The Basement Interviews
Open Source Politics

Joe Trippi, campaign manager for Howard Dean's 2004 presidential bid, and advocate for Open Source Politics, speaks to Richard Poynder

THE INTERVIEW BEGINS...[1]

RP: Where and when were you born?

JT: I was born in 1956, in Jamestown, New York.[2]

RP: But you grew up in Los Angeles?

JT: My family moved to Los Angeles when I was like three months old.

RP: You lived in single-parent family most of your childhood didn't you?

JT: I did. My parents divorced when I was three years old.

RP: Can you tell me about your family?

JT: My father was from Sicily. He came to the US as a child when his family moved here.

RP: What was your father's occupation?

JT: He had a florists shop in San José, which was a sort of a family tradition: his father owned a flower shop before him. It was that old-school Italian thing where you take over your dad's calling, and it goes through the family sort of thing.

RP: But you didn't follow the tradition.

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[1] The interview took place in 2006
[2] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jamestown%2C_New_York.

JT: No, and that was very stressful [laughs].

RP: So you lived with your mother as a child. Did you see your father much?

JT: No.

RP: You were estranged from him?

JT: Yes, it was a really messy divorce.

RP: What about your mother? Was she also from Sicily?

JT: No. she was Pennsylvania Dutch. She grew up just on the other side of the New York border, in Pennsylvania.

RP: Had her family been in the States for many generations?

JT: Yea, I believe so.

RP: What did your mother do?

JT: She waitressed, usually in two or three restaurants a day.

RP: Life in a single-parent household was tough I guess.

JT: Yes. [laughs] There was a *lot* of poverty.

RP: In your book The Revolution Will not be Televised*, you say that your family was on welfare a number of times. What did that mean? Can you say more about that?*

JT: Well, we didn't have any powdered milk, so it was literally cereal with water in it. And sometimes we had to go and get a welfare cheque to survive. You know, that kind of thing.

RP: You have two brothers and two sisters?

JT: Yes. I was the eldest of five.

SCHOOLING

RP: Tell me about your schooling?

JT: Neither my mom nor my dad, or anybody on either side of the family, had ever gone to college — so I was never encouraged in my schooling. The only reason I even got passing grades was because you needed them to remain eligible for the athletics team, and I was on the track team in high school. I ran the half mile and the third leg of the mile relay.

So schooling just wasn't something that happened around the house, and college for me was totally an accident.

RP: What sort of accident?

JT: There was an African American kid I hung out with at school named Marc Cobb.[3] One day I found him sitting filling out his exam application for college. I asked him what he was doing, and he looked at me like I was an idiot, but immediately got me to fill one out too. Then he dragged me down to take the SAT test.[4]

RP: How did you do?

JT: I blew the test out, both in Math and English.

RP: So you got poor grades at school because your only interest was in doing well enough to stay on the athletics team, but when you did an IQ test it was apparent that you had a lot more potential than people realised?

JT: Right. The SAT test is a classic aptitude test. It tests your aptitude for being able to handle college work. Anyway, I blew it out. I mean literally, I blew it off the map — much to my surprise [laughs], and to the surprise of my mother and my teachers [laughs again].

RP: So you went to college.

JT: Yea, suddenly I was getting letters from colleges saying things like: "You have horrible grades but excellent aptitude. You would be welcome to come here." And I ended up going to San José State[5]

RP: Why San José State?

JT: Because at the time I really wanted to study aeronautical and aerospace engineering, and San José State has got one of the better schools for doing that.[6] So I went to San José State in 1974, and majored in aeronautical engineering.

RP: Why aeronautical engineering?

JT: I think it had a lot to do with Neil Armstrong landing on the moon in 1969.[7]

RP: But you didn't graduate. Why?

JT: Because in 1979 I got a call from Senator Kennedy's operations.[8] They were looking for some of the better political organisers and strategists, and they had decided I was one of the people they wanted to come work for Kennedy.

RP: Quite an honour.

JT: Absolutely. I thought I had died and gone to heaven. The next day I got into my car and drove straight east. Within a day I had forgotten all about lift drag coefficients and that kind of stuff.

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[3] Marc passed away after running a race in Sacramento, California some years ago. http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6747135.
[4] The SAT Reasoning Test, formerly called the Scholastic Aptitude Test and Scholastic Assessment Test, is a type of standardised test frequently used by colleges and universities in the United States to aid in the selection of incoming students. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SAT.
[5] San José State University, commonly shortened to San José State and SJSU, is the founding campus of what became the California State University system. http://www.sjsu.edu.
[6] http://www.engr.sjsu.edu/mae.
[7] Neil Armstrong is a former American astronaut, test pilot, and Naval Aviator who is widely known for being the first human ever to set foot on the Moon. Armstrong's first space flight was as command pilot of Gemini 8 in 1966. On this mission, he performed the first manned docking of two spacecraft together with pilot David Scott. Armstrong's second and last space flight was as mission commander of the Apollo 11 moon landing on July 20th, 1969. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neil_Armstrong.
[8] Edward "Ted" Kennedy is the senior US Senator from Massachusetts, having served since November, 1962. The most prominent living member of the Kennedy family, he is the younger brother of President John F Kennedy and Senator Robert F Kennedy, both of whom were assassinated. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ted_Kennedy.

RP: No regrets then?

JT: I never really looked back. I mean, starting in politics at that level was just too much fun, and too interesting. In fact, when I left I was only about a semester short — not even a year — before I graduated. I just needed to take one more session of classes.

RP: I guess you could have gone back to finish off later on?

JT: Sure, but I could never figure a way to take a year off to go back — I just haven't found the time. I have thought about it of course: I speak on campus at San José quite a bit when I go West, and several times I have asked Terry Christensen (who was my favourite instructor at San José State and is now dean of the political science department there[9]) about completing my degree. "Could I just write a paper or two, or is there some ways to get those credits to finish?," I sometimes ask him. But he just looks at me, and says, "You don't need one, you idiot."

RENAISSANCE MAN

RP: You have always been interested in technology haven't you?

JT: Absolutely. I have always been this weird combination. When I was at San José State, for instance, one day I would be in the basement of the physics lab, trying to get as much time as I could on red beam lasers[10] in order to make holograms[11] (This is back when very few people knew what a hologram was), or breaking into the computer lab and making up number 2 pencil cards[12] on an IBM mainframe.

The next day I would be taking on Bank of America, or starting the alternative campus newspaper — *The Independent Weekly* — in order to do battle with the official campus newspaper *Spartan Daily*[13]; because I was always politically active too.

RP: And that was why you got the call from the Kennedy campaign?

JT: It was. So I have always been driven by two things: technology and politics. For that reason my campus advisor — a guy named Louie Parrozi — used to call me the Renaissance Man.

RP: What is it about technology that excites you?

JT: I've always had this inner desire to change the world. And I really mean that: It was a real, "I am going to do something to change the world damn it" kind of attitude. That's what drove me towards politics, and it was the same attitude that drove me towards technology.

RP: So it wasn't a fascination with the technology per se*, but with its potential to change the world?*

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[9] http://www.sjsu.edu/depts/PoliSci/faculty/christensen/christensen.htm.
[10] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laser.
[11] Holography is the science of producing holograms; it is an advanced form of photography that allows an image to be recorded in three dimensions. Holography was invented over Easter, 1947 by Hungarian physicist Dennis Gabor, for which he received the Nobel Prize in physics in 1971, but the field did not really advance until the discovery of the laser in 1960. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hologram.
[12] Presumably a reference to Mark sense cards. Mark sense was a trade name used by IBM for punched card technology that allowed cards marked with a pencil to be converted into punched cards. This allowed persons to record punched card data with only a pencil. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_sense.
[13] http://www.thespartandaily.com.

JT: Sure. When I looked at technology I would see this amazing thing that was changing humanity, changing the way the world worked. So technology was one way I could dedicate myself to changing the world; the other, obviously, was politics. And for whatever reason — at least by the time I was in my mid-20s, or early 20s — politics won out. However, my interest in technology never went away, although obviously it never stopped me being interested in politics.

RP: And indeed your career has tended to oscillate between those two interests.

JT: Right. So politics was my number one focus for a while, and technology was my number two focus. Then in the late 80s and early 90s, politics fell to number two for me; and I started to get back into technology more: it became my number one focus.

So they have both always been sort of competing for my time. Maybe you could call it a bi-polar disorder [laughs]. I don't know any other way to explain it!

RP: Your first experience with computers was with a mainframe was it?

JT: Yea. In the early days I was mainly doing stuff on the school mainframe, doing the punch card stuff and so on.

Later I had a Trash 80.[14] You know, the first computer you could walk around with, which was sold in Radio Shack.[15] It had those cups.[16] I just remember thinking how cool that was.

RP: When did you first encounter Open Source software?

JT: Well back then it was all Open Source. You used DOS and you had to write code, or at least understand code, and it was all transparent.

RP: I think you are saying that at one time all software was considered Open Source. Some would disagree with that?[17]

JT: What I am saying is that originally if you wanted to use a personal computer you had to write in BASIC,[18] or something similar. While it wasn't quite what Open Source means today it was a lot closer to Open Source than Windows is.[19]

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[14] The TRS-80 was Tandy Corporation's desktop microcomputer model line, and sold through Tandy's RadioShack stores, in the late-1970s and 1980s. Hobbyists, home users, and small-businesses were the intended consumers. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TRS-80.

[15] RadioShack Corporation (formerly Tandy Corporation) runs a chain of electronics retail stores in the United States, as well as parts of Europe, Central America and South America. Radio Shack introduced the TRS-80 in 1977, which was one of the first mass-produced personal computers. Affectionately known as the *Trash-80*, the machine became a big hit. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RadioShack.

[16] The TRS-80 could be used with a modem by means of two cups that held the receiver (handset) to allow the transmission of audio signals.

[17] In his interview with me co-founder of the Open Source Initiative, Eric Raymond, said "[I]t would be wrong to imply that there was this Free Software Eden in which most software was free and then suddenly it wasn't." http://poynder.blogspot.com/2006/03/interview-with-eric-raymond.html. In their book, *Information Feudalism*, however, Peter Drahos and John Braithwhaite argue that in the 1960s IBM very deliberately made the source code of its software freely available, but in 1983 it changed tack and began to withhold source code. *Information Feudalism, Who Owns the Knowledge Economy?* Peter Drahos and John Braithwhaite, Earthscan, 2002, p. 170. http://www.amazon.com/Information-Feudalism-Peter-Drahos/dp/1565848047.

[18] In computer programming, BASIC (an acronym for Beginner's All-purpose Symbolic Instruction Code) refers to a family of high-level programming languages. It was originally designed in 1963, by John George Kemeny and Thomas Eugene Kurtz at Dartmouth College, to provide access for non-science students to computers. At the time, nearly all computer use required writing custom software, which was something only scientists and mathematicians tended to do. The language (in one variant or another) became widespread on home microcomputers in the 1980s, and remains popular to this day in a handful of heavily evolved dialects. Microsoft BASIC was the foundation product of Microsoft. It first appeared in 1975 as Altair BASIC, which was the first BASIC (and indeed the first high level programming language) available for the MITS Altair 8800 hobbyist microcomputer. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BASIC_programming_language.

RP: Windows came later of course.[20]

JT: And I must have first encountered Windows around 1984 or 1985.

RP: But the first computer you personally owned was a TRS-80?

JT: It was. And later I bought a PDP-11.

RP: Wow, a DEC PDP-11. That was a minicomputer, not a personal computer.

JT: And I guess I was one of the very first ordinary citizens to actually put one in my house!

RP: In your book you describe how you used a DEC computer during the 1981 campaign to elect Tom Bradley[21] as governor of California?[22]

JT: Yea, that was the same machine; that was the DEC I bought.

RP: That was the first time a computer was used in an election campaign was it?

JT: Oh, yes, that was definitely the first time a computer was used in an election campaign.

RP: That's quite something: You bought a mini computer out of your own money to use in a political campaign. Why?

JT: Because the campaign wouldn't pay for it. They thought I was nuts. "Are you crazy," they said. "What do you mean, computer? The way we do it is we use 3 x 5 cards and shoe leather." But I went ahead anyway, and computerised the entire campaign.

RP: In doing so you were able to predict that Bradley had lost the election before the result was called, even though all the exit numbers were indicating that he had won.

JT: That's right. [Trippi becomes distracted, as if focusing on something, or someone, else at the same time as speaking into the phone].

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[19] Drahos and Braithwaite argue that in the 1980s IBM "led a global campaign pushing for the recognition of copyright over software." In fact, in 1976 Microsoft's Bill Gates had written a much-cited letter to computer hobbyists asking them to stop swapping copies of Altair BASIC. "The feedback we have gotten from the hundreds of people who say they are using BASIC has all been positive," he said. "Two surprising things are apparent, however, 1) Most of these 'users' never bought BASIC (less than 10% of all Altair owners have bought BASIC), and 2) The amount of royalties we have received from sales to hobbyists makes the time spent on Altair BASIC worth less than $2 an hour. Why is this? As the majority of hobbyists must be aware, most of you steal your software. Hardware must be paid for, but software is something to share. Who cares if the people who worked on it get paid? Is this fair?" http://www.digibarn.com/collections/newsletters/homebrew/V2_01/gatesletter.html.

[20] Microsoft Windows is a family of operating systems by Microsoft. Microsoft first introduced an operating environment named Windows in November 1985 as an add-on to MS-DOS in response to the growing trend of graphical user interfaces (GUI) popularized by the Macintosh. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microsoft_Windows.

[21] Thomas "Tom" Bradley was the mayor of Los Angeles, California from 1973 to 1993 (five terms) and only the second African American mayor of a major US city. He unsuccessfully ran for governor in 1982 and 1986. In 1982 he was narrowly defeated by then California Attorney General George Deukmejian. On election night, in fact, a number of news organisations made early projections that Bradley had won. In the final tally, however, Deukmejian carried the day by fewer than 53,000 votes. Bradley ran against Deukmejian again in 1986, but the governor won that election by a 61%-37% margin.

[22] In his book Trippi relates how he spend $17,000 for the DEC, which he then leased to the campaign for $500 a month. Trippi, *supra*, p. 23

COMMON PURPOSE

RP: Ok. Let's move on to politics. In your book you describe the effect on you of the 1968 shooting of Bobby Kennedy — the brother of Edward and John Kennedy. That was the incident that first fired your interest in politics was it?

JT: Yea.

RP: Were you too young to remember his older brother, President Kennedy, being shot?[23]

JT: Oh, no, I definitely remember that: that was a really searing experience in my childhood, and I remember every detail of it — although maybe I wasn't old enough to fully understand what had happened.

But I do definitely remember JFK being shot. And I remember when the funeral was shown on television I kept asking my mom, "Why are they giving that lady a flag?[24] You know, they folded the flag up at the funeral, and gave it to Jacqueline Kennedy?[25]

That was the level of my understanding then. But with Bobby I was older, and so I understood what was going on a lot better.

RP: What was the significance of Bobby's shooting for you personally?

JT: Well, I remember how he gave a speech in Indianapolis right after Martin Luther King was shot.[26] I remember watching it on television, and being struck at how Bobby could pull all these people together at the very moment when there was so much despair: how he argued that we could work together, and have a common purpose, and a common cause.

It was at that moment — right after the death of Martin Luther King, when I was listening to Bobby Kennedy — that I said to myself for the first time: "That is what I want to help try to do. What Bobby Kennedy is talking about right now."

RP: Bobby Kennedy became a role model for you?

JT: Exactly. And during the 1968 campaign I started watching everything he did, every step he took, every stop he made. I watched him every night on the news.

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[23] The assassination of John F Kennedy, the thirty-fifth President of the United States, took place on Friday, November 22nd, 1963, in Dallas, Texas, USA at 12:30 p.m. Central Standard Time. Kennedy was fatally wounded by gunshots while riding with his wife in a presidential motorcade through Dealey Plaza. He was the fourth US President to be assassinated. An official investigation into the shooting by the Warren Commission was conducted over a 10-month period, and its report was published in September 1964. The Commission concluded that the assassination was carried out solely by Lee Harvey Oswald, an employee of the Texas School Book Depository in Dealey Plaza. This conclusion initially met with widespread support among the American public, but polling in recent years shows a majority of that public now hold beliefs contrary to the Commission's findings. A later official investigation by the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) was conducted from 1976 to 1979, and it concluded that Kennedy was assassinated by Oswald "probably... as a result of a conspiracy". The assassination is still the subject of widespread speculation, and has spawned a number of Kennedy assassination theories.

