

Richard Guthman interviewed by Bob Short
2008 May 22
Hiawassee, GA
Reflections on Georgia Politics
ROGP-031
Original: video, 105 minutes

sponsored by:

Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies
University of Georgia Libraries
and
Young Harris College

University of Georgia
Reflections on Georgia Politics
Richard DOCPROPERTY "reference" Guthman

Date of Transcription: September 20, 2009

BOB SHORT: Hello. I'm Bob Short and this is "Reflections on Georgia Politics". It's May 22, 2008, and our guest today is Richard Guthman, long-time member of the Atlanta City Council and a long-time active member of the Georgia Republican Party. Richard, we're

honored to have you on our program today.

RICHARD GUTHMAN: Bob, I'm honored that you have come to my house on Lake Chatuge in Towns County, the home of Zell Miller. And it's just a pleasure to welcome you here.

SHORT: Well, before we get into your political career, Richard, tell us about yourself and how you became interested in politics.

GUTHMAN: I'm a native Atlantan, born at the old Piedmont Hospital over where the old Atlanta Stadium used to be – in right field, I think. I went to public school in Atlanta. After graduating from Grady High, I went off to Cornell for two years. My father thought it would be a good idea if I saw some other part of the country, and Cornell did have and still does a very fine engineering school. I was there for two years, decided the weather was too cold, and came back home and entered Georgia Tech where I received my degree in industrial engineering in 1956. I worked for Montag Brothers, the old Blue Horse School Supply people, for a number of years. My father had been there ever since he graduated from Georgia Tech.

I spent two years in the Army in Philadelphia, came back, and proceeded in my career. I got interested in several civic activities, the Visiting Nurse Association being the most prominent one. I was also selected to serve on a Fulton County Grand Jury one time. I think I was the youngest person ever to have achieved that honor. And I got interested in the police activities. I chaired the Police Committee and I used to ride with the police on Friday nights and all that

great, exciting stuff. But it created within me an interest in what was going on in government and in the City of Atlanta and Fulton County. And one thing led to another and I became active in the Republican Party of Fulton County, was elected Chairman of the Fulton County Party in 1971, and stayed in that position until I ran for the City Council in 1973.

Prior to that, however, in 1966, I got talked into running for the State Legislature as a Republican in Fulton County, which was – it was a countywide race. There was only one – well, actually, only two other Republican elected officials in Fulton County at that time: Richard Freeman, who later was a judge (he was on the Board of Aldermen); and Rodney Cook, who was on the Board of Aldermen. Both of them were very helpful to me and very, very fine people, and that was my introduction actually into elected office.

After I lost the election – by a very small margin – I stayed active in the Republican Party and, as I said earlier, became Chairman. And then when the City Council – or when the State – changed the Charter of the City of Atlanta allowing for district elections, I decided that I would run for District 8, which was basically northwest Atlanta. And with the help of a lot of volunteers, it was a five – it was nonpartisan. It was a five-person race. Everett Millikin, who had been a member of the Board of Aldermen, who was very instrumental in getting the Charter changed and was my main opponent, and we had a runoff and I beat him rather soundly.

An interesting thing, which is sort of apropos of today's politics with McCain, is that I was young, in my 30's. Everett Millikin was older, probably at least in his 60's at that time. But I made a decided effort that I would never ever mention his name – not his name, but his age. I also was told, "Don't ever mention his name," because that was advertising free for him, so I

used to call him “my opponent”. We were on a WADE debate, just the two of us, and he pulled out during this debate this brochure that I had distributed which essentially said that I’ll be around to run in 1977 and four years after that and four years after that and four years after that. And he said, “It’s not right that you should call me old.” And I looked at him and I said, “Mr. Millikin, I’ve never said a word about your age. You’re the one who said you’re old.”

[Laughter] And so, as I said, I won big – by 57 percent of the vote – which was pretty healthy. One of my key advisors at the time said to me, “Richard, with that majority in your district, you’ll never have any opposition in future elections.” And he was right. I had three reelections and never had any opposition in any of those elections, and I went on Council in January of 1974.

SHORT: If you don’t mind, let me ask you this question. How would you define your political philosophy?

