

Terry Coleman interviewed by Bob Short
2008 March 24
Atlanta, GA
Reflections on Georgia Politics
ROGP--025
Original: video, 105 minutes

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BOB SHORT: I'm Bob Short and this is Reflections on Georgia Politics, sponsored by the Institute for Continuing Learning, Young Harris College, and the Richard Russell Library at the University of Georgia. Our guest today is Terry Coleman, longtime Georgia legislator,

former speaker of the House, and now Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture for the state of Georgia.

Terry, I will never forget the first time I met you. It was 1966. I flew down to Eastman, your home town, to make a speech for Jimmy Carter, who was running for Governor that year, as you will remember. And you met me at the airport and took me to the Dodge County football field, where they were having a political rally. So, we're glad to have you on our program today, and we're very anxious for you to tell us a little bit about Terry Coleman and your career in Georgia politics.

TERRY COLEMAN: Well, I'm looking forward to it Bob, especially with an old friend. A really good old friend. Not old, but really good friend. I remember, Dan Blan, who had a son-in-law in Rome, Georgia, and his name escapes me right now. Dan Blan was a cotton buyer. I delivered groceries to his house as a boy. I had a lot of those older guys who kind of helped steer me and advise me and tell me stories and help me as I was growing up, and Dan was one of them. And he asked me if I would get involved with Jimmy Carter at the time, and I believe you might have been my first official contact with Carter before he and I ever got together. And I guess I could credit you and Dan with one of the most successful, long-lasting political relationships in my life. So, thank you.

SHORT: Good. Well, two years later, in 1972, you ran for the state House of Representatives. Do you recall that election?

COLEMAN: Certainly. Let me tell you this, before that, you know, Carter lost in '66.

SHORT: Right.

COLEMAN: By, what, about eight or ten thousand?

SHORT: A small percentage.

COLEMAN: Didn't make the runoff. Well, fortunately, we stayed in touch with him. He came to Eastman and I had just, in '69, opened a grocery store. My daddy had died. My uncle had died. And they'd been in the grocery business since before I was born. And when they both died and I wound up with the store, I built a small supermarket. We had what you call a pancake breakfast. And Carter came over on two different times after that. And we got to be very close. I was with him in Waycross at a speaking engagement one night. It might have been in '70. And I said, "Gosh, it's mighty late to go back home." Well, I followed him outside of Waycross, where the roads split. He was headed back home and dadgum near ran out in front of a train, because he was so tired.

And the next morning I called him and I said, "Mr. President." I mean, "Mr. Governor." No, not Governor at the time. Sen. Carter. I said, "Senator, you need somebody to drive for you." He was trying to do that by himself and go to all the Alliance clubs throughout the state and use that as a spring board to get out and see people. And my third brother, Randy Coleman at the time, had graduated high school and was working with me at the grocery store,

and just wasn't happy working 7:30 to 6 at night. And he wanted to go do things. And I called Sen. Carter at the time, and said, "Do you know my brother, Randy? He's a smart guy. He's a hard worker. He wants to do something." And at that time we didn't have campaign disclosure, campaign recording, so I said, "You know, if it'll help, Randy would really like to come and work for you and drive for you." And I said, "I'll kind of help pay his salary, if your interested." He said, "Well, I'm certainly interested." I don't remember exactly what he said. "Send him over" or "bring him over and let me meet him." We did that. Randy went to work for him and started driving. He and President Carter now, got to be so close. And he got close to Billy and Miss Lillian, that Miss Lillian asked him to move in with her. So he lived with Miss Lillian and drove for Carter while he was running for Governor. We just got closer and closer. Well, just before he got elected, Jody Powell started driving for him. Randy went to work for Billy, in the peanut warehouse.

Carter then -- I was interested -- he put me on the crime commission. I was involved. Got more and more interested in things. Came up here and worked for a year. I really got the bug. I worked through two full sessions of the legislature for a man you know very well, one of your old friends, George Bagley.

SHORT: Old George!

COLEMAN: Yes. I worked for George Bagley for a year, and got to know the state. Got to know a lot of legislators, and just got the bug. So I went home and in 1972 ran for the legislature. Got elected in '72. Took office in '73. In the meantime, we stayed in good contact. My brother, Stock, who you know.

SHORT: Yes.

COLEMAN: In '70, before Carter took office, Govenor Carter asked my brother Stock, who was on the State Patrol, to become his Chief of Security. And that's how the entanglement and inner relationships came about. But I ran for the legislature. Got elected. I was lucky, very lucky, because I had been involved and Bagley gave me a lot of freedom and he was close to Tom Murphy at the time and others. I had a better than normal in in the legislature. As a matter of fact, a lot of people already thought I was in the legislature. So, when I got elected, I had a head start. I knew everybody. I knew Tom Murphy. At the time, George L. was speaker. George L. was extremely nice to me. Put me on some good committees with Carlton Colwell and Ben Jessup and folks like that. And then, you know what happened after that. George L. died after the first session. Anyway, yeah, that's pretty much how I got started.

SHORT: When you came to the capital, was that not in the midst of that great reorganizational effort by Gov. Carter?

COLEMAN: Absolutely. And it was a traumatic thing. It strained our relationship a little bit, having been involved with the guys that were running the House at the time, and their resistance to Govenor Carter at the time -- reorganization efforts, it put me under a little bit of a strain. Some of the things I was able to vote for and a few things I couldn't vote for. But, our relationship stayed ok. Yeah. That's the largest reorganization of state government I think before or after.

SHORT: Yeah. Do you recall the days when there was a bitter feud between Carter, who was Governor, and Lester Maddox, who had been Governor, and then became Lieutenant Governor?

COLEMAN: Yeah.

SHORT: What sort of effect did that have on the legislature?

COLEMAN: You know, it's a lot like what's going on right now. It's a lot like one of your good friends, Zell Miller, when Zell and Tom Murphy had their feud. As Henry Bostick said one time about a feud between Tom Morland and Tom Murphy. He said, "You know, the generals don't get killed when there's a war that breaks out. It's the soldiers like me!" He said, "I'm fixing to get killed! I'm fixing to have to vote on this issue. And if I vote Murphy, I'm going to lose everything. If I vote against Tom Morland, I'm going to lose all my asphalt." You know how that was.

But Lester and Governor Carter had a personality issue. I never really got it from either one of them, what it was. It was not pleasant between them.

SHORT: Well, it was Governor Carter who did a lot of magnificent things for the state. He was given credit for being a great Governor. And his successor, who served with you in the House of Representatives, George Busbee, came along. And George also was elected and became a very good Governor. George, as I remember him, was very, very tough when he wanted to be. But he undertook some programs that no Governor before him had done, like international trade. He made a lot of missions to Japan and that area to bring business to Georgia.

COLEMAN: He broke new ground in Japan. He sure did.

SHORT: And in his administration also, he presided over the writing and passage of the new Constitution.

COLEMAN: Yeah.

SHORT: Which had been one of the toughest things to do.

COLEMAN: It was.

SHORT: Carl Sanders, when he was Governor, tried and didn't succeed. And, I don't recall, perhaps you do, I hope you do, some of the things in that Constitution that were controversial.

COLEMAN: Well, several things. The Constitution as I remember, and I was there. And you mentioned this, I think the difference between Busbee and Carl Sanders, Carl Sanders was in the Senate. The Senate, maybe because of their size or because of the size of their districts, they're not as cohesive as the House. They're not as close, personally, as House

members, it seems. Now, it may be smaller groups that are close, but as a whole they're not as close, socially, as House members. And I think Busbee coming from the House had a little bit better toe hold. And whether Speaker Murphy had really got credit -- I mean, whether he deserved all the credit or not, he got some credit for helping Busbee get elected. I don't think Busbee felt he did, but anyway he -- whatever.

