

SHORT: And Joe Frank did that. And despite the fact that very few people thought he had a chance, he won. The first of nine terms in the legislature. So here he is, a young fellow, from the country, going down down to the big city as a freshman. Guess what happens? He's appointed to the Appropriations Committee, which most legislators, often will tell you, except for Corrections -

\*Laughter\*

SHORT: It's the most powerful committee in the legislature. Joe Frank served there admirably, and he worked very well with the team of that time. But I thought it was very, very significant for Georgia. Busbee was there. Senator Miller was there. Joe Frank was there. So the state at that time was in very good hands. And as the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Joe Frank became an expert on state government. He knew the departments. He knew their needs. He knew their shortcomings. And he had the patience and the willingness to help them solve their problems, and become more efficient. He became widely known! I can remember when, if you went to see Speaker Murphy, he would always tell you, "If you're talking about a budget matter, go see Joe Frank." He was in a very powerful position to deal with state problems, and he did well. Then, he decided to run for governor. It was a wise decision, although the road, probably, was just as rough as the road when he ran for the state House of Representatives. He had a number of very well-qualified and well-known opponents. One was Congressman (Gean?), who had been an assistant to Herman Talmadge in Washington, who had been a congressman himself, who'd been on the Armed Services Committee, therefore had all the support of the military people and the government workers in the state. A very, very viable candidate. Then, he had (Norman Underwood?). Mr. (Underwood?) had been with Governor Busbee. Governor Busbee had put him on the (Appellate?) Court. He had - he left there to run for governor, and he had the support of Governor Sanders - former Governor Sanders, and, you would assume, Busbee, although I'm not sure that that's accurate. Although I would assume. At least he claimed to have the support. And so, another viable candidate. The three of them. There were others, of course, but none of them had the knowledge or the experience or the finances to run. Everybody thought that Mr. (Gean?) would be the frontrunner in that race, and he was. Most people thought that (Underwood?) probably would be the candidate in the run-off. But he wasn't. Joe Frank Harris came from a standing of less than five percent of the polls on opening day. You get into the run-off with Mr. (Gean?), and then defeat him soundly in the run-off, and then go on to become governor of Georgia. And, you know, what impressed me most about Joe Frank Harris was, he wasted very little time. And he took office on January 11th, I believe, in 1983? 1983. He immediately launched his programs to complete his platform. And there were - they were very progressive. And very needed! And they exist today. We'll talk about that later on in the program, because I know that you want to hear from him, some of the decisions he made in launching his campaign. He served two terms as governor of Georgia, both very well. He came up with the programs that we'll talk about, and he did an excellent job with them. When he left the governor's office, he

went back - back to Cartersville. Back to the business world. But he took time out to become a professor at Georgia State University, and also, to serve as chairman on the state Board of Regents, and to come here today. So, after a break, we will have our conversation with the Harris's. Thank you.

\*Break\*

SHORT: Well, welcome. I can think of no greater occasion than this - to have you both here. I'm particularly pleased to have Mrs. Harris, who was our first lady, and a very active one. And I'm anxious to talk to her about how she liked that job, whether it's fun, or whether it's a job. Whether she could sit on the sofa and eat bon-bons!

\*Laughter\*

SHORT: Or if she could do the things that she wanted to do. Did I miss anything about your early life?

JF HARRIS: No, you covered it embarassingly well!

\*Laughter\*

JF HARRIS: It's always still a little bit embarassing to hear someone talking about certain things. You know, their mothers, and the sort of things that you accomplished or did. It's still humbling when you hear that, and you covered it very admirably.

E HARRIS: (inaudible!)

JF HARRIS: I'm glad you're here!

\*Laughter\*

SHORT: Well, we've known each other for years. What, now, nine? I want to make sure that I do things politely. Should I call you governor, your Excellency -

\*Laughter\*

SHORT: Or can I just get by on calling you Joe Frank?

JF FRANK: You know, I'm still Joe Frank.

