, very late in the campaign, right before a debate. It was deeply hurtful. Deeply. Wrong, just wrong. Every time you hear something, you hardly hear. He hears roaring when you're up there. They're not town halls anymore. There's these giant rallies, you know. When you're the—you know, the general election—when you're the nominee and it's the general election, but every time he heard something, he was, long

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before—they caught it on tape, but I'll give you a prime example of the way a lot of the press put their thumb on the scale.

02;41;24;11

MARK SALTER:

So many times, he had corrected somebody for saying something wrong or alleging something, but for some reason, the one in suburban Minneapolis caught everybody's attention when the woman said he's an Arab or whatever, and he said, "No, mam. He's a decent family man and a good citizen, and I just have some differences with him, and that's what this election's all about." but took the microphone from her. Everybody remembers it. I'm sure it's in your film somewhere. The next morning, I got my Blackberry. I'm getting on the plane. I'm looking at the clips. Here's the New York Times account of it.

02;42;04;07

MARK SALTER:

It says something to the effect of "This woman called Obama an Arab, and McCain did not disagree" or something like that or other. Because he did not explicitly say, "No, he is not an Arab," that whole response to her, which anybody that saw it, knew it was a rebuke to her. The New York Times said he didn't disabuse her of it or disagree or whatever. So I went charging back to the New York Times reporter, who I liked, and blew up in the back of the plane. And all the other reporters got up. "Whoa, you don't know what happened. Settle down." I said, "Yeah, I'm done." I mean it's like just, he won't even report what ya saw.

02;42;58;13

MARK SALTER:

And that reporter, I'm not going to—came up to me and showed me her original copy where she said "Yes, he did," and exactly what he said, and how he had rebuked her for it. Her editors had taken it out. Yeah, so yeah. I mean, I'm not saying we ran a perfect campaign and we didn't make mistakes or we deserved to win and we didn't win, I'm not saying any of those things. I have my views on them, but you know. The thing was, Obama didn't even need the help. Okay? Once Lehman brothers went down there was hardly anything we could possibly do to win. It was a terrible, toxic environment for anybody that had an "R" next to their name. They didn't need to do it. He had been

honest and candid and straight forward with them his entire career. I get the appeal, I get it, I don't even begrudge it, but they did not have to treat him unfairly.

02;44;02;19

TITLE

On choosing the VP in 2008

02;44;07;10

MARK SALTER:

Well, shortly after Governor Romney left the race we sort of ... Working with him we came up with a sort of large pool of candidates that would then get whittled down. We'd do sort of a public document vet, but nothing more than that. And I think Sarah Palin was actually in that larger group, but then it got down to the half a dozen or so that were going to be under very serious consideration. They started getting a more thorough vet. You know, staff was polling what would each do for you, what wouldn't do for you, and at some point in the summer, early in the summer I think, well before the convention, but not that far from it, he decided that he wanted to do something different. He wanted to put on his ticket a democrat, or someone who had served most of his time in public office as a democrat. Joe—his friend, Joe Lieberman.

02;45;24;05

MARK SALTER:

Who had been, as everyone knows, the vice presidential nominee on a democratic ticket in 2000. And he thought that was on—they had their disagreements on domestic issues, but then on national security issues they were in agreement. Most everybody also thought it would be—he respected him, Senator Lieberman, a lot and was close to him, and thought, "I want somebody I trust in that job." We didn't—staff didn't argue with him at the outset, but we did due diligence, you know, Rick and everybody did due diligence and eventually concluded that the convention would erupt over it. That there were too many issues that were important to too many people that Senator Lieberman was on the other side of, and that you know, there

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weren't going to be any democrats nominated by a republican convention—national convention. And that there would be a challenge to it, and anyway.

02;46;47;02

MARK SALTER:

He was unhappy with that point of view and resisted it and argued against it and kept maintaining it. Eventually Rick, I think, and others, and me, prevailed on him to—you know, "Hey, you can't start off the general campaign with a convention that rejects your vice presidential choice." Or erupts and half the party is furious with you or something. How are you going to win in November? So, he reluctantly ceded, and unhappily. Then we were getting closer to the convention and no decision had been made. I went to our—we have a place in Maine and I went to Maine for a week to start working on a convention speech, on an acceptance speech. It's obviously a big thing and I needed to concentrate and focus on it. So, I just sort of got off the campaign and had, obviously, daily contact and conference calls, but minimal.

