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RICK DAVIS INTERVIEW  
*JOHN MCCAIN: FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS*  
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**RICK DAVIS**  
**Presidential Campaign Director**  
**October 31, 2017**  
Interviewed by Teddy Kunhardt  
**Total Running Time: 1 Hour 38 Minutes**

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

**QT: 01;00;00;00**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Ok, Rick Davis, take one, mark.

**QT: 01;00;08;14**

**TITLE**

The team member that knows McCain best

**QT: 01;00;13;02**

**RICK DAVIS:**

It's really Mark Salter, and I just call him whenever I need to know what's going on with McCain so—[laughs]

**QT: 01;00;18;16**

**TITLE**

Joining McCain's presidential campaign in '98

**QT: 01;00;24;00**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Well he was looking around after winning re-election in 2009, or no, 2008. So John won re-election to the Senate in 2008 and started thinking about

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running for President. A lot of people around him at the time were big supporters of his, they'd been a core team for some time but didn't have much national experience, and so they were looking for somebody who had been around a few presidential elections and so I started getting calls from some of the folks on the McCain team who knew me. I didn't really know McCain that well.

**QT: 01;01;02;10**

**RICK DAVIS:**

I'm sorry, '98, yeah. So anyway, in '98, they started looking around for somebody who had a little bit more presidential experience and I'd been on a number of presidential campaigns since 1980 with Reagan, and so some of my friends who were part of the McCain core group, Greg Stevens for one who was his media consultant called me up, said, "Hey, what do you think of John McCain running for President?" When I got done laughing, I told him, "I think I'm gonna probably be hooking up with somebody else." At that time, I'd just come off of the '96 Dole campaign where I'd been deputy manager and wanted to run my own show and thought that Elizabeth Dole had a shot at being President of the United States.

**QT: 01;01;48;11**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Thought it'd be pretty keen to put a woman up in the Republican party for president and—and so I was running along that trajectory. Everyone knew that George W. Bush would be the guy to beat but the question would be, who would—who'd be the person to challenge him. And I thought Elizabeth had the chops for that. Long story short, over the course of quite some time, Senator McCain and his team did an extraordinarily good job of talking me into joining his team and so when I did, it was flat out from late 1999 all the way through 2000. Boom, we were off to the races of a presidential campaign.

**QT: 01;02;32;12**

**TITLE**

What he liked about McCain

**QT: 01;02;36;20**

**RICK DAVIS:**

I had heard of John's POW experience, I knew him as a congressman. In 1984 I actually ran delegate selection for Reagan's re-election and had to deal with him in Arizona when he was there as a congressman putting the delegation together. He was Bob Dole's best friend, is Bob Dole's best friend and so I dealt with him a little bit when I was helping to run the Dole campaign. He came on in general election and basically was on the plane with Dole for most of the campaign but I didn't really have a personal relationship with him in any way and—and it was really through some of these team members who said, you know, we want you to come in and be our manager.

**QT: 01;03;20;14**

**RICK DAVIS:**

One, to have your colleagues say they want you to be their boss was impressive to me but when I started getting to know Senator McCain, he'd start calling me up on weekends; "Hey, I'm gonna be on Meet the Press this weekend, what do you think I ought to say?" And I was like, "Well, I—you know, don't ask me, I'm not even for you." But he was very open, very easy, and he wanted to do politics a different way. He wanted a different kind of campaign. He didn't want business as usual. He saw the issues with the Dole campaign that I saw, we agreed on that.

**QT: 01;03;50;05**

**RICK DAVIS:**

And I think ultimately, that was what attracted each other to doing the campaign together and that was, we wanted to try something new and different and boy, in 2000 did we ever get it.

**QT: 01;04;02;21**

**TITLE**

The campaign manager's job

**QT: 01;04;07;19**

**RICK DAVIS:**

A campaign manager's a bunch of different jobs, right? There's the job of running the day to day operations of the campaign; making sure that the strategists have the information they need to give the advice so that they can be converted into good tactics whether it's the schedule or the media or the ground game, political ground game, and the manager has to make all of that seamlessly work together and at the same time make sure you have enough money that's getting raised and controls on the money being spent. So, you're—you're—you're a multi-headed beast as a campaign manager. But that doesn't fulfill really the job requirements.

**QT: 01;04;45;10**

**RICK DAVIS:**

One of the other jobs that a campaign manager has, especially in an intensely personal campaign like a presidential campaign is dealing with the family. Nobody's family is used to a presidential campaign and yet they're all thrust into it. And so I would say probably the most rewarding experience that I've had over all this period of time is getting to know the McCain family, getting to know John's wife, Cindy and the kids because they all play an integral role in the campaign and the life of the candidate which is intersecting with a campaign, sometimes at logger heads, sometimes very seamlessly, but at the end of the day, the family matters.

**QT: 01;05;25;07**

**TITLE**

Working with McCain

**QT: 01;05;31;04**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Really, starting the day in early 1999 when I agreed to be the campaign manager for his 2000 election, we've talked every day. And that's a long period of time to be talking every day and probably in most of that period of time, multiple times a day so just the constant contact is indicative of the relationship. But what's really amazing is the constant stream of ideas and issues and information that flows in between. A lot of times, candidates will call you, "Hey what's going on, what do the numbers say today?" And they get

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satisfied, they get checked in and they're off to the races doing their job, pressing the flesh, talking to reporters, doing campaign activity.

**QT: 01;06;16;14**

**RICK DAVIS:**

John is one of the most intellectually curious people I know. He'd want to know the details of what do I think is happening in the media? How do we think this is gonna play in various states? What are the leadership in those states reacting to our most recent proposals? And even if it's not in a campaign period, what do you think is gonna happen with the new administration and how we react to it on defense issues?

**QT: 01;06;37;23**

**RICK DAVIS:**

I don't know anything about defense issues but it would never hesitate John to ask because I think he wants to know as much as he can from people he trusts and even if they're not experts on certain subject matter, he wants to hear your views and he's never in a single instance that I can recall in all that period of time, ever argued with me over an issue that you know, we were just discussing. It was just a matter of, he needed that information, he doesn't taint it in any way, he just takes it in and fleshes around, I don't know where it goes after that but he would never hesitate to ask.

**QT: 01;07;14;15**

**TITLE**

McCain's intellectual curiosity

**QT: 01;07;19;03**

**RICK DAVIS:**

That has not changed. I mean look, I think that's the hallmark of many great men, public officials of every stripe, is their interest in learning something new every day and I think John, he's a well-read man, he digs in on the issues, he shows up in the office every morning early to read four or five papers, he is an incredibly well read individual and that's just the beginning of his day

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and then he spends the rest of his day talking to experts and practitioners and friends and acquaintances and even people on the street. I mean, anybody's views are welcome to him and how he mixes those up and comes out with the policy prescriptions and the views he has is really uniquely McCain.

**QT: 01;08;07;06**

**TITLE**

McCain's personality

**QT: 01;08;11;10**

**RICK DAVIS:**

He's got the greatest sense of humor the first time you meet him, and then after you've heard those jokes 25 times, his sense of humor tends to wane a little bit. No, he loves a good time. He is someone who likes to relax. There's a lot of tension in his job as a Senator, an enormous amount of pressure and tension when he runs for president or reelection and he knows better than anyone. He's got to cut that tension somehow and essentially humor is always the way to it.

**QT: 01;08;40;02**

**RICK DAVIS:**

I remember, it's now Halloween day and Halloween in 2008 for the elections, we were in a debate and Lindsey Graham shows up at dinner right before the debate with a John McCain Halloween mask on and I mean the whole dinner, you could—you could cut the pressure going into that dinner; it was a big debate, it was one of the national scale outings, John was tight we were all tight, it was a must do, gotta declare victory tonight and Lindsey Graham walks in with a Halloween mask on and all of a sudden, all that just melted away.

**QT: 01;09;19;13**

**RICK DAVIS:**

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John was able to laugh, enjoy himself, and that's the hallmark I think, of someone who really understand their place, right? They don't take it too seriously, it's an amazingly important task to do things like run of president, be a united states Senator, but that task can pale compared to the needs of people just to be able to enjoy themselves.

**QT: 01;09;41;22**

**TITLE**

McCain and sports

**QT: 01;09;46;02**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Football. He's a sporting nut. I mean nobody has more detailed knowledge of every sporting event you can imagine than John McCain and he becomes immersed in them. He knows an enormous amount about boxing, I would say that's probably the sport of his passion but he loves football, baseball, basketball. The only sport he refuses to watch on television is golf 'cause he says it's just not enough action. Sorry all you golfers, but you know, John McCain is not watching you every Sunday afternoon.

**QT: 01;10;15;07**

**TITLE**

On gaining public trust

**QT: 01;10;20;04**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Well it comes at great cost. Trust is not something that's easily earned. In 1999 when we sat down to talk about what kind of campaign would be different to run for president, one of the things that was a hallmark of that was let's just tell the truth. Let's have a conversation with voters where we don't try to spin them, and in those days, spinning was the phrase that was so popular amongst political operatives. You know, you gotta put some spin on it. We actually had t-shirts that say, "Spinning is lying." And that's true today.

What John McCain wanted to do is have a straight conversation with voters and that's where the straight talk campaign came out of.

