

BOB SHORT: Hello, I'm Bob Short, and this is Reflections on Georgia Politics sponsored by the Institute for Continuing Learning, Young Harris College, and the Russell Library at the University of Georgia. We are delighted to have as our guest today Mr. Herb Mabry, former President of the Georgia AFL-CIO, former leading Democrat committeeman for the state of Georgia, and generally all-around good fellow. Herb, thanks for being with us.

HERB MABRY: Thank you very much.

SHORT: Thanks for being here.

MABRY: It's an honor for me to be here.

SHORT: Good. Well, we're delighted to have you. You grew up in the suburban Atlanta back when Roswell and Sandy Springs were out in the country.

MABRY: I did. We -- I was born in Roswell, Georgia and when I was about 3 or 4 years old, we moved down to Sandy Springs, and my family lived in Sandy Springs most of the time of my life. And I still live in Sandy Springs and never did get far away from my upbringings, but I've seen quite a change in that area, back when we had to go to North Fulton High School down at Buckhead when we were kids, then we would go down and get off the bus. They would say, "Here's the country kids coming in on the bus." And now you run into those people that we

were in North Fulton with, and they say, "Where you live?" And I say, "Out in Sandy Springs."
And they said, "Oh, you're one of those."

SHORT: [Laughter]

MABRY: And so that's how the world changes and the community changes.

SHORT: And it's the City of Sandy Springs now.

MABRY: The City of Sandy Springs. Eva Galambos worked mighty hard. She was at the legislature and one of my main duties as President of the organization that I later headed up, the Georgia AFL-CIO was to -- we had a saying, when the legislature was in session, the public was in danger.

SHORT: [Laughter]

MABRY: And so, we would go up there and stay, and Eva Galambos for several years was at that Capitol everyday fighting for the city of Sandy Springs. She did a great job for the people, and she's doing a great job for the city.

SHORT: That's good. Herb, you've been involved in the labor movement for many, many

years. How did you get interested in organized labor?

MABRY: Well, that's interesting. When I was coming up and all the building trades offered the best opportunity for people that -- I did not attend college after I got out of high school. I did study labor law at Woodrow Wilson and all, but it offered a good opportunity for us. And so, I got into the labor movement as a member of the Carpenter's Local, and I was very active in that local union. And I -- a lot of things that I did after then was that I got into the cemetery business, and I still to this day own a cemetery over in Paulding County, Dallas Memory Gardens. And I go over there and look after the cemetery and doing other things. And then I was in the building business and did a lot of things.

But then they -- I went to work with Sears Roebuck and I was in the shop, and we would build up the fixtures that they used to put in their CSO stores. If you remember, they started the CSO stores. We would build up those fixtures and ship them out to the locations, and then we would go out when the building was finished and we would install those fixtures. And one day a group of people came to me and wanted to know if I would consider running for President of the Georgia AFL-CIO, and I told them that I would have to think about that. I had a wonderful job with Sears Roebuck, good benefits, good hours, and good people to work with. But later I told them I would, and went to the convention and had a hard-fought battle with the other side, but I won the election and became Secretary-Treasurer -- well, Secretary at that time of the Georgia AFL-CIO. And later on J.L. Moore was the President and Mr. Moore called me into his office one day and told me that -- he said, "Herb, I would like for you to take the organization and run

it. I'm going to stay as President finish out my term." But he said, "I'm not able to do it and I would like for you to do it." So I did that and stayed and helped and all. Mr. Moore then passed away and the Board of Directors elevated me to become President of the AFL-CIO, and I served in that position until I retired. And I had opposition one time. And so, I felt very honored to be able to do that.

But not only was I interested in the labor movement, I was very, very interested in state politics, and I was very, very much involved in state politics and I ran for state Representative at that time. And I don't know whether you remember it or not, that I never got to take my seat, but I won the election. And that was when Haskew Brantley was in the Senate, and then the guy that he had defeated came back to run as a write-in candidate. And when they counted the votes, they counted what Haskew got, but they didn't deduct the ones that they counted on the write-in ballot, which takes precedence of it, so I didn't get to sit.

But I -- although I never had the opportunity to serve in state legislature, I was very familiar with what went on at the Capitol. Everyday I was up there, and I knew -- and, you know, I enjoyed a relationship with -- not only that -- I go back to Herman Talmadge days, and that kind of pinpoints my age, but I go back to Herman Talmadge and his offices, and it goes back to the other people that were in there, and there was not a one that served there that -- if I went to their door -- I got in. And I never had any problems in the world with the legislature. And -- but I always wanted to serve in the Georgia legislature. I just thought it would be an opportunity to have input in the directions that the state of Georgia would go, and the directions that I thought that the state needed to go, and later on, we saw that come about.

I knew that we could not survive if we did not allow the blacks and whites to go to school together, work together, and be friends and all. So I served on the board of directors of the Martin Luther King Center and all that. And if you might remember when some of the races and all, and the first time we had -- I endorsed our Congressman, then I went home that night. I endorsed it and then it hit the news that I had endorsed John Lewis for the Congress. And I went home that night, and my doors were closed and they were locked, and the lights were out, and I knew that something was wrong, because we never locked our doors. I had six children, so there wasn't no need of locking the door. But I went home and they came and let me in, and I asked them what was the problem, and they said that they had a phone call and it said, "You tell your daddy that he may endorse that black S.O.B., but we'll get his white A-double S before the night's over." And so they were all upset about it, and I said, "Well, turn the lights back on and let them come on out here." And I said, "I did what I thought was right and just." And so, I always enjoyed a very, very good relationship with the black community. As I said, I served on the board of the Martin Luther King Center. We were talking about Johnson a while ago and the different ones. I had a very, very close relation with the people in the black community, and Daddy King and I were very good friends, and we -- but the people never did understand, or maybe they understood but they didn't want to acknowledge the fact that labor was the backbone of anything. All of the businesses have to have labor in order to survive. We just thought that the working men and women of this state or this nation should be paid an adequate salary that they could provide for them and their self and family -- the same standard of living that they enjoy, and that they could educate them in the public schools of this state and this nation, and go

and work together. And that's what we're doing.