02;48;06;22

MARK SALTER:

At some point in there, Steve Schmidt who had had some business in Alaska or something where he'd been a closer observer of the Governor there than the rest of us, and mentioned to Rick or something Sarah Palin and they started doing some quick—thorough vetting and I don't know, polling or whatever, but they went into—at some point, then, I got a call from John to say, "Come out to Sedona," to his place, and, "we're flying Governor Palin in and I want you and Schmidt to meet with her and if you think I should I'll interview her the next day." So I did. We were up all night. You know, she's ... I thought very impressive person. At that time, I'd sort of decided Governor Pawlenty of Minnesota I liked and thought would be a good campaigner, very conventional, it wouldn't have added or subtracted anything to the polling, to our polling number at the time, but I'd kind of, in my mind, said, "Well, if he asked me who I think he should pick I'm going to tell him Pawlenty."

02;49;25;17

MARK SALTER:

But you know, I mean, Steve and I spent some hours with her and I asked her questions, I didn't know that much about her, but I asked questions that I'd heard; criticism of her. On foreign affairs she was quite candid about it. She said, "I will need to be sort of tutored on a lot of these issues." But most of the questions—I asked her about social issues and stuff, where I expected problems, even on, "Do you believe in evolution," or something like that? She answered in quite an acceptable way. She had a very charming way about her. I did not, at that time, I still thought Pawlenty would be a wise choice. I thought she was too inexperienced. We went through a long session on the phone, then, with the campaign lawyers and A.B. Culvahouse was a guy who would then tell the Senator, when the Senator asked subsequently, for his opinion. Said, "Big risk, big reward." And I got that.

02;50;37;09

MARK SALTER:

She was not chosen because she was ... Because of her position on any particular issue or because she was a more populous conservative. That—we knew that, but it wasn't—She had gotten into politics as a reformer. Remember, everything we were doing was to get some piece of the change message back from Obama. To share some piece of it, because it was a change election. If the other guy had all of that message and nobody was paying attention to the things you were doing, so the fact that she was a woman, and the fact that she had gotten into politics as a Mayor of her little city, by taking on the sort of republican machine, and then as Governor, taking on the oil companies in Alaska, that was the essence of her appeal.

02;51;35;05

MARK SALTER:

I didn't know what kind of public performer she was. But nevertheless Schmidt liked her. I think Rick, may have been agnostic, I don't recall. But the next day we went to John's place near Sedona and he interviewed her for quite some time. Then Steve and I, and he, caucused in a different house on the property. He asked our views and he talked to Culverhouse and he talked to Rick, and he asked our views, and Steve sort of argued for her, and I argued for Pawlenty.

02;52;18;14

MARK SALTER:

I wasn't critical of her, too much, other than I thought you're a national security guy and I made the argument she doesn't have experience in that, really in any, and you'll be criticized for that, and your message so far has been country first, you know, and country first especially when it comes to national security issues, since you ran on supporting the surge and that will not be perceived as country first.

02;52;54;05

MARK SALTER:

You know, he—he heard me out and I made an affirmative case for Pawlenty and the case against Pawlenty was, you know, he doesn't move the needle one way or another, he's perfectly acceptable, but as a political aide, she has the potential to help us more than he does. So, he listened and he liked her, he had a rapport with her and asked her to be on the ticket, she agreed. She's very scrappy and I found myself on a plane headed to Dayton, or a little town outside Dayton, Ohio, where we were going to announce her the next day, which would have been the day after the Democratic Convention was over.

02;53;34;12

MARK SALTER:

And at that event, she walked out and I did not write her speech. Matt Scully, one of the great speech writers, republican speech writers around, did. We brought him up and she went out and gave a bravero—bravura performance. I remember turning to someone and saying, "Wow." You know, wow, and for a minute I thought okay, I get the appeal. Same thing at the convention. Her teleprompter went down and she had a great Scully speech and she delivered it with a verve and people just responded, like—and it wasn't, they weren't responding to a negative, I mean, there were negative, I mean, that's the role, I mean, I can't remember Senator Biden's speech at the convention, I'm sure there were plenty of knocks at his pal John McCain and then there would have been if he were a vice president and, but, it's, you know, campaigns. But—

02;54;41;10

MARK SALTER:

They were responding to her, her, you know, "Look at me. I'm just a mom, but I've done these things." So, for a bit there and of course the polls got very close and in fact I think we might have had a couple of point lead. She did just fine in her debate. We had a couple point lead and then the global credit system collapsed and that was that.

02;55;12;06

TITLE

On Sarah Palin

02;55;16;08

MARK SALTER:

You still get most of the attention, she drew large crowds. Quite often those crowds were larger than the ones that were showing up for us. She was a novelty to be sure and she had a very engaging—he too. You know, she would work every rope line, she was always behind schedule and John has the same intensity to, you know, if they're standing out here, I'll shake their hand. And people respond, especially—she had an infant at the time with Down Syndrome and that had enormous appeal and people were—we hadn't anticipated that.