\*Laughter\*

JF FRANK: And during the time I was governor, I don't think I ever - in my life -

answered the phone and said, "Governor Harris." There was always a - it was Joe Frank. So, Joe Frank.

SHORT: And Mrs. Harris, should I call you Mrs. Harris or first lady?

E HARRIS: Elizabeth.

SHORT: Elizabeth.

\*Laughter\*

SHORT: It occurred to me when you said that, somewhere during your first campaign, someone tried to get you to change your name. From Joe Frank Harris to Joe Harris.

JF HARRIS: Well, actually, it was our PR person, who we'd hired to help us pick the - the colors for the campaign and the photographs and the brochures and all the kinds of things that you had to have to run for office. So I had him to help us. And he said, "There's one thing that I want you to consider." And I said, "Well, what's that?" And he said, "We need you to change your name." And I said, "Well, what you do you mean?" And he said, "Have you ever thought about how long Joe Frank Harris is on a bumper sticker?"

\*Laughter\*

JF HARRIS: If we put it long enough, people are not going to be able to see it. And another thing he said, "We're in the new South now." He said, "Now there's a double name connotation that brings up (inaudible) that people don't like to think about - Bob or John Henry or whatever." And he said, "You can drop that, and just go to Joe Harris." I said, "Well, you know, if I've got to change my name to run for governor, you've got to be what you are." I said, "That's not what I am. So, if we can't get all that on a bumper sticker, we'll just have to put two of them together."

\*Laughter\*

JF HARRIS: We made it work though!

SHORT: That reminds me of another instance at the inauguration, where you wanted to have your inauguration on the Capital Square like most people had. Except I think George Busbee had his inside in the auditorium. But the Speaker wanted you to have it inside. And you had a little -

E HARRIS: No, Bob, he sent me.

\*Laughter\*

SHORT: That was going to be my question! Elizabeth (inaudible) what did you do to the Speaker?

JF HARRIS: The Speaker, well, he'd been advised or something, as you know, from Carlton. He was unchangeable. I mean, that was it and there was nothing in between. And so he said, after I was elected, he said, "You may think you're going to have this election outside." Because I'd indicated earlier that I wanted to do it in the afternoon like it'd always had been done. Right there on the steps of the Capital, and everybody would come to the Capital in the afternoon. And he said, "The weather's always bad. It's cold." He said, "I'm not going to be there." And so, we solicited Elizabeth and she will tell you that part of the story.

E HARRIS: I very meekly went up to the office of the Speaker. And I guess we women have our way. And I just very nicely told him that it was going to be outside. And if it was too cold for him, then I guess he wouldn't be there.

\*Laughter\*

SHORT: Well, I remember that encouragement. So, you two met at the (Banks?) Catholic Church in Cartersville. Elizabeth's father was a pastor, and your family were attendees. And she, as I remember, was a student at (LaGrange?) College, which meant that you didn't get to see her as often as I'm sure you might have. But, I'm sure you did some courting, drove and met her or something.

JF HARRIS: Well, we kept the highway busy, back and forth in that car from (LaGrange?) for the whole year - our senior year. But her dad worked at our church (inaudible) in our senior year. And she was in Texas working. Her sister lived up there, and she had a job with one of oil companies in Texas that summer, and came home just before she started. And I had met her father and knew the family because our family were Methodist, and her family was, of course, heavily involved in the ministry (inaudible). And I'm seeing this girl who looks younger than I am. Last time I saw her she was too young to think about anything in the future. But I knew who she was, and I hadn't seen her after she'd gotten through her teenage years, when she was about to be a senior in college. And so she returned home that - at the end of her time in Texas. And that first Sunday when she came to church, I was pretty impressed!

\*Laughter\*

JF HARRIS: I was about to come and ask her out. I found out she'd been gone for two or three years, and I thought, I better find out more about her. Anyway we did. And we arranged to start dating each other, and kind of had the best of both worlds, because we

went ahead and planned to get married the following June, and then that next year the (Baptist Conference?) - as you know, they move the pastors around quite often - well her dad got moved to another place. And packed up my world! So, I married the pretty preacher's daughter and moved to the in-laws house then!