[24] After the funeral servicemen who had accompanied the President's body rigidly holding the flag over the casket folded the flag and presented it to Mrs. Kennedy after the playing of "Taps".
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_funeral_of_John_F._Kennedy.

[25] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacqueline_Kennedy_Onassis.

[26] On April 4th 1968 during a campaign stop in Indianapolis, Kennedy learned of the assassination of Martin Luther King. During a heartfelt, impromptu speech in Indianapolis' inner city, Kennedy called for reconciliation between the races.
http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/robertkennedyonmartinlutherking.html

So I had all this hope, and then he won.[27] And I remember being very excited on election night while we were watching his speech. Then, just minutes later, while he was walking through the kitchen he was shot dead.[28]

RP: It was a key moment in your political education then?

JT: Absolutely. And at that point I had two choices. I could say: "Well that's that", or I could say, "Hell, I want to be somebody who follows in Bobby Kennedy's shadow, doing what he did — and trying to get done what he had been trying to do."

So that was the effect his shooting had on me, and I decided, "Ok, it's up to me and everybody else to try to do follow his example — because we've lost him now."

RP: When you say you wanted to follow the example of Bobby Kennedy you are talking about trying to get everyone to come together to work for a common purpose — presumably with the aim of creating a fair and equitable society?

JT: Right. In common purpose. And that, by the way, is what happens when people collaborate over Linux. There is a sense of, "We are all in this together." That kind of thing.

RP: I hope to come on to how your joint interests in politics and technology eventually came together. But can we first talk about your early activism, which I believe began at San José State when you were asked if you would stand for the Student Council. In your book you say that you were approached by "a guy with hair down to his ass" called Dennis Driver?[29]

JT: Yes. Yes. [laughs].

RP: And to your surprise you were elected?

JT: And I was the only guy in his party that won; everybody else lost!

RP: This of course was in 1974, when students were somewhat more radical that today. Activism was more a way of life on campuses then.

JT: Oh yes, definitely [laughs].

RP: As I understand it, your early politics didn't exactly help you repair your relationship with your father. As a student activist, for instance, you were involved in a campaign to boycott Bank of America. This directly affected your father didn't it?[30]

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[27] On June 4th, 1968, Kennedy scored a major victory in his drive toward the Democratic presidential nomination when he won primaries in South Dakota and in California. He addressed his supporters in the early morning hours of June 5th in a ballroom at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. He left the ballroom through a service area to greet supporters working in the hotel's kitchen. In a crowded kitchen passageway, Sirhan B Sirhan, a 24-year-old Palestinian, fired a .22 calibre revolver directly into the crowd surrounding Kennedy. Six people were wounded, including Kennedy, who was shot in the head at close range. After being wounded, Kennedy remained conscious for about 20 minutes. During that time, he was heard to say, "Is everybody all right?" He was taken to Central Receiving Hospital and then Good Samaritan Hospital for emergency brain surgery. He died there at the age of 42 in the early morning hours of June 6, 1968. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bobby_Kennedy.

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[29] Trippi, *supra*, p. 7.

[30] Trippi was critical of Bank of America "for supporting apartheid by doing business in South Africa." Trippi, *supra*, p.10.

JT: Yea [laughs]. He didn't like that!

RP: Why?

JT: Well, the business loan he had to run his flower shop was with Bank of America. They … hold on one second …

[Trippi speaks to someone in his office: "Tell him I really want to talk to him but I'm on this call. Say I'll call him as soon as I've finished, and ask where I can reach him… it will be an hour or so, OK?"]

… Sorry. Where were we?

RP: You were saying that your father didn't like you boycotting his bank. The bank complained to him about you didn't it?

JT: Yes. They said something along the lines of: "Hey, can't you stop your son doing this." So he came to me and said: "They are asking me whether or not I can control my son." I replied, "Well tell them you can't." It was that kind of thing![31]

RP: Your first experience of a real political campaign was in 1975, after being angered by a San José Mercury News *story predicting that a candidate called Iola Williams could never win a seat on the San José City Council because she was black. You offered to canvass for her.*

JT: And for me that was very much following in the shadow of Bobby, and of Martin Luther King. Here was this woman — an African American woman — who everybody was saying couldn't win because she was black. So my response was very much in same spirit as Bobby: I just felt I had to do something about it.

RP: The predictions were right however: she did lose.

JT: That time, yes. But she got on the Council in the end.

RP: It was as a result of your having made a name for yourself as an activist in California that you were recruited to Edward Kennedy's 1980 presidential campaign. And you subsequently went on to work on seven presidential campaigns. Clearly, you've had a lot of experience as a political activist. In your book you say that the process of electing politicians has deteriorated.

JT: Oh, sure.

RP: And you point the finger of blame at television, which you say has transformed the traditional campaign — where real people met together at caucuses, and at other public venues, and talked about the issues — into a top-down, one-directional process where a politician, or a TV ad, broadcasts to a passive audience, and so people never become engaged with the issues.

JT: The point about television is that it just this thing that blathers at us. There is no communication, and we don't have conversations.

RP: You argue that this process began with President Nixon's Checkers Speech?[32]

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[31] Trippi was a little evasive about this incident, but in her [profile of him](#) DaPaulo implies that Trippi was directly involved in boycotting his father's own shop as part of the campaign against Bank of America.

[32] The "Checkers speech" was given by Richard Nixon on September 23rd, 1952, when he was the Republican candidate for the Vice Presidency. The speech, broadcast nationwide from the El Capitan Theatre in Hollywood, was one of the first political uses of television to appeal directly to the populace. Nixon, who had been accused of accepting $18,000 in illegal campaign contributions, gave a live address to the nation in which he revealed the results of an independent audit that was conducted on his finances, exonerating him of any malfeasance. The money, he asserted, did not go to him for personal use, nor did it count

JT: I do. And to understand the difference you only need to think about the contrast between Harry Truman's barnstorming train trip across the country in 1948[33] with the Eisenhower campaign just a few years later.

RP: How do you mean?

JT: When Harry Truman travelled across the country at every place he stopped people got up out of their homes, went down to the train station and sat waiting in a crowd together. While they were waiting they talked to each other.

Then the train pulled in and they watched Truman speak. And after the train pulled out of the station they all stood there for a while again and talked to each again. "What do you think? they would ask. "Is he right?" That kind of thing. Then they went home.

RP: So instead of being asked to choose a candidate by means of a TV ad — as if the candidate were a bar of soap, or breakfast cereal — they would see him or her in the flesh, and share opinions about the issues with neighbours?

JT: And at each place Truman stopped 1,500 or 2,000 people would listen to him, and all together nine million Americans saw their president that way. In the process a huge socialisation process went on.

Just four years later, however, in 1952, Eisenhower[34] became the first president to talk to nine million people at one time. And to do that he didn't take a train, and he didn't travel around the country: he just looked into a camera.

So although Eisenhower also talked to nine million Americans, this time he did so while they were sitting at home, alone; or maybe with their wife or partner. This time there were no people standing at the train station talking about what's going on in the town, or the neighbourhood, or any of that stuff.

RP: Which means that there is far less discussion of political issues today?

JT: It does. And this is not just about politics: with television there is no common experience any more. And it's getting worse.

RP: In what way?

JT: The last true common experience Americans have is to all sit and watch something on television at the same time. So you can go into work the next day and say: "Hey did you see the last episode of *Everybody Loves Raymond*[35] last night, that final episode; did you see it? What do you think?"

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as income, but rather as reimbursement for expenses. He followed with a complete financial history of his personal assets, finances, and debts, including his mortgages, life insurance, and loans, all of which had the effect of painting him as living a rather austere lifestyle. He denied that his wife Pat had a mink coat, instead she wore a "respectable Republican cloth coat." The one contribution he admitted receiving was from a Texas travelling salesman named Lou Carrol who gave his family a cocker spaniel, which his daughter named "Checkers." Nixon admitted that this gift could be made into an issue by some, but maintained that he didn't care, stating "the kids, like all kids, love the dog and I just want to say this right now, that regardless of what they say about it, we're gonna keep it." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Checkers_speech.

[33] Harry S Truman was the thirty-third President of the United States between 1945 and 1953. As Vice President, he succeeded to the office upon the death of Franklin D Roosevelt, and won a second term in 1948. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_S._Truman.

[34] Dwight David "Ike" Eisenhower was an American soldier and politician. During World War II, he served as Supreme Commander of the Allied forces in Europe, with responsibility for planning and supervising the successful invasion of France and Germany in 1944-45. In 1949 he became the first supreme commander of NATO. As a Republican, he was elected the 34th President of the United States (1953–1961). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eisenhower.

[35] http://www.everybodylovesray.com

Now the TiVo,[36] is taking that last common experience away. Two years from now when you go into work and ask your co-workers if they saw a popular show that had been broadcast the night before they will probably say, "Oh, no I TiVoed it for Thursday. Don't tell me what happened."

So the isolation that television has created is getting worse and worse.

RP: And this is important in the context of politics because politics is a social activity; and in order to have "a common purpose and a common cause" (as Bobby Kennedy believed) it is essential for people to talk to each other and to reach some kind of consensus?

JT: And they have to collaborate and work together in order to achieve common goals.

RP: You describe television as "just this thing that blathers at you", and you contrast today's broadcast method of political communication with the old caucus system,[37] where much greater stress was placed on people meeting together and talking about politics. In your book, however, you also point out that some politicians have tried to use television more interactively. In 1991, for instance, Governor Jerry Brown[38] appeared in a televised debate, and every time he was asked a question he held up a sign with an 800 number on it. The aim was to have people phone in to his campaign headquarters?

JT: Sure. But apart from the people who did respond to that 800 number I don't think anybody understood what Jerry Brown's campaign was really about.

RP: What was it about?

JT: It was an attempt to allow people to become part of something bigger than themselves, a way of collectively achieving something — instead of all pulling at the fabric in different directions.[39]

RP: Because humans are social animals, and have a need to collaborate?

JT: Yes. And so I believe there is a hunger in each of us to be part of a community, to be part of something bigger than ourselves. It's something that is intrinsic to the American spirit and, hopefully, to the spirit of all humans.

The problem is that we have somehow lost the ability to tap into that, and so that hunger is being squandered, or lost.

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[36] TiVo is a popular brand of digital video recorder (DVR) in the United States. It is a consumer video device which allows users to capture television programming to internal hard disk storage for later viewing (sometimes called "time shifting"). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tivo.

[37] In the United States, a caucus is a meeting of local members of a political party or subgroup to nominate candidates, plan policy, etc., in the Congress of the United States or other similar representative organs of government. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caucus.

[38] Edmund Gerald "Jerry" Brown, Jr., outgoing mayor of the city of Oakland, California, was elected Attorney General for the state of California on November 7th 2006. Brown is an American lawyer and political figure. A Democrat, he has had a lengthy political career spanning terms on the Los Angeles Community College Board of Trustees , as California Secretary of State, as governor of California, as chairman of the California Democratic Party, and as mayor of Oakland. He unsuccessfully sought the Democratic nominations for president in 1976, 1980, and 1992, and was the Democratic nominee for the US Senate in 1982.

[39] In addition to helping people feel part of something bigger, Brown also collected around $5 million in small donations for his campaign.

THE LINUX OF CAMPAIGNING

RP: Let's fast-forward to 2004, and the Dean campaign. In your book you say that when you were asked to become campaign manager you were reluctant, not least because of the sheer degree of emotional energy and drive needed to manage a presidential campaign.

JT: So it's not a decision you make lightly.

RP: You wrote that you were eventually convinced that you should take on the job after you heard Dean say to someone at a political meeting: "We have a responsibility to each other."[40] At that point, you say, you "fell in love with him"?

JT: Yes [laughs].

RP: It was the community thing again then; and the need you see for people to work together. This is important to you presumably because as a child you had seen the value of people helping each other, not least perhaps by providing welfare cheques. If the collective — the community — won't take responsibility for those who are disadvantaged then who will?

JT: Exactly. That's exactly right.

RP: Nevertheless, in taking on the Dean campaign you were backing a rank outsider. No one expected him to win, and when you arrived in Vermont[41] there were only around 432 Dean Supporters, and just $98,000 in the bank.

JT: That's true. But by the end of the campaign we had signed up 650,000 folks, and I think we had raised $59 million.[42]

RP: How would those numbers compare with a typical presidential campaign? How many supporters would a candidate traditionally expect to sign up?

JT: Well the next biggest figure prior to the Dean campaign would have been John McCain[43] in 2000. He signed up 40,000. So what we achieved was pretty incredible.

The point to stress is that what happened in the Dean campaign — and forget my being involved for a moment — was that it was probably one of the most amazing things that has ever happened in presidential politics.

RP: And it was possible because you used the Internet to create a sense of community, utilising techniques that you call Open Source Politics?

JT: Right. And one of the reasons I finally decided to work on the Dean campaign was because I saw the opportunity was there; and I could see that Howard was open to that opportunity.

RP: You sensed that Howard Dean would allow you to experiment with Open Source Politics?

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[40] Trippi describes how Dean was explaining why he was running for President in a house in Linn County, Iowa, during which he said, "I'm running because it's not enough to want health care for my kid or health care for your kid. We have a responsibility as American citizens, a responsibility to each other, to provide health care for those kids from Oklahoma and Minnesota and Arizona …" Trippi added, "And that was the moment he got me." Trippi, *supra.,* p. 64

[41] Dean's campaign was run out of his home town of Burlington, in the State of Vermont.

[42] The OpenSecrets.org web site estimates the figure at $52,968,040. Kerry went on to raise $328,479,245 and Bush $367,228,801. http://www.opensecrets.org/presidential/summary.asp?ID=N00025663.

[43] John McCain III is an American leading candidate for the Republican presidential nomination in 2008. McCain has been a US Senator from Arizona since 1987, winning re-election in 1992, 1998, and 2004. He was a presidential candidate in the 2000 election, but was defeated in the Republican primary by George W Bush. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_McCain.

JT: And that's why I don't think I would have gone to work for John Kerry,[44] or any of the other candidates — not because of their politics, but because they wouldn't have allowed the Open Source campaign to happen.

RP: Although the Kerry campaign learned a lot from the Dean campaign perhaps?

JT: No. In reality they never did — even when they started trying to copy the Dean campaign they never really understood what it was about. They thought it was simply putting up a web site and asking for money.

The point about Howard was that when I talked to him about Open Source Politics he really got it. I'm not saying it was like he had always been thinking about it, but when I started talking to him about it he said, "Yea, I can see that"; or "Sure, I'd let you try to do that". It was that attitude that was really critical to my making the decision to join the Campaign.

RP: Ok, so what is Open Source Politics?

JT: It's about enabling the real collaboration of the citizens with the campaign. It is the Linux of campaigning. That's the best way I can talk about it — in terms of the technology.

RP: Open Source software is about making the code that runs a program freely available so that other programmers can adapt it, and contribute to its developments.[45]

JT: Which contrasts with proprietary software, where the code is non-transparent and others cannot change it. So you could say that we have been using a Microsoft-style closed system of politics for years and years and years, and that system has been pretty much a monopoly.

Open Source Politics, by contrast is more open and collaborative. It's a kind of "all of us in this together" spontaneous Linux version of politics. So a citizen in San Antonio Texas, for instance, can input a bright idea that actually changes the complexion of the campaign. That happened to us all the time.

RP: Open Source Politics enables civic engagement in the campaign process?

JT: Yes. And it's decentralised. So it's realising that the 60 people in the national headquarters are not the smartest people in the world, and allowing your 650,000 supporters to all put their ideas in the pot too.[46]

RP: Anyone can make suggestions as to how the campaign is organised and run?