02;55;56;05

MARK SALTER:

People would show up who had Down children and she was colorful and exuberant and it was not—it is, as I keep referring to it, drinking from a fire hose. There's an enormous amount of stress and if you're inexperienced in national politics as she was, it is hard to get used to. So, there was some wear and tear on her, but as John always put it, she didn't invite herself on this ticket, I asked her to. She did this at my request. I think she frayed a few times and some of it wasn't a pleasant experience for her, I'm sure. It's a tough business and—but, ya know, she did what we asked her to do.

02;56;48;14

TITLE

Election night 2008 and the resilience required in loss

02;56;53;05

MARK SALTER:

So you know, I mean, all day long we were getting warning signals. We went into it after stock market was selling off 800 points a day and I thought he had won a couple of the debates, but we didn't seem to get much out of them. The last couple weeks of the campaign, which is great resilience, you have to be exuberant. You have to be as fired up as you were at the beginning. You know, at every airport rally, every public encounter and you've given essentially the same speech over and over again and doing it until your voice is raw and all this energy into something you know is probably hopeless. That's a special kind of resilience.

02;57;44;04

MARK SALTER:

On the part of the candidate, first and foremost, but everybody flying around. Get up and do your job every day as hard as you can, knowing that everything is, at this point, stacked against you. But, we get to the Biltmore in Phoenix, which is where we were all staying and where he would give his speech that night. As soon as certain precincts started reporting we knew it was over, so I have a superstition about writing two speeches, a victory and a concession, so I wait until I'm pretty sure what's happened before I write them and he's got the same superstition, so it's—we're simpatico in that.

02;58;29;13

MARK SALTER:

So I think I talked to Mike DuHaime in our war room or something and he, "Does not look good." Like around 5:00 or something in Phoenix time, so I went and wrote a concession speech for him, based on the conversation we'd had and what he'd want to say and he'd want to rally the country around the new president, which is essentially what he did. I gave it to him. He read it. He didn't want to make any changes and he went out there and delivered it very well.

02;59;00;00

MARK SALTER:

They were booing and hissing and he cut it off right away at the mention of Obama's name, that happens all the time, but he cut it off right away, got through the thing, heartfelt, sincere, went back to this condo at the Biltmore, which is kind of the holding room for him and the next day he was going to go up north to their place up north, and a few friends were going up there with him, they were going to relax and rest up and then he was going to go right back to the Senate.

02;59;35;08

MARK SALTER:

And Mark Hughes, who was the head of his secret service detail, you have two details and they alternate shifts, like a couple of weeks on and it was Mark Hughes' detail and he went through, even defeated candidates keep their protection, their secret service protection, for some time, a week or two or something like that before they're gone. Mark started walking through, sort of the procedures for the morning and the drive up north and he said something, I'm paraphrasing, but something like, "Mark, I appreciate everything you wonderful guys and girls have done for me and you've been great, it's been a pleasure getting to know you, but you and I are probably never going to see each other—I'd appreciate a ride home tonight."

03;00;16;17

MARK SALTER:

He said, "and then you and I will probably never see each other again." And the next morning, he and Cindy were spotted walking two blocks from their condo building to the nearest Starbucks to get a coffee before they drove up north all by themselves. As he would put it, a free man at last and moved on to the next thing, which I'm sure was Iraq related, because it was still a burning, sort of just still a burning issue. He got back there and probably that day, I think it was the first day back, went down and gave a speech on Iraq and the surge and he just put it behind him.

03;00;57;09

TITLE

On the movie *Game Change*, books and accounts of the 2008 campaign post-election

03;01;02;09

MARK SALTER:

I don't think he's ever watched it. I mean, I think, I read clips about the book or something and there was lots of stuff in the book that some of the stuff happened, but a lot of it didn't or was mischaracterized or exaggerated. So, he wasn't interested in reading—and it—and I don't think he read any sort of accounts, post-election, you know, post-facto accounts of the campaign. I don't think he looked at any of them. It's not his thing. It's, I did it, I tried, I worked as hard as I could, I lost, okay, I got a job, what am I doing tomorrow? It's, what else? So, I don't think he ever went to the movie or saw the—or—it was HBO, I don't think he watched it.

03;01;51;09

TITLE

On McCain's illness, diagnosis and flight back to Washing to vote on the healthcare bill

03;01;57;15

MARK SALTER:

Well, we knew something was—I—we suspected there was som—we were worried something was—he was complaining of being very tired, and he had gotten wrapped around the axle on a question to then FBI director Comey in a hearing. I saw him a couple of times, and Rick had seen him even more times, and he was saying, "I don't feel right. I don't look right." He gets an annual or even a twice annual, I think, check up since he's had melanoma 17 years ago at Mayo in Scottsdale. They added a brain scan to the—which is not something they normally did, I don't think, for his usual routine physicals, but they added an MRI.