And so, when we're talking about Leroy Johnson, I went to Leroy Johnson and told him that I'd like to talk to him about running for office. And Leroy became the first black -- I believe I'm correct -- that was elected to the state Senate or state House in Georgia, and he and I worked on that campaign, and I took a lot of heat from people about it. But I have no regrets at all about what I have done, what I accomplished, and what I was able to do. And then I went on and worked with him.

And I know that you are -- the same as I am -- a very, very close friend of Zell Miller. Now, Zell might have done some things that I disagreed with, but Zell was a very -- and is today -- a very smart person, very intelligent person, and a very political, astute person. So, he knew what he was doing, but then when Zell was elected and we're running for office -- and I don't know whether you'll remember or not, but there used to be out at North Avenue -- and there was a hotel or a motel or something started, and it stayed abandoned. And so, when he -- I went up and talked to Zell and asked him to run, and Zell said he did not. He had children and had to put them through school and that he didn't think he had the money and the time to do it. And I told him what I would do for him if he would just start. I was President of the AFL-CIO, and talked him into it, and he called me one day and said I had a candidate. And we went out and I took several of my carpenter friends and we built the largest political sign that's ever been built in the state on top of that old motel out there, and we got -- we had a phone call from a state highway department said that we had erected a sign too close to the highway, and that we were going to have to take it down. And Zell called me about it, and I said, "We have a right of appeal on their

decision about being too close, and by the time we make that appeal and they hear it, the campaign will be over.”

SHORT: [Laughter]

MABRY: And so, we left the sign up there, and Zell won the election. And the rest of that part of my life into politics is over and done with Zell being -- serving as Governor, and then going to the United States Senate and serving. And I have -- I took a lot of heat on that, but I have no regrets about it, and I have an understanding of Zell that a lot of people don't -- an understanding of what goes on. And I have questioned a lot in my lifetime about the two-party system in Georgia. People that were Democrats were Democrats because it was astute for them to be a Democrat, and to work with the people that's Democrats. But then they were Republican in Democrat clothing.

SHORT: Yes.

MABRY: And so, they had it and I -- the important thing is to be able to understand that, and I understood it, and we -- I believe that we've made great, great progress. There was no one in Georgia with the Chamber of Commerce. I served on practically every board that could be had in the state, and I got along great with them, and all of the other areas that I was involved in, and we had a harmonious relationship.

SHORT: Well, you have been a very respected labor leader, not only here in Georgia, but around the country.

MABRY: Thank you.

SHORT: And you certainly have contacts around the country.

MABRY: I became a Democrat National Committeeman and the first labor person that had ever been on the Democrat National Committee from Georgia, and Carter was President at that time, and I served on the National Committee until I retired. And I got -- I just didn't think that I needed to be involved speaking for labor or anyone else, and me not in office. And then I retired and then Richard Ray took my place here and Richard became a National Committeeman from Georgia, and was very much involved.

SHORT: Well, if you will, explain for us what a National Committeeman does.

MABRY: Well, a National Committeeman -- or woman, a National Committeewoman -- on the Democrat National Committee, we go and have our meetings and we deal with things there that affects the whole country, not just the things -- the local Democrat people here deal with Georgia, and so we go together there and we work together to accomplish what we want to do on

the national scene when it's dealing with the national issues. And that's -- it's about the same thing, just a different level.

SHORT: But you were involved in bringing the National Democratic Convention to Georgia in 1998. Wasn't it 1998?

MABRY: I believe it was. I was very instrumental and I was on the National Committee when we came here, and we -- I think that was the first one we ever had here. And I went to the people and talked with them and told them what we would do for them here, and they decided. I was on the Site Selection Committee of the Democratic National Committee when Carter was President. I was on the National Committee, and I was on the Site Selection Committee to decide where to hold the convention the year that Carter was elected. And so I asked Jimmy where he would like for the convention to go, and he said, well, naturally, he had rather it go to New York because he could get his delegates there cheaper than he could get them to the west! And so we had the convention in New York then, and the rest of it became history.

But -- excuse me -- I had a great opportunity to be with those people, and tried to work, not for -- I never looked at that as a labor issue. I looked at it as a issue for this country, and I think it came pretty good. I had to deal -- if you'll remember -- I had to deal with Julian Bond. Julian is the one I defeated when I became Democrat National Committeeman, and Julian and I got along good. And then I had a lot to deal with in the black community with people that thought that I was not doing enough to -- but I believe that you can get more with being nice and being fair

with people than you can to try to bully yourself into it. And I never was involved in anything that I couldn't go back to today. And so, I'm very pleased with that.

SHORT: Well, Herb, let's play out a little scene here.

MABRY: Alright.

SHORT: Let's suppose that I am a candidate for Governor of Georgia.

MABRY: Alright.

SHORT: And I want very badly to have the support of the AFL-CIO and organized labor. So I come to you, sitting here right now, and say, "Mr. Mabry, I sure would like to have your support." What would you ask me?

MABRY: I -- at that time, I don't know that I would have much to ask you about. I would -- fortunately, I would already know where most of them stood.

SHORT: Right.

MABRY: I would already -- but regardless of who they were, where they lived, and what their background was, we would invite everyone to come in to be before a screening committee, and

that screening committee would be composed of people -- leaders of the different local unions, or the different international unions in some cases. And we would come together with them and the -- a lot of people would think that Right to Work was one of our main issues. We think and still think that the Right to Work law is unjust and unfair, and so but we knew that anyone that came out in favor of abolishing the Right to Work law was not going to get elected. So we would talk to those people, and Right to Work, we thought was bad, but the main thing that we wanted to do was to assure that they understood when we talked about fair labor, that working people had to have a standard of living to keep in touch within the communities in which they lived. We're not saying that they had to have a paycheck to go out and live in Buckhead. We're just saying that they needed money, and I think it's proven that we were right, that they had to have -- be able to do it. And I would want to know how you felt about the issues of pay, and all the -- that you had. And one of the main things that we fought for was training programs. Now, we had to have training programs, and we never did have a lot of support, but we never did have a lot of opposition to it. Excuse me. The business community knew that they had to have qualified people to do their jobs if they were going to survive, and they knew that the unions were the only one that was providing training. The IBEW, for example, were turning out apprentices, the carpenters were turning out apprentice program workers, and the -- all of them -- every one of them were turning them out. And that was being paid for by the local unions themselves and the people that were working, and that money was used to operate the apprenticeship programs, and we were giving them skilled workers for their jobs.