**QT: 01;11;04;03**

**RICK DAVIS:**

That we weren't gonna rose—rosy coat anything, there was never gonna be a day where we could get away with spin, and the only bad periods of the campaign was when we did something out of political expediency rather than just telling the truth and that's how you build trust. It's a dangerous high wire act where you don't know how voters are gonna react to it but if you stick to it, and you make that a standard with which you have a conversation with voters on, then everybody's gonna come around sooner or later and say, "You know what, I disagree with what he says from time to time but I trust that what he's telling is the truth."

**QT: 01;11;41;22**

**TITLE**

The personal and political perils of running for president and the potential reward

**QT: 01;11;47;00**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Planning a presidential campaign is a pretty personal thing. One, you gotta decide that you're willing to take the risks. It doesn't always work out well for people. In fact, it only works out well for one person per party. The others who lose tend to lose a lot in their political life cycle, right? The political graveyard is stock full of candidates who thought, "I can't lose a thing by running for president." And then they're gone. So, it's a high-risk discussion. It has all kinds of political perils, what if I don't perform well?

**QT: 01;12;26;04**

**RICK DAVIS:**

What if I screw up a debate? What if I don't get votes? It has a lot of physical peril. It's an enormous task physically to get up every morning at the crack of dawn and do the early morning TV shows, to get on a plane, fly around to



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these little towns, press the flesh all day long and then go to a fundraiser that night and then start making calls into the next state or get on a plane and fly there so you're there first thing in the morning.

**QT: 01;12;49;15**

**RICK DAVIS:**

So it takes an enormous time out of your life, the time commitment means time away from your job, time away from your family, time away from the things you love to do. Not that you don't love to run for president, but it's not exactly in the top ten. And so when you start talking about it, you start talking about all those things, you start talking about the toll it'll take on the family, what role the family will play in the campaign. What do you want to say, right? Nobody runs for president unless they actually want to be president and also want to accomplish something. So you talk about what is it that you want to accomplish? What's the impact you want to have?

**QT: 01;13;28;17**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Why do this? Put yourself through all this, raise all this money, make all these commitments to people if you don't know what the outcome's gonna be. So you want to have all that loaded into the chamber before you fire that gun and John's very good at that. I mean he's always had, I think, a desire to use power to improve people's lives. That's what elections give you. If you're successful, you get power. And with power, you can create change. And even though we lost in the primaries in 2000, John McCain went from a guy who nobody really knew other than, "There might be this guy called McCain who's a Senator from Arizona."

**QT: 01;14;04;17**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Or, "Isn't he the guy who was a former POW?" Very low name ID to after the primary, which was wildly successful in creating power but unsuccessful in winning the nomination, he was able to go back to the United States Senate a much more powerful individual than when he started that campaign and was able to accomplish great things, like campaign finance reform and other things. Ya know, even though you lose, you can lose in a way that gives you more power to accomplish the things you still want to do.

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**QT: 01;14;37;04**

**TITLE**

McCain's message in his 2000 presidential bid

**QT: 01;14;42;15**

**RICK DAVIS:**

In 1999, much like today, there was a need to reform government. We've spent a lot of time not getting things done as a federal government. We had problems with Medicaid and Medicare and social security as far as funding. The defense establishment, although built up over Bush, had gone through Gulf wars and other things that had weakened them. So there was a desire to create a stronger, more nimble, more flexible military. And remember this is all pre-911, so the world was a different place than we know today since then and I would say too, create a different discourse.

**QT: 01;15;27;08**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Even in 1999, people were talking about polarization, you know, and that we can't get anything done and that you know, it's very hard to get bipartisan legislation passed or ya know, reach across the aisle. This gulf was getting bigger and bigger and we have to stop it. So the campaign that he ran was much like the administration that he would've overseen and that was a reformer campaign. The ideas was, how do we reform Government?

**QT: 01;15;53;22**

**RICK DAVIS:**

So our number one campaign theme was campaign finance reform. There's too much money washing around in politics, the million dollar cheque was able to be written in those days and we thought unless you took that money out, you were never gonna get a true political system were bipartisanship could flourish. Two, the entitlements. We—we—one of the number one issues that we campaigned on in 2000 was on reforming social security. Since then, nothing has been done on social security but it was one of the hallmarks of our campaign, that social security needed to be updated and repaired in order for all those commitments to be able to be sustained over time.

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**QT: 01;16;34;08**

**RICK DAVIS:**

So these kinds of things were very popular at the time. We'd seen other campaigns do well on issues related to social security, we knew it was a risk. No republican likes talking about changing entitlements. But our whole campaigns wasn't about being a republican, it was about being honest with voters about what needed to change.

**QT: 01;16;54;03**

**TITLE**

The 2000 presidential primary field

**QT: 01;16;59;14**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Well in the run up to the 2000 campaign, there were lots of candidates. I think around nine, and they included a lot of really important people. Elizabeth Dole who had been a cabinet secretary and a wife of a presidential candidate nominee of the party, well known big contributors list. Lamar Alexander, run before, had a lot of track record, and knew people in Iowa, New Hampshire, Florida, all these places that were important. Folks like that were—were everywhere and one, Phil Graham, no, Phil wasn't in that race, that was 96 sorry about that. No Phil Graham in that campaign, but many others.

**QT: 01;17;38;01**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Dan Quayle, I think had a cameo appearance in the 2000 primary field and I would say John McCain was probably the least known of any of those candidates. Everyone else had a national name ID, had either run for president or been part of presidential campaigns and nobody really knew who John McCain was and of course the one person that sort of stood over top of that entire field was George W Bush, right? The son, Governor of Texas, son of the president, the president was still very popular, George H.W. Bush and so he came into the campaign late.

**QT: 01;18;15;09**

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**RICK DAVIS:**

So for many, many months, it was this field of nine people trying to jockey for position. Our view was just ignore the field, alright? Ya know, there wasn't much we could do to influence the outcome of all those people. What were we gonna do to get John McCain better known? And we did something that was quite unique. We took a poll in New Hampshire and we asked people about John McCain, nobody really knew who he was.

**QT: 01;18;39;14**

**RICK DAVIS:**

But then we talked about his bio and we used his bio and a number of other bios of other candidates running and said, "If you had to choose between the bios of these people," and we took them all off of their material, it wasn't like we cooked the books and we really wanted to see whether or not his bio was something that voters would react to and all of a sudden we realized we found gold. That people reacted incredibly well to that. His reform message, his history, his commitment to our country as you know, a pilot in Vietnam shot down, a POW and then went right into the politics of business, the business of politics, right away was something that people really liked and that reform message was very powerful.

**QT: 01;19;28;17**

**RICK DAVIS:**

So our strategy was ignore the rest of the field and put our head down, and start selling John McCain. Ultimately, we were able to catch fire at the very end of the campaign, that was the strategy. We didn't have enough money to be popular early, we couldn't have supported it and literally, the whole idea was just win in New Hampshire, or do extremely well there and start the campaign basically from there. And that's exactly what we did. We ignored Iowa, the first primary caucus in the nation. Everyone says, "You can't do anything unless you go to Iowa." We knew that John's bio and his reform message and his background wasn't the perfect match for Iowa, certainly not for the caucuses, which is a real organizational exercise and we didn't have enough campaign staff to organize a state. And so we just didn't go.

**QT: 01;20;24;05**

**RICK DAVIS:**

The only time John set foot in Iowa in 2000 was for the debates. We thought we'd take advantage of those 'cause they were national events and we said, "We'll meet you all New Hampshire." And what happened is the rest of the field ground themselves in New Ham—in Iowa, they weren't able to really catch fire and it was a real mixed bag, and there was this guy named Huckabee that came out of nowhere and was able to give George W. Bush a real run in Iowa and cause all kinds of commotion at the top of the ticket and we were ready in New Hampshire the next day.

**QT: 01;21;01;18**

**RICK DAVIS:**

We entered into a new campaign and by the time people started voting in New Hampshire, John McCain had a historic 19-point win and it was exactly what the strategy was all about. We had no idea we'd get to 19 points as a margin of victory, but we took it and flew south to South Carolina for a three week, bruising South Carolina campaign.

**QT: 01;21;26;04**

**TITLE**

On Bill McInturff and the poll numbers in 2000

**QT: 01;21;30;15**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Bill McInturff is an inveterate liar; as a pollster it's a requirement for the job, you know. They make these numbers up. Bill had been a long time campaign operative for McCain long before almost anyone else. I think he even polled for John's first congressional campaign, so he knew the guy well. And he knew he didn't like good news. And frankly, we weren't used to good news in a campaign that had never seen a single national poll that had John McCain anywhere but rock bottom and so when we started getting movement in New Hampshire in you know, November and December of '99 we thought, "Wow this is the plan but we really didn't know whether it would work or not." And I think McInturff had to constantly second guess his own methodology because what if he's polling the wrong people? What if the mix is different? What if it's not the right turn out model?

**QT: 01;22;30;19**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Ya know, Bill's very nervous about his number because so many people make decisions like me over how much to spend, where to go, what to do, based on where his numbers are and I think the pressure knowing it was a one state strategy and those numbers in New Hampshire were everything, really crippled a lot of people. We were very nervous about whether we were making this bet right and I remember even on election day in New Hampshire Bill didn't want to take to anybody, he didn't want to see anybody, he didn't want to talk about the overnight polling because at the end of the day, the numbers he was getting were incredibly positive, nobody in their wildest imaginations would've said that John McCain was gonna cruise to a 19-point win and sure enough, his data and the outcome were pretty consistent.