JT: And I give some examples in my book.[47] There was the time, for instance, when we created the Dean for New Hampshire signs, and discovered we had screwed up because we didn't have signs for supporters in Puerto Rico and London.

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[44] John Kerry is the junior United States Senator from Massachusetts. As the nominee of the Democratic Party in 2004, he was beat Howard Dean to get the nomination but was subsequently unsuccessful in his bid to unseat the Presidential incumbent George W Bush. He is a potential candidate for the Democratic Party presidential nomination in 2008. As the eventual Presidential nominee of the Democratic Party, he was defeated the Republican incumbent, President George W. Bush. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Kerry.

[45] Open Source software is computer software whose source code is available under a copyright license that permits users to study, change, and improve the software, and to redistribute it in modified or unmodified form. It is the most prominent example of Open Source development. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_source_software.

[46] In his book Trippi puts it this way, "It became pretty obvious quickly that a couple of dozen sleep-deprived political junkies couldn't possibly match the brainpower and resourcefulness of six hundred thousand Americans. We couldn't see every hole and every flaw that they could see." Trippi, *supra,* p. 146. Or, in the terminology of Eric Raymond, talking about Open Source Software, "Given enough eyeballs, all bugs are shallow." http://catb.org/~esr/writings/cathedral-bazaar/cathedral-bazaar.

RP: But Dean Supporters fixed it. [48]

JT: So with the Dean campaign it wasn't one person calling the shots so much as 650,000 people knowing that if they had a good idea they could throw it in the pot, and there was a good chance that the national headquarters would grab it, and go with it.

RP: Open Source Politics is also about being transparent about your goals.

JT: Absolutely.

RP: A great example of that transparency I guess was when you opened up the campaign finance books, and shared with the world your fund-raising objectives. You also put up images of baseball bats on the web site to show how close the campaign was to meeting its quarterly target?[49] As you put it in your book, the aim was "to take this thing all the way to Open Source, put the code out there and see if the people could improve it, the way they had with the posters and software[50] and all the less significant aspects of the campaign."

JT: That was revolutionary because we were the first campaign to say how much money we needed to raise. Every campaign is trained to never say how much they are going to raise in a quarter.

RP: Why?

JT: Because if you don't make it the press will say, "Oh well, he expected to raise $20 million, and he only raised $9 million. His campaign is clearly faltering." That is what happens. So in a traditional campaign you would never say out loud to your supporters: "We are going to try to raise $7 million this quarter: what are some good ways to do that?" Because if you say you are going to raise $7 million and you don't make it the press and your opponents beat you with your failure.

But we went the opposite way: We told everybody exactly what we needed to do, and asked everybody for ideas about how to get there; what to do.

RP: And what you discovered was that by telling supporters how much money you hope to raise you motivate them to do more to help you reach your goal.

JT: Exactly, because they were part of it now; it wasn't some state secret held up in the campaign headquarters. So we'd say, "Let's try to raise this much by next week. What are your ideas? Can you help us get there?" And then we reported literally every single dollar that came in, real time, on the site.

Of course, that meant that it wasn't only our friends who could see what was going on, but our opponents too. So they thought we were crazy to start talking openly with our supporters about how much we needed, and try to work together with them on our strategy.

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[47] Perhaps the best example given by Trippi in his book is when he describes how supporters helped design the DeanLink software. A version of the social software Friendster, this allowed people to link together based on their mutual interests. Trippi, *supra.,* p. 139.

[48] At one point the Dean campaign put up fifty state signs on its web site for supports to download and print out. Three minutes after doing so, says Trippi, "an e-mail came from someone in Puerto Rico: 'Hey you guys screwed up. You forgot Puerto Rico'." So the campaign team added Puerto Rico. A little later they had a request from someone in London for an "Americans Abroad for Howard Dean" poster too. Supporters also downloaded campaign fliers, improved them and sent them back to campaign headquarters. Trippi, *supra*, p. 116/7.

[49] http://www.gwu.edu/~action/2004/money/webfund0903.html.

[50] When the campaign decided to produce its own version of Meetup.com software — which it called GetLocal — supporters not only suggested features, but wrote software code and sent it in. Trippi, *supra.,* p. 117. Meetup.com helps people find others who share their interest or cause, and form lasting, influential, local community groups that regularly meet face-to-face. http://www.meetup.com

RP: A critical moment of this strategy was when you held an online referendum to decide whether or not to opt out of federal matching funds.

JT: So we didn't go out and hold a press conference, and say: "We are opting out. Hey now, everybody, give us a lot of money." It was more like, "You make the decision with us."

THE FIRST TIME

RP: And the decision was not to take matching funds. That was a very risky strategy for a Democratic candidacy.

JT: Oh, yea, sure. It was the first time it was ever done by a Democratic campaign.

RP: Just to check my understanding: the issue of federal funding is that presidential candidates can choose to take money from the State to help fund their campaign, but if they do so the amount of money they can then spend on the campaign is limited?[51]

JT: Exactly right. If you opt in to federal funds during a primary election[52] you can spend only $45 million. The second you spent over $45 million you are in violation. If, however, you opt out — as Bush also did — you can spend whatever you like.

RP: What does this mean in practice?

JT: Well, in the 2000 primary Gore stayed in. That meant that Bush ended up raising $100 million compared to Gore's $45 million. And if you look at how close the Gore/Bush election was, that $45 million to $100 million difference is probably how Bush won.[53] Obviously Dean didn't last, but if he had who knows….

RP: By opting out of federal funding you were once again breaking with tradition.

JT: And all the other campaigns thought we were absolutely crazy to do that too. But after we had decided to do so, the Kerry campaign looked at all their data and realised that they had to do it too — not to catch Bush, but because if they didn't do it they would never be able to compete with us.

So five days later the Kerry Campaign opted out as well. And if you talk to the Kerry people today they will tell you that it was the smartest thing they ever did — because if they hadn't they would have been almost penniless from March on, and Bush would have really destroyed them. Instead, Kerry ended up staying toe-to-toe with Bush.

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[51] In November 2003, after a much-publicised online vote among his followers, Dean became the first Democrat to forgo federal matching funds (and the spending limits that go with them) since the system was established in 1974. (John Kerry later followed his lead.) In addition to state-by-state spending limits for the primaries, the system limits a candidate to spending only $44.6 million until the Democratic National Convention in July, which sum would almost certainly run out soon after the early primary season. (George W Bush declined federal matching funds in 2000 and did so again for the 2004 campaign.) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Howard_Dean.

[52] A primary election is an election in which voters in a jurisdiction select candidates for a subsequent election (nominating primary). Primaries are common in the United States, but are generally rare elsewhere in the world. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primary_election.

[53] The United States presidential election of 2000 was one of the closest Presidential elections in United States history. On election night, November 7th, the media prematurely declared a winner twice based on exit polls and faulty data before finally deciding that the Florida race was too close to call. It would turn out to be a month before the election was finally certified after numerous court challenges and recounts. Republican candidate George W Bush was awarded Florida's 25 electoral votes after the last recount showed him having won by a razor-thin margin of 537 votes, thereby defeating Democratic candidate Al Gore despite Gore having won the popular vote. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_2000.

In short, Kerry wouldn't have been able to keep up with Bush if we hadn't forced him to opt out.

RP: What was revolutionary about Dean opting out was that it demonstrated that Democrats could aspire to raising as much money as the Republicans. This had been assumed to be impossible because the Republicans are viewed as the party of the rich, and so are able to attract much larger donations. What the Dean Campaign discovered was that using the Internet it was possible to attract thousands of small donations. The trick is to convince enough small guys to support you.

JT: Yes, that's the issue.[54]

RP: Your Open Source approach was hugely successful. Nevertheless you faced a lot of resistance from other members of the Dean Campaign didn't you?

JT: Oh, yes. Even though Howard was open to it, and encouraged it, there were elements within the Campaign that took the view that politics has always been done in a certain way, and we should carry on doing it that way.

Besides, many of the campaign staff didn't know what Open Source was. Some hadn't even ever used the Internet, let alone thought about running an Open Source Campaign!

So it took me a good three months to change the culture of the Dean Campaign.

RP: Can you give me an example of the kind of resistance you faced?

JT: Just trying to get a link to MeetUp.com[55] put up on our web site, a link simply saying "Here is a link to MeetUp.com, go meetup for Howard Dean," took me two weeks — and I mean literally two weeks — of screaming.

JT: Every day I would come in and it wouldn't be up, so I would go talk to the web team and they would tell me that the legal department had stopped it, on the grounds that they thought it was illegal. I would go, "How could it be illegal to put a link up?" So I would have to go and fight that battle, and then when I came back I would find that somebody else had stopped it. By January 2003, however, we had finally got the MeetUp links in place, and 1,000s of people had started to sign up to meetup for Howard Dean.

The last person to fall, by the way, was Sarah Buxton our scheduler. I razz[56] her about this till this day, but she absolutely thought that we were all crazy.[57]

RP: Getting Sarah to agree that Dean should himself turn up at a meetup was another turning point in making the Dean Campaign Open Source wasn't it?

JT: It was.

RP: How did you manage that?

JT: I waited until the last minute before going to see Sarah, and said: "Where is Howard on Wednesday night?"

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[54] Trippi expands on this point later.
[55] MeetUp.com is an online social networking portal that facilitates offline group meetings in various localities around the world. Meetup allows members to find and join groups unified by a common interest, such as politics, books, games, movies, health, pets, careers or hobbies. Users enter their ZIP code (or their city outside the United States) and the topic they want to meet about, and the website helps them arrange a place and time to meet. http://www.meetup.com.
[56] i.e. tease. http://www.google.com/search?sourceid=navclient-ff&ie=UTF-8&rlz=1B2GGGL_enGB177&q=define%3A+razz.
[57] By March 2004, however, Sarah Buxton was blogging herself! http://www.blogforamerica.com/archives/004015.html.

She said "He's in New York."

"Great, because that is meetup night," I said. "I am going to find out whereabouts the meetup in New York is, and he is going to stop there."

She said, "Oh, no he's not. You are crazy; we are not going to send him to some stupid meetup."

So we were like, "No he's not!", "Yes he is!"

But I argued, and argued, and argued, and I screamed, and I screamed, and Sarah did everything she could to stop me. She would hide the schedule, but I would find it and schedule Howard to attend. Three hours later I would check and it would be off the schedule again. Sarah, by the way, is a stubborn Irish redhead.

Finally, I went in to see her again and I said, "Just do it one time; one time only. You can tell me you told me so if it's a waste of time, but we are going to do it; please just do it; trust me."

Eventually she put it on the schedule and Howard went to the meetup in New York on March 5th 2003.

RP: How did it go?

JT: When Dean pulled up outside the building in New York we found people were standing all around the block, and the line went on forever. There were over 500 people inside, and the fire marshals had had to stop all the other people from entering because it was already way beyond fire code.

That was the night when even Sarah Buxton finally gave way, and said "OK, we are going to trust these people; you're right; let's do it." And after that she became one of the strongest people inside the campaign.

RP: The important point about the meetups was that instead of campaign headquarters organising and orchestrating events, and then inviting supporters, the Dean Campaign let the supporters organise the meetings themselves.

JT: Right. But as I say, it was so hard to change the culture, and convince campaign staff that these meetups were going to become a very important part of our effort, and that we were going to do it differently.

So it took from January until March to get everyone in these various different departments to understand that we were going to be doing the Campaign Open Source, and in as transparent a way as possible — by telling people where we were going, putting the information out on the web site, and letting supporters build events of their own for us, without us telling them what to do.

But you know even to the end there were still four or five key people where you would walk in and say "We are going to do this or that", and they would go like "Why?" So there were some who didn't understand right to the end. Despite all our success there were still doubters.

RP: Another important point about using meetup is that it allows you to link the virtual world with the real world — because although you can organise virtually, with politics it is still very important that people meet each other physically. They need to meet one another in the way they do when attending a traditional caucus, for instance, or in the way they did when they walked to the station to hear Truman speak. And it is important because it provides the social interaction necessary to make people feel that they are working to a common purpose, and collaborating for a mutual good?

JT: And we were the first campaign ever to do that. By the end of the Campaign thousands and thousands of supporters were meeting up like that.

You know, for years people in politics in the States talked about how you could get people to connect on the Internet, but no one could figure out how you then got them to come out from behind their desktops and do something offline. No one could figure that out.

And then all of a sudden MeetUp.com comes along and, within a short space of time, the Dean Campaign had 190,000 people meeting on the first Wednesday of every month, 20 or 30 at a time, in libraries and Starbucks, and private homes around the country.

RP: Eventually the Dean campaign developed its own version of the meetup software didn't it?

JT: Yes, Get Local was basically a clone of MeetUp that we developed internally. That alone gave us another 170,000 supporters.

RP: I think the Call to Action blog was another important plank of the online campaign? A central point where everyone — both campaign staff and supporters — could communicate with one another?

JT: Absolutely**.** Call to Action was the first site by the way. We later retired that, and started Blog for America.[58]

RP: The campaign was to a great extent built around blogs wasn't it. Both the official campaign blog, and the many citizen blogs that also supported Dean. What's so radical about blogs in the context of a political campaign?

JT: They allow everyone to be part of the conversation. Unlike television, which talks one way to millions — or at least thousands — of people, you can have a real conversation on blogs.

THE PLANE CRASHES

RP: The Dean campaign was undoubtedly hugely successful: a complete outsider managed to become a serious contender. But Dean lost the primary to Kerry and so never went head-to-head with Bush. So while the campaign clearly achieved far more than anyone had ever expected it to, it nevertheless ultimately failed. As you put it in your book, "the plane crashed".[59] What went wrong?

JT: A number of things went wrong. But my own view is that we were dead the day of the Tim Russert interview. Do you know what I am talking about?[60]

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[58] Blog for America (www.blogforamerica.com) was the title of the official Howard Dean campaign weblog from March 2003 to March, 2004. It was previously known as the Dean Call To Action blog, the first presidential campaign weblog, founded by Mathew Gross on March 15, 2003, but became BFA when it was rebuilt using Movable Type by Marc Chadwick and Mathew Gross. It is widely recognised as the first effective campaign blog, and is credited (along with the Howard Dean Meetup) with enabling a new paradigm for grassroots campaigning. Using the blog, Dean campaign members were able to effectively communicate with supporters, posting frequent updates on the candidate, his supporters, his organisation, his views, and his detractors. The comments section of Blog for America was noted for high activity and loyalty, and was an effective means of self-organisation for Dean's committed followers. Blog for America was transformed in March, 2004 into the house blog for the grassroots recruitment organisation Democracy for America, paralleling the conversion of the campaign into a Democratic non-profit organisation. Democracy for America was founded by Dean but now run by his brother, [James Dean](). http://www.democracyforamerica.com.

[59] As Trippi puts it in the introduction to his book (date December 2003), "My guy is about to crash and burn in an Iowa cornfield. I can feel it. I have a sense about these things, especially in Iowa. I have a kind of clairvoyance in Iowa. I can smell death in Iowa… After months of scraping and cajoling and pleading just to the plane down the runway, now that they're finally aloft — and the rest of the crew is celebrating — I look out the window and the wings are coming off. And I'm the only one who sees it." [Trippi, *supra.* p. xi]

[60] In the last week of June 2003, Howard Dean was interviewed by NBC journalist Tim Russert in *Meet the Press*. An event that Trippi characterises in his book (p. 127) as "an unmitigated disaster, a head-on train wreck." — most notably because Dean conceded he did not know how many active duty personnel were in the US military, and how many were stationed in Iraq.

RP: In June 2003 Dean was interviewed by Tim Russert on Meet the Press[61]— an interview you describe in your book as a "head-on train wreck". Most embarrassingly, Dean was unable to tell Russert how many US soldiers there were in Iraq.

JT: So what cost us the election wasn't the Open Source component, or the Net. It was the same old things that always take a campaign down.

RP: Right, and in your book you argue that one slip off message can be devastating.[62] However, you also say that Dean supporters responded very positively to the event. In fact, that Sunday the campaign raised $90,000 in donations, compared to the normal $3,000. It wasn't that clear-cut perhaps?[63]

JT: Well, that's my point: any other campaign would have died that day. If the Dean campaign had been a normal everyday campaign — one dependent on wealthy donors and establishment endorsements — they would all have left us the day of the Russert interview. They would have looked at it, and said: "Oh, my God: We are out of here."