Busbee made the Constitution a lot more flexible, which in some ways hurt the power of the legislature. One thing that a lot of people don't know, or don't remember, that worried me was that in the old Constitution, the House and Senate met in the first year of a biannual session for 45 days. That took care of the organization of the House and Senate. That took care of the ceremonial things, like the state of the state speech. At the time you had a state of the state speech, then you had the Governor's budget address, other ceremonial things that took place. And when Busbee recommended, or submitted the new Constitution, it was a 40 day session in the first year, a 40 day session the second year. So, there was a major change in terms of the legislature, but not many people noticed. I guess Speaker Murphy at the time signed off on it. I don't remember a lot of the other major changes, but I do believe that it took out a lot of the specific things and put in more general responsibilities. Or more general applications of the Constitution.

SHORT: Late in his administration, Governor Busbee presented you a bill that would allow him to succeed himself. Since that time, most of our Governors have been able to do so.

COLEMAN: They have.

SHORT: Do you think that was a good law?

COLEMAN: In retrospect, no. I think the Governor, and the President, ought to be elected for a six-year term. A sole six-year term. I believe it gives them time to focus. The truth is, like the 45 day session the first year and the 40 day session the second year of the legislative term, I think that first year's time gives some opportunity to do that.

In the case of the Governor's term, it really takes them two years to get their feet on the ground. To get changes in administration. Again, to put their stamp on an administration. And now, beginning their third year, all they worry about -- not all, but most of them worry about getting elected. Including the President. It's extremely costly in the physical, the mental tole, and worse than that, it takes a financial tole now on Governors. Certainly Congressional candidates. And certainly Presidents. The office of the President, the office of the Governor, I think, ought to be a six-year term. One six-year term.

In Georgia, the Governor is vested with an inordinate amount of power. Executive branch, Constitutionally and statutorally, maybe in the top ten in the power of the gubernatorial power. So, you know, your Governor can issue an executive order, as you know, you've done some! That almost has to force a law, if not enforce a law.

SHORT: Speaking of Congressman, we in this state have had many battles over reapportionment. Now you were there and you know the story. Please tell us how we arrived at reapportioning our state.

COLEMAN: Well, the Supreme Court, as is usual when legislatures overact or don't

act, steps in to do things. I believe that too has gotten out of hand. Ten years is probably ok. I might tell you that Governor Barnes, with our agreement, with our participation, probably overreacted, over-aggressively. He was a brilliant Governor, but I think he was over-aggressive when it came to reapportionment. And people say, "Well, Republicans are doing the same thing." And I say, "They're doing the same thing, but they've developed it to a fine science!" They are really brilliant in their reapportionment! The truth is, it's gotten to the point where it's a political game. And now, George T. Smith and I were talking about this sometime ago, a few, maybe six months or a year ago, not quite a year ago, the Lieutenant Governor, Speaker, Justice Smith and I, he was three people, you know.

SHORT: Yeah.

COLEMAN: We talked about it. And the truth is, we probably should put together a non-partisan commission to do reapportionment. It's not beneficial to the state, and it's not good for the state.

SHORT: Well, we've got three more years, and we'll have to do it all over again.

COLEMAN: All over again. But, you know, they just did it! Reapportionment. And the court backed them and backed the legislature, and said it was within their power. They can reapportion as often as they like. And that creates a lot of concern. A lot of, I guess, uneasiness. It really ought to be every ten years, based on population changes. It ought to be done by a non-partisan commission.

SHORT: Well, in the present situation, if the legislature can reapportion anytime it wants to, what happens when parties switch power in the legislature? Would there be a reapportionment there?

COLEMAN: Sure! They can. I guess they can. It's unhealthy. It's not good for us.

SHORT: George Busbee left office and he was very interested in his successor. And I know you know this, because we were talking about it just a few minutes ago. The last six Governors of Georgia came from the General Assembly. Busbee was proud of his administration, as he should be. The candidate that I think he wanted to succeed him, Joe Frank Harris, who is a friend of yours, a friend of Speaker Murphy's. And Joe Frank ran against a pretty tough opponent. What do you remember about that race?

COLEMAN: Well, first you need to know the background of Joe Frank Harris and myself. I was, as I told you, lucky enough to get a head start in the legislature, because of ties and because I'd been around them. So, I got good appointments when George L. was speaker. When Speaker Murphy -- I wound up voting for him in a race between he and Al. And Al Burruss and I got to be good friends. But in my second term Speaker Murphy put me on Appropriations. My third term, I was still rapidly rising through the ranks and we have about a thirty or thirty-three percent turnover rate in the legislature annually depending on what kind of year. So, I was rising in seniority and luckily in committee appointments. In my third term, Speaker Murphy made me Secretary of Appropriations. Well, guess who's Chairman? Joe

Frank Harris was Chairman. And that was right after "Sloppy" Floyd died.

Joe Frank took over in the middle of the term, then when he had a full term appointment, I became Secretary. He and I got to be good friends. He let me, actually, unlike some people, he let me operate out of his office. Got to be great friends with some of the interns. Wayne Reece turned out to be one of his interns, and he and I are fast friends today. Joe Frank and I got to be really good friends. I got in closely with Joe Frank. And you're right, Busbee was concerned about his legacy, and he was concerned about turning over the reigns of the state to someone he thought would be progressive yet conservative. Maybe it was quiet -- but everybody believed in the insiders in the Busbee administration, they felt like Joe Frank was the guy to do it. And Joe Frank was running -- well, Bo Ginn, as you know, a very popular, very successful congressman from Millen, Georgia. Had risen up to the rank of, maybe Majority Whip or something in the caucus in Washington. You might correct me on that one.

SHORT: He was a Whip.

COLEMAN: Nobody gave Joe Frank a chance. And as is the case in a lot of races like that, Joe Frank won. Busbee seemed to be happy. Joe Frank and Busbee got along great. Busbee, when he went to the law firm, Joe Frank included him in many things. And so it was a good relationship.

SHORT: Which brings this question up from me to you. I have always said that the strength of the Democratic Party in Georgia, was the Georgia House of Representatives.

COLEMAN: No question about it.

SHORT: Speaker Murphy and people like you and Busbee and Joe Frank Harris were the real heart of the Democratic party in Georgia.

COLEMAN: Well, you might consider this blasphemy, but let me tell you what I think. Tom Murphy was one of the strongest, most unusual, one of the most progressive yet conservative -- he was a...

SHORT: He was Tom Murphy.

COLEMAN: He was a lesson in opposites! You just could never figure him out. Larry Walker said he was the most complex human being he'd ever met. Tom Murphy did the state a great service. As I said, I think he kept us out of deep debt. I think he was passionately conservative yet almost socially liberal when it came to, as he says, "poor folks and kids." He was just a great Georgian. But in retrospect, his service, which he felt was the right thing to do, may have been detrimental to the Democratic party. Anytime you've been there longer than 20 years, you begin to have more enemies, people who disagree with you politically. And he was such a plain spoken guy that he kind of gathered up some of those. He was the kind of guy who could stay and he could have been Speaker as long as he lived. But he could never run for or be elected statewide. But I think he stayed, probably, four or six years too long. And in doing so, I think it might have -- none of us knew that at the time -- I'm talking about in retrospect. In retrospect, he might have held down the bench or held down some people or discouraged some

people who might have moved up through leadership posts in another way. And I think that that had a little bit to do with the way things turned out politically.

I think that the Republicans were smart, have been smart, and are still smart in the way they've managed. So, you know, you're right. The House has always been the place, except for Zell, and now Governor Purdue, most of the leadership at different levels came out of the House. But most of it from the legislature.

SHORT: You know what somebody told me awhile back? The reason so many people liked George Busbee was because they wanted to do things for him because he was a good guy.

COLEMAN: Yeah.

SHORT: He was a good fellow.