03;02;44;23

MARK SALTER:

And he called me and we were worried. Oh, no. No, that's right. I got a call. I can't remember who told me. John got the physical, and he left, and they called him back, and they're operating. They found some blood clot or something on his frontal lobe. He called me—and they operated immediately, like the next day. After the operation, I think he'd left the hospital 36 hours later, if memory serves, because he's just made of titanium, or something. He

called me, and it was weird. What we were worried about, that blood clot might have been a melanoma tumor. They had biopsied it. They had gotten it back, and I said, "How are you feeling?" "Good. Fine." He goes, "Look." He started talking to me. He didn't want to comment. He said at the time, "I think they're going to let me fly back to Washington in a few days. I'm going to spend the weekend up north, and then I'm going to fly back. I think the doctors are going to let me."

03;04;03;00

MARK SALTER:

Well, they weren't agreeing to it at the time, but, "I want to give this speech about the healthcare vote that's coming up. Stop doing this, one side trying to do it all by themselves, and the other side trying to—the only way we're going to—ya know, an issue that affects this many people, we need to do it together. Even if nobody's satisfied by what we produce, we need to do it together. Let's start thinking about it. I'm going to call you this weekend and go over it, and I'm going to go, and I'm going to give this speech." And I said, "Okay. Have they got the results back?"

03;04;41;14

MARK SALTER:

And, "Yeah. It's not great." "Was it melanoma, John?" "It's glioblastoma. I don't know." I didn't even know what it was, so I hung up, and either Cindy emailed me or Cindy emailed Rick, who then—I think Cindy emailed Rick and said, "I don't think John made clear to Mark what this is." And so I think Rick called me or emailed me and said, "glioblastoma. Look it up. It's bad." He just breezed by it like it was nothing and you know, I did. It's what Kennedy had. Obviously, it was a rough diagnosis.

03;05;28;04

MARK SALTER:

And I had planned at the time to go out to the cabin, because we were working on this book. What I ended up doing was flying out there, getting a hotel room in Phoenix, and working on this speech for about 36 hours or something. It's August in Phoenix, like 190 out there. Not typically ... It's nice up where they live, but hotter than hell. Literally, I don't think I went

outdoors the entire ... Once I arrived at the hotel, I just stayed in there in a pair of shorts and wrote the speech or draft. Then they came back down to Phoenix. We took a chartered private aircraft, because he somehow browbeat his doctors into letting him fly. I mean he had an open—it's just ridiculous, you know, that he did it, when you think about it, because he had just had brain surgery. There was literally a hole in his skull that hadn't closed.

03;06;39;05

MARK SALTER:

And on the airplane, he had the stitches over his left eye. That's all you could tell that he had had brain surgery, though. He's animated on the plane, going over the speech. Add this, take that out. Finished it up, walks on the Senate floor to a heartfelt, warm, tender reception. Cast his vote to let the process go forward and gives his speech. I think if not 100, very close to all 100 Senators were in attendance, and did a good job delivering it. And here we are.

03;07;27;22

TITLE

The healthcare speech as one of many legacy moments for McCain

03;07;33;04

MARK SALTER:

As well as all the things that he managed to do as a Senator by working that way himself. Yes. Those will be his legacy issues, whether it's campaign reform or the normalization of relations with Vietnam or the torture debate or all the—I—I don't think people appreciate. The Senate Armed Services Committee, which he chairs and has been ranking member of, produces an authorizing bill for the military that authorizes every dime that's spent in the military and instructs in policy for the military.

03;08;08;02

MARK SALTER:

It's one of the few committees that reports out a bill that gets passed. Every single year, he passes his bill. This day and age, not many committees do. Those things are his legacy. A legacy—he did the people's business, the

country's business, by keeping the nonsense to a minimum and working with adults to make some incremental progress on the problems confronting their country. Yeah. In this day and age, that is a magnificent achievement.

03;08;44;21

TITLE

McCain is a fighter

03;08;49;18

MARK SALTER:

He's a fighter. He fights for everything, but it's not—there's never a fight, or the fight that matters. He's a Republican. He'll go out and campaign for people and goes after their opponents. He can be a tough guy out there, fighting for Republicans and the Republican Party and that kind of stuff, but I think he understands they're a means to an end. At the end is this country and its causes. Do you think have been a great benefit to humanity. That's the important thing you're fighting for. All your fights have to help you do that one way or another.

03;09;44;13

MARK SALTER:

And when we're—when we're—the Republican Party, if it falls under the control of the Freedom Caucus or if the Democratic Party becomes more influenced by its more non-cooperative, more confrontational liberal activists, they're not getting anything done for the country and its causes. They're the no surrender—McCain understands no surrender. He's like the no surrendering all his life, but no cooperation. Nope. We're going to fight them 100% all the time. We're going to do it our way or no way. That has hurt our country. He knows it hurt our country. It impedes our ability to support—to defend our security overseas and our values overseas, which are as important to him as economic interests or anything else we may be protecting abroad. So he'll fight that. He'll fight that.

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END TC: QT: 03;10;53;18