SHORT: And as you look back over those years, do you remember any real serious labor problems you had with the state of Georgia?

MABRY: We did not have any real serious labor problems. Now, the automobile workers came out once right before my time, and they had them, but most of the time, we did not have any. We had strikes and all, but they were not rowdy. They were -- so the -- in my position as I came up and I was the Vice President of my carpenter's local, then later I served as President of it, and then later as I said, I became President, Secretary-Treasure of the AFL-CIO, and then elevated to President, and served in it for the number of years. And as I said, I only had opposition one time, and I told him he couldn't win when he did!

[Laughter]

MABRY: He said he thought he could, but he didn't. And so, but I think that the labor movement -- now, don't get me wrong, labor movement has gone overboard in cases in other places -- not in Georgia. I can truthfully say we did not have them. We had people at work stoppages and all like that, but we never did have any violence on the work line.

SHORT: Alright, getting back to our little play here, suppose that the organized labor in Georgia decided to support me in my candidacy for Governor of Georgia. What would you do for me?

MABRY: Alright, the first thing, let me tell you how that decision would be made. We would

bring in everyone that wanted to be interviewed. If there was four in a race for Governor of this state, and we would bring you in and interview you and -- to find out how you stood on the issues. Not necessarily -- people think that we would -- Right to Work probably would never even be mentioned. We knew, and still know, that Right to Work laws are not going to be changed in Georgia in my lifetime. And we would ask you how you felt about training programs -- money for training people, and to find out. And then we would look at your background in politics as to what you had been able to accomplish in politics, and then we would get together and think about who could win the race. And we were more concerned with making sure the Republicans didn't take it. We were Democrats because Democrats had a tendency to support labor positions more than Republicans were. They're money people and all. So we would then get together and the committee members would vote on how we would make that endorsement. Now, needless to say, I -- as President, I would kindly nudge them on the elbow as to which one I thought was going to be the best one for us.

[Laughter]

MABRY: And we never had a work stoppage. We never had work stoppage. There have been work stoppage, but that's individual unions, whether they was part of the AFL-CIO or not. That's their decision to make as to whether they have work stoppages. But very few. We never had any major work stoppages.

SHORT: So you would then choose your candidate and organize your troops and go out and

work for them?

MABRY: Oh, yes. We would send people to their headquarters and to try to get people to go volunteer in that headquarters and to help them try to -- and we would get together and ask the individual unions to donate money to the campaign. And if it was for a statewide race, we would ask the international unions to --

SHORT: Provide.

MABRY: Supply money, and help us with those races, and --

SHORT: Get out the vote.

MABRY: Get out the vote is the most important thing. If you have 90 percent of the people supporting someone and they stay at home on election day, it doesn't help.

SHORT: Right.

MABRY: We had -- and then we could use dues money. Dues money could not be used to give to candidates. That had to come through a special COPE fund, Committee on Political Education, and we would use that, but we could use the money to get our people out to vote.

SHORT: Right. Now, how do you fit in as a state organization in the national picture -- political picture? As far as, how do you get involved in Presidential races?

MABRY: We do not have the authority as labor to introduce -- endorse, excuse me -- endorse anyone for a national office. Now, we can endorse candidates for Congress and the United States Senate that goes up there, but once they get up there, and the thing's national election is done through the AFL-CIO in Washington. That's something that affects the entire country. And so, we just always know where the line stops.

SHORT: Right. So your national COPE fund can be used to help --

MABRY: Yes, that's a volunteer fund. Most of that money they can use, and when we were giving money to federal candidates and people there, that money had to come out of Washington, out of our COPE fund up there. And we could not give to candidates seeking Congress or anything like that. Now, we make endorsements of those people. Once we've endorsed them, then we would -- it would become a matter of them. But we could ask our people to get out and put up signs for them, and our people to go knock doors for them, and we would try to do that to help them get elected.

SHORT: Well, this is an election year, and a lot of hot button issues in this campaign. What are

some of the ones that mostly affect organized labor?

MABRY: What are the issues that mostly affect? Well, needless to say, that Right to Work, as we both have talked before and mentioned here, that it doesn't give anyone a Right to Work. It just gives them a right to pay what they want to, and not have -- that's always been an issue with us. But medical coverage is a very, very important issue today for labor people and working class of people, that they have hospitalization insurance on them where they work and everything. Now, most -- *clears throat* excuse me -- most of the companies have that except for construction workers. Construction workers -- the people now, I think, are beginning to cover their construction workers more than they used to. Of course, they had insurance on them at the job if they was injured in them, but that's very, very important to people. And we are very, very much -- we were involved in supporting people in the localities of where they were, of running for school boards and things. That is very, very important for working class of people, you know, to be able to send their children to qualified schools. And very important to us, and it was an issue that we didn't take lightly.

SHORT: How is immigrant labor affecting the unions?

MABRY: It has taken a toll. It has taken a toll. You take the people here, coming into the state or the nation -- it's just not Georgia. It's everywhere. They come into the state, and the business community is not as concerned about it as they might make out like they are. But those people

come here from Mexico or wherever they come from, and they pay rent in the places where they are, and they spend those dollars here. Now a lot of them send some of it home and it goes there, but they can't send it all. So, therefore, the people -- you can go out on the north side and go to the apartment complexes out there off of Roswell Road and different places, and you -- every one of them there are Mexican people that work, and if they work and they live there, they have to buy groceries and they have to buy -- they go to the restaurants and they have to buy their tobacco and their booze and whatever. So, they earn a lot of money and they turn around and put a lot of money back into the economy. And so, what the unions had a real problem with them, where a carpenter or an electrician in the state -- well, I don't say the state, out in the rural areas it might not be -- the carpenters and electricians and the mill workers, they had benefits that were negotiated in the contract, wages and health benefits and insurance. Well, these people that's working here, they are not covered if they are illegals. Now, I'm not talking about the ones that's legal. They are not covered by any kind of benefits and, if they are hurt, then they go to the hospital, and the hospitals of this state, thank God, won't turn someone injured away and not help them. So therefore, you and I and the people that's paying to help fund that is the one that has to pick up the tab through the state or federal, whichever one it might be. And those are the issues that's very, very important to people. And we believe and always have that, regardless of who a person is, and the color of their skin -- now, and always have, we know when it changed and all, that those people have a right to be able to send their children to a school that they might be able to acquire an education that they could compete in the community in which they live. And the people coming here from Mexico, they're not covered for any of that. And when one of

them gets sick or one of them gets injured, they go to the doctor and go to the hospital, and the state picks up the tab. You and I pay the tab. Well, if someone came to your house injured, you would not tell them to get away. You'd try your best to help them, and that's the way we are. But that doesn't mean that we should be required to do it. But it is that way, and so I guess if you look back at it, when we were young, coming up, our parents probably didn't have any money and able to do it, and if they're injured or something, they had to go get some help somewhere.