COLEMAN: He was. I think in the end, the thing of all else that elected George Bush President compared to John Kerry was that people said, "Well, you know, I may not think this or I may not think that." And it's very much like you said about Busbee. "I kind of like ole' Bush." I heard a lot of people say that. "I just don't really like Kerry. He's not the kind of guy" but you're exactly right. Busbee was, you know, he and Al Holloway and the crew they roomed together, got along together. He had a lot of good friends. But he was just a good guy. But also a good manager of the state. Now let me say this, let me just tell you this. Before he died, we built the Georgia Aviation Technical College, then under the department of technical and adult education. And Busbee loved to fly. And if there was anything next to his family and the Governship, he loved flying. He came down and spent the day with me just playing in the simulators, visiting, looking around. And I think maybe three months later he died, but the people who got to speak him, have their picture made with him, responded very much like you said. He's just a good fellow. Easy to talk to.

SHORT: Joe Frank, of course, people think was elected primarily because of the support he had in the House of Representatives, and particularly from Speaker Murphy. But from time to time they had their differences over issues. It's awful hard, isn't it, for a Speaker to rile up against a Governor?

COLEMAN: Oh, it is. And I was fortunate to be, through the years, in many of those meetings with Busbee, Speaker Murphy, Larry Walker, Bill Lee, Jack Connell, you know the group. Clarence Vaughn, Roy Lambert, all these folks. A lot more with Joe Frank and then...

SHORT: Green Door Committee.

COLEMAN: Yeah.

SHORT: I want to get to the Green Door Committee.

COLEMAN: We will. And then a lot more with, certainly, Zell on down the line. But the one of the great things Tom Murphy taught me, he said, and I tried to show this when I

became Speaker and Governor Purdue became Governor. And that was, "even if you disagree with the person or his or her politics, you should respect the office." That's one thing Speaker Murphy epitomized, you could just bet that was the way he was. Sometimes he'd slip and say ugly things about them, you know, but he really, generally, if not always, respected their office. But he really got into it, especially with Zell later on.

SHORT: Well, they were friends though.

COLEMAN: Oh yeah.

SHORT: I'll tell you a story of when Speaker Murphy died. Sen. Miller called me and wanted me to come by. We live about eight miles apart up in the mountains now. And so we sat down and reminisced about Tom Murphy. And despite the many, many battles they had, I think that they both had a respect for each other. And I really believe they were good friends.

COLEMAN: There was no doubt. If they didn't respect each other, they would have gotten into fist fights.

SHORT: Speaking of Miller, he was elected Governor in 1990 on a platform that was very controversial. The state lottery.

COLEMAN: Yeah.

SHORT: And that had a tough time for him in the legislature, but it finally passed. And I will always believe that the Speaker had to have a role in that.

COLEMAN: Oh, absolutely. Had the Speaker opposed it, it never would have passed. And Zell is another amazing guy. He and I didn't always agree. He was sixteen years as Lieutenant Governor, and you know his history before that with Lester and with other Governors. He served indirectly with some other Governors on the parole board and in-and-out of government. Ran against Talmadge. Ran against -- it might have been -- I don't remember if he was Lieutenant Governor. I think he was. Anyway, he ran against -- was it Phil Landrum?

SHORT: Phil Landrum

COLEMAN: Phil Landrum once or twice.

SHORT: Congressman from the Ninth District.

COLEMAN: And when Zell was inaugurated, the same year Busbee was inaugurated as Governor, if you remember, things were a little tight, so Busbee chose to have the inauguration at the Civic Center and not spend the 40 or 50 thousand dollars it would take to build an inaugural platform, which endeared him to a lot of people. It was the right move at the right time to get him started off. The legislature got to sit up front. I was on the second row of that inauguration with members of the legislature. And it was amazing. I don't think this was planned in anyway. Busbee was, like me and a lot of others, he was not the best speaker. He

was not a storyteller, not a world-class speaker, but when he spoke, people listened. And he delivered a message. And the truth is, Zell was a little better of a speaker than Busbee. And I'll never forget that Zell actually upstaged the Governor on inauguration day. And, he doesn't like to talk about it, but that's when he was a liberal. And you remember that.

SHORT: Yeah.

COLEMAN: He was a liberal, and I remember the gist or the part that I remember most about Zell. He talked about "old breath and britches." A fellow from the mountains that was so thin, he could barely keep his overalls on, and how poor -- he called them "pur people" came out of the Appalachian mountains and he was going to do something for them. And he did do some things -- a lot of things for them. But it was a liberal speech and it was a great speech. But it really upstaged the Governor at the inauguration. Zell's an unusual guy and very successful.

SHORT: Well, he succeeded Joe Frank as Governor.

COLEMAN: Yeah.

SHORT: And he undertook some programs that were, if not controversial, I'm sure they would be heavy for some legislators to carry, like the Georgia Mountain Protection Act.

COLEMAN: Yeah.

SHORT: That was very controversial, particularly in the mountains.

COLEMAN: Yeah.

SHORT: Of course, it never passed the way he proposed it, but it did pass.

COLEMAN: Well, not much does, as you know.

SHORT: Yeah.

COLEMAN: Having been there.

SHORT: But Miller seemed bent on education. He came up with the HOPE scholarship program, which, I think, has been one of the godsend to the state of Georgia, because so many young people have an opportunity to go to college. But he also did a lot of work on technology in the classrooms. He wanted to be the education Governor, but as I look back over it, Mr. Speaker, I think every Governor has given education his best effort.

But, I want to talk a minute now about his appointment to the Senate. Governor Barnes appointed him, crossing party lines, and that upset a lot of people.

COLEMAN: We didn't cross party lines!

SHORT: Well, as it turned out, that's probably true. But he did not appoint a Republican. Of course, that upset the Republicans, and it had, I think, an effect on Miller's decision to be very, very independent in the United States Senate.

COLEMAN: Yeah.

SHORT: And I don't see anything wrong with that.

COLEMAN: No.

SHORT: I think independence is probably one of the greatest things you could have up there. Because if you follow those party lines, if you're so partisan that you don't see the trees through the forest, then you're not going to get anywhere. Don't you think?

COLEMAN: Absolutely. Let me go back, and you mentioned this, the lottery was the big issue that people give credit for helping get Zell elected. I don't always agree with that, the concept of the lottery. But you know what helped more, as much as anything? And that was how he sold the lottery. Not the lottery itself, but how he sold HOPE scholarships, full-blown kindergarten, state-paid kindergarten, which was a tremendous asset to this state, to get kids an early start in education. And then the money that was intended to upgrade technology and other things in education. So, Zell, if anybody ever has been, he's been an education Governor. He changed the Regents around, made some major changes there, but, yes.

Now, let's talk about his appointment. Certainly, the Republicans got upset about it. If I had been a Democratic Governor, I would have appointed a Democrat too. If I'd been a Republican and a vacancy occurred, I would have appointed a Republican, if I'd been Governor. I actually believe that Zell wasn't expecting it. Now, he and I haven't talked about that. We've talked, not lately, but I don't think he was expecting it. And I think, though, it rounded out his complete career. I think he felt when he went to Washington, that he could make a difference. And his relationship with Clinton, they were very close, and he helped Clinton carry Georgia. But I think when he got to the Senate he went with his typical, real independent attitude, and was not loved by the Democratic leadership because he didn't tow the line. And the Republicans, maybe liked him, but maybe they wouldn't take him in. Zell always has been and always will be independent. Maybe not in the literal sense of the word, but he has always been independent. And when he went up there -- I think that's why he decided not to run again. He just didn't feel comfortable with it.

SHORT: Roy Barnes told me a funny story about that. He said that he'd almost made up his mind about who he wanted to appoint to the Senate, and it wasn't Zell Miller.

COLEMAN: Right.