**QT: 01;23;22;23**

**TITLE**

McInturff's concern over the polling and campaign strategy going into South Carolina

**QT: 01;23;27;18**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Yeah, I think fetal position in his bedroom in the hotel while everyone was celebrating and that's right. We were easily five, ten points down going into the New Hampshire campaign in South Carolina but I did an interview with Karl Rove, the day before the New Hampshire primary and I said, "We're gonna beat you in New Hampshire. And I bet you a steak dinner that within 24 hours, we're winning in South Carolina." Cause our whole strategy was that we were betting on the fact that momentum mattered more than the polling data.

**QT: 01;23;59;09**

**RICK DAVIS:**

That if you could beat a sitting son of a president who had been, up until this point in time, already anointed the Republican nominee, I mean nobody was supposed to beat George W. Bush, that if you could actually beat him in a state that it could create an enormous backlash and create enormous

momentum for us in any future state. We didn't spend hardly a dollar in South Carolina until the day after the New Hampshire primary and it's exactly what happened. Within two days after getting to South Carolina, we were already five points up in the surveys and so that margin of deficit disappeared literally when people counted the votes in New Hampshire.

**QT: 01;24;47;12**

**TITLE**

The campaign in South Carolina in 2000

**QT: 01;24;51;20**

**RICK DAVIS:**

South Carolina was a three-week campaign. So the schedule in those days was you left New Hampshire and you had three weeks to campaign in South Carolina and it was pretty much the only thing going on. And so we go down and we start campaigning door to door in South Carolina, I mean it was a real retail campaign but by now, two things had changed dramatically. One, the crowds were enormous right? John McCain would roll into Columbia, South Carolina and 5000 people would show up in an event that we thought 500 people would show up. So we had a different ride going on.

**QT: 01;25;21;18**

**RICK DAVIS:**

I mean, it was enormously changed. But also what changed is we pioneered internet contributions to campaigns. In fact, earlier in that campaign, the McCain campaign and the Bradley campaign had appealed to the FEC to give us the right to take a credit card contribution that up until that point in time, none had ever been given for political purposes. And so our strategy was when we win New Hampshire, and we were convinced we were gonna win New Hampshire, we have to be able to raise money fast and one of the ways we believed we would raise money fast was through the internet but the only way we could get it in the internet is through credit cards so we had to get that deal done. And we did.

**QT: 01;26;03;05**

**RICK DAVIS:**

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What happened the next day? So we arrive in South Carolina, we're on a bus the night before we arrive we're on a bus traveling the state and literally every hour on the hour, our internet receipts for fundraising are going through the moon. We are getting a million dollars an hour into the campaign. I mean this is a campaign that didn't have ten million dollars total and we raised five million dollars the day after the New Hampshire campaign and so it was between the fundraising momentum and the momentum we had gotten from crowd showing up at our events that just totally fundamentally changed the way we campaign and the way John McCain was perceived. He—it was a one on one race at that point. It was McCain versus Bush and even though there were some other candidates in the field, nobody cared it was McCain versus Bush.

**QT: 01;26;53;22**

## **TITLE**

Highlights on the Straight Talk Express

**QT: 01;26;57;15**

## **RICK DAVIS:**

The high was pretty good. I mean literally every hour on the hour my internet folks were calling me saying, "Okay we got in another, ya know, half a million, a million, million five." And we were literally announcing it on the bus and cheers would go up on the bus. Now the thing you need to understand about that campaign is, the bus is about a third campaign staff and two thirds reporters and I would say there was as many cheers from the reporters as there was from the campaign team cause in that campaign it was the straight talk express by now.

**QT: 01;27;25;20**

## **RICK DAVIS:**

We had basically modeled the campaign on being completely transparent and literally every day, 18 hours a day, John McCain would be surrounded by the press core that was covering him in the back of that bus, holding forth on every issue that was on the table. It could be important national security issues or the latest book read. I mean it could be what you saw in the movies last night, you know—or—you know, what the campaign's doing about the



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George Bush attack from last night and so it literally had become an environment all to itself and as it rolled around South Carolina, there were great times and there were hard times but it was definitely a culture that was created around the straight talk express.

**QT: 01;28;08;07**

## **TITLE**

The genesis of the Straight Talk Express

**QT: 01;28;12;17**

## **RICK DAVIS:**

It came together naturally. Over time, when we first started in New Hampshire, you know, it was like a car with three people in it. I remember when we had a big moment in the campaign when three or four national reporters said, "Hey we're gonna go travel with McCain." We actually got to rent a van 'cause we needed more seats and so it went from a van then to bus and the bus was this freewheeling exercise in public discourse, right? John McCain sitting in the back of the bus with all these reporters, basically talking about anything that came to their mind and the routine would be that the reporters would get in there in morning and they'd ask all the hard campaign questions and then go file their stories.

**QT: 01;28;55;15**

## **RICK DAVIS:**

This was in a day before 24-hour internet service and then the rest of the day, it would be talking about history or talking about ya know, books and interesting people and articles and their views way outside the normal political discourse and so it was just a fascinating rambling conversation that literally started at 7 o'clock in the morning and many times, didn't end until midnight and really, kudos to the press core, no gotcha questions, no like when did you last stop beating your wife?

**QT: 01;29;30;12**

## **RICK DAVIS:**

I mean those things were not allowed on the bus because you didn't want to waste your time with that. You wanted to have a very interesting,

intellectually curious discussion with a guy who was full of ideas. And none of it was vetted. I mean we didn't sit there and hand out policy papers. It was all, you know, top of my mind by John McCain who had the kind of mind and wit and was entertaining that he could actually keep that going for that long a time every single day.

**QT: 01;29;58;02**

**TITLE**

The South Carolina race turns negative

**QT: 01;30;03;01**

**RICK DAVIS:**

So we get to South Carolina, the day after New Hampshire, we're five points up. We erased a 15-point deficit overnight. We had momentum, the big 'mo, and we drove that for about the first week of the campaign but two things started happening. One, we started acting like a real campaign, right? So we started running TV, the money that was coming in every day from the internet was getting thrown up on television that night. As we're being produced we're getting into sort of a normal tit for tat, right?

**QT: 01;30;33;15**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Up until this point in time, I don't think a single TV ad had ever been run against John McCain or George Bush by either party. You know, New Hampshire's campaign was basically void of a lot of negative campaigning, by the time we got to South Carolina, it was bare-knuckle politics. We were running negative ads against George Bush, George Bush was running negative ads against John McCain; it was for the fight of the century.

**QT: 01;31;00;23**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Everybody knew in the Bush campaign and in the McCain campaign that whoever came out of South Carolina was likely to be the nominee of the party. Even though it was that shot a period of time inside the crucible of the primary experience, most of the other campaigns were either broke or

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exhausted with support and these two campaigns had all the energy, the establishment centered around George W. Bush and the reformers centered around John McCain and one person was gonna come out of South Carolina and be the nominee with the money and the support that they needed to be able to win. And so everybody knew that it was all the marbles in South Carolina and within about 10 days, 7 days out of the campaign, out of the election day, it had gotten totally out of control.

**QT: 01;31;51;09**

**RICK DAVIS:**

The negative advertising was you know, the worst you've ever seen in your life, it was personal, there was some of the most horrible things said about McCain and his family. The press was picking it up and the press had been our ally in the sense that because we gave total access to the press, we got a lot of press and that had been one of the beneficial aspects of the way we ran the campaign.

Now, it actually worked against us because every single charge was vetted on the evening news that night.

**QT: 01;32;21;04**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Oh my god, somebody said John McCain had an African American baby, oh how horrible that is that someone would attack McCain's family when in fact the McCain's had adopted a baby from Bangladesh, ya know, when it was an infant, because it had a cleft palette and was gonna die and Cindy took the baby in and yet it was a campaign theme that night. So rather than bury that and not honor it with attention, the media was basically a delivery drug for these negative attacks.

**QT: 01;32;54;03**

**RICK DAVIS:**

I remember standing in Columbia South Carolina watching a CNN interview of a professor at Bob Jones University who said John McCain had a comfortable life in prison camp and a family and the CNN interviewer said, "Well, how can you prove that?" And the professor said, "How can John McCain prove that it didn't happen?" Now that was on CNN. Now why would CNN broadcast a completely unsubstantiated attack like that where the, prove the negative was now the normal?

**QT: 01;33;34;03**

**RICK DAVIS:**

And so it was getting bad but one day, what really changed the outcome in my view of the campaign was a rally we had in Columbia, South Carolina. It was maybe 10 days into the campaign and I'd say we'd melted away about five per point of the five-point lead. It was about a dead even race and we were losing ground, not gaining ground and a person stood up in the crowd, a woman, and this was normal for a McCain rally that people would ask questions. Only guy I know who could go to a rally for 5,000 people and say, "Anybody's got any questions?" And she stood up and she told a story about her son who was maybe ten or eleven years old, I don't recall at the time, but he worshiped John McCain, had campaign posters in his room, followed the campaign vociferously, and really, ya know, was excited that the campaign had come to South Carolina.

**QT: 01;34;35;16**

**RICK DAVIS:**

But one day, had gotten one of these pernicious phone calls that had been going on talking about John McCain in a very slanderous way, talking about he was a liar, he was a cheat, and the kid had picked up the phone and gotten this message from the recorded caller that was delivering these from mass phone call, another attack method that was employed with no fingerprints on it.

Nobody knew who made the call or who was behind it, but it was obviously an anti-McCain call. And he was crushed and he asked his mother that night, "Mom is John McCain really a liar?"