GUTHMAN: Well, I guess basically it’s less government in general. I really believe in individual freedom. I believe the government has a strong responsibility to protect the public health, public safety and, obviously, defense of the country, and to maintain a stable financial environment. But to get involved in the nitty-gritty of daily life, I just think government ought to stay out of that and I guess that’s why I’m a Republican. I am probably – I am – fiscally conservative, I am socially moderate, and I think that the American people have enough sense to know what to do and, where things cannot be accomplished by people and it’s necessary, then

government should play a role -- primarily I think as a facilitator.

SHORT: So in 1974 after defeating Mr. Millikin, you went down to the City Hall...

GUTHMAN: Correct.

SHORT: ...with a brand new set of City Councilpersons.

GUTHMAN: That's correct. We had -- this was the first time, because of the individual district, there were 18 members of Council. Six ran at large, had to live in the district in which they were running, but they ran at large. Six -- 12 -- ran in individual districts, and that allowed for a racially equal split on Council. There were nine whites, nine blacks. The President of the Council -- or the Vice Mayor -- was white. The Mayor Maynard Jackson was black. So we were as racially equal as could be, and it represented basically the demographics of Atlanta.

SHORT: Uh-huh. Richard, there's one thing I've always admired about you and that was your ability to work across party and racial lines while you were a member of the City Council.

GUTHMAN: Well, the idea of being in government is to get something accomplished. If you can't work with other members of the legislative body, then you're not going to get anything accomplished. And the City -- running a city or a local government -- there's very little partisan

politics or partisan philosophy, frankly, that gets involved. Sewers are not political. Traffic is not political (or shouldn't be). So my challenge was to work with people who had – who came from – a different background than I came from, who had different interests than I did, but to understand their points of view and to respect those even if I disagreed with them.

One of the lessons I learned early was taught to me by Q. V. Williamson, who had been a member of the Board of Aldermen for a number of years, a tower in the black community, in government particularly, and he told me, he said, “Richard, you can disagree vehemently and passionately with an issue, but let it be on the issue and not on the personality.” And people have found it difficult how I could disagree with somebody so passionately on a particular issue and, after the vote, could go over and put my arms around them and we'd go out and have a beer after the session. But that's the way it is. Politics today, unfortunately, has gotten very personal and people aren't friends with each other anymore and that, I think, has gone a long way to create the animosity and the divisiveness that we see in government today.

SHORT: The Mayor was Maynard Jackson, newly elected. Went into office, new City Council.

Was government at that point in turmoil?

GUTHMAN: Government was not in turmoil. It may have seemed as though it was in turmoil because the City, by and large, had a very good underlying bureaucracy that knew how to get things done, how to get the nuts and bolts of running a government: paving the streets, fixing the water lines, making sure the traffic lights worked, policing. What made this new government

somewhat difficult was it changed the method of governing from what had been a strong aldermanic/weak mayor system to a strong mayor/council system. No longer were the committees of Council responsible for the departments in government. The Mayor, that was his responsibility.

The only caveat to that was the Finance Department had a split, dual reporting responsibility. It reported both to Council as well as to the Mayor. That made for some interesting situations in legislation and in philosophy later on, but the Legislature had seen to it that the Charter – it was a strong Charter; it had some very strong language about the City's finances, which prevented the City from having any operating debt. It could have bond indebtedness but through a referendum, but it could not have – it had to have a balanced budget every time. And so if the proposed budget was not in balance, then you had to have a couple of things take place. You either had to reduce the budget, raise the revenue (which generally meant raising taxes), or a combination. But we had to have a budget, it had to be balanced, and it had to be approved by the, I believe it was the third Monday in March of every year.

There were a lot of disagreements between members of Council and the Mayor. Maynard Jackson was a strong individual, a very articulate individual, a person whom it was very easy to be friends with. He had a strong personality, a great and engaging personality. Could speak several languages fluently. But he had his opinions and his strongest opinions had to do with what he envisioned was control of a number of activities which heretofore had been legislatively controlled. Appointments to the Zoning Board, as an example. He also was very, very strong on the minority participation in contracts and that led to a lot of disagreements over time, but his

principle was right. His tactics sometimes were irritating. He did not get along well with the business community, which he could have but he didn't. That was just his way. So a lot of things that happened, happened much more difficult to get done than they could have gotten done.