SHORT: And you've probably heard this story. But he got a call, from all people, Tom Daschle, who was the majority leader. A very liberal guy. He called him and asked who he was going to appoint. And he told him the man he had in mind. Daschle says, "No. Send us Miller. He can get reelected." And I think that is what really persuaded Barnes to do that. Although, Zell and Barnes were good friends, and are good friends.

COLEMAN: Who did you think he was going to appoint, can you tell me?

SHORT: I will.

COLEMAN: Will you?

SHORT: Buddy Darden.

COLEMAN: Yeah! I knew that they discussed it, but I didn't know. The truth is that some of us felt that he should have appointed Cathy Cox. That Cathy could have been elected and could have been reelected, and would have changed the dynamics, as you know. If we could go back and make one change in history and you change everything. But we thought that Cathy could have been reelected. And Daschle -- that's why Daschle's not there now.

SHORT: Yeah.

COLEMAN: He was not the best judge.

SHORT: Yeah.

COLEMAN: Zell did a great job.

SHORT: We've talked a little bit about party politics in Georgia, which begs this question. Most states have party registration. You're either a Democrat, a Republican, or you're an Independent. You can register either way. Should we have that in Georgia?

COLEMAN: I don't think so. I don't think people want to be identified. There's been a ground swell of resistance, even to this national I.D. card. Georgians have always been independent. And I think that's why you see on the state level constitutional officers like John Oxendine, Cathy Cox, Karen Handel. And on the Democratic side you've got Tommy Irvin, who won with the biggest majority of anybody this year as a Democrat. You've got Thurbert Baker as a Democrat. Michael Thurmond is a Democrat. I just don't believe people want to restrict themselves to that. They may make up their mind at the last minute, which primary they want to vote in. That's the way it should be. Now, I do worry about partisanship. And I don't know how to tackle that. I have some things in me that tell me that I could've run just as easily as a Republican as a Democrat. But that party registration, I don't think it's good for Georgia.

SHORT: Well, let's get back to talking about Terry Coleman. You had a wonderful relationship with Speaker Murphy. How did that develop?

COLEMAN: As I said, you're just closer. I'll tell you the truth, I've worked all my life. I've either had two jobs and been in the legislature, I've basically been in the legislature all my life. I've worked at home. I've been involved in the fire department or I've been in the insurance business, the grocery business, in the legislature. And I found out that there are very few substitutes for hard work. When I came to the legislature I displayed that in actual activity.

I went to Speaker Murphy -- you know our relationship. I talked about earlier people like George Bagby and Ben Jessup and others in the legislature got me into the inner circle, so to speak. But then I went a step further, and when he put me on the Appropriations Committee, I would go to the speaker and say, "Mr. Speaker, do you mind if I sit in and watch you work on the Green Door Committee?" And he'd say, "No, son. Come on in and just sit over there." Of course, I knew better than to say anything or do anything. But we developed a relationship. He also developed one with other people. He had a few very, very good friends, as you know. Bill Lee, Marcus Collins, and people like that.

SHORT: I'm going to ask you about them later.

COLEMAN: Okay. But he also had a few of us that he included. Larry Walker, as an attorney. One of my best friends in the legislature and, of course, he became one of the Speaker's close confidantes. As they called us, one of his lieutenants. I guess I was in the other group that dealt with other issues, budget and other things. But we had a great relationship. I worked my business with him just by being involved and just by spending any time I had doing my job and quite frankly, from time to time, being independent. He and I disagreed from time to time, but as I told you earlier, I was respectful of his office.

The only time I ever opposed the Speaker in a debate, was on the floor of the House. And I won. It was on an adjournment resolution. When I was Chairman of Appropriations, we passed a bill out of committee. Sent it to the Senate. They finished it. It got back over. Robert Hobbs, who was our legislative budget officer told me, he said, "Terry, we can't finish." This was maybe two days before adjournment. And he said, "We can't finish putting the budget together." After the conference committee approved, "We can't finish putting the budget together and put it on the desk in time. I've got to have an extra day." That was a tradition in later years, and just before the last day, you would take a day off to catch up with paperwork. Let the clerk's office in the House, the clerk and the Senate, and the budget folks catch up. And he wanted to get it through. You know why? He wanted to go to spring training. I knew what he wanted. And I went down there with him a lot of times.

SHORT: Yeah.

COLEMAN: But I went to the well of the house and I told him. I said, "Mr. Speaker, this is wrong. We don't need to approve this thing." I remember what I said. I said, "The older I get, the more important regularity means to me." And I know a lot of people understand that. You understand that! But in the end, he let me have my say, and I jabbed him a couple of times. He laughed. Finally loosened up. And he said, "You know, whatever." We did that.

But we had a great relationship. I think that he respected me as a budget person. I think that he respected my opinion and called me one of his boys and whatever -- son. He always told people like us, "One of these days, I'm going to turn this over to you young boys." I remember what Larry Walker said. Larry said, "Does he know I've got grandchildren?" So we had a good relationship and I was deeply hurt when he died. But, you know, we were expecting it, so...

SHORT: Well, would you take long enough to explain to us the Appropriations process in the Georgia General Assembly and take us behind the famous Green Door?

COLEMAN: Oh yeah.

SHORT: And tell us what the Green Door was.

COLEMAN: Okay. Let me tell you this. As you know, you were involved in things, until Lester Maddox was elected Governor, every Governor wrote the budget. Every Governor introduced, if not every bill, almost every bill and called upstairs. He appointed the Speaker. He appointed the Chairmen of the committees. Carl Sanders was the last great all-inclusive, all-comprehensive Governor. He appointed the Speaker. Speaker George T. Smith will tell you that. He appointed me Speaker. And when Lester became Governor, elected by the legislature, George L. Smith took advantage of that, seized the power, and the legislature became independent. When that happened, he started a budget office. It was started with one person, Pete Hackney. Do you remember Pete Hackney?

SHORT: I remember Pete very well, yes.

COLEMAN: We named that parking lot over there for Pete Hackney. Pete Hackney became the budget officer, and he did it with an old, I think it might have been an old manual calculator and the add machine tape. And he started the budget office. And at that time, the legislature was partially a creature of the old days where they came and they hung around, but didn't really vote. Or they voted when they told them to. So, they needed a group of people who were willing to work and whatever. And that's kind of how the Green Door Committee started. Murphy was Speaker Pro Tem under George L. Smith. I believe I'm right about that. And he was involved. He's told me these stories. And as things grew and the complexity and the size of the budget grew, it went from, I think it was Speaker Murphy and Busbee and Marcus or Bill Lee or both of them, whenever Carter was Governor, after Lester. And then it grew a little bit. And the committee would meet. The Appropriations Committee would meet and they would talk about things and hear from all of these departments. But somebody had to make decisions. You can't govern by committee. President Kennedy said, "A committee is just a group of people organized to do what one person ought to do." As you know.

SHORT: Yeah.

COLEMAN: So that's how it kind of evolved. Joe Mack Wilson, Al Burruss. Joe Mack told me when he was at Murphy -- I called him Murphy -- don't take that as a sign of disrespect, but Murphy and Collins and all that crowd were in there doing the budget. He'd go in and beat on the door, "Let me in there! Let me in! What's going on behind the green door?" You know, that was a popular song back then. And the press popularized the myth of that green door based on that song, and some of it came from Joe Mack Wilson. Well, finally, they let him in. They let him be involved. Partially because they needed another legislator, I think. Al Burruss might have been in on it, I don't know. But they needed some more representation in the urban areas of the state, and Cobb County was emerging as an urban area -- Marietta.

But that's kind of how the Green Door concept came about, to the best of my knowledge, and we grew it a little bit over the years, politically. Speaker Murphy brought in some more people over time. We got up to seven, eight, or nine members finally. The process is

that the Governor recommends a budget. The House gets the first shot at it. The House committee goes through their process. And back then, pretty much the Green Door Committee would refine the process, make recommendations, and generally the committee would adopt it. I changed that when I went. Bubba was Chairman of the Appropriations Committee before me. And I changed that a little bit more and opened it up. People like Dick Pettys and everybody was always wanting to come in and sit in on the Green Door meetings. Well, I just opened it. I said, "Sure, come on in."