**QT: 01;35;13;16**

**RICK DAVIS:**

And the crowd silenced. You could hear a pin drop. And the media immediately descended upon her, and John said at the time this has turned into a negative campaign, never intended to be this way, this is not honoring the voters in any way shape or form. We gotta do something about it, and so she was on the evening news that night, it was a compelling story to see at home all around the country. But we hopped on a plane and flew to New York for a big fundraiser, cause not all the money needed to come through the internet and we were in the hotel and McCain called me into his suite and at

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the time, his daughter Megan McCain was a student at Columbia University, so she was there for the event and it was a big splashy affair.

**QT: 01;36;02;11**

**RICK DAVIS:**

I think it was in the New York Hilton hotel and she's in there and he says, "Look I want to take off all the negative campaign ads. I want to go positive." I said, "Well, what do you mean take off negative campaign ads? We're in a slog fest of our lives, this is a battle to the death; we've gotta be able to define George W Bush, he's defining us in ways that we can't even retaliate against." And he said, "Nope, I want to run a campaign that my daughter will be proud of." And I thought at the time, "You're losing the election." And I told him that, I said, "If you go positive, you will lose South Carolina." And he says, "It doesn't matter to me, I'd rather lose an honorable campaign than win a dishonorable one."

**QT: 01;36;46;20**

**RICK DAVIS:**

So that night, got the strategy group all on the phone, got our media consultants on the phone, got our ground game on the phone, we had a big huddle and we pulled the plug and we took our ads down, took a couple of days to wash them through but by two days after that decision, we had run nothing but positive ads about John McCain.

**QT: 01;37;07;22**

**RICK DAVIS:**

In the face of what has been repudiated over time to be one of the most negative state campaigns in history of any state and we lost. And we were gonna lose, and as McInturff says, "You can't look at the time and day as though when we lost the election." but I would contend that John McCain said, "Take down the defenses, let's let it ride on a positive campaign." That day is what changed the campaign.

**QT: 01;37;38;00**

**TITLE**

The Confederate Flag debate in South Carolina during the 2000 primaries

**QT: 01;37;42;02**

**RICK DAVIS:**

You know, we had people on the ground in South Carolina just like we had in New Hampshire, right? You know, who know the local issues, understand the local politics, it's all an essential component of any presidential campaign, is to have these folks around and one of the things that was a hot debate at the time that had nothing to do with the republican primary but was debating actively in South Carolina was whether or not the flag should fly on the property of the state capital, the confederate flag.

**QT: 01;38;10;23**

**RICK DAVIS:**

We all know now today there are a lot of issues related to the confederate flag but at that time it was a pretty hot issue in South Carolina and when you roll into a state like South Carolina, even though you're talking about reforming the federal government and changing social security and the campaign finance reform, you're gonna get asked every single day by state reporters what do you think about the issue of taking down the confederate flag and we consulted the local group, they were very talented, skilled politicians and they said, "Look, don't get involved in this issue." And we literally worked out some wording about the fact that it was a sign of the symbol of heritage and that it was a state issue and it got to the point where when we sat down to talk to John McCain about it, he's like, ya know, "That's bullshit."

**QT: 01;39;06;13**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Ya know, and—and we convinced him, we said, "Well it's a state issue it's not what we want to get into, let's just use this spin." And we just talked about spinning as lying, well we bought into the lie and we literally had to write it down on a three by five card because he just refused to remember it, and here's a guy who's got a memory where he can tell you what's on page 97 of a book, right? And yet he could not articulate this message that we asked him to do and he didn't want to do it because he didn't believe in it and yet it was politically expedient to do it and he did it.

**QT: 01;39;45;12**

**RICK DAVIS:**

I literally remember an interview where he reaches into his pocket, pulls out the card and just reads the answer when asked the question and he knew it was the wrong thing to do at the time. It was one of the very few instances where we didn't follow our instincts rather than following the polling data and I think for that reason, rightly so, he went back after the election and apologized to the people of South Carolina for spinning them and telling them something he didn't believe and didn't think they should either.

**QT: 01;40;18;04**

**RICK DAVIS:**

You wouldn't see that today from anybody.

**QT: 01;40;20;04**

**TITLE**

The boy who received the attack ad call in South Carolina during the 2000 primaries and the importance of integrity

**QT: 01;40;26;07**

**RICK DAVIS:**

After the event, where the woman had discussed you know, what had happened to her son, we were able to get the two of them together, literally behind the stage and McCain did call the young boy and told him not to believe what he'd heard and that he should believe in the symbols that you know, represent, you know, John McCain and that was the kind of heart he had at that time. I mean it was one of these things where it wasn't just a campaign for president, it was a campaign for his vision of America and what it stood for and the honesty and integrity that elected officials should want to have if they want to serve as President of the United States.

**QT: 01;41;05;14**

**RICK DAVIS:**

I mean it was really an ideological campaign and that little boy just symbolized what was wrong with it. And we couldn't control what the Bush campaign did, but John McCain could control what he did as a presidential candidate and what his campaign did and many years later you'll see him

referencing the fact that you have to be responsible for your campaign, when things would go wrong in other people's campaigns, he would feel sorry for them but he would say, "You're responsible for what happens in your campaign." primarily because he made one of the hardest decisions anybody has ever made as a candidate at any level, right? He did something that was honorable, that was not—that was actually gonna keep him from being able to win the election and he knew it at the time when he made the decision.

**QT: 01;41;52;05**

**TITLE**

The decision to withdraw from the 2000 presidential bid

**QT: 01;41;57;01**

**RICK DAVIS:**

We had—we'd all flown in after Super Tuesday, the campaign had gone on successfully in some states and not successfully in others, all the way through Super Tuesday; I think there were 21 states at risk on Super Tuesday. We were in California and a group of us flew senior campaign group to Sedona Arizona where John has his hideaway, and a place where he goes to make big decisions, relax with his family and sort of repair up in between campaign slogs. And so we were there and there had already been a good amount of activity done in advance of the trip there to determine just numerically where we stood in the campaign.

**QT: 01;42;43;05**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Ya know, the view was, let's get through Super Tuesday. There are a lot of delegates at stake, let's see how it goes and count up what's left at that point in time. And even though numerically we still had a chance to ya know, win John the nomination, it was unlikely, right. I mean, it meant we had to clear the table and we knew we weren't gonna do that. So there was a very honest conversation about what our chances are and John's view was, this was a campaign that was launched to make a point but that the last thing you would want to do is keep a republican from winning just because you're making a point within the republican party. Again, sort of an honorable approach that we don't want to drain the campaign resources of George W.



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Bush because he's got a much bigger fight if we think he's gonna be the nominee.

**QT: 01;43;38;15**

**RICK DAVIS:**

He's got a much bigger fight coming ahead of him than winning the primaries. He's gotta win the general and we don't want to do anything that would damage his ability to do that. Now this is at a time when there had been a lot of bad feelings between the two camps. Very hard campaign that had ensued over the year of campaigning and—but John's view was, "No, I don't want to continue to campaign if it's futile and I sure don't want to engage the resources of the Bush campaign and leave them depleted at the hands of the democrats." who had a relatively easy contest that Al Gore had—had already finished off.

**QT: 01;44;24;15**

**RICK DAVIS:**

So the decision was at that point, to get out of the race. There had been a conversation in all honesty about how about running for independent? You know, he had garnered a lot of support outside the party in addition to winning a lot of primaries with republican votes; he was very popular with democrats and independents because the reform message wasn't singular to any one party. But John's a Republican, he's a Teddy Roosevelt, Abraham Lincoln, Ronald Reagan Republican and the last thing he wants to do is damage the party from being able to carry on those kinds of, I'd say, traditions.

**QT: 01;45;08;09**

**TITLE**

McCain gained political power in the 2000 presidential primary and eventually supported Bush despite ideological differences

**QT: 01;45;15;09**

**RICK DAVIS:**

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You know, in many cases, once you withdraw from a campaign, you sort of lose any real focus of the media or any political saliency. That was not the case with John McCain. The Bush folks wanted his endorsement and he withheld it for a period of time. Both because I think he thought that he needed to let the tempers cool off. It had still been pretty hot between the two camps, so he wanted some time for that to go through. It didn't really matter in the primary anymore, Bush was gonna win through the states now that John had taken his name off the ballot and I think he wanted to focus on what he was gonna do next in the united states senate. He'd gained an enormous amount of power politically around the country and he wanted to accomplish things on his own, regardless of what happened in the presidential campaign.

**QT: 01;46;12;18**

**RICK DAVIS:**

So immediately, plans got started to put together legislation on campaign finance reform, on climate, on all kinds of different issues related to the military in order to basically take the momentum that John had gotten through the election process and turn it into legislative victory. So that took some time and he threw himself into that pretty intensely right after withdrawing from the primary. It wasn't for months before Senator McCain actually had a meeting with president or then candidate Bush in Pennsylvania where they laid down the swords and shook hands and agreed to work together. I would say at that time, it was bittersweet. Some of the issues that John had campaigned on were really picked up by the democrats who were running against George Bush.

**QT: 01;47;09;03**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Bush had been a late entry to the issues related to campaign finance reform although he had adopted them because McCain had gotten so much value out of them that he was even running commercials, George W Bush campaign for campaign finance reform, mimicking the McCain success with some of these issues. But really, it was Gore-Lieberman in many cases on climate and on campaign finance reform that really held more common cause with where McCain was and frankly, I think that was the beginning of a change in the electorate where you had to make a choice, where if you were going to be

someone who was worried about those kinds of issues, you found more comfort in the democratic camp than you did in a republican camp.