But what happened was that the strength of the community, the strength of the Netroots — and the collaborative Open Source campaign we were running — kept Howard alive for nine more months.

So what I'm saying is that the campaign should have been dead and buried in June: the miracle was that Dean's Open Source candidacy shook that interview off, and he stayed strong all the way to Iowa, and on to New Hampshire.

RP: And then he was taken down by the same old things that always damage campaigns. This tells us that an Open Source campaign can only achieve so much doesn't it?

JT: To put it another way: if Gary Hart had had an Open Source campaign when he got caught on a boat called *The Monkey Business* with Donna Rice[64] on his lap I am not sure that he could have been saved — even if he had had 650,000 Open Source supporters. If you make those kinds of mistakes you pay for them, regardless of whether you are a moneyed media machine campaign or an Open Source grassroots campaign.

The fact of the matter is that our campaign made a lot of mistakes in the last forty days, and they were Gary Hart kind of mistakes.

RP: What kind of mistakes are you referring to?

JT: Mistakes like Howard saying, for instance, that Osama bin Laden is innocent;[65] or my making the mistake of insinuating that President Carter was going to endorse us on the Sunday before the caucuses,[66] and then he didn't.

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[61] *Meet the Press* (*MTP*) is a weekly American television news show produced by NBC. It started as a radio show in 1945 as *American Mercury Presents: Meet the Press*, created by Lawrence E. Spivak, who was the host and narrator. The radio series originated from WRC-AM in Washington. NBC's Washington bureau chief, Tim Russert, has hosted the show since December 8th 1991, under the full title Meet the Press with Tim Russert. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meet_the_Press.

[62] Trippi, *supra.,* p. 162

[63] In response to the interview, rather than abandon Dean supporters donated an additional $90,000 that weekend (rather than the expected $3,000).

[64] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gary_Hart

[65] In a December 2003 interview with New Hampshire's *Concord Monitor* Dean said he would not state his preference on a punishment for bin Laden before the al Qaeda leader was captured and put before a jury. "I will have this old-fashioned notion that even with people like Osama, who is very likely to be found guilty, we should do our best not to, in positions of executive power, not to prejudge jury trials." http://www.cnn.com/2003/ALLPOLITICS/12/26/elec04.prez.dean.bin.laden.

[66] In January 2004 Trippi went on CNN's *Crossfire* with Paula Begala and Tucker Carson. When he was asked if Jimmy Carter might endorse Dean, Trippi made the mistake of replying "You'll have to tune in Sunday and see." P. 164. http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0401/13/cf.00.html.

What I'm saying is that it wasn't the Open Source campaign that went haywire and took us down. Quite the opposite: the Open Source campaign is what kept us alive, and so took us to heights we never should have gotten to. And it kept us there — despite the rookie mistakes that the candidate and members of staff, including me, made. Basically, there came a point where, hey, some of the mistakes got to be really big mistakes, and they cost us.

RP: You say rookie mistakes. Presumably then they were mistakes that you feel should have been avoided?

JT: There were a number of things going on: first of all, we were a very, very inexperienced campaign. None of the pros would work for us — not one of them — so we had 22-year-olds running a quarter of the nation.

The other point to make is that when we started there were just 432 supporters and $98,000 in the bank, and we were going nowhere. That we got where we did despite this tells you just how powerful Open Source Politics is.

RP: If you'd had the pros come work for you would it have all been very different?

JT: I have often wondered. Sometimes I say to myself, "Well jeez, if we had had just ten or twenty of the experienced calibre people that Kerry and these other campaigns had — if we'd had a more experienced team around Dean on the road, and all of that kind of stuff — maybe we would have made it."

But then I think, "You know, if we had had those kind of people they wouldn't have let us run the campaign Open Source. These people would have said: "No, no, no [laughs]; do not talk about your money ahead of times. Do not go to meetups, and so on."

So we may never have gotten off the ground if we had had that kind of experience.

RP: In your book you complain that you were personally hamstrung because you didn't have the cheque book.[67] Your point was that without the cheque book you didn't have full control of the campaign.[68] Was that a big problem?

JT: Oh yea, that was really important, and a big piece of it I think. It is hard to run something when you don't have control of the money; when the purse strings are somewhere else.

RP: This was related to the difficulties you had with Dean's top aide, Kate O'Connor:[69] She was the real gatekeeper to Dean, and you didn't feel you were ever trusted by her. That is why you were never given the cheque book?[70]

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[67] This may not have been as clear cut as it seems. *The Washington Post's* Howard Kurtz commented in late February 2004: "By the fall, the Dean operation was using its Internet savvy to raise more money than any Democratic campaign in history but was spending it almost as quickly. Trippi, who said he regrets some of the early spending on television ads, tried to stop what he saw as marginal expenses, such as the hiring of a communications director in Maine, the 11th state to vote. Trippi openly grumbled about Dean giving the financial authority to deputy campaign manager [Bob] Rogan. He and two other senior officials said they were mystified that the amounts they were told they had in the bank would abruptly shrink by millions of dollars after spending decisions had been made." Divide and Bicker, Howard Kurtz, *The Washington Post*, February 29th 2004. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A15741-2004Feb28.html

[68] "Without the checkbook, without Dean's trust, I had no real authority." p. 172

[69] Howard Dean aide, in 2006 O'Connor went to work for Republican Richard Tarrant in his bid to win a Vermont Senate seat. http://hotlineblog.nationaljournal.com/archives/2006/02/oconnor_speaks.html.

[70] This appears not to have been paranoia. As *The Washington Post* put it, "O'Connor, according to a staffer who saw the e-mail, wrote a friend that she wanted to get rid of Trippi and that she felt like quitting herself except that she needed to protect Dean." Divide and Bicker, Howard Kurtz, *The Washington Post*, February 29th 2004. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A15741-2004Feb28.html.

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JT: Kate was one of the folks that didn't really believe in the Open Source part of it.[71] So these things were important. But frankly I think we could have survived even that, because our strategy was really simple. Here I'm talking about the, "How the hell are we going to win this thing" strategy.

RP: What was the "how the hell are we going to win this thing" strategy?

JT: Essentially it was to run every other campaign into the ground. It was the same strategy that Reagan used to beat the Soviets. In other words, you spend so much on defence that they can't keep up with you.

RP: How did that strategy work in the context of the Dean Campaign?

JT: Well, our feeling was that whoever won Iowa and New Hampshire was going to be the nominee. So we were going to go for broke to try to win those two states, and to do so on the basis that even if we were broke when we got there, if we won them then when we got there everybody else would be dead and we would then get exponential growth, and so go on to win the nomination. And in fact we were right: Kerry won the nomination after winning Iowa and New Hampshire.[72]

If you take all that into account then whether I had the purse strings in my hands or not is not the issue.

RP: So what was the fundamental problem?

JT: What cost us the race was the attacks, the misstatements, and the rookie mistakes, and things like that. It wasn't that we didn't have the resources, or that our strategy was wrong; it was simply, "Hey, you get nine guys start out, and if you make a series of mistakes at the wrong time then you are going to be in trouble."[73]

And let's face it, we were running for President of the United States, so there were a bunch of really smart people on the other campaigns — people who were going to take advantage of any stumble, and who would try to push you off the field. That is just the way it is, and that is the way it happened.

DISAPPOINTMENT?

RP: At the beginning of your book you describe a meeting with Dean in which you asked him to release some papers from his time as governor of Vermont that he had had sealed.[74] He refused — on the grounds that there was nothing significant or embarrassing in them, so why should he release them. The reader might conclude that Dean's commitment to openness was not that great. Perhaps he didn't "get it" in quite the way you described earlier?

JT: Howard was open to allowing us to run an Open Source campaign, and I think he genuinely wanted to run that kind of campaign. Intellectually he understood the power that could be tapped. But he was also someone who had just barely started using e-mail when the campaign started; he certainly wasn't immersed in Open Source, or technology, or anything like that.

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[71] In February 2006 Kate O'Connor signed up to help Republican Richard Tarrant. http://hotlineblog.nationaljournal.com/archives/2006/02/oconnor_speaks.html.

[72] As we saw in the introduction, Clay Shirky viewed things differently. "The moment ... [when I realised] ... that Dean was sunk was on Wednesday after New Hampshire, when the press reported that he'd spent most of his $45 million war chest already."

[73] Wikipedia reports that there were ten Democratic candidates in the 2004 Presidential primary, although it was nine by the time of the Iowa caucuses. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election%2C_2004#Democratic_nomination.

[74] Trippi reports that 15 of the Dean campaign staff met him in December 2003 and "pleaded" with him to release the records of his time as governor of Vermont that Dean had ordered to be sealed for ten years. Dean refused, saying he would rather quite than do so. p. xiii

Moreover, when you have been governor for 12 years — when you are the longest-serving governor in the modern history of this country[75] — you are used to this other system, the system where you spend your time raising money and then putting it on television.

So I'd say Howard got so much of it, but at the same time, he didn't get so much of it too. In that regard I guess you are right.

RP: But he got it more than most politicians?

JT: Yea, he got it a hell of a lot more than John Kerry got it; he got it a hell of a lot more than Dick Gephardt got it; and he understood it a hell of a lot more than George Bush did. So while you are correct to say that Howard didn't get it all — and I wish he had — I really can't fault him for getting 60% of what the rest of the elected politicians in this country still only get 20%, if that.

RP: There is a theory that Dean never really wanted to be President, [76]and that he was surprised he had got as far as he had, and perhaps a little frightened by that. Was that your perception?

JT: Pretty much. He never thought he had a chance, and I think he was really shocked to suddenly be in a position where he might actually win. Certainly he had never thought he would be; and I think it was really shocking to him.

RP: Might this have caused him also to subvert the campaign towards the end — by for instance not releasing the documents? And you hinted at the kind of bickering that took place amongst campaign staff. Perhaps he should have done more to manage the situation, but didn't do because he was frightened of winning?

JT: I don't know the answer to your question. It would be giving in to pop psychology to speculate as to whether or not he wanted to subvert the campaign. But I do think he was just so stunned to be where he was; and I don't think he quite knew how to deal with that.

RP: When you began to suspect that Howard Dean might not actually want to be President did you feel some disappointment, a sense of betrayal perhaps?

JT: No. I mean, yea, there was some disappointment. But I have to admit that when I started out I didn't go up to Burlington thinking a) I was going to get rich, or b) that we were going to win. Remember, there were just 432 supporters and $98,000 in the bank; and a guy who didn't even register in the polls. He was an asterisk!

Unlike Howard, however, I wasn't shocked to see where we were. I really had seen a kind of path early on. Howard would say things like: "Joe saw the vision"; or "He had a vision before we all did." So he will credit me with having that vision.[77] But when we got close, and when I realised he was shocked to be there — that he never really thought he would be in that position — I realised he didn't know how to deal with it.

RP: This makes me wonder about your motivation: Why did you take on the job of campaign manager for a candidate that most people believed had no hope of winning? Why would you do that?

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[75] The Wikipedia entry asserts that Dean was "the second longest-serving Governor in Vermont history, after Thomas Chittenden (1778-1789 and 1790-1797)." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Howard_Dean.
[76] See, for instance: Divide and Bicker, Howard Kurtz, *The Washington Post*, February 29th 2004. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A15741-2004Feb28.html.
[77] In his book Trippi says is afflicted with "the curse of seeing something no one else could see — even if it was only a few hours before they saw it." p. 24.

JT: Well, I have a different philosophy to most people about presidential runs. I don't believe that presidential campaigns are, at their core, about winning. Think about it — 63 democrats have run for President since 1968 and two have won: Clinton and Carter.

And it's not much better on the Republican side: you will find something like 58 Republicans have run since 1968. Of those 58, four have won on their side: Reagan, Nixon, Bush[78] and Bush. That is 4 and 2. And by the way, if you take the 2000 election out of the mix, or give it to Al Gore — who won the popular vote — it is really 3 and 3 on the popular vote.

So maybe we've had 120 or 130 people run for the presidency since 1968, and six have actually become President: 4 from their party, two from the Democrats, and you can argue about whether it should really be 3 to 3. Either way, not a whole lot.

RP: So if it is not about winning, what is it about?

JT: I think the best presidential campaigns are where you try to lead the country, to tell the country where you want to take it.

Obviously, if you can convince enough Americans to follow you, you win. But if you don't, you have at least pushed the country to some extent in the direction you wanted to take it — even if only 20% agree with where you want to take them. Is this making any sense to you at all?

RP: You are saying that the point of running a presidential campaign is only partly to get people to vote for a particular candidate. It is about getting citizens to think about their country, about its collective aspirations and aims, and about the way in which it should be governed?

JT: Correct. If you can get enough of them to think about what you say, and to agree with you about the right direction to take the country, then you are either going to win, or at least you have built a group of citizens who want to take the country in that direction. If you do that, you have left a lasting impact. That is what you are seeing with Dean today.

RP: In so far as he articulated a vision, and a set of goals, for America?

JT: That's right. And I am not talking about what Dean is doing today as chairman of the DNC:[79] I am talking about the civic engagement that we can see taking place right now, and which stems directly from the Dean Campaign. Moreover, it is happening with both parties, which is good for the country.

So we did everything we could to win but, damn it, even though we had to leave the field early, when we got off the playing field we knew we weren't going to be one of the 120, or whatever, losing campaigns that no one ever remembers.

RP: Do you believe the Dean Campaign was a turning point in the politics of America?

JT: I do. People will remember that the Dean for America Campaign was on the field, that this guy ran for President, and that we made a difference.

That was our attitude. And so when it became clear that Howard was shocked at where we were it wasn't that I was sitting round feeling as though we had failed. It was more like, "We are not going to make it, but we are not going to be one of the 68 (perhaps it was 61) democratic campaigns that no one remembers."

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[78] George Herbert Walker Bush is George W Bush's father. He was the 41st President of the United States, serving from 1989 to 1993. Before his presidency, Bush was the 43rd Vice President of the United States in the administration of Ronald Reagan. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_bush.
[79] In February 2005 Howard Dean was elected chairman of the Democratic National Committee (DNC). http://www.democrats.org/a/party/chairman/index.php.

IN RETROSPECT

RP: In retrospect then, even though you didn't win you believe the Dean Campaign was a success?

JT: Oh yes. We achieved a lot. If you look at politics in this country today, and the way campaigns are now run, many of them have really strong grassroots support, and they have people signing up all the time.

If we look at recent history we see that America went through the doldrums, where everybody stayed in their house, in front of their television sets, and watched a bunch of ads. They never had to participate or do anything except vote.

But today that is dead. The way campaigns are now run is very different: people sign up online and then go off into the precincts. So now it is pretty healthy, and the Dean Campaign was really influential in making that change.

The only real question is whether we might revert back to the old way.

RP: Might we?

JT: We could, but I don't think we will. Once people have got a taste of what real democracy is like, and experience real participation — with everyone collaborating, and working together, with transparency, and in a real conversation — I don't think you can go back from that.

RP: You have said that the Internet is tailor-made for a populist insurgent movement. You also say that for this reason the Web gives the Democratic Party a leg up, because Republicans are obsessed with command and control?

JT: Right.

RP: You have also said that you believe that the Democratic Party itself killed the Howard Dean Campaign.[80] If that's right, then does that not imply that the Democratic Party is essentially a command and control organisation too?

JT: That's true. The whole system is command and control, and that is why I think it is so hard to break out of it. But Open Source Politics is grinding away and, in my view, it is inevitable that the old system will fall to a new form of Open Source Politics.

RP: In your book you say that you believe the Internet offers us a chance to once again tap into that desire people have to be part of something bigger.

JT: I absolutely believe that.

RP: You also say that the first national campaign to use the Internet effectively was John McCain's 2000 presidential campaign, as a result of which he recruited 40,000 supporters. And you say he succeeded by appealing to the urge in people to become part of something bigger than themselves, to be part of a community.