We also started subcommittees because the budget had grown to the point that nobody could be a real expert on the whole budget. The complexity of government, the size of the budget, the size of the state, different areas were growing compared to the rural areas, when the rural legislators dominated the House. And I think we started out with four subcommittees, and then allowed them to go through their area of the budget and make recommendations to the so-called Green Door Committee. And then the House committee would handle it. Pretty much send it to the floor of the House and the Senate.

Now, the reason I'm telling you that is that one of the times that it was most trying to Speaker Murphy was a couple of times when Bubba was Chairman. They were doing it the old way. Not many people were involved. And the Macon Five got together and amended the budget. Not much before then or since then had it been amended. They went crazy. They thought that was the worst thing in the world that could happen! They had an amendment on the budget, and they had to go back and rewrite it. Also, let me say this, the Green Door Committee also got a chance at putting some projects in the budget. That was a real incentive to be on the Green Door Committee. And it expanded then to the Chairman on Appropriations. And when we'd almost get through the budget, Pete Hackney and Robert Hobbs would come in there and, it was kind of a charade, but the Speaker would say, "How much money do we have left?" Well, people like Harry Dixon and myself and the leadership -- Larry Walker, Jack Connell, Bill Lee, Crawford Ware, Tom Buck, all of us would be in, and Pete Hackney might say, "Well, we've got two hundred and forty thousand left over, Mr. Speaker." Well, all the Chairmen would fight over five or ten or twenty or thirty thousand dollar grants.

When I got to be Chairman, I knew we had to endear some people, and I started, with the Speaker's permission and with the leadership's working with me, we started the slush fund. Actually, Speaker Murphy had done that originally. But we would give agencies money and before then, they were doing it a little less informal. We did a formal deal. We'd give DHR or Community Affairs two hundred and fifty thousand dollars and some legislator would come in there and say, "Commissioner, Mr. Speaker, my basketball team is going to the state championship. The bus is broken down. Can you get me two or three thousand dollars?" He'd say, "I don't know. I'll see." And, of course, he'd get on the phone and he'd call Pete and he'd say, "Pete, you think you could help old Harry Dixon or Carlton Colwell or whoever it might be find three thousand dollars to help overhaul the bus? They've got to go to the state basketball game." Anyway, Pete would call over the department of education and say, "Can you cut a check to the Ware County school system for three thousand dollars for the athletic program?" That's how it started out. This is how Dick Pettys won a Pulitzer Prize. He uncovered the things. You remember Nathan Dean? He was a master of it. And that's when we started doing special projects. Dick Pettys called me, or maybe he came to see me. And he said, "Well, we've done away with the slush fund now. What are you going to do?" I said, "Well, we're going to put them in the budget." And he said, "How are you going to do that?" I said, "Well, we're going to line-item these special grants in the budget." And it turned out to be pages and pages

and pages and going from barely passing the budget on the floor of the House, by giving fifty or one hundred legislators special projects that they asked for, five or ten or fifteen thousand dollar, legitimate local government grants, they were obligated then to vote for the budget! So...

SHORT: Tricked them

COLEMAN: Yeah.

SHORT: Tricked them!

COLEMAN: No. Bribed them.

SHORT: Bribed them.

COLEMAN: That's kind of how things evolved in the budget process, and how we got to, I guess, where we were. And you might ask about this later, but I spent a lot of my time, hard-working time, helping legislators with their little projects and, of course, with the Speaker's permission, but not doing anything to undermine the system -- working within the system. So, the budget process worked out pretty good.

I'll tell you, let me just tell you this one thing, because you're going to ask about some things later on. I don't know how or why, but I think it was to help elect Busbee, in the House, the Chairman of the Appropriations Committee didn't present the budget. Speaker Murphy let Busbee do it. I believe I'm right about that, for the exposure.

SHORT: He was the majority leader.

COLEMAN: He was the majority leader.

SHORT: Yeah.

COLEMAN: And unless Joe Frank did some of it, I think that -- no. Because Clarence Vaughn, I think, might have done the same thing. And then when Larry became the majority leader, they allowed him to do it too. And by that time, Larry and I were kind of jockeying for favor with the members and trying to curry the favor of the speaker. And I didn't know exactly when I needed to do it, but here I was Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Larry was presenting the budget. He's very knowledgeable. Knew a lot about the budget. But he was on the floor and I was sitting back there, you know, sitting in my desk.

One day, Speaker Murphy called me in his office. And I, as I do, a lot of people may not know this. I do. I generally have a plan, a backup plan, for just about everything I do, some of it spontaneous. But he called me in his office, and I didn't know what it was about. I thought it was about a budget item. And he said, "Terry, I want to ask you something." And I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "I had some people telling me you may run against me for Speaker." And I said, "Well, Mr. Speaker you know, you made me what I am, as far as Chairman of the Appropriations Committee." But I said, "I'll tell you this. The way things are, it's not fair. And the truth is that I probably ought to run against you." He said, "Why?" I said, "Well, Larry's down there presenting the budget. Doing a great job, I can't argue with that. I'd do it a little

differently, but that's been the tradition. He's presenting the budget, and I'm sitting on my butt back there and having to just kind of observe." He said, "Well, what do you mean?" I said, "Well, if you're going to let him present the budget, which is the tradition, I think that you ought to let me preside." And he said, "Well, that's fair enough." He said, "Are you going to run against me?" I said, "I'd never run against you! You're my friend and mentor. But I do think that you need to do that." So, he said, "That's fair enough." So, I started presiding in a, I guess, for lack of a better word "Speaker-esque" type position that kind of helped to bring me up in an equal footing with Larry and give people confidence in my ability to preside and to do things. So, that's how that happened.

SHORT: Isn't it true, Terry, that the final word on the budget comes from the Conference Committees?

COLEMAN: Yes. Usually small differences, but in the scheme of things.

SHORT: And isn't it also good that both Houses have Appropriations Chairmen who serve for a long time, like, you know, they had you in the House and, I believe, George Hooks. Senator Hooks?

COLEMAN: Oh, absolutely, or have had experience. And, you know, let me say this. Ben Harbin gives me some credit, I don't know if I deserve as much as he gives me sometimes, but I brought Ben in just because he was a sharp young man. Sharp young member of the House. And I saw promise in him. And I brought him in and let him be involved in some things. I think that's one of the reasons the House has been successful since I left as Speaker. The very few of the legislators who started out four years ago when they completely took over the House, had not much experience in dealing with the day-to-day committee work and that kind of thing. But Ben had. Ben had been on a couple of major subcommittees. And I also put him on the local grant subcommittee, the pork barrel projects, we call them. And he sat in on that and was involved and got a chance to get a head start.

But, yeah, the tradition was that, other than the Speaker's job, and maybe the majority leader and maybe the Judiciary or -- I think equally that the Chairman of Appropriations, Judiciary, Ways and Means, and the majority leader's job were all equal, required different talents, or required different backgrounds, but equal in stature. So, having somebody with experience as Chairman of Appropriations was absolutely important. Experience and a little tenure.

SHORT: So, you included Republican members in your efforts to pass a good budget?

COLEMAN: Oh, sure. You had to. Because they began to grow in numbers, and only a dummie would exclude them from the process. You know, I was the first one to do things as a chairman, of course, that was pretty much because the Republican membership grew when I was Chairman of Appropriations. And the last few years the Speaker was Speaker. But people like Burke Day, Mark Burkhalter, Anne -- oh gosh, from Savannah --

SHORT: Purcell. Anne Purcell.