**QT: 01;48;02;17**

**RICK DAVIS:**

And not to say that Bush didn't offer other options, you know, at that time to be a republican, we had the best of both worlds when McCain and Bush were together in this campaign because both had a good and articulate message on those issues and frankly stolen away by John's good friend Joe Lieberman, and sometimes friend Al Gore. And so later, after the Gore-Lieberman loss, John worked very hard with Joe Lieberman to put together some legislation called cap and trade to help a market solution to climate issues. So it didn't slow them down as people, but it obviously had a big impact on the presidential electorate.

**QT: 01;48;50;18**

**TITLE**

The 2000 vs the 2008 presidential campaign

**QT: 01;48;56;06**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Well if the 2000 campaign was known as sort of the reformer campaign and straight talk express and freewheeling, easy access to the media, I would say the 2000 camp—2008 campaign was completely the opposite. We knew times had changed, that maybe we needed to approach the 2008 campaign differently than we did in the 2000 campaign. We knew we'd have access to more resources, money and people and we had a lot of time to think about it.

**QT: 01;49;31;09**

**RICK DAVIS:**

John McCain was in sort of political winter during most of the Bush administration, he wasn't the popular Republican even though he had enormous popularity with the electorate, ya know, inside of Washington, he

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was never considered part of the Bush administration team. In fact, if anything, he was sort of the outsider within a republican administration and-

**QT: 01;49;55;02**

**TITLE**

In 2008 McCain was the establishment candidate

**QT: 01;50;00;10**

**RICK DAVIS:**

So really, the 2000 campaign and the 2008 campaign were night and day. The 2000 campaign known of its rollicking style, freewheeling with the press, reform message turned into an establishment message with a big control campaign. In 2008, we took a lesson from the success of the George W Bush campaign, and said, "We want the resources. We want the manpower. We want the battleship that lasts the test of time and can deliver a win at all costs." versus taking a lot of risks along the way.

**QT: 01;50;39;14**

**RICK DAVIS:**

So early on in 2006, we started planning a battleship where Senator McCain would have access to big donors all over the country, lots of money. A big organization to raise those funds and deliver them, but even a bigger organization to spend them. Campaign managers, teams in every state.

**QT: 01;51;01;15**

**RICK DAVIS:**

A 50 state campaign, all the things we used to laugh about as suckers, they're having to spend money in states that you're never gonna wind up campaigning in. We did exactly that and we felt at that time, that maybe that was the new normal, that if you didn't have that kind of big establishment vehicle to support all the people who wanted to have John McCain as president at this point, you ran the risk of someone doing what we almost did to George W Bush, which is come in and snatch the prize away from them. So we built that battleship.

**QT: 01;51;37;06**

**RICK DAVIS:**

John announced, you know, that he was running and the day he announced he was the leader of the pack of presumptives, and had more money and more likelihood of success than any other individual. So he was overnight the establishment and I would say John McCain was much more comfortable as the guy throwing rocks at windows, as the reformer outsider from 2000 than he was wearing the mantle of a republican party in a republican administration acting as the vehicle for the establishment to win another victory and that was the 2008 campaign.

**QT: 01;52;18;15**

**TITLE**

On exploring a second presidential run

**QT: 01;52;23;00**

**RICK DAVIS:**

There was no question that after the 2000 loss, there was really no sense that there was a prospect for John to ever run for president again. And so in 2006, discussions started with John himself, ya know, did he have a platform? What did he want to accomplish? Ya know, how old he was. He would've been the oldest president to be elected at that time and he wanted to make sure he had the stamina. It was a big difference between being in your 70s, ya know, and 80s and so I think those were really important things that weighed on his mind and then the family, they had been through a bruising political experience in 2000 and getting them onboard and seeing whether or not they were up for another election was a whole 'nother series of conversations.

**QT: 01;53;28;06**

**RICK DAVIS:**

I remember being out in San Diego California, Coronado where the McCain's have a condominium and having a one on one meeting with Cindy to go through the likelihood that John may want to run for president again, and basically, Senator said, you know, "I'll take it seriously if Cindy's okay." And he didn't want to be the guy to make that pitch because I think he thought that would make it hard for her to say no.

**QT: 01;53;57;13**

**RICK DAVIS:**

So I was the sucker that got sent out there, ya know, because everyone says no to me and Cindy could not have been more constructive; there were issues that she knew that were gonna come up because of her experience on the campaign trail, that she wanted assurances that the family could be protected frankly, in a better than it was in 2000 and—and you know, I think that took a very mature and I think very strategic look at the race, both as a mother and as a wife and as a public servant herself.

**QT: 01;54;32;12**

**TITLE**

The impact of 9/11 on the American electorate

**QT: 01;54;37;10**

**RICK DAVIS:**

9/11 had a profound impact not only on the country and you know, security and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq but also on the American electorate, right? We cared about things that we didn't used to care about. Now that was a wonderful opportunity for Senator McCain who had always been steeped in national security, foreign policy, national security affairs, and so he was, I think, legitimately the right man at the right time to lead a nation in a post 9/11 environment and I think the earliest polling demonstrated that.

**QT: 01;55;13;08**

**RICK DAVIS:**

You know, he was significantly in the lead both against his likely republican challengers but also in many polls against any democratic opposition that we would've seen at the time and of course, at this time it was John McCain and Hillary Clinton. That was the narrative of the 2008 campaign. Little did we know that narrative would be turned upside down.

**QT: 01;55;36;19**

**TITLE**

The impact of the internet and social media on the 2008 campaign and the rise of “gotcha journalism”

**QT: 01;55;42;04**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Well I think that the internet and social media, the impact it had was to just involve more people on a more rapid basis. We thought that was a huge advantage for Senator McCain, he was the kind of person who could react to questions on the stunt, he had an enormous amount of experience and information.

**QT: 01;56;02;07**

**RICK DAVIS:**

And he was, you know, one of these people who did extremely well on morning shows and interviews because he had at his fingertips, you know, a wealth of knowledge not only that he had learned over time in the experience of being United States Senator but also, you know, as an individual who served in the military and just as an incredibly intellectually curious person, you know, who reads constantly and can recite what he picked up on the way. So to us, the speed of the internet was actually keeping pace with the speed of John McCain and his thoughts.

**QT: 01;56;37;18**

**RICK DAVIS:**

I would say the impact, how it actually played out, was different than how we thought and what happened was rather than having a discourse in the back of a bus for 18 hours, like we did in the 2000 campaign on issues that you know, you could get into the depth of them and the nuances of them, we were into gotcha journalism at this point in 2008, that the only thing that you wanted was a certain number of characters to fit into a tweet or a certain number of seconds in a video that you would then put out virally. It was actually shortened the conversation significantly rather than deepening it.

**QT: 01;57;17;05**

**RICK DAVIS:**

And I'd say that wound up becoming a more difficult way for John McCain to communicate to voters, because he wasn't given the time to really give you

the nuance and to give you the depth of the knowledge that he had and so it was harder for him to convey his competitive edge over other candidates who, ya know, frankly, the rise of Barack Obama was the rise of the set speech and the sort of set message perfect for the internet.

**QT: 01;57;48;02**

**TITLE**

The media environment in 2008 changed

**QT: 01;57;53;19**

**RICK DAVIS:**

It was a long time before Barack Obama became a serious candidate for president and I would say the media had already changed long before he showed up on the scene. One, budgets were tighter in these newspapers and media outlets around the country, so instead of sending senior political reporters to cover the candidates nonstop like what we saw in 2000, in many cases, newspapers no longer existed that covered us in 2000 and the budgets for those outlets had been diminished so much that in many cases, those experienced political reporters were no longer working, you know, at those outlets.

**QT: 01;58;35;00**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Or, the people that were assigned to go out with the campaigns were much more junior, inexperienced reporters who were gonna cut their teeth on getting that sound byte or getting that video. We noticed in the bus early activity that instead of people with pads writing out what they were taking from the conversation and filing their stories, everyone had a camera and the entire bus was videotaped and that that was the filing, was the video. Now we had never put makeup on John McCain in the back of the bus in 2000, right? Unless it was a set interview. We had never seen the kind of viral video explosion that would happen if there had been a minor miscue in the course of a bus ride in 2000 because you had 18 hours to clean it up.

**QT: 01;59;24;15**

**RICK DAVIS:**



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If people are filing their stories as your bus is rolling along down the street because they can upload it to the internet and have it virally exposed to the world within seconds, it changed the entire dynamic of the kinds of questions, the kinds of discussion, and frankly the way the media operated. And that was both on airplanes and in the buses and at press conferences. And finally, we came late to the game and realized we have to treat the press in a different fashion.

**QT: 01;59;54;08**

**RICK DAVIS:**

One of the issues of the campaign even later as Barack Obama became more successful in the democratic primary, was the fact that we were giving the media enormous amount of access to Senator McCain and it was negative coverage and yet Obama was not giving access to the media hardly at all to him and his campaign and he was getting enormously positive coverage.

**QT: 02;00;18;08**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Some of that just has to do with the swinging pendulum of the taste of the media, but also we realized, you didn't get any benefit anymore from that access. In essence, it was counterproductive and we actually started cracking down on it a little bit.