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[80] Trippi says, "After twenty years of watering down the Democrats' message to play to the centre, the party leadership was scared to death of a Dean candidacy. Senator Evan Bayh, chairman of the Democratic Leadership Council, released a statement that read: 'It is our belief that the Democratic Party has an important choice to make. Do we want to vent or do we want to govern — The Administration is being run by the far right. The Democratic Party is in danger of being taken over by the far left.' Every step of the way, we had to fight our own party leadership." p. 175/6

JT: Right, and all through our recent political history — the Jerry Brown stuff, the McCain stuff, the Dean thing — this urge has become increasingly visible. Every few years that urge becomes visible, and each time it reappears it seems to be stronger: it has a bit more energy, and it attracts more people.

What we are seeing, therefore, is that that spirit is being re-awoken. And as technology advances, and the ability to connect with other people gets better, so I expect to see it advance further.

RP: You argue in your book that this was the same urge that was evident after the terrorist attacks of 9/11,[81] which you point to as a key moment in awakening a new desire in American citizens for greater participation, and for joining together in common cause. Of course throughout history terrible tragedies have tended to have this effect of pulling communities together. In Britain we call it The Dunkirk Spirit.[82]

JT: That's true. But what was different about 9/11 was that people suddenly discovered that they had technology at their disposal to allow them to do this in new and more effective ways.

RP: So the point about the Internet is that it enables much greater interactivity and recovers some of the communal spirit of the pre-television age — through mailing lists, blogs etc.?

JT: Exactly.

RP: I'm conscious, however, that the place where people now meet to collaborate and join together in common purpose — the Internet — is a virtual world. Some might argue that although the Internet enables greater interactivity and the creation of virtual communities, it can also increase people's sense of isolation. After all, we are still all sitting at home alone, huddled in front of a screen?

JT: Well, it's like anything: the Internet can be used in a positive way, or it can work against the kind of things we are talking about. The technology doesn't know whose ideology it is being used for, so it is we as humans [laughs] who decide whether to use it to create things that are bigger than we are, or to treat it as just another medium for squabbling — like the talking heads screaming at each other on television.

So it is up to us to make it work in the right way. Personally, I think that that is what will happen, but there is still a lot of work to be done.

RP: And however virtual, online communities can be surprisingly bonding places. You have said that the moment that you "got it" (as in the power of the Internet to bring people together) was when you took part in the virtual funeral of David Haines.[83] You were struck at the way in which a bunch of people — most of whom had never met each other, or indeed David Haines — were deeply moved by his death. All they had in common was that they were members of the same virtual community — one based around a bulletin board.[84]

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[81] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September_11,_2001_attacks.

[82] The Dunkirk spirit is a phrase used to describe the tendency of the British public to pull together to overcome times of adversity. It came into use following the evacuation of allied troops across the English Channel by flotillas of pleasure boats, working barges and other civilian craft at the Battle of Dunkirk in 1940. In nine days, 338,226 French and British soldiers were taken off the beach by a quickly assembled fleet of about seven hundred vessels. The evacuation was codenamed Operation Dynamo. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dunkirk_spirit.

[83] In the late 1990s Trippi used to monitor the bulletin board of games maker THQ, a company he had invested in. THQ made games for the PlayStation and Game Boy, and other video games consoles. David Haines, a young day trader who regularly posted to the bulletin board was, Trippi explains in his book, "the unofficial star of the THQ bulletin board." (p. 55). Haines died of a heart attack in the late 1990s and the whole bulletin board went into mourning. "I sat at my PC, crying and watching as people eulogised David," says Trippi, "and mourned him the way you would mourn a good friend." (p56) Trippi used the bulletin board because he had invested in THQ, which made games for the PlayStation and Game Boy, and other video games consoles.

[84] As Trippi wrote, "This was not a bunch of individual people sitting in front of a television alone, watching a sad program, reaching on cue for the Kleenex brand tissue. This was a rich, fully realised community, a world of real people interacting with

JT: That's right.

RP: How can a physically isolated community apparently create such a strong bond by communicating online?

JT: It's certainly strange that that online community was stronger than many communities you can meet in the physical world, and the members ended up doing something that they would not have done for someone that they didn't know who lived five blocks away from them.[85] But it just shows that while the sense of community has been dwindling in the physical world, there is still a real hunger for it.[86]

RP: That's the conundrum then?

JT: Yes. And that was the genesis, or first spark if you will, of the Dean Campaign; of what the Dean Campaign would become. It began for me on that board, when I saw the virtual funeral of David Haines. That was where it first hit me that there was something going on here that had real power, and that the Internet allowed people to connect in ways that we had somehow lost the ability to do offline.

It occurred to me when I saw this happening that if a community could self-build around something as dumb, or as unnecessary, as a game-making company then, wow, this is powerful. And I wondered what would happen if you could have people come together in this way and collectively work to change their country, to elect a president, to address and discuss real meaningful issues. Not, "Hey, is this new game any good?"

RP: As we have discussed, you believe that television is problematic because it is a one-way broadcast medium that personifies command and control communication systems. This discourages communal activity, encourages passivity, and so isolates people. By contrast, you say, the many-to-many model of the Internet invites interactivity and encourages bottom-up communication. Do you think the Internet will simply return us to the more democratic communication modes prevalent in the pre-television era — things like "on the stump" speeches and caucuses etc. — or does it hold out the promise of something totally new, and perhaps more democratic?

JT: I would say it is a more democratically empowering environment than was possible in that train station during the Truman era, yes.

RP: Why?

JT: Today we are much better able to talk with each other about what politicians say, to critique their speeches, and to be engaged with them. In the Truman days you were more limited because you had no way of contacting every single friend you had — within minutes — in order to tell them what you think, and ask them to get involved.

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one each other, sharing their kids' first steps and crying on each other's shoulders when they lost someone they cared about, someone most of had never met." Trippi, *supra*, p. 56.

[85] "For days," reports Trippi, "the whole board — built around a gaming technology company of all things — went into a deep period of mourning. I sat at my PC, crying and watching as people eulogised David and mourned him the way you'd mourn a good friend." Trippi, *supra.,* p. 56.

[86] *The New Republic* also describes how in 1999 Trippi frequented the bulletin board of a company he had invested in called Wave Systems (http://www.wavesys.com), which he later worked for. Again, he was struck by the community of "Wavoids" that frequented the bulletin board — although apparently for different reasons to THQ. https://ssl.tnr.com/p/docsub.mhtml?i=20031117&s=scheiber111703.

Back then you would have had to pick up your telephone and dial the numbers of all those friends and speak to them separately. Today you can have the same conversation, but the individual has much more power to push the message on a peer-to-peer level.[87]

RP: Because you can email all your friends with one message, you can go into chat rooms and bulletin boards, and you can IM[88] and text them.

JT: Right. What is also very important is that your peers have more credibility with you than any television ad ever does. So if you say to your best friend on the telephone, or in an e-mail, that John Kerry said something really smart, and you think he is a great candidate, and, please, why don't they come to the rally with you, you have more credibility than a television ad that says John Kerry is great.

RP: In other words, the Internet enables more "speech" — as in more and more people talking to each other, debating issues and sharing views — a process that you believe to be an important part of the democratic process?

JT: Yes. It also enables more reach — because the technology lets you get to more people when you have something to say.

RP: You are very critical of the way presidential elections are run nowadays, especially the negative advertising that campaigns engage in. In your book you explain the failure of the Dean campaign in this way: "We had been taken down by the technology of past elections. The TV attack ad."[89] You also said the campaign made rookie mistakes. Does that mean that, whatever its merits, in the end the Open Source approach can never be decisive: That presidential races will always be decided in the way that they have always been decided?

JT: I think to some extent that is true. However, Open Source hasn't yet penetrated the system enough. I liken it to the way that television started to have more power than radio after the war.

During WWII we listened to the news on the radio, and read about it in the newspaper, and we also listened to FDR[90] doing his fireside chats. Then things began to change with the advent of television; and as we go forward we can expect to see the Web changing things again.[91]

RP: When a new medium develops we cannot always be sure of the impact it will have.

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[87] Strictly speaking peer to peer (P2P) simply implies the sharing and delivery of user specified files among groups of people who are logged on to a file sharing network. Napster was the first mainstream P2P software that enabled large scale file sharing. As we saw, some, however, view P2P in a much broader light. Michel Bauwens, for instance, defines it as a new form of egalitarian networking that has been made possible by the Internet. This, he says, enables new types of relationships to emerge that will profoundly transform the way in which society and human civilization is organised.

[88] Instant messaging or IM is a form of real-time communication between two or more people based on typed text. The text is conveyed via computers connected over a network such as the Internet. Popular instant messaging services on the public Internet include .NET Messenger Service, AOL Instant Messenger, Excite/Pal, Gadu-Gadu, Google Talk, iChat, ICQ, and Jabber. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Instant_messaging.

[89] As the day of the Iowa Caucus approached Gephardt's campaign team embarked on a negative ad war with Dean's people, ads that Trippi says ruined the chances of both candidates, as voters fled to Kerry and Edwards. "It wasn't lost on me that that after eleven months of showing how the Internet would be the technology of future elections, in a few days we'd been taken down by the technology of past elections — the TV attack ad." Trippi, *supra*. p. 184.

[90] Franklin Delano Roosevelt , often referred to by his initials FDR, was the thirty-second President of the United States. Elected to four terms in office, he served from 1933 to 1945, and is the only US president to have served more than two terms. A central figure of the 20th century during a time of worldwide economic crisis and world war, he has consistently been ranked as one of the three greatest US presidents in scholarly surveys. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, Roosevelt created the New Deal to provide relief for the unemployed, recovery of the economy, and reform of the economic and banking systems

[91] In a National Public Radio (NPR) interview he gave on October 31st 2006, Trippi said, "We didn't have YouTube when we were running the Howard Dean campaign; we didn't have a lot of the social networking software and programs out there like MySpace and Facebook, and podcasts were just starting out [so] in just a couple of years the entire world online has changed." http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6410264.

JT: Sure, so all of a sudden this new medium of television started to come into play, and at first people were kind of confused — because if they listened to something on the radio they believed one thing, but if they saw a guy on the television they started thinking a little differently about politics.

In the 1960 Campaign, for instance, everybody who listened to the Nixon and Kennedy debates on radio thought that Nixon had won, while everybody who saw the debate on television were positive that Kennedy had won.[92] Suddenly television candidates started doing very well.

Today we are in a similar period of transition, and in that light the Dean Campaign was similar to the Nixon Checkers speech:[93] It was the first real Internet move, just like the Nixon's Checkers speech was the real first television moment.

RP: It's early days then?

JT: Right. During the Dean Campaign there wasn't yet enough broadband — if I am making any sense to you.[94] The Internet just wasn't yet in enough hands to pull it off.

But by 2008, or 2012 (somewhere in there) I expect to see television fragmenting — due to the TiVo and such technologies. TiVos will let people fast-forward through the commercials for instance. And so they will start paying less attention to it.

RP: You don't see the Internet replacing television though?

JT: No. Television didn't kill radio; it just made it less powerful. In the same way, Open Source Politics is not going to kill television, but it will make it a hell of a lot less powerful — because television is a passive medium whereas the Internet is a collaborative, active medium. And as more and more people grasp that they can make a difference by joining with each other, it will overpower television.

So the Dean Campaign was the first Open Source Politics moment, and it was fuelled by this new technology. Over time it is going to get stronger, and stronger, and stronger.

RP: What are the implications of that?

JT: One implication is that the nasty, negative, ugly, tear-us-apart politics will be rejected. Instead we'll embrace the "Hey we are all in this together; we are going to fix our problems together." And it will be, "What can we do together to tackle global warming? How do we educate our kids?"[95]

Right now these are all really important issues that frankly we can't solve on our own. I mean, I can't solve global warming by myself. The only way we are going to do that is if we are connected with each other, and we all collaborate to do some small thing, and each small thing will help to alleviate it.

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[92] In the NPR interview, Trippi put it this way: "In 1960, when Nixon and Kennedy had that big debate people who listened to it on the radio thought that Nixon had won because he had this timbred voice, and John Kennedy had a weird accent. [But] People who saw it on television knew that John Kennedy had beaten him, because Nixon was sweaty and hadn't shaved that day. And all of a sudden we got to the point where with television looks mattered." http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6410264.

[93] http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/richardnixoncheckers.html

[94] Broadband comes from the words "broad bandwidth" and is used to describe a high-capacity, two-way link between an end user and access network suppliers capable of supporting full-motion, interactive video applications. Here I think Trippi is using it as a metaphor to say that too few people were using the Internet. Indeed, at that point take-up seemed to be slowing — a Pew survey undertaken in 2003 reported, "Internet penetration rates have hovered between 57 per cent and 61 per cent since October 2001, rather than pursuing the steady climb that they had showed in prior years". http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/183/press_coverageitem.asp.

[95] But see JoeTrippi.com weblog on Sue Kelly http://joetrippi.com/?p=1973.

BEYOND THE CAMPAIGN

RP: When you talk about Open Source Politics you are mainly talking about how you get politicians elected. I'm wondering what Open Source Politics means in the context of day-to-day government: how politicians run a country once they are elected. Supposing your guy is now in office: how is Open Source Politics going to improve the way in which he governs?

JT: You know one of my big fantasies is one in which President Kerry has won [laughs], and he decides to send his universal health care plan directly to the people.

RP: Ok, that sounds like a good example. How would it work?

JT: Well, I could see the President going on television from the Oval Office[96] and announcing that he had just sent his health care plan to the American people, not by sending it to Congress, but by posting it on the Web. Moreover, he would add that he is not going to bring it to Congress[97] until a majority of the American people have gone to the web site, read the plan, digested it, and talked about it with their fellow citizens.

Only when a majority of the people had done so, and had signed on his web site to say that they supported the health care plan, would the President then pass it to Congress.

RP: You are talking about holding a referendum on the issue.

JT: I am. Because it turns out there is a good way for a president, or a prime minister, to rally the people around an idea. He can now use the Internet, and cell phones, and text messaging, and all the new kinds of technology tools, to do it. The message would be: "You really do have the power today to make universal healthcare happen in America. The reason it hasn't happened as yet is not because there haven't been good plans, but because there are 33 lobbyists for every member of Congress. But there is one thing that Congress will listen to beyond those lobbyists, and that is you."

RP: The aim would be to cut out the middlemen, and encourage greater participation by citizens in their government?

JT: And in a democracy that's how it should be: people rallying round an idea. And doing so could allow a president or prime minister to overcome any congress — or parliament — that decides to stonewall his agenda. Once that agenda has become the People's Agenda any congress, or parliament, that decided to stonewall would do so at the risk of their political lives.

RP: Importantly, it would neutralise the lobbyists, a group of people who have a very considerable influence over the political agenda today but who have never been elected or officially appointed by the people.

JT: So the technology could be used to shove aside the special interests, and to create the kind of government where people were able to rally around the leader for the common good, putting aside some of their own selfish interests.

However, first of all you need that kind of leadership, and you need to use the technology to give people the ability to connect with each other.

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[96] The Oval Office is the official office of the President of the United States. Located in the West Wing of the White House, the oval-shaped office features three large south-facing windows behind the president's desk and a fireplace at the north end of the room. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oval_office.

[97] The United States Congress is the legislature of the United States federal government. It is bicameral, comprising the House of Representatives and the Senate. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Congress.

RP: Is that a realistic scenario?

JT: I think so.

RP: Does your vision assume moving beyond representative democracy, or would it simply be a case of taking a more direct approach when dealing with specific issues?

JT: I don't envisage it being practical when dealing with the many mundane issues that come before our elected leaders. In those cases representative democracy works fine. But on major issues like going to war in Iraq, or health care reform, you need real civic engagement.

RP: Can you say a little more about how it might work?

JT: Well, you would have meetups like we had in the Dean campaign, where everybody goes to a town meeting and the issue is put in front of them rather than in front of Congress, and they discuss it. Congress only gets to deal with it once the people have digested it.

RP: This would be done specifically in order to neutralise the special interests?

JT: That's right. Think what happened last time, when Hillary Clinton proposed a health care reform plan.[98] You immediately had television ads with Harry and Louise[99] telling you that you would never again be able to pick a doctor, and you would be standing in line to get rationed healthcare, assuming you could even get in to see the doctor.