COLEMAN: Anne Purcell. But she became a Republican later. She was a Democrat. Gosh, just a minute, let me think of her name. A great lady from down there. All over, I started giving them things. Burkhalter came to me about things like, you know, a nature walk for his school in Alpharetta, and Ben had projects going on.

I remember Burke Day called me one day, and he represents lower Chattham County and Tibey Island and he said, "I've got to do something about my beach. It's eroding down there." And the Mayor had talked to me and the Butch Parrish had talked to me about some things and others. I believe we put fifty thousand dollars in the budget for Tibey Island to help them with beach erosion. We were going through the budget in the Green Door, and Speaker Murphy liked to be called the titular head, or Chairman of the Green Door Committee, and all of a sudden, he said, "What in the hell is this!" And he was skipping way ahead, you know, he liked to be ahead of everybody. He was skipping way ahead. And it was fifty thousand dollars for a snow fence for Tibey Island. And he said, "What in the hell does Tibey Island need with snow fences?" And I said, "Wait! Wait Mr. Speaker! This is Burke Day." I said, "You know, his mother is a fan of yours." "Yeah, I know. She's a good friend of mine." And I said, "Burke has a problem with beach erosion. They call it a snow fence, but the truth is it's for sand. And if you put this slotted fence up, it helps build up the sand dunes and whatever." And that was one of those things. Yeah, the Republicans got, I think, their share of things in the budget.

SHORT: We often hear or read about those types of projects as being questionable by the media, but they're absolutely necessary, aren't they?

COLEMAN: Well, my position on that is, why can a Governor or a President call a department head in the executive branch and say, "Look, I think we probably need to start putting computers in schools and I'd like for you to start with Rabun County." Say the Governor's from Rabun County. "I'd like for you to start with Rabun County up there." Or let's just say Zell, for instance. Zell decided he wanted a mountain park! Well, by god, he got a mountain park. And he did it in good style. And he should have. It's a great asset and a great resource to help develop the mountains. But how and why should a Governor have that power, when there are three equal branches of government? Why shouldn't the legislature or Congress have that power, unless they abuse it? If it's a rational, justifiable, in most people's minds, in the body where they serve or in the Governor's mind, why shouldn't they have that power? I say they should.

SHORT: Let's talk, for a minute, about your becoming Speaker.

COLEMAN: Okay.

SHORT: Speaker Murphy lost his race. And that left his seat open. I have heard that over the years he had developed two or three people, friends that he thought were capable of being Speakers. One was you. One was Larry Walker. And the other one I can't remember. So, here we were in Georgia without a Speaker, leaving you and Larry, I guess, in a contest to see who would succeed him. I seriously doubt, and you can confirm this, that Speaker Murphy took any part in that election. Did he?

COLEMAN: Not at first. If we have time, and you want to talk about that, we'll talk about that.

SHORT: Yeah, I'd like to.

COLEMAN: During his last three terms, Speaker Murphy threatened, insinuated, that he might not run again. As I told you earlier in our conversation, he referred to people like Jerry -- gosh, give me a minute. I'll think of his name. I'm getting a little bit old now. He talked about people like Butch Parrish. He talked about me, Larry Walker, Jerry Jackson, and, gosh, others of our age group, at that time, in their fifties. He'd say, "Well, I'm going to let you young boys have this one day." And, quite frankly, he never really felt like anybody could do as good a job as him. That's one of his successful points. He had as much self-confidence as any person I've ever known. But, he'd said it enough for me to know that and I had enough encouragement from the membership that said, "You know, you need to run if he quits." Al Burruss was the first one that pushed me. And Al was one of the guys that opposed Murphy, but worked, I mean, literally, worked his way back to respect and to come in the inner circle. And Murphy brought him back in. He held it against him long enough for Al to know that he might never want to do it again, but then he brought him back in and made a very productive career. He helped Al Burruss have a legislative career.

Anyway, the last four years that Speaker Murphy was there, things were changing. Larry was preparing in his own way. He had a group of people that were supporting him. I was preparing in my own way. I actually did it where it counted. I was lucky enough to have the check book. And I helped people. I mean, helped them not just because I wanted them to vote for me, because it was never a quid pro quo. I helped people because I enjoyed it, but I also helped them because it was the right thing to do. Good for them or whatever. But my ulterior motive was to at least give me a fair shot if Larry and I had to run against each other for Speaker. And I remember that we'd kind of jockeyed and positioned ourselves. And, you know, he went with the Speaker to the National Speaker's meetings and did the ceremonial kind of things. I was working in a different way. I didn't know if it was productive or not. I was doing a different deal. But, in the end, we kind of wondered if Speaker Murphy might not win. He'd had a rough race two years before that, and at the last minute decided to run again. As a matter of fact, the National Speaker's Conference, members of the Speaker's Conference, when I became Speaker, they told me, they said, "Well, you know, we thought Murphy was retired four years ago. We took up a collection and bought him a boat!" And he didn't retire! But anyway, I was up in Joe Frank Harris's room. I believe it was in the Mariot. I can't remember. One of the downtown hotels when the results were being announced and the first results were coming in. It looked pretty bad for Roy. Then, somebody called me and said, "Hey, we think Speaker Murphy's lost." Well, I immediately loaded up. I came back to the capitol. During that time you could see that Roy was losing and may not be able to recover. And word kept coming in that looked like Murphy was gone. And I went immediately back over here and I called Speaker Murphy and I said, "Speaker Murphy, how do you stand?" He said, "Son, I've lost." He said, "Go ahead and do what you've got to do." And I don't know if he had that same conversation with Larry or not, but I immediately went to work. My team, that I had developed over the years, the Bob Handers, Butch Parrish's, Richard Royal's, Johnny Floyd's, Nicky Chanel's, Christy Flowers' -- who was not in the legislature but was helping me with my campaign -- Gerald Green. Just a host of legislators got busy and started campaigning for me. As you know, Sonny became

Governor in a tremendous upset. A shock, I think people say it shocked Sonny and it shocked Roy! So, I don't know, but I was working. Larry was working. You know, it got to that point where the caucus was going to choose, we were still the majority in the number, so we were the majority caucus, and the caucus was going to choose.

SHORT: And the caucus chose.

COLEMAN: Well, it was not easy. Larry worked hard and I worked hard and it was very close, right up till just before the caucus was going to meet. And there were people still on the fence, even though I began to build up a little momentum. The black caucus met. I know what it was. The black caucus met with us individually over at the Old Stadium Hotel, and that was kind of the last official meeting before the election coming up. And it looked like I had the votes. And I'd been all over the state trying to get people, learned a thing or two about commitments from Speaker Murphy and people where I had a question mark, I'd ask them to write me a letter of commitment. And I had two or three of them. Jeanette Jamieson had a hard time making up her mind. She wrote me a letter and then backed out. Wrote me a letter and backed out.

It was very close, right up until I kind of knew that I had the votes and people we started talking about then who might be the Speaker Pro Tem nominee. Dubose Porter seemed to be the likely nominee. You know, Dubose, to his credits, said, "Terry." He said, "For the good of the caucus, if it works out this way and you become the nominee for Speaker, why don't you call Larry and ask him if he would be Speaker Pro Tem. I'll back out or I won't offer my name." And I did that. And I didn't know at the time that Larry, and you'll have to ask Larry about this, but I guess he was talking with Governor Purdue, or Governor-elect Purdue at the time, and this was right after the couple of weeks before the election for nominees to the caucus. I suppose they must have been talking then. I've never gone back and asked him. Larry was trying to decide, I guess, if he wanted to be Speaker Pro Tem or run kind of as a third party choice. And I guess you'll just have to find out from Gov. Purdue or from Larry how that worked. I remember, I think it was Friday before the caucus met on Monday or Tuesday, and I called Larry. And I said, "Larry, if you would run as Speaker Pro Tem, you can preside when you get ready. I'll give you all the power you feel like you need to carry on, to continue to be involved in the state legislative leaders' foundation, whatever you need to do." And he just said, "Let me think about it and I'll let you know." Well, I never heard back. They went ahead and nominated me for Speaker as the majority caucus. Dubose for Speaker Pro Tem and Jimmy Skipper as majority leader. Jimmy Skipper's a very smart, hard-working guy.