\*Laughter\*

SHORT: Tell us about your (inaudible).

JF HARRIS: Well, I don't have much to tell you myself.

E HARRIS: Well, you know he graduated the University of Georgia. And, because (LaGrange?) was off in the other end of the state - the western side - he would have me transferred to Atlanta, and live with me (inaudible) at Georgia Tech and attend a football game. And then the Sunday he'd take me back to Cartersville, and send me a ticket back to (LaGrange?). But you know, there were a lot of miles in there. But that was back when those tin-foil radios were - (CP?) radios - and I guess I learned to court Joe Frank with that (CV?) radio right there.

\*Laughter\*

E HARRIS: But I did feel lucky to know that he was going on those long, dark miles from (LaGrange?) and something was keeping him awake.

SHORT: Well, he finally got the courage to ask your father for your hand in marriage.

E HARRIS: Well, my sister too, was very - she saw him that first Sunday that she brought me back from Texas. And she saw him in that white Oldsmobile convertible. And she said, "Elizabeth, you might take him."

\*Laughter\*

E HARRIS: His mother and daddy probably gave him that car. (Inaudible) so that he could make payments on it.

\*Laughter\*

SHORT: So your father was impressed with young Harris. He gave you away to him. A very unusual ceremony. He gave away the bride, and then he walked up to the altar and he (inaudible). I've often said, and I say it again today, that I have never seen a more loving and caring couple than you two. And I mean that.

JF HARRIS: I appreciate it.

SHORT: Now, you became first lady, overseeing the mansion and (inaudible) most of the time. What was it like meeting the first lady?

E HARRIS: Well, I want to make it known that Joe Frank and I have always seen alike in everything. But when you assume that office, it's almost like you're assuming the whole state of Georgia on your shoulders. And he had a staff that was just as eager to please and serve the state as he was. But, you know, sometimes the distance between (West Paces Ferry Road?) and the Capital was very long and very stinging. And so they tried to separate the two, and it really caused a wedge in there between Joe Frank and myself. Finally, after about six months I had had about enough. Because I was overwhelmed with my responsibilities, learning to manage - really it's like running a small hotel. And I had never hired and fired and, I really never had help all my life, growing up. And so, I was learning all these things. But then I didn't have him! And I really missed that. So, one day he came home and I was getting an ultimatum. And I said, "Okay. You either give me fifteen minutes of your day, or I'm out of here."

\*Laughter\*

E HARRIS: I got that fifteen minutes.

\*Laughter\*

E HARRIS: And so we were able to - I (inaudible). And I knew the responsibilities were great, but mine were too. And I think it needed to be known, a stability between the two. Because I felt like that mansion should serve the state of Georgia, serve its interests. And really it was an economic development tool. I don't regret at all, having used it that way.

JF HARRIS: So the problem you have - what you find yourself in - you're elected, and then you go through the months after your election as you know them, and being around the people who work there. They're totally consumed by budgetary consideration and preparation and legislative legislation for people in public office and how you're going to do it. It totally consumes your hours - what hours you have. And your family suffers because you don't have time to have that sharing and compatibility. You come in late at night and you're so tired you go to bed and you have to be up early the next morning for another Senate meeting or your staff. They program - they want to program you twenty-four hours a day. And you have to say no. But it takes a little time to work through it and then you have to stop and realize your priorities are getting a little bit skewed. And they are not what they should be, and you're not giving them the kind of time that she's used to having. It's hers too. And so, she reminded me then, and it didn't take but one reminder!