That scared the living daylights out of everybody, and the fundamental problem was that we never had a debate about it. It was just killed.

RP: Killed by unelected special interests.

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[98] In 1993, the administration of President Bill Clinton proposed a significant health care reform package. Clinton had campaigned heavily on health care in the 1992 election, and he quickly set up a task force, headed by First Lady Hillary Clinton, to come up with a comprehensive plan to provide universal health care for all Americans. This was to be a cornerstone of the administration's first-term agenda.

The result, announced by President Clinton in an address to Congress on September 22nd, 1993, was a complex and complicated proposal running more than 1,000 pages, the core element of which was an enforced mandate for employers to provide health insurance coverage to all their employees through competitive but closely-regulated health maintenance organisations (HMOs). The plan, referred to derisively as "Hillary Care" by some, was initially well-received by liberal political leaders and most Americans, who said health care was the most important issue facing the country. At its introduction, the plan seemed likely to pass through the Democratic-controlled Congress.

Conservatives, libertarians, and the insurance industry, however, staged an effective and well-organised campaign opposing Clinton's plan and criticised it as being overly bureaucratic and restrictive of patient choice. The effort included extensive advertising criticising the plan, including the famous *Harry and Louise* ad (see below). Meanwhile, Democrats, instead of uniting behind the President's original proposal, offered a number of competing plans of their own. Some criticised the plan from the left, preferring a Canadian-style single payer system.

On September 26th 1994, Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell announced that the plan was dead, at least for that session of Congress. The defeat weakened Clinton politically, and contributed to widespread public frustration with perceived Congressional gridlock. In the 1994 election, the Republican revolution gave the Republicans control of both houses of Congress, ending prospects for a Clinton-sponsored health care overhaul.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clinton_health_care_plan.

[99] "Harry and Louise" was the name of a television commercial funded by the Health Insurance Association of America (HIAA), a health insurance industry lobbying group, in opposition to the Clintons' plan. The ad depicted a middle-class couple, portrayed by actors Harry Johnson and Louise Claire Clark, despairing over the allegedly bureaucratic nature of the plan and urged viewers to contact their representatives in Congress. It was widely credited as being a major factor in the plan's ultimate defeat, and is often cited as a landmark moment in the use of public relations techniques for lobbying.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_and_Louise.

JT: Exactly. So I can see a President saying, "This time I am going to do it differently: I am sending it directly to you the people, and I want you to have time to discuss it. And if the special interests dare to run ads about this just remember: you need to look at it, read it for yourself, go to the meetings, talk amongst your friends, and make a decision. Then sign up here and together we can stop the special interests: we can actually have healthcare in America.

It's about using the technology now available to us in a way that lets people connect with each other and so subvert the top-down power systems that all our democracies, and all of our institutions, have spent years building on top of democracy.

BREAKING THE LOGJAM

RP: The key point is that the Internet, and other forms of new technology, can enable us to create a more bottom-up system; and bottom-up systems tend to be more democratic?

JT: And I think a president, or a congressman, who adopts a bottom-up approach, can eventually defeat the top-down guys — the guys who want to keep healthcare, and oil prices (and thus oil profits) where they are; the powerful moneyed interests that want to bamboozle people.

And the beauty of the bottom-up nature of the Net is that it enables you to look up the facts for yourself — and I don't just mean read a blog, but use all those research tools out there — and then make your own decision. So if you have a president, or a prime minister, willing to enable that, and to formulate it, I think you will see a different kind of politics.

RP: When you talk about the special interests you are essentially referring to lobbyists who represent the rich and powerful; the guys with the money: the healthcare companies, the oil companies and so on?

JT: Well, the amazing thing is that this occurs on both sides of the political spectrum. Take the issue of oil, for instance: on the conservative side you will have the oil interests, and on the progressive side the unions. So not only do you have oil companies opposing any policy that might lead to tougher emission standards on SUVs,[100] but you may also have, say, the United Auto Workers.[101]

This means that if you are a Democrat you have to deal with one set of powerful interests that don't want us to get better gas mileage in our cars — the auto unions; and if you are a Republican you have another set — the oil companies. And on both sides these special interests hold out the temptation of political contributions.

RP: It's not so much a party political issue. It's a fundamental corruption of the political system.

JT: Exactly. It's not a case of "We're good: They're bad". The problem is that there are so many special interests, so many different groups that have so much influence. And these interests are thwarting the will of the people.[102] The tragedy is that as a consequence nothing is being done to address important issues.

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[100] A sport utility vehicle, or SUV, is a passenger vehicle which combines the towing capability of a pickup truck with the passenger-carrying space of a car. The recent popularity of SUVs is generally thought of as one reason the U.S. population has begun consume more gasoline than in previous years. SUVs are as a class much less fuel efficient than comparable passenger vehicles. Because SUVs typically use more fuel than some cars, they generate much higher volumes of pollutants (particularly carbon dioxide) into the atmosphere during their working lives. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SUV.

[101] The United Auto Workers (UAW), officially the United Automobile, Aerospace & Agricultural Implement Workers of America International Union, is one of the largest labour unions in North America, with more than 500,000 members in the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico organized into approximately 950 union locals. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Automobile_Workers.

[102] http://www.cleanmoneyelections.org. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YDhk5J6FGpE&eurl=.

After all, there is no one in Britain, or in the United States, or in France, that wouldn't want to get better gas mileage, and not have to pay extravagant energy prices. Yet neither the right nor the left have been able to make this happen — all because of the special interests that they get contributions from.

RP: And you believe Open Source Politics can break the logjam?

JT: Sure. A lot of people might say, "Joe's a little too optimistic about the power of Open Source Politics." And there may be some truth to that, but the one thing I know for sure is that it is the only hope we have got.

RP: Why?

JT: Because the high cost of television isn't going to release us from the grip of the special interests, and radio isn't going to do it either.

RP: You mean that it is very expensive to buy airtime to run TV and radio ads, and both are top-down media that broadcast messages to a passive audience, without any ability for interaction? The problem is that campaigns are locked into raising money in order to buy airtime because TV and radio are still viewed as the most effective ways for politicians to communicate their messages.

JT: So if you look at all the potential media, the only way that we have a chance of defeating this system, and actually bringing about change, is through citizens' use of the Internet — in an Open Source collaborative way. It is about the only shot that democracy has right now.

RP: Are there any other examples you can give me of how Open Source Politics might be used to improve the day-to-day business of running a country?[103]

JT: [Sigh] I don't know. When people ask me questions like that I reply: When McCain ran for President in 2000 his was regarded as the most savvy Internet-driven presidential campaign in history. He had 40,000 people sign up, and I think he raised a few million dollars. But if you had sat him and his staff down after that campaign, and said "OK, so you've pioneered Open Source Politics; now tell us what the 2004 presidential campaign will look like" they couldn't have told you.

He certainly wouldn't have been able to tell you that Dean would get 650,000 people, and that he would raise more money than President Clinton did when he was running for re-election for President.[104] No one could have. So I believe that we are moving in an Open Source direction in our politics. I am saying that it is something that is going to evolve. It's something that hasn't been invented yet.

RP: It's a question of belief. You believe that the Internet will lead to a more open and a more democratic system?

JT: I am not trying to skirt the question here. My point is that if you leave aside the personality differences between McCain and Dean then it is really a question of the maturity of the technology —

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[103] Interestingly, the term "Open Government" tends to be used in terms of transparency of government, and synonymous with freedom of information. As such, it is about the "right to know", rather than the "right to participate". See for instance, http://www.saratogian.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=17707824&BRD=1169&PAG=461&dept_id=17708&rfi=6. Some might argue that telling citizens what you are doing is not the same as asking them to participate. At the time of writing the Wikipedia entry on Open Government refers to a BBC comedy series! http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_Government.

[104] In the 1996 presidential campaign Bill Clinton raised $46.1 million. http://www.opensecrets.org/clinton/clinton96data.htm. Prior to the 2004 primary season, the Democratic record for most money raised in one quarter by a primary candidate was held by Bill Clinton in 1995, raising $10.3 million during a campaign in which he had no primary opponent. In the third quarter of 2003, the Dean campaign raised $14.8 million, shattering Clinton's record.

when McCain was running, blogs had just barely started, if they existed at all in 2000. Three years later, in 2003, there were hundreds of thousands of blogs. And on the day the Dean campaign ended there were 1.4 million blogs. Today there are 32 million of them. So God knows what 2008 is going to look like.[105]

With McCain we also didn't really have any text messaging in the States. Now it is increasing in maturity. Nor did McCain have MeetUp.com, to encourage people to get out from behind their screens, go into the community and meet together. In fact, it only started up about four months before the Dean campaign started.[106] So that tool was not available to McCain, but it was to Dean; and the tools that provide the ability to communicate and connect with each other are evolving exponentially. And the power of each citizen grows with it.

You know, I would have died to have been able to use the social networking tools that have developed since the Dean campaign. But we were just six months ahead of them.[107]

The fact is that to try to scope out exactly what Open Source Government, or Open Source Politics, will become is a tough thing to try to do — because the tools that may make Open Source Government really possible and powerful are beyond your and my ability to see. It could just be two-kids-in-a-garage away, and available six months from now. That, after all, is what happened with Meetup.com, which was a huge thing for the Dean campaign.

So I am hugely encouraged by the social networking tools that I am seeing being developed. I'm talking about tools like CivicSpace labs,[108] which is a bunch of kids in Redwood City.[109] Those guys are writing really unbelievable community-building software that they give out for free as Open Source software. And there are so many people out there doing just amazing things that weren't being done when we were running.

BE THE SLINGSHOT

RP: Clearly you are very upbeat. But the Open Source revolution, and indeed the very openness of the Web that has enabled Open Source Politics, is under threat isn't it? And this threat comes precisely from the special interests you refer to. Right now, for instance, there is growing concern[110] about so-called Net Neutrality, with network operators wanting to charge Internet content providers for enhanced IP services. The fear is that this could impede openness and introduce censorship.

JT: Absolutely.

RP: Is this a big danger?

JT: Oh, yes. There is a big danger here. My own view is that the genie is not going to be put back in the bottle. There are a lot of people who want to stop this openness, or who are afraid of it. Hell, almost all the other Democratic presidential campaigns of 2004 wanted to stop it somehow — because they didn't understand it they were afraid of it. And now you have corporate interests that want to stop it too.

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[105] In April 2007 Technorati reported that it is now tracking over 70 million blogs.
http://technorati.com/weblog/2007/04/328.html.
[106] Wikipedia reports that MeetUp was founded in 2002. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meetup.com.
[107] When we spoke by phone YouTube and MySpace had not yet become as hot as they currently are. As Trippi put it to NPR: "Some of the smarter candidates are understanding that they have to join these communities and get involved in the conversations." http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6410264.
[108] CivicSpace, formerly known as Deanspace and Hack4Dean, is a content management system founded in May 2004 by Zack Rosen and Neil Drumm. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civicspace. http://civicspacelabs.org/home.
[109] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Redwood_City,_California.
[110] See: http://news.com.com/Net+neutrality+showdown/2009-1028_3-6055133.html.

RP: But you are optimistic about the outcome?

JT: Well, there is going to be a big effort directed against the Net. But the problem these people face is that too many Americans have touched the power, and come to realise that they have a great tool sitting at home that they can use.

So I think that those who try to take it away are going to have trouble. Essentially, it has got too big to take away. In fact, if they try to take it away they may find they have the next American Revolution on their hands!

RP: But there are a lot of reactionary forces out there — Hollywood companies looking to control access to their content, for instance; big telephone carriers threatening to block certain Web sites, or charge users extra to access them; publishers opposing researchers who want to make their publicly-funded research on the Web etc. etc.[111] How do you expect to see this play out?

JT: Well, the one insight I have comes from Glenn Reynolds, who has published a book called *An Army of Davids*.[112]

RP: Yes, and you have debated with him in public.[113]

JT: Right. He's a conservative blogger. But while he and I may disagree on some issues, he totally understands the situation, and his book puts the whole thing in perspective: As you know, Goliath was defeated by this little guy David with a slingshot.

RP: Here the Internet represents the slingshot?

JT: Yes. So we have all these Goliaths — the corporations, the top-down leadership of the political parties, and the government — and all the Davids on the Internet. And every day new armies of Davids are being created out there: the army of Napster that took on the Goliath of the recording industry for instance…

RP: But got beaten by the recording industry?

JT: No, the recording industry got beaten.

RP: How beaten?

JT: Because we are now buying music exactly in the way the recording industry didn't want us to. That is, they didn't want us to be able to buy one song for 99 cents, but to have to buy the whole damned album. But they lost that battle because buying the album sucked, and the upshot is that they are losing 20% of their profits every year, and they have been in decline ever since Napster.

The point is that there was a Goliath out there that said: "We are the big recording industry, so we are going to decide how music is distributed."

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[111] The Open access Movement is calling for the immediate, free and unrestricted online access to digital scholarly material, primarily peer-reviewed research articles in journals. OA was made possible by the advent of the Internet, and is being heavily resisted by scholarly publishers. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_access.

[112] *An Army of Davids: How Markets and Technology Empower Ordinary People to Beat Big Media, Big Government, and Other Goliaths*, Nelson Current, 2006. http://www.amazon.com/Army-Davids-Technology-Government-Goliaths/dp/1595550542. Glenn Reynolds is Beauchamp Brogan Distinguished Professor of Law at the University of Tennessee, and is most widely known for his weblog, *Instapundit*, one of the most widely-read American political weblogs. He is a strong supporter of Porkbusters and the Iraq War.

[113] http://www.wonkette.com/politics/top/an-army-of-davids-attacks-barry-c-lynn-158828.php.

RP: *You are saying that whatever happened to Napster, the Davids won?*

JT: Well, another company out there called Apple said, "You know, we could be Goliath or we could be the slingshot. So we are going to have iPods, and we are going to have iTunes, and we will give that Army of Davids out there a slingshot. Music is going to be distributed totally differently."[114]

RP: *Apple is also a Goliath of course. Indeed, many people are very concerned about its proprietary approach to music, and especially its use of digital rights management?[115]?*

JT: Sure, Apple is also a Goliath, but your question was: "What is going on?" I'm giving you my answer to that. I'm saying that if you look at it as David and Goliath you can then ask the question, "How do I become the slingshot?"

So if I am a corporation do I sit here being a Goliath trying to stand against the Army of Davids, or do I become the slingshot? The point about Apple is that it has become a mega power in music distribution, while all the big recording companies are watching their profits decline. Of course, from Apple's perspective, that doesn't mean that the Army of Davids isn't going to come after you for the way you do digital rights management.

The point is that people need to think about how they are going to empower the Army of Davids to help them achieve what they want to achieve — be it in terms of the way music is distributed, how a nation is led, or how you get a healthcare plan through. For politicians, therefore, the question is how they become the slingshot in the hands of the people? How does Tony Blair do that for Labour? How do the Republicans and Bush do it?

That is why I think the Net is going to change everything: it is not just going to change politics, it is going to change the way corporations work too.

RP: *And many traditional intermediaries will be threatened as a result.*

JT: Indeed. For journalists, of course, the question is how they report the news. You can see signs already of how the Web is changing journalism, or at least putting increasing pressure on journalists. So if I am *The New York Times* how do I become the slingshot and not the Goliath?

As I say, this is going to be across the board.

RP: *The size and nature of the struggle is demonstrated by the many different free and open movements we can see being created: Open Source Politics of course, but also the Free and Open Source software movements, Creative Commons, Open Access, Open Biology, Open Data, and indeed Open Source Journalism.*

JT: Right.

RP: *Clearly the Internet is a big part of this, but is it just about the Internet, or is there something else going on here?*

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[114] Indeed, in August 2006 Tower Records filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy — for the second time. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tower_Records.

[115] Digital rights management (DRM) is an umbrella term referring to technologies used by publishers or copyright owners to control access to or usage of digital data or hardware, and to restrictions associated with a specific instance of a digital work or device. The use of DRM has been controversial. Advocates argue DRM is necessary for copyright holders to prevent unauthorised duplication of their work to ensure continued revenue streams. The Free Software Foundation suggests that the use of the word "Rights" is misleading and suggest that people instead use the term Digital Restrictions Management. Their position is essentially that copyright holders are attempting to restrict use of copyrighted material in ways not included in the statutory, common law, or Constitutional grant of exclusive commercial use to them. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_Rights_Management.