SHORT: One of the things that sticks in my mind was a personnel matter that occurred shortly after he took office, and that involved the Chief of Police.

GUTHMAN: John Inman was the Chief of Police. He had been appointed by Sam Massell in Sam Massell's previous administration, but he had an unusual situation. He had an eight-year contract. Most department heads had four-year contracts. And I don't know why he had an eight-year; I was not involved at the time. And Maynard Jackson tried to move John Inman out, but he couldn't because of this contract. So what he did was, in essence, he created a Department of Public Safety, the Police Department became a bureau, and the Fire Department became a bureau under the Department of Public Safety, and the Commissioner of Public Safety was Reginald Eaves, and so that – who, in effect, became the Police Chief. And John Inman just stayed on, occupied his position, but really didn't have any influence in the running of the Police Department after that.

SHORT: You always impressed me as a public servant who is forever brimming with new ideas on how Atlanta could improve its government. You've made a lot of solid suggestions that were

adopted and maybe a few that weren't.

[Laughter]

SHORT: But are you satisfied with your successes?

GUTHMAN: Well, I never kept score as to a success or a defeat. My major accomplishments I think occurred in the financial arena. I became Chair of the Finance Committee and served in that position for a number of years and was not very popular in that position because there were a lot of things that the City was asked to do that I thought – and others thought – that were against what the City Charter said we could do. The City of Atlanta, interestingly enough, at that time (and I don't know what the Charter now says) could not engage in social services and could only do the nuts and bolts: police, fire, pick up the garbage, keep the water running, run the parks, pave the streets, traffic control. It had no control and no interest – or I say no interest; no influence or no oversight on – Grady Hospital.

We had in our budget, and had been for a number of years, eight childcare facilities that I don't know how they got into the budget, but they were. And we continued to fund those via a contract. Anybody that got money from the City that wasn't a part of the City – wasn't a City service or a City department – had to have a contract with the City to provide services, whatever they might be. And so the City paid for services of eight childcare centers primarily in the black community. And it also had a contract with the Woodruff Arts Center to provide services of the

Atlanta Symphony and other activities of the Woodruff Arts Center for schoolchildren. And I was a stickler about that. I never will forget one instance in which Daddy King – Martin Luther King, Sr. – came before the Finance Committee and he was advocating funding for another daycare center, and I said, “Reverend King, I’m sorry, but I’m just not going to support that because of our setup and our financial condition.” And he looked at me straight in the eye and he shook a finger in my face and he says, “Guthman, you are a racist.” And I said, “Well, I don’t think that’s got anything to do with it, but nonetheless,” and it did not get included. But that was sort of a defining moment for me. I’d never had anybody shake their finger in my face before then [chuckling] and accuse me of being – of being racist.

There were some interesting things. We had this minority participation that had to happen.

When I chaired the Development Committee my first year in office, we were debating the development around MARTA stations, and the station that was involved was on the west side of town, the furtherest(sic) station out. And we were describing the land use plan for that what kind of things, and one member of Council said – of the Committee – said, “Well, the people that can develop this, we should limit that to only minorities.” And I understood why he was saying it, because it was in that part of town. And so I [chuckling] adding or wanting to add a little levity to the situation, which was my – I always wanted to do that; I used to like to poke fun at myself, not at the responsibility but myself – because people couldn’t laugh. They couldn’t, you know, they couldn’t enjoy what they were doing. So I said, I said, “Well, that means that I can have a contract.” And they all looked at me like I was sort of nuts and they said, “What do you mean by that?” I said, “Well, you said only minorities and I’m certainly a minority on Council. I’m

white. I've been accused of coming from an affluent district. I'm short. I'm redhead. I'm Jewish." I said, "That's about as minority as you can be, so I ought to be able to get a contract." And they looked at me in all seriousness and said, "Well, that's not the way it's defined in the Congressional Record as a minority." And I said, "Okay." [Laughing]

SHORT: Speaking of levity, I remember hearing you speak once – it might have been to the Buckhead Association – when you referred to your colleagues as "the kitty council". Was that – was that a joke or was that just a Freudian slip?