SHORT: Let's talk for a minute about the North American Free Trade Act, NAFTA. Has that had an effect on organized labor?

MABRY: It did when it started. I do not believe NAFTA has -- it put the sewing people out of business here. I mean, it -- NAFTA just completely put it out. You don't have amalgamated clothing, and textile workers, I think, are just absolutely about gone, and now I'm not sure, because I've been out of the main line of it and don't keep up with it like I did. But it took a toll, and it took a toll on it when they started shipping it in here. And it hurt the automobile workers drastically. It took a toll on them, that they would manufacture those cars. And I had an opportunity to go visit the automobile plants over in other countries and to see them, the way they were putting them out over there, and the money that they were making. They couldn't compete, we can't compete with that, and we have to have some kind of a control on what happens. And it's not the fact whether or not we want to deny those people the work. We just

want to be able to provide jobs and a standard of living for the people in this country that they would need to keep up with what they need to do.

SHORT: How about outsourcing?

MABRY: Well, we've had outsourcing, we're going to have outsourcing, and I don't see anything that they -- any way they're going to correct it. And it will eventually come -- outsourcing will come to an end, but I don't think it will be in my lifetime.

SHORT: Well, let's get back to Georgia politics. Many people think that Georgia began to turn the corner economically with the demise of the county unit system and the election of Carl Sanders as Governor.

MABRY: Well, I would say that those people -- that I'd be one of them. I think that Carl Sanders -- I know that Carter referred to him as "Cufflink Carl", but Carl Sanders and Betty was a great asset to this state. And they were well-respected and they were someone that could go -- and I'm not saying that there were not others -- but they could go and open most any door they wanted to open. And he was not afraid. He was not afraid. I had a reason to call Carl Sanders one time after he went out of office -- and it will tell you what kind of person he was. And I called Carl's office and they said that he was out of the country. And he -- I said, "Well, when he gets back, have him to call me." And two hours later, I had a call from him -- and I forget

what country he was in, but he had called and found out that I had called his office, and he had read an article in the paper, and so he said, "I knew what you were calling me about." And I said, "I wanted to call you." And he said, "I'll take your call."

SHORT: Well, you know, I worked in his office. I worked with Carl Sanders.

MABRY: I'm not going to hold that against him!

[Laughter]

MABRY: He was lucky to have you.

SHORT: Well, there's one thing about him that I really respect Carl Sanders for, and that was his devotion to the very same things you've been talking about, education and training. As you recall, he advocated having at least two years of college education within 30 minutes of any student in the state of Georgia, and I think that started a trend that later on was picked up, so you got more programs in state government to train workers, as you said, because of that.

MABRY: He was in the forefront of most of the modern changes in this state. Now, since that time, we have had some fine ones, and if you look at it, we have had a lot of fine Governors. I mean, a lot of them. I got along good with every one of the Governors and I could go on and talk to them and enjoy talking with them and all. We've been very fortunate.

SHORT: Well, following Sanders was Lester Maddox, a working man. How'd you get along with him?

MABRY: I got along fine. I was using my tools as a carpenter, and they sent me from my -- from the union hall out to put the first addition to Pickrick.

SHORT: Is that right?

MABRY: Yes, and I went out there and built -- and was superintendent over that job out there -- to build his restaurant. And then later on when he became Governor -- well, I was up there lobbying all the time and the door was always open to go talk to him. And of course, I was very fortunate the doors for the Governors were always open to me.

SHORT: Yes, you -- that's true.

MABRY: And I could go up there and I would be able to get in and talk with the Governors, and I look back at that -- but Lester Maddox was not the same person in the Governor's office that he was prior to that. Who appointed the first minority to the state patrol?

SHORT: Lester Maddox.

MABRY: Lester Maddox.

SHORT: That's correct.

MABRY: And Lester Maddox did a lot of good things for Georgia, and he and Betty were well-respected in circles, and they had a lot of friends in the black community. They had a lot of friends in the black community. And Lester, then, later, you know, lived -- I went to see Lester when he was in the nursing home out there where he passed away. That's the last time I saw him.

SHORT: And he was succeeded by Jimmy Carter. You were particularly close to Carter, weren't you?

MABRY: I was real close to Jimmy. In fact, Carter was running for President, and I told you that he -- I told him if he -- I called him down in Plains and told him, I said, "Jimmy, if you're going to win the race, you're going to have to have labor." And he said, "Well, Herb, I know that." And in our structure, the President of AFL-CIO nationally is the ones that makes the endorsement as to who we're going to support for -- in labor for President. And I called Jimmy down in Plains and told him. I said, "Jimmy, it is time for you to meet with George Meany." George was still living at that time. And he said, "Herb, I know it is." And he said, "It's past

time.” But he said, “I cannot afford to put in a call to George Meany at the AFL-CIO and have him to turn me down.” He said, “That would kill me.” And I said, “Well, do you have any objection for me calling and making an appointment?” And he said, “I would always be grateful.”

I picked up the phone and called Washington and called our COPE department, and Al Barkin, and I’m going to tell you just the way he talked. I said, “Al, I would like to bring Carter up to Washington and meet with President Meany.” And he said, “Weeeell, Herb, let me talk to Geooooorge and I will caaall you right back.” That’s just the way he talked. And so about five minutes later, the phone rang and it was Al Barkin, COPE Director. And he said, “George said all lines are open. Tell Carter to call.”