JT: The way to think about it is to compare it to the time before the printing press was invented. At that time only the very wealthy were able to afford to hire private scribes to handwrite their own copy of the bible, or their own copy of some other book that they wanted to read. As a result the only people who had a copy of the bible were those who could afford a bunch of scribes with great handwriting and literacy capabilities to copy it word for word.

But when the printing press came along all of a sudden all that information became available to anybody, since people could now publish their own books. With the printing press anyone of us could become a publisher, at practically no cost to ourselves. Thomas Paine,[116] for instance, was able to publish *Common Sense*[117]

RP: Although there were still costs associated with publishing a book.

JT: And now, several hundred years later, there are no financial barriers to entry at all: anyone can print their own words and get them to other people on the Internet.

It wasn't that before the printing press no one wanted to get their words out. The problem was that those who couldn't afford to hire scribes, or publish a book, had to go stand in the town hall and scream at the top of their lungs to do so.[118] And since people were busy doing other things their audience was severely restricted.

RP: As you say, things changed dramatically with the printing press, but there were still financial constraints. And now the Web has effectively removed all costs, and so further democratised the process of getting your words out.

JT: Correct. Even with the printing press there were obstacles to getting your ideas out there. Those have now gone away, and the Web has tapped the same pent up creativeness that was there before the printing press, when only the rich could afford to publish hand-written books. In addition, it is a multi-way printing press, and so it has also unleashed a huge flow of bottom-up energy.

And it is not just a case of people publishing their words. As I said, people can also share their music. And having decided that the concept of the album sucked, and that they didn't want to buy a whole album, they started sharing their songs with others.

RP: And Napster got sued for helping them!

JT: Sure, the recording industry said that sharing music is illegal and sued Napster. But the fact of the matter is that while you can say Napster lost, it is now possible for people to buy 99c songs from iTunes; and only those songs they want. They don't have to buy 16 songs for a big album price if they don't want them; and the recording industry guys are losing the dough. As I said, they're profits are down.

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[116] Thomas Paine was an English and American intellectual, scholar, revolutionary, deist and idealist, who spent much of his time in America and France. A radical pamphleteer, Paine anticipated and helped foment the American Revolution through his powerful writings, most notably *Common Sense*, an incendiary pamphlet advocating independence from the Kingdom of Great Britain. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Paine.

[117] *Common Sense* was a pamphlet first published on January 15th, 1776, during the American Revolution by Thomas Paine. He wrote it with editorial feedback from Benjamin Rush, who came up with the title. The document denounced British rule, and through its immense popularity contributed to fomenting the American Revolution. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_Sense_%28pamphlet%29.

[118] In England this remains a regular method at Speakers' Corner an area where public speaking is allowed, and is located in the north-east corner of Hyde Park in London, England. Speakers are allowed to speak as long as the police consider their speeches do not breach the law. Contrary to popular mythology there is no immunity from the law nor are any subjects proscribed. In practice the police tend to be quite tolerant and intervene either when they receive a complaint or when they hear bad language. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Speakers_corner.

So the Net has sparked the same kind of really disruptive revolutionary change that the printing press brought us, and it is impacting journalism, politics, government, corporate communications — everything.

And if you understand how the printing press changed human society at every single level, and then you think about the TV, you can see that while the television changed things it didn't create the same kind of revolution; nor did radio.

THE PEOPLE WENT MISSING IN ACTION

RP: In your book you quote James Madison,[119] who said: "Knowledge will forever govern ignorance and a people who mean to be their own government must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives."[120] We are today said to be in the knowledge age. I suspect what whoever coined the term, however, did so in order to point out that — thanks to the intellectual property system — we can now exploit knowledge as though it were a physical raw material like iron ore or coal. For you, by contrast, what is revolutionary about the information age is that it makes available technology that we can use to share knowledge in new and interesting ways — and not for private profit, but for communal good. And in doing so, we can create a fairer and a more democratic society?

JT: Yes exactly.

RP: Some might say: "Why do we need more democracy? What's so special about it?" I guess I am enquiring about the moral kernel at the heart of your belief that the Internet should be used to enhance democracy?

JT: Democracy is the participation of the people, so if you don't have people participating then you don't really have democracy. So what makes the Internet good — at least from a political point of view — is that it enhances participation, and the more people participate the greater the democracy.

RP: Ok, the Internet allows more participation, and more participation enhances democracy. But that still doesn't explain why democracy is inherently good.

JT: The problem we face today is that money is driving our politics. We are in trouble over this. The more people who get involved and the more small money — not big money — you get in, the more you strengthen democracy. So the Internet is good for democracy. That's a pretty simple reason, but it's what I believe.

RP: I wonder if the answer to my question has more to do with pragmatism than morality. Some might argue, for instance, that democracy is simply the most efficient way we have yet discovered for organising large modern societies, and that that's why we need to strengthen it?

JT: Maybe. But whatever the reasons, when you look at where we are today you see that we have a limited democracy. We had democracy, but it just sort of got skittered[121] away.

RP: How?

JT: Again, TV was the culprit. Retail politics is knocking on doors, engaging with citizens, listening to them, telling them what you think, or having your volunteers do that. And then this thing comes along

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[119] James Madison was the fourth (1809–1817) President of the United States. Known as the "Father of the Constitution," he played a leading role in the creation of the United States Constitution in 1787, and, together with Alexander Hamilton and John Jay, was among the chief expounders of its meaning in the *Federalist Papers* (1788). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Madison.
[120] Letter to WT Barry, August 4th, 1822.
[121] http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary_/skittered.html.

and it made things a hell of a lot easier: We don't need people talking to people, we can just talk to them ourselves and, besides, Joe might get the story wrong when he's at John's door.

RP: So the purpose of a political campaign shifted from having a democratic debate about the best way forward, to keeping everyone on message; and the only goal today is to do everything possible to increase the chances of getting your candidate elected?

JT: Indeed. With TV I can do the story exactly the way I want to do it, and then just beam it out. At that point retail politics becomes me chasing a lot of rich people for money so I can buy television ads. And these TV ads evolved from me just telling my story into me wanting to nuke the other guy. Meanwhile, he's doing the same thing to me.

Eventually it reaches the point where whoever raises the most money can nuke the other guy better. And the one who can nuke the other guy better is the guy that wins.

RP: Today it's just a matter of selling a product then.

JT: And as the process developed the people went missing in action, because the campaigns didn't want them. It was a waste of time and effort — and of money — to try to get people to do things. But what you are seeing post the 2004 election, at least here in the States, is a revitalisation of the people.

RP: It's a very depressing picture you paint. You are saying that the average US citizen is entirely malleable: He or she turns on the TV, is told a bunch of lies, and then goes out to vote on the basis of which candidate's campaign blackened the opposition most effectively, not on the issues at hand. Consequently, you are saying, you can plot a direct relationship between the dollars spent in a US political campaign and the number of votes a candidate gets?

JT: That is exactly what was going on, and it is still going on. And that is precisely why the only hope I can see is for Internet Open Source campaigning to develop.

RP: Your views are of course primarily based on your experience in the US. I know you have been in the UK, however, and you have advised Tony Blair. You have also advised the liberals in Canada. How much do you think this is an American story, and how relevant is it to other democracies?

JT: Oh, this is a very wide phenomenon. In fact, the first real deployment of Open Source Politics wasn't the Dean campaign. It was in countries like South Korea, where we saw a lot more going on than over here; and indeed the ability the technology gives to connect people has produced new leaders, one of which was in South Korea.[122] So we are seeing this developing everywhere.

I wasn't, by the way, telling the Labour Party, or Blair, or the Liberals in Canada for that matter, what to do. It was more a case of, "We have been doing it this way, what can we learn?" It's true, however, that over the last few years I have been to quite a few countries to talk about it, including Spain, Norway, The Netherlands, and Mexico. I've also been to talk about at the Carnegie Center for International Peace in Moscow.[123]

RP: Moscow sounds an interesting place to discuss Open Source Politics in. How did that work?

JT: The Carnegie Center put together a series of meetings[124] with people from the Kremlin, and people from the different parties there. We had two days of discussions about how they are using the Internet to connect up citizens, and how can we learn from each other.

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[122] See for instance, http://edition.cnn.com/2002/TECH/12/18/skorea.elections.
[123] http://www.carnegie.ru/en.
[124] http://www.carnegie.ru/en/news/74027.htm.

So I see this everywhere. I can't think of a place that doesn't appear to have been impacted, or isn't trying to build civic action, and citizen movements around the technology.

NOT INTERESTED IN PLAYING THE GAME

RP: Let's finish up by turning back to Joe Trippi. You said you didn't go to Vermont to win. But I'm wondering: if Dean had won the nomination, and if he had gone on to become President, would you personally have ended up with a job in the White House[125]?

JT: I wouldn't have gone there for all the money in the world.

RP: Why?

JT: I'm like James Carville,[126] who said he wouldn't want to live in a country that would let him be part of the government! Besides, I'm just not interested in that side of things. I had a stint in government early on in my career — I was deputy chief of staff to the Lieutenant Governor of California for four months, and it was the most painful four months of my career.

RP: Why?

JT: The bureaucracy.

RP: How do you mean?

JT: If, for instance, I had a great idea about how to solve the State's energy resources, or thought I did, I would find that if somebody else wanted to kill it, it would just die in committee.

So after four months I quit. Maybe the White House has a little bit more power to get things done, but I doubt it: I can't imagine it being much different in the White House.

RP: Did you not ever think of becoming a politician yourself? Do you perhaps harbour aspirations to stand?

JT: No, and I never did.

RP: Because of the bureaucracy?

JT: Actually, it's twofold. First, I am simply not interested in playing the game. I don't go to Washington parties, for instance. I can't stand the "Hey, love ya baby," [laughs] while you hold a knife in the other hand.

Second, I feel there are better ways for me to make a difference than to run for office. So, no, I never thought of becoming a politician.

RP: Why then are you on the planet? What is the job you feel you have to do?

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[125] The White House is the official home and principal workplace of the President of the United States of America. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_house.

[126] James Carville is an American political consultant, commentator, media personality and pundit. Sometimes known as the Ragin' Cajun, Carville gained national attention for his work as the lead strategist of the successful 1992 presidential campaign of then-Arkansas governor Bill Clinton. Carville was the co-host of CNN's Crossfire until its final broadcast in June 2005. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Carville.

JT: As I said when we started this conversation, I want to change the world. I tried to do that by running the Dean campaign; and I try to do that by helping the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.[127]

RP: What's the Chesapeake Bay Foundation?

JT: It's an attempt to build a community to stop global warming. I am also helping Laurie David[128] the wife of Larry David.[129] Laurie has created stop global warming dot org;[130] we've built a membership of 300,000 in the last four months.[131] So I am doing different things like that.

RP: This might seem a silly question, but I wonder how you would describe your politics.

JT: Oh, I am much more of a reformer than people think. Because of the Dean campaign most think I am a whacked-out liberal. But I am not. I am definitely progressive, and I would say that I am a centre-left person. I am not driven by ideology at all: I am much more driven by the need to change this messed up system that we have got; to improve it. I also think politics has become really inauthentic.

RP: Can you expand on that?

JT: Sure. I mean, in every polling we have there is not a single really authentic word appears to come out of any of these politicians' mouths any more. So to attract me, a candidate needs to be authentic, and they need to want to reform or change the system.[132]

That sort of candidate is much more appealing to me than, "Oh, who is the most liberal guy in the race?" kind of thing.

BEST AND MOST HONEST DESCRIPTION

RP: I suspect that people become active in politics for many different reasons. Once they have made the decision to become involved, of course, they generally then choose a party to support — which side of the political spectrum to stand on if you like. Was it inevitable that you would sit with the Democrats?

JT: Absolutely. It had to be the Democrats.

RP: Why?

JT: When I was coming of age in the 1960s and 1970s the Republicans were clearly identified as the party of the rich, and the Democrats were clearly and very starkly identified as the party of the poor. Essentially, Bobby Kennedy and the Democrats were making the case for a war on poverty, and helping the poor; and the Republicans were sort of rebelling against that [laughs].

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[127] http://www.cbf.org.

[128] Laurie David is a political activist concerned with environmental protection, global warming, and reduction in the use of fossil fuels. She is a trustee of the Natural Resources Defense Council and sits on the board of California's Children Nature Institute. Since 2005, she has been a contributing blogger to The Huffington Post.

[129] Larry David is an Emmy-winning American actor, writer, comedian, producer, and film director born and raised in the Sheepshead Bay section of Brooklyn, New York. David was the co-creator, writer and executive producer for the television series *Seinfeld*. In addition, he created and stars in the HBO series *Curb Your Enthusiasm*.

[130] http://www.stopglobalwarming.org. See, http://joetrippi.com/?p=1557, and http://joetrippi.com/blog/?p=2250.

[131] The figure is now over 853,000.

[132] In the NPR interview Trippi said, "We are about to enter a period where the more authentic a candidate is, the better they are going to be able to survive in the Internet new media world — because television let these guys be fake, but on the Internet, in this new medium, you have to be real." http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6410264.

So back then there was a stark difference between the two parties. Unfortunately that distinction has become somewhat blurred today [laughs].

RP: There's no difference between the Democrats and the Republicans?

JT: Well, the Republicans still like to make tax cuts for the rich and so on; but the lines have become much more blurred. Back then if you asked any American which party represented the poor, 95% of people would say, "Oh that's the Democrats". If you asked which party looks out for the rich, everybody would have said the Republicans.

RP: You were instinctively a Democrat because you had lived in poverty as a child: the Democrats supported your kind of people?

JT: Exactly, yea.

RP: I am curious about your motivation. Why have you devoted your whole life to trying to get politicians elected? I understand what you say about wanting to change the world, but in reading your book I was struck at the way you described campaigning — you used the analogy of a gambler for instance, and you talked about campaigning as an addiction. You are also widely viewed as a risk taker.[133] What is the buzz here? What is it about political campaigning that turns you on?

JT: I meant what I said about changing the world. I am one of those boomers who knew immediately that our generation was put here to change the world. That's the weird thing. And as I said, as I was growing up I couldn't figure out if you could change the world more through politics, or through technology.

And, by the way, I was right about the potential of technology: just consider the cell phone for instance. That has certainly changed the world. In fact, you could make the case that the cell phone, or the PC, or the laptop, has changed the world far more than any politician ever has.

RP: But politicians <u>can</u> change the world?

JT: Absolutely. None of the technology could have done what Bobby Kennedy — and a bunch of people like him — did to improve civil rights; and in that way they fundamentally changed the world in a way that technology never did.

So I fundamentally understood inside myself that politics could change the world, and technology could change the world, but I never could figure out which one of the two was the one to go for. Whenever I had my doubts about politics, when I was run down and I decided that politics really couldn't change things, I would leave for ten years and go do the technology.

RP: But politics always calls you back!

JT: True, after a while I would go, "So cell phones changed the world; but so what?" [laughs]. Then finally with Howard Dean I found I could do both. I thought, "Wow, I never thought about what would happen if you put both of them together: Maybe you can change the world that way." And that is where I am now.

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[133] See for instance the description of Trippi in a *New York Times* profile in December 2003. "He's a risk-taker, he's always been a risk-taker," said Pete Giangreco, a consultant who is married to Mr. Trippi's former wife's sister and is working for Senator John Edwards of North Carolina. "He's always in the middle of some tumultuous, sometimes disastrous, thing." http://www.nytimes.com/2003/12/13/politics/campaigns/13TRIP.html?ex=1386651600&en=5d59d4b83db6df87&ei=5007&partner=USERLAND. Or the *US Today* piece, entitled "Dean Campaign's architect a risk taker" http://www.usatoday.com/news/politicselections/nation/2004-01-08-trippi-profile_x.htm.