\*Laughter\*

JF HARRIS: That all worked out! I guess our - our reason for being in politics is a little different. Particularly (inaudible). And I'm going to share it with you, because I think it's very important. Because after we married and were in the process of completing a new home, and our son, Joe, just had been born. He came a little early too, and that kind of messed up things a little bit. That's when people came to me, and all, and said, "We'll give you support and help if you consider running for the General Assembly." I had no idea what was required - if I had to pay anything or what my campaign would - I just hadn't been that tied in politically. And so, it was all a learning experience. And my answer to them at the time they came, was, "Well, I - we'll pray about it." And that point we'd (inaudible) what to do and we'd consider it. The reason that I made that determination, that I was going to pray about it is that about a year after we were married, Elizabeth and I, and our families brought us up in the church too. We grew up in the church and were very active. So, we decided that if the Lord hadn't already called me to preach with him and I hadn't had the opportunity and didn't get that call - we were going to dedicate our lives to whatever the Lord had in store for us, wherever he needs us to go, and whatever he needs us to do. We made that dedication, and then (inaudible) very long, because she (inaudible). I was fearful. If I made that kind of commitment, that - and I didn't want to go to the pulpit then, and I decided, well, this is my career. And I didn't want to consider that. I thought, well, the first thing it's going to have to be if I make that commitment is that I'm going to have to be called to the pulpit or the (inaudible) somewhere else. And it took a little while, but I decided, well, you can't hold back. It's almost like accepting Jesus Christ as your savior, you've got to take all of it. You can't just take part of it. So then we - it took a couple of years, actually, before I had the opportunity to run for the General Assembly. Really, just biding our time and waiting for something not happened. Not knowing what it was going to be. I look back now, and I realize that my mission there was (inaudible) not in Cartersville, and it wasn't in a foreign country somewhere. But the very areas we were so critical in participating in and going on a foreign mission, was the area that was probably most productive for our state. And traveling to these foreign countries were big companies (inaudible) during that time. So it was a real window of opportunity to invent the economy of Georgia. And I feel like, looking back now, that we made that commitment, and then prayed about (inaudible) into politics, and then found that (inaudible). That our place was public service. Same way we ran for governor. Prayed about it for a long time and the door never did close. It didn't quite swing open, I mean, it was kind of cracked and it was hard work to get there, but the good Lord blessed us. We've been blessed many times during our public service.

SHORT: Getting back to your first placement in the House of Representatives. You faced a pretty well-oiled opponent who, you know, had a good political background, a good political chance. A lot of people were surprised that you won. Were you surprised?

JF HARRIS: Well I guess - probably - yes I was surprised, but then again, you felt like you could win, or you wouldn't run. But the person that I ran against, he was a very successful attorney and he made a lot of money. He had a lot of money and he didn't have

any problems spending it on the campaign. And he thought that there was no way that we could match the dollars that he on his campaign. But he was already being promoted and had a state-wide office in his future. They (inaudible) governor himself. But the problem that he had, and the reason I was able to defeat him, was that the business community really didn't communicate with him. I mean, he was representing Cartersville and Atlanta instead of Atlanta and Cartersville. And (inaudible). And so, they didn't feel like they had the communication and the support for the issues that they were interested in. And so, it provided an opportunity for me to - to kind of slip in there and move over quickly.

SHORT: And you were there when the legislature declared its independence.

JF HARRIS: Yeah, which - looking back, I think it was a (inaudible). The governor, actually, was the king of the kingdom. I mean, he appointed the Speaker of the House. He appointed all the committee chairs. I know that if (Carlton Caldwell?) was here, we elected (inaudible) same time. Carlton had been elected to the Senate before that, and then had served. And then he got reapportioned out, and came back to the House and General Assembly. I've always remembered Carlton once - he told me once when we were on the way to Plains to welcome Jimmy Carter back to Georgia. And the rumor was out about the run for governor. And he said, "Joe Frank, I'll tell you." He said, "If you run for governor -" He said - he said, "I want to help you. I'll do it either way. I'll either support you or I'll get you, whichever way you think would help you the most!"

\*Laughter\*

JF HARRIS: He just wanted to help me an awful lot. Back then (inaudible) you'd actually have to go to the governor's (inaudible) in the House. Because the governor would elect the Speaker, and the Speaker would be in charge of deciding the federal committees. So, the governor talks (inaudible). It's worked well, I think.