**QT: 02;00;32;19**

**TITLE**

The struggle to regain maverick status, the market crash and running in the shadow of the Bush presidency

**QT: 02;00;37;21**

**RICK DAVIS:**

I think in the general election, we had really high hopes. We started the campaign coming out of the convention five points up. We were really happy with the success that we had with the convention and the run up to that, with the selection of Sarah Palin as vice president and literally for two weeks, we had a campaign that was winning the presidential election in every survey that we've seen around the country and certainly in our own data, we saw a

lot of strength. One of the things that was the key to us in the convention to come out in the fall campaign was to be able to regain the mantle of the maverick, just by becoming the nominee of the party, he looked like the establishment personified, right?

**QT: 02;01;25;15**

**RICK DAVIS:**

I mean, he was all of a sudden no longer the maverick, no longer the straight talk express, he was a republican nominee and it made him very republican and in a time when his numbers had always been good with democrats and independents and always a little iffy with republicans, republicans were bought onto the McCain campaign, 90% supported him in his quest of presidency and we had lost the bottom of that independent and democratic support that had been the hallmark of his image for most of that decade going up to that.

**QT: 02;01;59;06**

**RICK DAVIS:**

So we had a different kind of campaign. You know, we had to go out and find votes in small quantities and we were doing that. I'd say on September 16th the entire campaign changed and that was the day that the economy collapsed, and that was the week that the house republicans voted against the tarp bailout. That was the week, the one day the market crashed 780 points and from that point on, every speech, every discussion, every event, had on the little corner of the screen of every television in every household in America, a copy of the DOW Jones industrial average and what it was doing that day.

**QT: 02;02;46;19**

**RICK DAVIS:**

And you literally would sit in your office and watch a speech being given by Senator McCain and worrying about whether the DOW is going up or down and at that time, in middle of September, it was always going down, we lost trillions in market cap, people were being thrown out of their jobs, we were going through a global upheaval that we'd never seen before, the depression and we were running a presidential campaign right in the middle of it. And not only we were running a presidential campaign in the middle of it, we were running an incumbent republican administration campaign.

**QT: 02;03;19;22**

**RICK DAVIS:**

I mean John McCain and George Bush had never really been that close, they'd fought on a lot on issues throughout the years but they'd found detente in the later years of the Bush administration and Bush was very supportive of McCain's task to become his successor as President of the United States. The downside is George Bush was the single least popular sitting president in history. We talk a lot about presidential popularity these days, but George Bush's numbers, his approval rating was 25%.

**QT: 02;03;50;13**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Nobody has been within 10 points of that in history. It was a combination of factors, of the stewardship of the economy and it imploding at the time, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan had gotten to be a burden for his administration and we were the third term of the Bush administration and with many voters, they just couldn't shake that.

**QT: 02;04;13;17**

**TITLE**

On choosing a running mate in 2008

**QT: 02;04;19;06**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Like every campaign, we win a relatively early primary victory and we have some time now to figure out how we're gonna wage the general election. One of the most critical decisions that John McCain had to make was who is gonna be his running mate and we had a lot of really good options. At least we thought we did. We put a list together of about 25 people and Senator McCain and the strategists around him and the family whittled that down to about a dozen and we went through the vetting process and out of that dozen came about another half a dozen and we started the process of a deep dive and what that meant was we did survey research around these folks and we were looking at people who came from wildly different walks of life.

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**QT: 02;05;07;04**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Ya know, everybody from Michael Bloomberg to Mitt Romney and what we found in this group of all men, was that they didn't help us with any of the constituents that we needed to broaden the base of our party, to broaden the base of our campaign in order to win the election. So we could govern with any one of these individuals, they would be fine as vice presidential candidates, but they were not likely to help us win the election. And this was at a time in the summer when arguably John McCain's poll numbers opposite Barack Obama were somewhere between down 10 points and down 15 points.

**QT: 02;05;48;23**

**RICK DAVIS:**

We thought it was a good day when we were only down 10 points and so we presented this information to Senator McCain and the conclusion was all these people were good and fine folks, they passed through our rigorous background checks but none of them are gonna particularly be helpful in getting you elected. With them on the ticket, you're on your own and so Senator McCain said, "Well what's the group that I'm most in need of?" And you know, we said women.

**QT: 02;06;21;02**

**RICK DAVIS:**

At that time, John McCain had a net positive image amongst white male voters of plus 28, very popular, but he was a negative 15 amongst white women, and that was the critical sort of feature of what we were trying to determine is how to balance that out. How do you get more white women into our election formula without losing the white males? And there's issues obviously that you can tackle, but one of the things that Senator McCain said was, "Well let's look at more women as potential candidates for vice president."

**QT: 02;06;59;05**

**RICK DAVIS:**

And so we did. And out of that analysis came Sarah Palin. A maverick like him, out of Alaska, 85% approval rating amongst the voters there, had never spent any time really in the lower 48 doing politics but had beat a republican ??? of the family to be governor and was a favorite amongst conservatives within the party. As you can imagine, that was sort of an added benefit seeing as McCain was always suspect amongst conservatives in the party.

**QT: 02;07;33;05**

**RICK DAVIS:**

But what we liked about the energy around Sarah Palin was that she was a maverick and we knew had to get back that maverick appeal that John McCain had won so many campaigns previously with that had been washed away since becoming the nominee of the party and so John McCain picked Sarah Palin and from the day the world even heard her name, and which was the day after the Obama convention—

**QT: 02;08;02;16**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Just to dial it back a minute, Obama went into his convention with at least a ten-point lead, maybe 15-point lead, it was one of the most successful conventions the democratic party has ever held. The Obama speech, accepting the nomination of the party in an open stadium with a hundred thousand people with Greek columns surrounding him, was carried live around the world. Our guess the next morning, we woke up that Friday and we were probably 15 to 20 points down. You usually get a bump out of your convention. I'm sure that Barack Obama got a bump out of his convention. At 11 o'clock the next morning, Friday morning in Dayton, Ohio, John McCain stood on a stage with Sarah Palin who no one had ever heard of other than in Alaska and announced that she was gonna be his vice presidential running mate.

**QT: 02;08;57;13**

**RICK DAVIS:**

She didn't do another interview or another speech until Wednesday at the convention five days later where she introduced herself to the American public. The highest-ranking convention audience in history at that time, 65

million people watched her speech. That Friday, our pollster, Bill McInturff gave me a survey that showed that we had erased a 20-point margin where we went from 15 points down to 5 points up and the only fundamental change in the campaign at that time was two speeches by Sarah Palin.

**QT: 02;09;36;04**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Now I would argue I think that John McCain's speech on Thursday night was a humdinger and he inspired people and probably added to that number but at the end of the day, you can't doubt the facts, and the facts are that Barack Obama finished his convention an overwhelming leader of the presidential campaign and woke up a week later trailing, and that's just the facts.

**QT: 02;10;01;11**

**TITLE**

On McCain's regret over not running with Lieberman in 2008

**QT: 02;10;06;02**

**RICK DAVIS:**

John McCain has the right to be nostalgic, I mean he's not gonna change the outcome of the 2008 presidential campaign, he's not gonna change the fact that you know, he selected Sarah Palin and he can't change the fact that you know, Joe Lieberman would've been an enormous wild card, you know, at getting republican unity and even picking up any democratic or independent votes, which none of the surveys indicated that he would.

**QT: 02;10;36;22**

**RICK DAVIS:**

But he's his friend, you know, and I, you know, I know John McCain and John McCain loves his friends and you want to be in the friend category, not the enemy category and for that reason and that reason alone, for the rest of John's life I'm sure he'll entertain thoughts that if I were president what would it have been like to have Joe Lieberman serve?

**QT: 02;10;59;03**

**RICK DAVIS:**

I can tell you without a shadow of doubt that if John McCain had become President of the United States, most of what we today know about Sarah Palin would've been erased by history because she would've been in a different job, a job that many lesser individuals have had, and done just fine and I think she would've been supportive of Senator McCain 100% of the time and so history will never allow us the opportunity to look into that cloud and see, ya know, how it would've worked out.

**QT: 02;11;33;05**

**RICK DAVIS:**

And you can't erase today the differences of Sarah Palin, the vice presidential nominee of the Republican Party and what she's become politically today. But I can tell you for sure, that forever John McCain will value his relationship with Joe Lieberman and has the right all he wants to think about how romantically fun that would've been to have had him, ya know, also as a nominee for vice president.

**QT: 02;12;00;19**

**TITLE**

The VP choice was difficult but calculated

**QT: 02;12;05;04**

**RICK DAVIS:**

We had that discussion pretty vociferously, you know, around the table and John is a smart man, he understands what it takes and look, here's the fundamental way you pick a vice president. If you're in the lead, you pick someone you want to serve with, and that's how Joe Biden got selected by Barack Obama. Joe Biden wasn't gonna add one vote to the Obama coalition but he's a nice guy. He's the kind of guy you want to walk in and see everyday hanging around the office.

**QT: 02;12;35;22**

**RICK DAVIS:**

But when you are 10 or 15 points behind, you have to take into the calculus somebody who will help you win and you hope that if you win you will work out how that whole VP presidential thing's gonna work out and it happens every time. There's never been an exception to that rule. You never vote for the guy who's gonna be your pal if he's not gonna add to the winning coalition and that's just the fact of how presidential campaigns tend to evolve.