So if you think of a boomer who thinks he's going to change the world, and then you think of a guy who is confused and can't figure out whether technology or politics is the right way to change it, and then spends his whole life drifting indecisively back and forth between these two worlds, then you have the best and most honest description I can give of myself to you.

SO DRIVEN

RP: Your obsession with politics has come at some personal cost hasn't it? During the Dean campaign, for instance, your diabetes got so bad that you lost your vision temporarily?[134]

JT: I am definitely a driven person. But being so driven isn't necessarily a good thing. In that sense I guess I have an addictive personality.

RP: In your book you also imply that the failure of your first marriage was a consequence of being so driven?

JT: I would say that's true. I do sometimes wonder what it would have been like to be somebody who didn't take so much on, and just worried about paying the bills. Certainly I have never been so good at worrying about bills — which is why I have a lot of trouble paying them [large laugh].

So I sometimes wonder about that. But I probably would have hated that kind of life, so I don't know. I certainly don't sit around sort of upset with myself for the life I have led.

RP: Perhaps if you had devoted yourself to technology you might have made a lot of money, as many in Silicon Valley have done?

JT: That's true; and there are days when I think about it. For instance Steve Westly,[135] who was a co-founder of eBay[136] — and like number eight employee of the company — is a very good friend of mine. We were close in our college days, and I remember once — I can't recall what presidential campaign it was — but I called him and said, "Hey, I'm going to go and work on a presidential campaign."

He said, "No Joe, don't do that, stay in the Valley. We are trying to get this little company off the ground. Come and join us."

I said, "What's the name of this company?" He replied, "Oh, we're thinking of calling it eBay."

But I decided to go do a presidential campaign, and not stay in Silicon Valley and do eBay. Do you think there are days when I don't think to myself: "What would $400m in the bank feel like?" [laughs loud]

RP: There's a great story in your book about how when you were working on the Walter Mondale[137] campaign in 1984 Mondale flew your father out to Philadelphia to be with you.

JT: Yea.

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[134] At one point during the Dean campaign Trippi temporarily lost his sight due to his diabetes. Trippi, s*upra,* p. 161.

[135] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steve_Westly.

[136] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/EBay.

[137] Walter Frederick "Fritz" Mondale is an American politician and member of the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party (largely established by former Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey). He was the 42nd Vice President of the United States (1977-1981) under President Jimmy Carter. He was also a two-term United States Senator from Minnesota and the Democratic Party nominee for president in 1984 against the incumbent, Republican Ronald Reagan. Mondale suffered a crushing defeat as Reagan was re-elected in a landslide victory in which Mondale carried only his home state of Minnesota and the District of Columbia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Mondale.

RP: A while later you made plans to take a trip to Sicily with your father, where he came from, but you got caught up running another campaign before you had a chance. During that campaign you got news that your father died. Is it a big regret for you that you never managed to take that trip?

JT: Oh, sure, a big regret. But one wonderful thing that happened during the Dean campaign was that my kids were old enough to be on the plane with us for most of the summer — so they finally got to see what their dad did [laughs] after all those days when I was missing in action. So that was good.

But no, politics is not an easy business, and your personal relationships are a disaster. I regret all that.

RP: You said you had four siblings. What do they do today?

JT: Oh, one brother is an art dealer and lives in Tokyo. The other one drives 18-wheeled trucks back and forth across the country.

RP: And your sisters?

JT: One is a home maker, raising kids; and the other is — what do you call it — a casting person in Hollywood.

RP: Do you see them often?

JT: No. We live all over the place, and when you are running a presidential campaign it's particularly difficult to meet up: I am never in any one place, and pretty constantly on the road.

I used to see my brother in Tokyo occasionally: When I was doing business in Morocco, he would sometimes fly from Japan to Morocco to have dinner with me. It was easier to do that than for me to fly out to Japan from here, or for him to fly to the States!

As for my brother Jeff, the truck driver, I'll usually call him when I am in his town, or when I am going to be near his town, and suggest we get together. But often when I do he'll call me back from, say, Florida, and tell me he's taking a load from Florida to New Orleans, and so won't be anywhere near where he lives [laughs].

Basically, we're all nomads!

RP: I guess relationships can be difficult with your colleagues too. On one campaign you might be working in the same team, but next time in opposing camps?

JT: Absolutely. I often think of the friends I have lost along the way — Jack Corrigan,[138] for instance, who had to be one of my best friends in the Kennedy campaign, and who was my boss. But in 1988 he ended up working for Mike Dukakis for President[139] while I was working for Dick Gephardt.[140]

RP: And you fell out as a result of working on opposite teams?

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[138] Jack Corrigan is a long time "poll" who Trippi first worked with on the Ted Kennedy campaign in Iowa in 1979. p. 18.
[139] Michael Stanley Dukakis is an American Democratic politician, former Governor of Massachusetts, and the Democratic presidential nominee in 1988. He was born to Greek-immigrant parents in Brookline, Massachusetts and was the longest serving governor in Massachusetts' history. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Dukakis.
[140] Richard Andrew "Dick" Gephardt is senior counsel at the global law firm DLA Piper and a former prominent American politician of the Democratic Party. Gephardt served as a US Representative from Missouri from January 3, 1977, until January 3, 2005, and Minority Leader of the U.S. House of Representatives from 1995 to 2003. He was an unsuccessful candidate for the Democratic nomination in the 1988 presidential election and then again in the 2004 presidential election. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dick_Gephardt.

JT: Yes. The race became really heated, and while we're cordial these days, frankly our relationship has never been the same again, just because we ran on different sides of a Presidential campaign. So it's not just the family, it's all kinds of things [voice drops].

RP: You agree that you are driven. What else would you say about yourself, and your personality?

JT: I don't know. That's a tough one.

RP: I came across a colourful description of you by Joe Drymala[141] in an interview he did with Broadway World. *He said "If anyone created a character like Trippi, no one would believe it: he's a guy who, every day, drinks 40 Diet Pepsis and dips an entire can of Cherry Skoal;[142] one minute he's crumpling up your latest speech into a ball and ruthlessly pelting it at you, and the next minute he's on the verge of tears as he ruminates on the power and moral righteousness of Jeffersonian democracy."[143] That's quite a graphic picture he paints. Is it accurate?*

JT: Pretty much.

RP: So you are a very emotional person?

JT: Well, I am Italian right [laughs]. But also, you know, politics is a really tough thing. You have got to be tough enough to keep the ball rolling in the right direction. And I am not one of those who just does it. I never became one of those mercenaries. I care about what I am doing. And so I really have to care about a candidate's campaign, or I wouldn't work for them; I don't go work for anybody."

RP: For you it's never a sort of professional "I am your lawyer" relationship" then?

JT: Hell, no. That is one of the reasons the campaigns I run tend to have passion in them.

The fact is that everybody who did the Dean campaign believed in the Dean campaign. Nobody went up there thinking they were going to win, or get rich, or be famous. Nobody went up there thinking, "Oh, I want to go work for the guy who's going to win."

RP: Because, as you said, Dean was an asterisk at the start?

JT: That's right. If you wanted to make sure you got paid you didn't go to Dean, you went to work for John Kerry or John Edwards or Dick Gephardt. If you thought, "I am going to go be a winner, and go work in the White House, and be famous, and get on CNN," you would go work for John Kerry.

Howard Dean was not the guy you went to do that for. You went to work for Dean because you thought, "Hey there is a bunch of people up there who can't put two nickels together, but I believe in what they are doing."

RP: You said you sometimes think about how it might have been to have joined eBay and make loads of money. You have done OK though: You have a farmhouse on the Eastern shore of Maryland; you got married again; you are never short of work. Life is good isn't it?

JT: No, no, no, I didn't mean it that way: I just meant that if you get so driven in one direction then just once in a while you wonder like, shit [laughs], what am I doing. You particularly feel this about a month before Election Day [laughs] when you are getting nuked, and when your candidate is getting attacked every which way [laughs again]!

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[141] Joe Drymala was a speech writer on the Dean campaign. http://boston.broadwayworld.com/viewcolumn.cfm?colid=9152.
[142] http://www.sky.cz/bonec_sports/obrazky/skoal.jpg.
[143] http://www.broadwayworld.com/viewcolumn.cfm?colid=9152.

RP: Can you remember a particular time on the Dean campaign when you felt like that?

JT: The time we found out about the robocalls[144] that Kerry was doing for instance.

RP: What was that?

JT: I woke up one day and found out that the Kerry campaign was using a robocall system to call every one of our supporters 16 or 17 times a day. They would answer and the machine would just hang up on them when they answered, which they programmed it to do. Then later, when we called, we would be like the 18th call that person had received that day, and they would just scream, "I hate the Howard Dean campaign. How could you be calling me this way," and then they'd pull their phone out of the wall.

That day, when someone came in and said the robocalls had started calling all our supporters every frickin' hour, I thought to myself, "Why the hell wasn't I in technology for the last 10 years, and not in politics!"

RP: Looking back, what changed for you personally as a result of the Dean campaign?

JT: Well, in a lot of ways I wish it hadn't changed at all. Before Dean I was just someone who was dedicated to politics — and technology of course. As such I was sort of inconspicuous. People would know who I was, but I didn't seem to represent anything in particular.

RP: That changed after the Dean campaign?

JT: It did. And it's strange, because for every person who comes up to me at an airport, pats me on the back, and says: "Hey, thank you for helping me to change things", I get one or two other guys who will say: "You are the guy who blew the Howard Dean campaign. He would have been president if it hadn't been for you."

And for some reason the negative voices still get to me [laughs] more than the positive ones do.

RP: But you wouldn't turn back the clock and choose not to work for Dean?

JT: No. I don't regret doing it: I just wish I could have done it in a way where I could be the guy I was before. You know what I am saying? To be unremarkable again. It's a crummy business where there's all kinds of people who would like to kick me a few times, whether it was because they were with Kerry, or somebody else. But I guess that's just politics.

A KEY MOMENT?

RP: You said you believed that the Dean campaign made a difference. Do you think that when the history books are written it will be seen as having been a key moment in American politics?

JT: I think so. If we had won it would probably be seen as having been comparable to the John Kennedy campaign — in so far as Kennedy was the first President to use television effectively; he was the first television candidate.

RP: Where Dean was the first Internet candidate?

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[144] A telephone call made using a computer that plays a voice recording, used in election campaigning and telemarketing http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary_701709482/robocall.html.

JT: Right. Here I am not talking about greatness; I'm not comparing ourselves to Kennedy as a candidate, but in terms of our too having been the first to use a new medium as part of a sea change in the political universe.

In that sense if we had won, then years later people would have looked back at Howard Dean's presidency in a similar way, not in the way they look at Kennedy as a President, but at the way both campaigns used a new medium effectively. It would have been seen as a similar push forward.

However, since we lost I guess our campaign will be seen as more like that of McGovern's.

RP: Why McGovern's?

JT: Because the McGovern campaign was the first campaign to really implement direct mail.[145] And they did it amazingly well: McGovern raised more money using direct mail than anyone had done before. But McGovern lost, and so the Democrats viewed direct mail as a fad, believing that it had only worked for McGovern.

The Republicans, by contrast, said: "We don't care where he was on the War[146] — that stuff works. So we are going to learn more about it than anybody else, and we are going to develop it better than anybody else."

Today as a consequence, over thirty years later, the Republicans just kick our rear end on direct mail, where we just walked away from it.[147]

RP: So there's a lesson to be learned here for the Democrats?

JT: Certainly. When we look back on the Dean campaign in the future the question will be: Was it another instance where a Democratic Party campaign pushed the envelope but the Democrats didn't follow it up? Instead they reacted as they did with George McGovern, and said, "Oh he was anti-war.[148] It was a fad. We are not going to put much into it". And in the meantime Republicans like Karl Rove and Mehlman[149] systematically began putting millions of dollars into developing the online medium.

If that does happen then we will likely end up in the same place 30 or 40 years from now saying, "Well, boy, those working in the Dean campaign were the innovators, but the Republicans are the ones that now own the medium."

RP: Is that likely?

JT: Well, if you look at every medium before — at everything, from cable television to radio to direct mail — you will see that it has been the Republicans that have put the resources in, and become the experts at it, while the Democrats and the progressives sat on the side-lines poo pooing it.

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[145] As we saw in the introduction, the Progressive Policy Institute's Will Marshall also saw a parallel between the Dean campaign and George McGovern's campaign. Both, he said, appealed to what he called "the postgraduate proletariat, on the two coasts, plus a dollop of Hollywood liberals."

[146] McGovern ran on a platform that advocated unilateral withdrawal from the Vietnam War in exchange for the return of American prisoners of war and amnesty for draft evaders who had left the country, an "anti-war" platform that was presaged in 1970 by McGovern's sponsorship of the McGovern-Hatfield amendment, seeking to end US participation in the war by Congressional action.

[147] "The Republican Party, agree Armstrong and Moulitsas, "built its financial dominance on the strength of a successful direct-mail operation that netted hundreds of millions in small-dollar donations." Trippi, *supra.*, p. 134/5

[148] During his presidential campaign Dean opposed the war with Iraq. Trippi is not the only person to compare him with McGovern. Dean, however, was criticised by fellow candidate Dennis Kucinich for not supporting an immediate withdrawal of US troops from Iraq and cuts to the Pentagon budget. http://dir.salon.com/story/news/feature/2003/07/11/dean/index.html.

[149] Kenneth Mehlman is s an American attorney who was chairman of the Republican National Committee from 2005 to 2007. He served as the campaign manager for George W. Bush's 2004 re-election campaign. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ken_Mehlman.

RP: It would certainly be an interesting outcome if the Republicans were to take ownership of the Internet as a campaign tool — because it seems to run counter to everything implied in our conversation: that the technology is a progressive and democratic force. Here you are saying that the Internet could become a tool for conservatism?

JT: Exactly. My biggest concern about the Dean campaign is that we could end up being the Japanese at Pearl Harbour — where we made a sneak attack that woke up the sleeping giant that is the Republican Party.[150]

RP: But if we agree that Internet technology encourages and enables a bottom-up approach, should we not conclude that that is very unlikely?

JT: In theory.

RP: Because while we agreed that the Democratic Party also instinctively operates on a top-down basis, if the Internet is inherently democratic then it shouldn't favour the Republicans should it?

JT: It shouldn't favour any ideology. But my fear is that if the Republicans pour more money into hiring more people who blog more, and we ignore that and don't cultivate the Web, but continue to think bloggers are weird, then we have started to create our own mess.

RP: My final question then: How does the future look for Joe Trippi. I know you were very active in the November elections, consulting for a number of candidates, and you are working for people like Tom Knox.[151] But what about the future: Are you going to dedicate yourself to politics again, or are you going to take some time out to sit with your technology twin?

JT: I am sort of doing both. I am doing a lot of technology and corporate stuff, and I'm doing some politics too. I guess I still haven't figured out what I am going to do when I grow up!

RP: What about the Presidential race in 2008?

JT: I get asked that frequently. I usually say I am crazy enough to do it again. But I'm not sure anybody is crazy enough to hire me.

RP: You'd take a call from Hillary Clinton I bet?

JT: Oh sure. In fact, I think we have got a number of good Democrats out there I'd be happy to work with. But Hillary has got her team all put together.[152] Anyway, we'll see what happens. I am not ruling out getting involved. When I was done with the Dean campaign I said never again, but I always say that …[153]

RP: OK, a good note to end on. Thanks for your time.

JT: Thanks then.

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[150] As we saw in the introduction, it seems that the Democrats retain a clear lead in the use of the Internet for campaigning. See also Matt Stoller on this issue: http://www.mydd.com/story/2007/4/8/1243/35299.

[151] Tom Knox is a millionaire candidate in the 2007 Democratic primary for mayor of Philadelphia. http://www.knoxforphilly.com. As we saw in the introduction,

[152] Hillary Clinton declared herself for the 2008 presidential race on 20th January 2007. Amongst those signed up as advisers are Karen Hicks, who served as New Hampshire director for Howard Dean in 2004. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karen_Hicks.

[153] On April 19th 2007 it was announced that Trippi was joining the John Edwards campaign, as senior adviser and a member of the media team. http://johnedwards.com/news/press-releases/200700419-trippi.