And after that it kind of cursed my period when I should have had time to organize the House. Larry had mounted a third, so-called third party or alternative race for Speaker. So, I felt good, but I never knew until the day we organized, January, I guess, it was the 13th, the day I was elected Speaker for sure. It kind of cursed my first year. I was late getting organized. So, we had a tough two or three days to get the House organized and committees appointed and that sort-of thing.

SHORT: And two years later the Republicans became the majority.

COLEMAN: They did.

SHORT: Why?

COLEMAN: Reapportionment. We assumed that the federal court would give us a fair shake and know that we had a Republican Senate. Eric Johnson would not approve, they would not approve a House plan that gave us a pretty good majority. We held out, thinking in the end that they might agree or the court might give us a better situation, better than we would get with the Republican Senate. That was one thing. When the court came down on us with reapportionment, that was really a tough blow.

In my own district, I was disappointed. One of my strongest counties, Telfair County, they took out of my district. That was personally kind of a -- I don't know if it was then or later - - I can't remember now. But anyway, the court, the federal court brought in a special master or somebody from Pennsylvania to draw the districts. That hurt us.

The marriage amendment was a strong issue. And it was one of those things that had me torn between the conservative rural Democrats, the liberals in the urban areas who generally didn't want to do anything. Of course, Republicans all were, well, not all, most of them were for the gay marriage amendment, which prohibited marriage among gays. It was a terribly divisive thing. But the timing was right. The gay community had helped, not intentionally, but the attention they had gotten nationally -- the national Republican party was very wise to use it as a wedge issue. And, not that people supported the gay rights or gay marriages, it was a question of whether it ought to be in the Constitution. Well, I was in the middle, torn between allowing my conservative, rural members a vote on that, knowing it might be the death knell for the Democrats, because it would bring out the conservative vote that traditionally voted Republican.

Now, the state, all this time, had elected the first Republican Governor. The Republicans in the state and nationally the Republicans were frothing at the mouth to see Georgia ready to turn Republican. So, they were putting a lot of resources into Georgia. Eventually we allowed a vote on it. And when it was a Constitutional amendment, Governor Purdue riding a wave of new Republicanism in this state. The liberal face on the national Democratic party, a Republican president. I guess, it's just what they say, it's a worn cliché "the perfect storm." And it all worked to have pretty much a major change in Georgia politics. We went from one hundred and eleven or twelve or thirteen House members to -- they wound up with a five or six, maybe less than ten person majority in the House. I didn't do what Larry did. I'm not saying he was wrong. Traditionally he was wrong in not ceding to me since the majority party chose me as the Speaker nominee. I said that I was not going to let that happen. I tried to act like a gentleman. And Glenn became the nominee and he came to see me and I told him, "Congratulations." He said, "Well, are we going to have any problems?" I said, "No. I respect the fact that y'all have the majority and you're the nominee and sometime around the first of the year I'll be moved out. You can move in before the session starts." Well, that was different from what I had to deal with. Because I couldn't move into the Speaker's office until January 13th. But, yeah, that's kind of, in a nut shell, how it happened. And who knows, it may change again.

SHORT: Another big issue while you were Speaker was Governor Purdue's changing the Georgia flag.

COLEMAN: Yeah.

SHORT: Care to comment on that?

COLEMAN: That was another thing that was controversial. The way Gov. Barnes went about changing the flag. We begged him. Some of us who were more conservative friends and rural friends, begged him. We said, "Don't do this your first year! This is a major change." As you know, they almost beat Zell. Zell only won by thirty thousand votes his second term because he just talked about it. Well, the powers that be. Corporate Georgia, as we call them, the other folks told Barnes, "You've got a great thing going. You've been on the cover of TIME magazine. You're doing well. If you ever want to do anything good for Georgia, now's the time to do it." And he got all wrapped up in that. We said, "Governor, this is a divisive issue. Talk about it. Let it soak in and give people time to think about it." Well, I'd been hearing this. And I know that some people in the legislature had been kind of quietly talking about it. Well, I just believed it was a farce. When they told me that, I'm going back before, now. Governor Barnes was going to get the bill out of committee, the Rules Committee, and on to the floor in one day. That was a tough deal. Finally, you know, it lost, I think it lost the first time. This was changing to the blue flag, away from the flag from 1956 on. And I think it might have failed on the first vote or whatever. I know if failed on the first vote. And they worked it, and they worked and worked it, finally passed it. Well, that was partially responsible for Gov. Barnes's defeat, and for the change. And it wasn't so much changing the flag, as we'll discuss further, if you'll give me a little time here, that we'll discuss in a little bit. It was the way it was handled. It was almost as if they ignored tradition. Ignored the will of the people. Snuck the bill out. That's the way it was perceived. And passed it. As you know, that's one of the reasons Sonny won. Okay. Move forward.

When Sonny was running he promised a vote on the flag. I was Speaker. The old flag was there. We had a new design. George Hooks was involved in it. A lot of people were involved in it. It was basically Bobby Franklin's idea of going back to the flag before '56. It was Georgia's original flag, as a matter of fact. And today's flag is a small variation of Georgia's original flag. It came out of the Senate, I believe is right. They had a problem with it. I don't remember if it came from the House to the Senate or the Senate to the House. The Senate to the House. I don't remember. No. It came from the House and was sent to the Senate. It passed the House, was sent to the Senate and was changed. And at that time, a lot of people mounted a big protest. It came back to the House for final approval as amended. George Hooks and some others over there changed it, as they said, to be historically correct. And I said, "George, god knows! Why did you send that back to me?" I said, "We could lose this bill." The Governor had asked me to help him. We knew it needed to be done, but this was, I think, more of a proper way to do it.

The debate lasted a long time. I remember Judy Manning, it was toward the end of the session. It might have been the last day of the session, or the day before the end of the session. Judy Manning, who was a vote for it, finally in the wee hours she told me, she said, "I've got a cruise planned. My whole family is on the cruise. I tried to wait. I've got to go." A lady from Augusta. A legislator over there, her mother got sick. They had probably an eight or ten vote lead, and as the day wore on, that lead dwindled to nothing! And when the final vote on changing, on the final vote! This was it. The end of the flag controversy. A vote for a referendum on the existing flag. And we had it, I believe, it was late in the day. It could have been eight or nine o'clock at night. Finally voted on it. And what do you believe, what would you think?

SHORT: Tie.

COLEMAN: The vote was 94, and I've forgotten what the vote against was. It wasn't a tie. It might have been 90 or whatever. Well, the one thing I learned from Speaker Murphy was that when you go to preside over every bill, you better have your mind made up how you are going to vote, or you're going to get caught in a mess. Well, I knew how I was going to vote, but I had no idea it would be like. You have to have 91 votes for a Constitutional majority. The vote comes up 90 votes, and I said, "Oh my god!" You know, I'm representing a conservative district. We've just gone through that thing with Roy. And so, I took a deep breath, and I said, "Chair votes, aye. This bill having received requisite Constitutional majorities is therefore, passed." People were stunned! Lynn Westmoreland was standing there saying, "What happened, you know, it only got ninety votes, you know?" A lot of people never realized what happened. There was a silence in the whole chamber. What seemed like five minutes was only fifteen or twenty or thirty seconds. And then whatever side you were on, there was some moaning and groaning and some cheering. Of course, I gavelled everybody back to order. And I remember one thing that stuck out in my mind. David Lucas stood up and said something, "Way to go! Way to go Mr. Speaker!" Or something like that, and I said, "Please sit down, David." And I had to stand there and take a breathe because I had never, ever thought that I would have to be the deciding vote on that. But it was the right thing to do, and we got a great flag.