**QT: 02;13;04;18**

**TITLE**

Sarah Palin's impact on the campaign

**QT: 02;13;10;04**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Sarah had a profound impact on the campaign because of her immediate popularity. We were used to a certain tempo with Senator McCain, you know, crowd size, schedule, activities, that kind of thing. And when we'd originally designed a vice presidential team, ya know, it was basically to focus on fundraising and second tier states, which would be a traditional way to look at how the vice presidential candidate would operate. Cheney, Jack Kemp, they all had sort of the smaller plane, the—ya know, the second tier states and a lot of fundraising shorts 'cause you wanted to save the other stuff for your presidential candidate.

**QT: 02;13;54;14**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Immediately we realized that Palin was gonna have a much bigger audience than what we'd anticipated for any normal vice presidential nominee, so we beefed up the staff, we beefed up the plane, we beefed up the schedule, in a way that would I think maximize her growing appeal, and I would say it grew fast. What would normally be a decent day where John McCain would go out and see three big crowd events, ya know, five to ten thousand people a piece, Sarah Palin would show up in a town that was half the size of the cities that McCain was going to and have 25,000 people there without even batting an eye.



**QT: 02;14;38;17**

**RICK DAVIS:**

She did one event in Florida where 70,000 people showed up, twice what we thought was gonna show up that day. So we had to constantly accelerate what we were doing as far as the support staff, the advance people, the events people, the support staff around Palin just to get that traveling show organized enough to be able to accommodate the massive growth in the activity around her and the good news is that the McCain team had been born out of all kinds of anxiety and disruption and so they were very sort of honed together as a team and could literally almost operate on their own as a separate campaign and so, the campaign had an advantage of having a real seasoned group that knew the routine and understood how the McCain campaign functioned well to be able to operate alongside of that.

**QT: 02;15;42;17**

**TITLE**

On McCain townhalls

**QT: 02;15;47;00**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Since 2000, the number one campaign feature of every McCain campaign and I would say that would include all his reelections to the senate, is doing Town Halls. Now, most candidates don't like Town Halls, right? They don't like that kind of Q&A, it can be dicey. They don't like unscripted events, if anything most candidates usually say, you know, turn in your card with your questions and I'll pick the ones I want to answer.

**QT: 02;16;15;13**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Well not McCain, right? It's free, holds—no holds barred, free speech. Usually in an event like the one in Minnesota, it starts out with protestors who come and they want to be heard, of course we had a lot of protestors on the war in Iraq and Afghanistan and McCain would always go first to the protestors. If you were a protestor, you knew you were gonna get the first question but it

was a tactic by John cause then he could say, "Now, you've had your say, sit down and let everybody else now have a conversation."

**QT: 02;16;50;03**

**RICK DAVIS:**

And nine times out of ten that worked great and it would settle the crowd down. In this case, we had a bigger than usual Town Hall. I mean typically a Town Hall would be anywhere on this campaign from a thousand to five thousand people. I think close to 10 thousand people were in the room and it was a raucous group. They don't normally get that much attention up there and so I think they were pretty excited to see John McCain there and it had gotten heated, right?

**QT: 02;17;15;08**

**RICK DAVIS:**

The campaign was stoking up with Barack Obama and people's I think emotions were running hot at this time and a woman stood up and she started to take on Barack Obama and it wasn't the first time John McCain had heard, ya know, Barack Hussein Obama slurs at his events and things like that and nine times out of ten, he can tamp those down and move on, but in this case, you know, he wanted to make a point.

**QT: 02;17;45;07**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Ya know, he'd seen the campaign become negative, never a tactic that he particularly liked and he decided to have a conversation about why that's the wrong thing to do. And he went out of his way to say Barack Obama is a good family man, he's a good man, ya know; he'll make a good leader but the one thing we will not accommodate in this campaign are slurs against him and his family and this is in a very tough environment.

**QT: 02;18;13;21**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Now, that's the decency of John McCain, that's just being a normal human being, a decent human being void of any political pretense whatsoever like I'm actually trying to win a race for president. And that's what he does all the time and it wasn't a surprise to any of us, who had gotten to know him and

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realize that he doesn't freeze in a moment like that, he uses it as a teaching moment. I hope the rest of this crowd learns that this is not the politics that we try to promote in our country.

**QT: 02;18;46;21**

**RICK DAVIS:**

I'd seen him do it in 2000, in New Hampshire, a state we desperately needed to win, we were in the upstate portion, which was full of textile mills and things that were all disappearing because of the new economy and what was happening in the region and a man stood up and he said, "Senator McCain if you're elected president, these mills will go away and where will my son and daughter earn a living?"

**QT: 02;19;16;00**

**RICK DAVIS:**

And John looked at him and said, "I would've hoped that you'd have a bigger ambition for your son and daughter than working in a textile mill." Now you tell me what is more critical to the outcome of election than going into upstate New Hampshire and talking about how your kids should have a bigger ambition than working in a textile mill to a guy who you're there to solicit his support. Now that was in 2000 and it's the same kind of an event and the same kind of quick thinking and the same kind of values based conversation that McCain would have with voters all the time. These were not unusual circumstances on a campaign with John McCain.

**QT: 02;20;00;22**

**TITLE**

The effect of the presidential race in 2008 on McCain

**QT: 02;20;06;10**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Yeah, I think that—I think that probably the greatest way that the campaign changed Senator McCain is it refocused his attention in the senate. I think the senate has always been a great passion of his. It's a great body where things can get done. He honors the senate a great deal with his participation in it but

I think that what he realized was that that the end of his presidential ambitions and that, you know, thank God I have the senate to dive back into.

**QT: 02;20;38;10**

**RICK DAVIS:**

And again, like he did in 2000, used his newfound celebrity status, his newfound political power to try and make change and literally—you know, the week after the election, he was at work in the United States Senate, traveling all over the world giving speeches about the importance of national security foreign policy issues and has not missed a beat since the day after that campaign. And for Barack Obama, you know, in many cases he was his best friend on some issues, and his worst enemy. And he treated Barack Obama just like he treated George W. Bush, just like he treated William Clinton, I mean these guys got the John McCain United States Senator that you get every time. When I agree with you, I'll say so regardless of the political calculation, and when I disagree with you, I'll be your worst enemy in the United States Senate. And that's John McCain.

**QT: 02;21;37;20**

**TITLE**

The paradox of John McCain

**QT: 02;21;42;14**

**RICK DAVIS:**

What's interesting about John McCain is everyone always talks about this tough John McCain right and for sure there are moments when if you're a witness at a congressional hearing that John McCain is running, and you don't tell him the truth, you're gonna witness the wrath of John McCain because he believes that the only thing you have to ring with you to a United States Senate hearing is the truth so yes, he has a reputation to be a tough guy but some of the most tender moments of emotion and understand I've ever seen in public life have been with John McCain.

**QT: 02;22;16;17**

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**RICK DAVIS:**

I don't think he could've led the life that he lived and has lived, without having that piece of you keep you going in the hard times.

**QT: 02;22;28;12**

**TITLE**

The 'crying' campaign

**QT: 02;22;32;15**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Oh yeah. Well, the entire 2000 campaign we dubbed the crying campaign because when John McCain got up to speak to voters he talked to them about their values, he talked to them about what was at stake. Ya know, it was a different time then, pre 9/11 but every single time it ended with a story of great heroism or sacrifice that he'd witnessed personally himself either in captivity or subsequent to that.

**QT: 02;22;59;12**

**RICK DAVIS:**

And nobody in the crowd was immune to the raw emotion of those moments and nine times out of ten, thunderous applause would be followed by wiping of eyes and literally we could stand in the back of the room, hardened campaign professionals ourselves and dropping tears all along the way, and we literally knew that if we were gonna have a good event, it was gonna result in everybody crying at the end of that campaign event.

**QT: 02;23;28;21**

**TITLE**

On McCain's famous temper

**QT: 02;23;33;15**

**RICK DAVIS:**

I can honestly say that I've witnessed the temper but never focused on me. I have been blessed with a relationship with Senator McCain where I got the

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best side of him 100% of the time, but sure. He believes that things have a cost and everything is at stake on some of these big moments like presidential campaigns, or important debates in the senate and he does not take lightly, ya know, his view of making sure there's an outcome for the American people there, and he will not suffer fools gladly and that's when you see the temper.

**QT: 02;24;22;03**

**RICK DAVIS:**

We all have it. Rarely are we on display 24 hours a day, seven days a week like an individual like John McCain so nobody's gonna notice it with us, so I do think he gets a lot more attention to the temper than he probably deserves, but it's a passion to him. You know, he doesn't take this stuff lightly, and I think that the American public gets their money's worth with John McCain.

**QT: 02;24;48;21**

**TITLE**

McCain's diagnosis

**QT: 02;24;52;21**

**RICK DAVIS:**

I was—I was in LA, Los Angeles having lunch and he had gone into the Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale Arizona to get a checkup and one of the things they were gonna do is an MRI, and he'd been complaining of ya know, sleep loss and things like that, so it was a little bit more than a normal checkup I would say, and so I'm in the middle of lunch and I get a call from Senator McCain and in a very nonchalant way, he says, "I had my checkup today and I'm just about here in Sedona." He was in a car driving to Sedona, treacherous roads of Sedona and he's making phone calls, bad boy. And he said, "They just called me and told me to turn my car around and come back, I've gotta have something looked at."