And I called Jimmy and he called me back, and he said, “Herb, we have an appointment. We have an appointment with Meany on a certain day, and I’ll be up there and we’ll fly up to Washington and meet with him.” And I said, “What do you mean, we?” I said, “That’s not mine. That’s Mr. Meany’s.” He said, “Well, he said you would come with me.” So I took him up to Washington, we went in and met with Mr. Meany, but I -- they -- when they started in, Carter says, “Come on, Herb.” I said, “Nope.” I said, “That belongs to him and you, not me. Mine’s in Georgia.” They went in and talked and came back out. Labor called people together and endorsed Carter for the Presidency, and that’s the way he won the election, by having that to do. And Carter will tell you today -- or at least he has me -- that he would have never been President if it hadn’t been me making that call and getting him up there with Meany. And Carter now -- Carter made a lot of good things, but he made a lot of bad mistakes. He brought in all

inexperienced people to work. Good people, but they had been working in the legislature, around the legislature in Georgia. But when he put them up there in Washington, it was a different ballgame.

SHORT: Shark waters.

MABRY: Yes, sir.

SHORT: Shark waters. Were you at the convention in Miami in 1972?

MABRY: Yes.

SHORT: You remember that convention where Governor Carter was supporting Jackson?

MABRY: Yes.

SHORT: Scoop Jackson.

MABRY: Scoop Jackson.

SHORT: And himself looked at the possibility of being a running mate?

MABRY: Yes.

SHORT: Did you think at that time that he really had national aspirations?

MABRY: No, I didn't. I really did not, and I was close to Jimmy Carter. I was close to him and I just would not want to get into why I thought that his administration did not go better. But he had some good people, but very, very inexperienced. People that had -- were great in Georgia, but when they made the step to Washington, it was just a little over their head.

SHORT: Well, you also worked with other Presidents. Clinton.

MABRY: Yes.

SHORT: You were close to President Clinton.

MABRY: I was very close to Clinton, and still am. I never see him any much. And I got to be real close to he and Hillary during the time, as I said, and I thought Clinton was alright. And then, the more I read the paper now, I -- all those people up there around Washington that get involved in that thing are not lily perfect!

[Laughter]

MABRY: And so, I don't know. He was alright. I had an opportunity -- I tell people, you know, country guy down in Georgia, I became very, very close friends to J. Rockefeller and his wife. And we -- his wife and I served on the Democratic National Committee together. And I was on the Site Selection Committee for the convention in the year that Carter was elected, and I called him and I asked him where would he like to hold the convention, and he said, "Herb." I was on the Site Selection Committee, and he said, "I want to go to New York." He said, "I can get my delegates up there easier than I can get them cheaper anywhere else." And I said, "Okay." And so, we took the convention to New York.

SHORT: Well, looking back over your career in politics, what do you think was your best moment?

MABRY: My best moment? Now, that's an interesting question. Interesting question. There has never been anyone that enjoyed politics more than I do. I enjoy them today, but time has passed me. I've gotten too old to fool with it. But in my moment of it, I just don't know.

SHORT: Don't know.

MABRY: Just do not know. They were all highlight moments to me, and things that I thoroughly enjoyed. But the fact that I lived to see and to know the number of Presidents that I have. I was in Washington D.C. attending the AFL-CIO convention at the Capitol Hilton Hotel

in the year that the President got shot by Hinckley. And I never had met Ronald Reagan in person, and I'm sure that you've been to the Washington Hilton Hotel, and on the upper level of the hotel is where the main entrance is, but on the lower level there is a drive-around under the canopy for the dignitaries that come in and speak to the people. And I was in there, and President Reagan spoke to the group, and I never had met him, and I thought it would be interesting to meet him. And I came out the lower level and walked, and I knew exactly where they did. I've been there hundreds of times. And I walked out the door on the lower level and the limousine was there waiting for him to come. And of course, all of the FBI people and everything, the security was there, and the limousine pool. And the door opened, and I was as far as maybe 10, 15 feet from Reagan when he walked out of the door. And just as he got to the car, I was within 10 feet of him, because I was going to try to speak to him and shake hands with him. And about that time, Hinckley started shooting. And when he did, every one of the -- every security one threw those coats open, shoved machine guns and they backed up against that wall that -- there where he came out that door, and I can hear them to this day, "Don't anyone move. Don't anyone move," they just kept saying. But they grabbed him and -- I've forgotten his security man that was with him, but anyhow, they grabbed Reagan and pushed him in, just pushed him in on the seat, and one of the people got in and laid on top of him and the door was being closed as that ambulance car left -- not the ambulance, but his car left to take him to the hospital.

SHORT: The 1980 election, I suppose that your AFL-CIO continued to support Jimmy Carter

against Reagan?

MABRY: Yes. Yes.

SHORT: Yes, and Carter lost the election.

MABRY: Yes. Well, I don't think that it was -- and you were probably one of the more astute political people in Georgia yourself. You were well-connected in everything. You really didn't expect Carter to win the second election.

SHORT: I did not.

MABRY: I did not either.

SHORT: No.

MABRY: And I -- in fact, we were not even asked to help. I was never asked to get involved in his campaign. I would have done anything I could for him, but you can't take -- you couldn't take your eye and put us in the ring with Cassius Clay and all, and expect us to not get a knockout! We would get a knockout, but it wouldn't be ours!

[Laughter]

SHORT: It would be us.

MABRY: It would be us! And that was the same way that he had. You couldn't expect -- he took a group of fine, fine people up there, but he didn't take experienced people that knew the ropes up there. He could have put a couple of them -- three people from up there that could have told those people what to do, and he would have been alright.

And then one of my very best close friends, Bert Lance. Bert Lance, he took a lot of heat from Bert. Bert Lance -- I was with Bert when -- in Bell when we went to -- we was out in California at the meeting. And he was -- they were going to make Bert head of the Democratic National Committee. And man, they exploded, so...

SHORT: Let's talk for a minute about some other prominent labor leaders in the state of Georgia. One that I remember very dearly is Al Kara.

MABRY: Well, Al Kara was -- he was not necessarily -- he was a labor leader, but Kara was more of a -- put in here by the AFL-CIO as someone to work with the minority community, and to bring them into the fold of organized labor. So consequently, Al was a fine man. I say consequently he was. He was a fine man, then consequently, he had a lot to overcome, because the people resented him being sent in here to tell them that they had to bring the minorities on. And see, I had a minority working in my office, and I -- as I said about the phone call about

endorsing John Lewis, and the people knew where I stood. And I came up in the South, but I just believed they were here, they worked here and all, and they had a right to a job, and they had a right to a good education and all. But Kara was a good person, and he -- but he had a hard time -- had a hard job.