SHORT: Great flag.

COLEMAN: The Governor's proud. He lived up to his responsibility. And it's a beautiful flag.

SHORT: And we've moved ahead.

COLEMAN: We've moved ahead. We've moved on.

SHORT: Right. A new career for you now.

COLEMAN: Yeah, different.

SHORT: Yeah. But you have the background for it.

COLEMAN: Well, yeah, maybe so. I've been in the food business all of my life. I've been in the grocery business and the restaurant business as one of my three jobs.

SHORT: Right. And I suppose that you'll be working on some issues that face the state in agriculture?

COLEMAN: Do you have time to talk about it? I want to talk to you about it.

SHORT: Of course.

COLEMAN: Let me tell you what we're faced with. Agriculture is still the number

one industry in Georgia when you include the timber industry. And it's been tough. We have an opportunity, and I have really enjoyed this. Commissioner Irvin called me after I decided not to run again. And the House and the Speaker had been kind enough to bestow a title on me, Speaker Emeritus. It's kind of the honorable way to not be beaten, but still not have your office, but have a title. They'd been kind enough to do that. And in the waning days of the legislature, after the new legislature had been elected, actually, Rusty Paul had come to me and said, "How about let's start a lobbying firm? I've already got a lobbying firm. Would you come join me?" And I thought it was a great idea. He and I talked about it. We went far enough to draw up paperwork to incorporate and do everything. In the meantime, Tommy Irvin called me and said, "Come over here. I want to talk to you. Will you help me?" To make a long story short, "Will you help me next session with my legislative program?" And I think Bobby Rowan had had a little bit to do with that. You didn't know Bobby Rowan, did you?

SHORT: Everybody knows Bobby Rowan!

COLEMAN: Well, a great American! Former Public Service Commissioner, candidate for Governor, and a great Senator. Anyway, he asked me, and I was intrigued with the offer, even though it was what some people said was probably a step down from Speaker. But, as I told you earlier, I've worked all my life and I didn't think I could handle the prospect of not continuing to work in some form in government or be involved. And Rusty had offered me what I thought was a lucrative opportunity. Him as a former Chairman of the Republican party, a former Republican Senator, and me as a former Democratic House member and a Democratic Speaker. It was a great opportunity, and I like Rusty, even though I told him as he tried, we laughed at each other. We said we each tried to beat each others butts during our political careers, but we're still friends. We're good friends. And I just decided I wasn't sure I wanted to lobby. And this came along, so I decided I'd try it. Tried it for a few months, stood the session. We had a good session on some legislation. A little help in the budget. The Speaker and the leadership were good to me in helping me help Tommy in the department. I got involved in issues. These were issues that I really enjoy.

And let me tell you some of the things that we're doing. We're promoting, because agriculture is truly the major industry in Georgia, we've lost, through 70 years of agriculture, we at one time had as many as several thousand dairies in the state. We were down to 271 dairies. We started promoting what's known as producer processor dairies. Now, this was not an original idea. But it had never had the attention or the help that we started giving them in Georgia. We dedicated a person to help them get started. To help them through the process, through the bureaucratic thing. We made some modifications to our rules and interpretations of the state laws dealing with dairies. We now have seven producer processor dairies in the state, and not only have they become great producers of product, but most of them are family owned. They produce a great quantity of milk, because it's a hands-on operation. They produce great butter, and it's a value-added product in the dairy business. We see Sparkman Dairy down in Moultrie, a Flat Creek, or Cagle dairy. Some of them are producing ice cream. Sweetgrass in Thomasville is producing a goat cheese and other products from goat's milk. We've turned the dairy business around in Georgia. We now have two hundred -- I don't know if it's two hundred and seventy, three hundred and seventy-three so, we've turned it around and are moving it up.

Georgia also is becoming a host state to the concept of New Zealand-style dairies. The old dairies, as you know and I knew, were what's called confined animal operations. CAFO.

You fed them in a stall, you let them cool in a covered stall. You had to have huge investment in a lagoon to take care of animal waste and that kind of thing. Well, the New Zealand concept, which we're promoting, or the pasture-based grazing dairies, is a whole new concept. They use a circuit irrigation system. They grow the grass in paddocks, or the animals are kept in paddocks where they move from one paddock to another. In hot weather they use a mister under the irrigation system so the cows graze. They move under the mister when it's hot. When they get cool, they move back out and continue to graze. So, it's more natural. 85% of all urination and defecation stays on the pasture land and they don't need an expensive lagoon system. They don't have to have a cooling barn. We're looking at trying to promote, because of the cost of corn now, it's affecting all our food products. Because Georgia poultry is the number one ag. product in the state, poultry relies heavily on corn. We're promoting something we worked on when I was Chairman of the Appropriations. Gail Buchanan was head of the extension service. It's called Pearl Millet -- as a substitute for corn.

We've gotten very deep into consumer protection. Fish substitution, species identification. Some people have illegally substituted cheaper Asian fish for expensive grouper, snapper, that kind of thing. We're doing things with our food banks. We're making them more available to people in areas that have never been served by food banks. Just doing a lot of things that I really enjoy that go back to my background in the food business. And so I've enjoyed helping Commissioner Irvin. He's the longest serving, continuously serving, Ag. Commissioner in the country. I've learned a lot by our association. It's been a good relationship and I've enjoyed being over here. I'd give you a lot more details, but you might be bored.

SHORT: No! Not boring at all. In fact, I'm very interested in it. As a matter of fact, it brings up another question. Should we be concerned about the amount of food we're importing into the United States?

COLEMAN: Absolutely. We are concerned. We now have one, excuse me, seafood specialist on the coast. We've just gotten approval by the legislature to hire a second. Our consumer protection staff spends a lot of time, even with American-produced food, we see contamination, certainly not intentionally, though we are preparing for that with our efforts in homeland security. We don't want to be caught unawares, or be caught unprepared. But this year we had a major meat processor that processed canned, prepared meats have a retort go bad. A cooker. And turned out tons and tons, thousands of cans of bad meat, which carried in it a botulism and the germs with the potential for botulism. We wound up working with FDA overseeing the seventeen tractor trailer loads of product delivered to Alabama for incineration. Pulled a lot more off the shelf.

We just had an exercise this past, gosh, a couple of months ago, with the Georgia Ports Authority, TSA, Customs and Border Patrol, FDA and others on shipments coming into this state. As you know, Savannah is one of the largest, maybe second largest, container port on the eastern sea board. We're actually seeing, approximately, 320,000 tons of food coming into the Atlanta airport every year. Some destined for this state.

So, imported foods are a tremendous concern. The quality, the potential contamination for those foods, is an ongoing problem. We're trying to prepare for it. The legislature gave us another position, which we plan to use in the Atlanta airport area just to look for bad food or food coming in from other countries.

SHORT: And now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask you this question. What is your fondest memory of serving in the Georgia General Assembly?

COLEMAN: Well, that's the toughest question you've asked me. Because I have hundreds of them! I think, probably, being elected Speaker was my fondest memory. Some of the best people I've ever met, some of my -- still, my best friends are people I served with in the legislature. And people I still talk with on a regular basis. Becoming Speaker, that's the highest honor you can get serving in the legislature.

SHORT: What is your biggest disappointment?

COLEMAN: Not still being Speaker.

SHORT: That's a good one. How would you like to be remembered?

COLEMAN: Well, I'd like to be remembered as a good Speaker and a good legislator. Fair, hard-worker, kind, maybe. Approachable. Well, in a lot of ways, I don't know.

SHORT: Well, I've always been a great admirer of yours, and I appreciate you being with us.

COLEMAN: Thank you. It's a mutual relationship, I hope. Thank you.
[END RECORDING]