**QT: 02;25;48;08**

**RICK DAVIS:**

I'm like, "Well what do you mean turn your car around and go back?" And he explained to me that something had shown up on the MRI and that they were potentially gonna do surgery that night. Didn't exactly know what it was on, he isn't a very good conveyor of details about himself but I knew it was important enough to look into it right away. So while he was driving back from Sedona to Scottsdale, I contacted the folks at the hospital and his staff who had been with him there and found out that indeed they'd found what looked like a tumor, didn't know what it was, but they knew it was in a place where he shouldn't have it and they were gonna operate on him that night and they were assembling the team literally while he drove back to take him straight into surgery. So when I called him back and I said, "Now I know what you're talking about, are you alright?" And he goes, "Yeah, I'll be fine." And so that was when I learned about it, and he was driving himself back to the hospital to have brain surgery.

**QT: 02;27;05;00**

**TITLE**

The stress of not knowing the diagnosis

**QT: 02;27;09;19**

**RICK DAVIS:**

All these cases where there's a surgery and then there's a period of time when you have to sort of find out what they took out of your head in his case, there's a question, "Is it bad, is it really bad, is it horribly bad?" right? It's never a good thing and the doctors at the time, the day he woke up, didn't know whether it was a blood clot or whether it was a tumor that could've been melanoma, cause in that side of his face, almost nine years earlier he'd had some major surgery to take out melanoma so they thought maybe it's melanoma that had gotten in there or worse. In this case, like a glioblastoma, which it wound up being.

**QT: 02;27;57;10**

**RICK DAVIS:**

They didn't know. They hadn't done a pathology report, it would take days to do that and so you can imagine a blunt, straight, black and white kind of guy like John McCain who says, "Okay, what's the deal?" And you have these incredibly smart, super educated, highly trained neurosurgeon say, "Well it

could be this, it could be that, it would be another thing." didn't sit well with Senator McCain, he wanted to know, "Look, I just, emergency brain surgery, I wake up and I want to know what happened to me." And the doctors, rightly so, couldn't, they didn't know. Right? They weren't sure.

**QT: 02;28;36;08**

**RICK DAVIS:**

They could guess but the minute you start guessing with a patient like John McCain, he's gonna hold you to it and I think over time, the doctors got to know John and got more information about this condition and were able to have that sort of straight talk conversation with him but I would say that was the toughest that I saw for him was just not knowing what your real condition was. He could take that it was bad, it was just like, just tell me and I'll—I'll absorb it. He certainly had a lot of bad news in his lifetime and the last thing he wanted to do was to be spun.

**QT: 02;29;13;08**

**TITLE**

The treatments and McCain's threshold for pain

**QT: 02;29;18;02**

**RICK DAVIS:**

He's had his head radiated for six weeks and seven weeks of chemotherapy and all the other and sundry things, steroids and diet and things like that. So nobody comes out of that experience, you know, either happy or physically in good shape. Now John McCain has a capacity to bury his own physical limitations like no one you've ever met. He walked out of the hospital at 2 o'clock in the afternoon the day after he got out of brain surgery at 11 o'clock the night before. Nobody's ever done that in the Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale Arizona. But he felt fine. Now, did he feel fine or did he convince you that he felt fine? Ya know?

**QT: 02;30;11;14**

**RICK DAVIS:**



He—he could answer all the questions the doctor said, he was eating well, he exhibited all the outward emotions and intellect and physicality of a healthy person eight hours after he had brain surgery. So they let him go home. Was like, "Go home." I think they're probably tired of him but you never know, right?

**QT: 02;30;34;00**

**RICK DAVIS:**

I mean here's a guy who's gone through enormous physical challenges early in his life and has found a way to accommodate them. You know, his knees were all busted up but he out walks everybody who ever tries to do a campaign event with him. Ya know, his shoulders don't function properly, he can't comb his own hair, but he gets by through the day looking just fine, right?

**QT: 02;30;56;03**

**RICK DAVIS:**

I mean—and you never, ever hear a single word from him about, "Boy, my knee is really sore today." or, "My shoulders are killing me. or, "I didn't get a good night's sleep." or, "That food really upset my stomach." Not one single time does he let any of his physical limitations get in the course of a day and this is the same thing. Ya know, just because he's had seven weeks of chemotherapy and six weeks of radiation and all these other drugs that help cure him of the disease that's attacking him, he'll not let it get in the way of his day. Now, ya know, there are limitations that he has today that he didn't have two months ago but he doesn't let them get in the way of his day.

**QT: 02;31;38;22**

**TITLE**

Flying back to Washington post surgery to vote on the politically charged healthcare bill

**QT: 02;31;44;07**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Well you know, it was the kind of thing where it was a good example of John McCain not knowing his own impact. We'd been talking about getting him back, he's been talking about coming back, right? As far as he was concerned

he should get in a car and drive back immediately just because the doctors having been telling him, "Hey you got this hole in your head and you don't want to get on an airplane, air pockets expand and contract." And so they ban him from getting on a plane for a couple of weeks. He was ready to get back to Washington and go to work. He wanted to get back into the groove. You know, like after failed campaigns for president, he wanted to get back in the senate and get back to work, that was his therapy, best therapy every created, the United States Senate.

**QT: 02;32;26;03**

**RICK DAVIS:**

But we tried explaining to him that this was a big deal, him coming back. The entire world knew that he had a brain tumor and that he was coming back at a time that was highly charged political atmosphere and it was gonna have a bigger impact than just showing up to work again. And I think in his mind, he thought it was just business as usual, right? "I'll just get back, we'll get into the rough and tumble of this vote." And we said, "No, no, no you want to take an opportunity to try and do something with the attention you're gonna get because of the condition you're in and you ought to try to change the attitude of your fellow members of the united states senate and politics in general."

**QT: 02;33;13;02**

**RICK DAVIS:**

So he sat down and we worked through a speech that did just that and so I would say even flying up to Washington that day on the plane, we were talking about just the steps that we're going to be going through, you're gonna get in a car when you get to national airport, they're gonna take you straight to the capital, you're gonna walk in and they will be immersed in a debate about healthcare reform but the senate will go into recess in order for you to address the entire United States Senate.

**QT: 02;33;49;07**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Why would they do that? I said, "Well John, 'cause they expect you back and they expect you to say something to them. They're wanting to hear from you." And I said, "You will receive a standing ovation from 99 other Senators who will all be assembled." "No, no the room will be half empty, nobody will be in there." I said, "John you don't understand. People are there to welcome

you back." So I think he was more shocked by the fact that there were all these people there, they all greeted him enthusiastically than any reaction to the speech. I think it's so unusual for a Senator to yield time to another senator without walking into the cloakroom or going off to do an interview or meeting with their staff. And nobody did that. They stayed there and listened to John McCain.

**QT: 02;34;42;12**

**TITLE**

His immense respect for McCain

**QT: 02;34;47;08**

**RICK DAVIS:**

It's hard not to be proud of John McCain, right? He takes chances that nobody else takes, both with his health to get on a plane and get on Washington, to have an impact. He takes chances with his message, to tell people what they probably need to hear but don't ever want to hear and he does it all because of his insatiable desire to have an impact for the positive. It's hard not to be respectful of that guy.

**QT: 02;35;17;22**

**TITLE**

Demystifying McCain's rebuke of Trump

**QT: 02;35;24;00**

**RICK DAVIS:**

I think too many people make too much about John McCain and the current relationship he has with Donald Trump. John McCain was George W. Bush's worst enemy in the United States Senate in 2001. He voted against the tax cuts, he voted against virtually everything Bush did, it was in the front page of the newspaper all the time. He was a much better advocate for opposition to George W. Bush than the entire Democratic Party was. Barack Obama gets elected president, invites John McCain to the inaugural himself and he attends. What happens?

**QT: 02;35;59;10**

**RICK DAVIS:**

John McCain becomes the number one critic of Barack Obama and his health care plan and many of the other things he did, national policy, foreign policy, national security. So what's the difference today? Probably the difference is Donald Trump fights back. I mean part of the new dynamic isn't that a Senator like John McCain stands up in the World Senate, attacks the president on the policies that he has, but that the president then engages in a Twitter war with that individual as a response. That's what's different. It's not that John McCain has changed; it's that Donald Trump is a different kind of president.

**QT: 02;36;39;22**

**TITLE**

McCain's great speeches

**QT: 02;36;43;18**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Well John McCain has given so many wonderful speeches. They still show new recruits at the naval academy a speech he gave 20 years ago at the forestall series, one that he just reprised last night. I probably shouldn't talk about dates. And there are many. His concession speech in 2008 has been considered one of the great speeches for the transfer of power ever given. So I would say part of what makes the liberty speech so impactful is that it's a message to the world about how we're supposed to get along with each other.

**QT: 02;37;28;13**

**RICK DAVIS:**

So it's a much broader message than I think traditionally given, even though that's in the context of the US political system, it's applicable everywhere. But also at a time when there's so many questions about where we're going, you know, as people in a fight politically to find space and he does it at a time when he knows there's a sunset on his time on earth. And he has very few things to say or time to say and it has that value, it has that impact and he's

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always known how to use the new power he's gotten from presidential campaigns, the excitement of what he's been able to do on issues and at this point in time, the attention he's getting because of his struggle against cancer to try and create good.

**QT: 02;38;21;06**

**TITLE**

What he'll miss most about McCain

**QT: 02;38;28;12**

**RICK DAVIS:**

Him. His presence.

**END TC:**

**QT: 02;38;34;05**