SHORT: Really. I remember the United Auto Workers, Herb Butler.

MABRY: Herb Butler. We buried Herb about three months ago. You know, he passed away. And I -- yes, Herb Butler was probably the most outspoken labor person in this city -- in this state. I mean, he did not mind a bit in this wide world taking on anyone.

SHORT: Yes.

MABRY: He fought for what he believed in for automobile workers.

SHORT: Uh-huh. He was a good guy. Martha True.

MABRY: Martha True was the secretary of the AFL-CIO during most of my term as President. Martha is still living, but they -- I have not seen her since I retired, and she was at my retirement and I have not seen her. I have tried to call her, but she -- her mother says she goes into her room and she stays there and never comes out.

SHORT: Oh my goodness. Well, she was a nice lady.

MABRY: Yes. But we had a lot of fine people in the labor movement, and a lot of fine people that we have had an opportunity to work with. I always enjoyed working with you on --

SHORT: Well, I enjoyed working with you. I have great respect for you.

MABRY: Yes.

SHORT: You have been a great leader.

MABRY: Well, I've tried. I tried to treat people like I wanted to be treated.

SHORT: And a good politician.

MABRY: Well, I tried to be a good politician.

SHORT: I can't recall you backed a loser.

MABRY: Sorry?

SHORT: Pardon?

MABRY: You said you couldn't recall?

SHORT: Yes, I don't remember you backing the loser.

MABRY: No, we always -- we backed losers in some of our Congressional races, but we knew what we were getting into when we did, and we did not necessarily -- maybe the people that we were running someone against were better for the job -- better for that.

SHORT: Better qualified. Okay, you want to stop for a minute?

[AUDIO RESUMES]

SHORT: Herb, people seem to be disenchanted today with the state of politics in the United States. Why is that?

MABRY: That is a hard thing, why. They -- I talk to people and they come back at me and say, "They're all just alike. They're looking after their self. Is that true?" I mean, you know?

SHORT: Well, it seems that the voters of the United States today are not focused on issues that affect the entire country, only issues that affect themselves personally.

MABRY: What are you going to for me?

SHORT: Right, right.

MABRY: And we have to -- Yes, well, I'll agree with that, yes. It's dog-eat-dog out there.

SHORT: Let's talk for a minute about the Martin Luther King Center. You served on the board, and is it making progress?

MABRY: Well, you will have to understand, I have been out of it for about eight years. I don't remember even when I retired, and why or anything about it, but I still stay in touch with some of them. I talk to John Lewis a good bit, and I don't talk to any of the King family, and I became real good friends to all of them. I think that Coretta was a dynamic person, but she got to the point where she thought of herself -- more so of what she could go and get involved in, than she could running the King Center. And the King Center went down considerably, and I do not know now what the status of it is -- of what they're doing or anything about it. I don't know what Dexter or any of them are about it. But they have been very successful in having the shrine to and a memorial to King, which he well deserved. He well deserved. If it had not been

for him, I don't hesitate one minute to admit that I do not know where this country would be today if someone -- you can't have a parade until someone steps out to lead it, and he stepped out to lead the Civil Rights movement. And he was very successful for it. I had an opportunity to meet him and talk with him once, and that doesn't -- I didn't know him, I just had an opportunity to meet him and talk with him, and I just had -- it was such a shame for a brilliant person that had the ability to lead and to do it, whose life was snuffed out at that. But we've had it in Presidents and everyone else, so...

SHORT: Does that phone, will that mess up that? It won't? I want to ask you a question about Zell, and I hope, you know, I hope you will answer it.

MABRY: About what?

SHORT: Zell.

MABRY: Oh, Zell?

SHORT: Yeah.

MABRY: Okay.

SHORT: Herb, what was your reaction when you learned that Zell Miller was keynoting the address -- making a keynote address at the last Republican convention?

MABRY: I thought it was one of the worst cases of betrayal to the party that we had ever had. When he ran here and was elected and was honored with being the Lieutenant Governor, he was honored by being the Governor, and then he was honored by the Governor of this state appointing him to fill the vacancy of one of our Senators that had passed away, and he was appointed by a Democrat. And then he goes up there and then turns around and gives the keynote -- to be the keynote speaker for the Republicans. Now, then I thought about that, that he -- when he was Governor and all, he got to know the guy pretty good, probably, and was a friend. But friends -- sometimes friendship has to end when you have an obligation. But on the same token, he did me the identically same way basically, when he -- after he got in up there. He never -- I was never appointed to any board, never appointed to anything to help him, and I would go up there and ask him to help me with some legislation, and he never did anything to help us. Not at all. But if Zell Miller called me tomorrow and needed a favor, I'd do it for him if I possibly could. I think he has a wonderful family and all.

I was very, very disappointed in the outcome of the late Cathy Cox race for Governor. I thought that she would run a better race than that. I was shocked that she didn't. And then I was not even shocked by the fact that we lost the Governor's race that year. I didn't ever expect him to win it, and after he had run the race against her. And I don't know what it's going to take to turn it around in Georgia, but it is going to take someone that is levelheaded, someone that is very

articulate with their speaking ability, and for them to be well-financed, and people -- someone that has a good relationship with the male-female, white-black all over this state. And the Democrats can win again, and I anticipate the Democrats after this to make a sweep in the whole country. People say, "Well, I don't know what needs to be done, but I know this group's not doing it." But we're all very fortunate and thank God that we live in America, live in a country where we have a right to go to the polls and vote for who we think will be the best leader.

SHORT: Amen. Well, Herb, you've been a great man, a great leader, and we appreciate you being with us here today.

MABRY: Oh, I appreciate it very much. If I did not -- if you decide you don't want the public to see me, I've enjoyed every minute of it with you today.

SHORT: Well, thank you.

MABRY: And this young man you have with you here, he has got over there and put up with us with a smile on his face the whole time.

SHORT: Herb, is there anything else you'd like to say as you look back on your career?

MABRY: No, I just thank God that he was with me all during the time. It was rough and it was

tough, but we made it.

SHORT: You made it. That's correct. You got any questions there, Craig?

CRAIG BREADEN: Not any that I can think of.

SHORT: Well, we've talked about most of the things, I think. There might be others. The emphasis of organized labor in Georgia, of course, has been to protect the workers, and they've done an excellent job. We don't have any fights. The only strikes I remember was Westclox over in Athens when Maddox was Governor. I remember that.

MABRY: Yes.

SHORT: And then the only ones I know of was when Gene Talmadge was Governor, he had a bunch of legislation that held back the working people. And Herman signed some legislation that affected organized labor.

MABRY: Oh yes. Well --

SHORT: But other than that, there's been no --

MABRY: And I've said in my remarks, we -- if I were someone that did not understand that, I would have had one bad time in it. But I understood that we had 200,000 labor people that deserved just as well -- as much of the benefits of this state as anyone else. But on the same token, you had to realize that we were not going to enjoy the same things that the people that were supplying all of the money to furnish jobs. And you had to understand that. And I had a relationship with -- I'm just as comfortable by going out there and sitting on the side of the road or curb or something, having a hot dog with a black, or I'm just as comfortable going over to the Hyatt Regency or somewhere else and having lunch with them. And I was invited to those places with the business communities, but they knew where I stood, and I'd take them on in a heartbeat.

But it -- and we could -- you can go up there, and you know it. You can go up to the legislature, and at lunchtime, when they break, there's about 5 or 6 cars lined up with people, chauffeurs or people -- individuals that are chauffeurs -- and they load those legislators up and take them over to the Capitol City Club for lunch, and or somewhere like that. And take them to lunch, and together explain the bill that they got over there, and where it is. Well, working class people can't afford that. We can't take them over there. If they did, people wouldn't want to be seen with labor people, so it was hard.

SHORT: How actively have you been involved in local legislative races? Did the union take interest in those?

MABRY: In Atlanta, we were involved in the Mayoral race and the county races, because they were big employees.

SHORT: Yes.

MABRY: They are big employers when it came to that, but we -- they couldn't sign a collective bargain agreement with us, but they worked union people a lot, and we did good.

SHORT: What's going to happen to the Georgia Democratic Party?

MABRY: I don't go to -- I was going to the North Fulton Democratic Party meetings a good bit, and I just didn't -- I have been to every Democratic National Committee Convention and Site Selection Committees, and I met with every one that was involved in politics anyway, but I just decided I'd had enough.

SHORT: Were you at the '68 convention?

MABRY: If they had a convention in '68, I was --

SHORT: In '68 when Maddox walked out?

MABRY: Yeah.

SHORT: Tell us about that.

MABRY: Well, I don't remember that much about it. There were two -- this is just background, right? There were two -- there was the Georgia delegation, then there was a rump delegation headed by Julian Bond --

MABRY: Julian Bond. Now he --

SHORT: Now, right from the very beginning now.

MABRY: I think -- I thought Carter was Governor when Julian Bond --

SHORT: No, that was '68. Maddox was elected in '66.

MABRY: Yeah.

SHORT: And he and James Grey -- you remember James Grey?

MABRY: Yes. From Albany, wasn't he?

SHORT: Yes, he had a delegation that was sent -- that they sent Chicago.

MABRY: Was not at the convention.

SHORT: You weren't?

MABRY: Was not when Julian -- when they walked out on account of Julian Bond had been placed in the nomination or something?

SHORT: Well, he had challenged the delegation.

MABRY: Okay.

SHORT: So they split it, half Maddox and half Bond.

MABRY: That was the --

SHORT: Well, you remember it. Well, tell us about it. You remember it.

MABRY: I just remember that he challenged the delegation because he was -- he led the group

that was appointed to come in some way. I don't know, I don't remember that much about that.

SHORT: You don't. Well, we can do this, right? The Maddox delegation represented the Democratic Party of Georgia.

MABRY: That's right.

SHORT: The Bond delegation challenged that because it didn't include --

MABRY: Minorities.

SHORT: The credentials committee decided to seat half and half.

MABRY: And half.

SHORT: I don't remember how many delegates we had, but --

MABRY: I don't either.

SHORT: But anyway, half Bond delegates and half Maddox delegates.

MABRY: And Bond was a delegate.

SHORT: Right, and so Maddox walked out of the convention. You remember that. Bond was nominated for Vice President.

MABRY: Right.

SHORT: But was too young to serve, so they had to withdraw his nomination. Then, it came back to Georgia and a group of the clique, they called them -- Jimmy Bentley and Alfred Fowler and Jack Ray and Crawford Pilcher -- switched parties. They became Republicans, the first switchers in the senate.

MABRY: That was the first switch we had had.

SHORT: Right. And then they ran for office as Republicans, and every one of them was soundly defeated. Bentley ran for Governor. This would be the year Carter ran, in '70. Bentley ran for Governor as a Republican and was defeated by Hal Suit. You remember Hal. Hal was a newsman here, very wonderful person.

MABRY: Yes. Very, very, very astute person.

SHORT: Yes. And then, of course, he lost. And then Carter went on to defeat the guy that beat Hal Suit -- no, I'm sorry -- who, Ronnie, no, who was that candidate? Let's see, Hal Suit beat -- Hal Suit defeated Bentley.

MABRY: Right.

SHORT: Carter defeated Hal Suit for Governor in the fall. That was--

MABRY: Is that who it was?

SHORT: But all of those other switchers were defeated in their races. Jack Ray lost --

MABRY: See, that was the year before I took over. See, Mr. Moore was the President of the AFL-CIO at the time when they elevated me to --

SHORT: Right.

MABRY: So I wasn't involved in the -- he wasn't much involved, but he --

SHORT: Who were your closest friends in the legislature? Can you say that?

MABRY: Who were mine? We had a lot of -- Al Burris, when he was up there, he was a good friend of ours, and but we did not back then have a lot of friends. Now, we would have them that would vote on mother love and apple pie issues that everybody supported and all, but we had no one in the legislature much that -- and you can understand it and you all can, but the John Q. Public could not understand it -- that these people in the legislature would come out and talk with us and find out what we wanted, and then they could go in and vote for our legislation to satisfy us, and then go back home and tell the people, "Hey, oh, we knew they wasn't going to get the bill passed, but we had to have their help to get elected." And they would vote for it. We would give them money. In fact, I sent -- and I can't remember -- you may remember -- the guy from Toccoa, Georgia, Stephens County, was a state Senator, and I sent him a check for \$500.00, and it never did clear the bank. And so later on, I asked him, I said, "Did the check show up?" And he said, "I'm embarrassed to tell you." But he said, "It came there and I saw it was from you as a labor leader, and I threw it in the trash." But he admit --

SHORT: I don't guess you sent him another one, did you?

MABRY: Never did send him another one. But we put out a lot of money, helped people, but they never did. My predecessor, J.L. Moore, he thought he could call up there and get people. He'd call up there and say -- and they would tell him, "Yes, I'll help you with that thing, I'll get it." And then he would come back and say that he had somebody handling it for him, but I mean, you know, you didn't have to be up there but one year to know how they stood. And you

can't fall out with them. You can get mad, but there's no need to get upset with them. They ran. They were elected to come up there and represent and should represent the best interests of the people in the district in which they ran. And if they satisfied those people, then they would -- that's fine. But when you got outside of metropolitan Atlanta and a 25-mile radius around here, you had no union members except maybe in a sewing plant somewhere -- in Americus, Georgia, somewhere like that. So, it would run you crazy to lobby that legislature if you did not understand that -- who could vote for you and come back, and that's why that the black community got such a hold and was electing people up there, because the labor movement knew if they put a black in up there, and that black got elected in that area, they could get elected if they supported us. And that's how it was done.

SHORT: What is the current thinking of Griffin Landrum, or Landrum-Griffin?

MABRY: Landrum-Griffin bill never comes up.

SHORT: Never?

MABRY: Never.

SHORT: Taft-Hartley?

MABRY: Taft-Hartley.

SHORT: Doesn't bother you at all?

MABRY: It doesn't bother most of the people today. No one pays any attention to it. If it got down to a really nut-cutting thing that they got into, it might. But I mean, it doesn't.

SHORT: You have a reason to have a close relationship with the Georgia Department of Labor. How is that?

MABRY: I have always enjoyed a good relationship with Georgia Department of Labor, and the Georgia Department of Labor owns a piece of legislation over there. If they didn't push it or pull it, it didn't move. You know that, and they were not going to take an issue, they were not going to take it on, and if we had a bill over there that the labor department thought, and we all -- they always thought people was their friend, but they're a friend to your face. But they only have to make two phone calls -- to the Speaker and the Speaker Pro Tem and the Governor, and say, "Hey, that dog won't hunt." And it's over. And then the Governor puts over -- out his sheet that that bill needs killing to about 6, 8 people on the committee, and it's over. And so it's -- and you'd go crazy up there if you didn't understand that, and we have had a lot of people up there that did not understand that. And I --

SHORT: They've handled a lot of training funds, do they not, in the State Department of Labor?

MABRY: Oh yes.

SHORT: Do y'all cooperate on those programs?

MABRY: Well, they had programs. We got more out of training programs through federal instead of their programs. We got directly through federal programs, and the AFL-CIO in Washington would handle the programs and then they would apply to the states, and that's how we were able to do that. But other than that, it was -- it's a hard job and it would run you crazy if you don't understand it. But if you understand it and know what your potentials are. If you know what your potentials are up there, but you're not going to be able to implement your potentials. I mean, it just doesn't work.

SHORT: Has your union AFL-CIO grown in Georgia over the past years?

MABRY: No.

SHORT: Has not?

MABRY: No, it's lost ground.

SHORT: Has it?

MABRY: The things that we used to fight for, and they were mainstream things, are now provided. You know, we would fight for healthcare, and all that stuff, that's provided.

SHORT: Yes.

MABRY: I mean, it was a big issue. And we fought for them and got them, but the unions never did get the credit, but they came about, and that's what we were there for, regardless of how it came about.

SHORT: Sometimes you hear that labor leaders are losing the support of their local membership. Is that happening -- say in national elections?

MABRY: Everywhere.

SHORT: You endorse -- the union endorses somebody, but the members don't necessarily follow?

MABRY: Even when I was close to leaving, and -- or when I left, we would go and we would

hear them say, "No one's going to tell me how to vote. I'll vote like I want to." And that person that's living down in south Georgia and they are very close to the person that represents them up here, and that person could not get reelected if they supported organized labor's issues, and that person down there knows that. So therefore, they're not going to take issues with him about it or her. And we have some people up there that can vote for anything we had, and they live in a district that would put them back up here. So, it...

SHORT: Herb, one last question. What do you see down the road with the American economy that seems to be outsourcing and --

MABRY: Well, if we continue on the road we're going, we are going to have a -- in my opinion -- a very, very deep recession in the country. We are outsourcing and the salaries of the workers, they are not necessarily on the decline, but they are stable and they aren't giving them raises like they were. And we're going to see that -- and we're seeing it now -- the number of people that are unemployed, and this country cannot stand to see everyone on welfare. The people that are working cannot generate enough money to fund the unemployment that we have. And it's in bad shape. We have a lot of unemployed people right now, and we're trying to feed them all, and we're not going to be able to do it.

SHORT: Well, you look like a happy man.

MABRY: Me?

SHORT: Yes.

MABRY: I'm a very happy man. I have a wonderful wife and all my children and my grandchildren, and I -- very active in my church, and --

SHORT: Good.

MABRY: Sing in the choir. My daddy -- my mother would have been proud of me if she was living. My daddy wouldn't have believed it. So, it's a great thing.

SHORT: Well, we appreciate you coming out here, Herb.

MABRY: Appreciate you inviting me.

SHORT: And we're going to -- we'll get you a copy of this.

MABRY: Please do.

SHORT: And we'll put it in the archives, and you can go over to the University of Georgia and

see what you are and what -- and all of that.

MABRY: Well, you know, I fought for it for a long time -- to get a labor study program at the Georgia State University. And I -- finally I got a call one night at home, and you'll have to tell me who it was now, that was Busbee's chief of staff.

SHORT: Tom Lewis.

MABRY: Who?

SHORT: Tom Lewis.

MABRY: Yes. It was Tom or one of them, called me at home and said, "Herb, the Governor has just signed off on your bill to get the labor study program at Georgia State."

SHORT: Well, that's wonderful.

MABRY: And that was great, and we still have it.

[END OF RECORDING]