GUTHMAN: Well, maybe both. [Laughter] We were, you know, we were new essentially, and we would squabble like children do but not anywhere near as bad as what it's come to now. So while I don't remember that particular remark, it's very possible that I said it.

SHORT: Let's talk for a minute about MARTA. MARTA really got into being while you were a member of the City Council. Tell us about the development of MARTA.

GUTHMAN: Well, MARTA actually started prior to that, and I think the first referendum was in '69 or '70, something in that date, and it was defeated rather roundly. And there are several reasons for that (which are unimportant). It was revived again in, I think, was it '71 or '72? And I was appointed a Vice Chair of the Committee to have a successful referendum. Emmet Bondurant, a very fine attorney in Atlanta, a good friend, and Andrew Young were Chairs of the

Committee. I was a Vice Chair. My responsibility was basically to get the referendum passed from North Avenue north to the City limits. That was my responsibility. And that part of the City did; it voted in favor of MARTA. I went out night after night – it was a political campaign – giving speeches to small groups about MARTA and what it would do, etc. And it became the referendum passed.

Our first activities as far as a Council was to condemn land. MARTA would ask us to condemn certain pieces of land. If we couldn't get it done voluntarily, we used the eminent domain process. We then got involved in the station area planning, which I mentioned earlier. And, beyond that, we were really – we, the Council – if people didn't like what MARTA was doing or if the bulldozers made too much noise or whatever it was, people would complain to us. We were the elected officials. We had no responsibility. MARTA was an authority, which a lot of people don't like for the simple reason that it has no elected responsibility. So we took a lot of heat from the construction of MARTA. But that was fine. That was all fair game. By and large, the City Council was in favor of what MARTA wanted to do.

The key to the, I think, to the success of that referendum was at the very last moment almost, Sam Massell, who was Mayor at the time, he proposed that MARTA have a 15 cent fare across the board from the furthestest(sic) point; made no difference how far you traveled. And that 15 cents was going to last for a number of years. And I think that was really what swung the vote, and I give Sam a lot of credit for understanding really the psychology necessary to succeed with that referendum.

SHORT: Well, as you look back on MARTA today, do you think that it would have been much more effective if Cobb County and Gwinnett County and Clayton County had opted in instead of refusing to join?

GUTHMAN: Absolutely. Absolutely. And certainly the growth of the metropolitan area that has taken place since that time demonstrates the need for that. All you have to do is look at I-75, look at I-85/75 in the south, look at going east and going west. Well, not so much west then, but certainly now. Had those counties participated, it would've been a much better system and it would have encompassed – because both Cobb County now and Gwinnett County now run their own rapid transit buses, if you will, into Atlanta to hook up to MARTA stations. It's a shame that that didn't happen and, obviously, most people understand the reason for that: it was race. Pure and simple, it was race. It was not economics. The people in those counties would not have objected to the 1 percent sales tax. They all have that now. But it was purely a matter of race. They thought that if they became part of the MARTA system, it would bring blacks into their essentially all-white counties.

SHORT: While we're on the subject of transportation, let me ask you this question. Do you think it was wise to funnel traffic from two major interstate highways directly through the center of Atlanta on what is now known as the Downtown Connector?

GUTHMAN: If there could have been a better solution to that, it may have been wise to do it.

But remember there was already an Atlanta Expressway. It didn't go very far, but it came – it was essentially what is now known as the Downtown Connector. It split the City in two – east and west. That was a major mistake because it stayed divided for many, many years. Just relatively in the last 8 to 10 years has that gap really been bridged, both literally and figuratively. That route was there; to do it otherwise would have put in more – two other – roads probably through the City. 285 took some of that traffic off from a traffic point of view. If you're coming in from the north and you want to get out on the south and have no business in the City, you would take – you take – 285, as trucks are supposed or are required. That was something, by the way, that the Council got the Department of Transportation to put that rule in where through trucks could not drive through the Downtown Connector. They had to – their bills of lading had to – show a delivery or a pickup in the City in order to do that. That's why the trucks go around now and not through.

From a planning point of view, probably should have – maybe should have – been done a different way. But planning by textbook and planning by practicality are two different things.

The practical aspect of it was Atlanta already had a Downtown Connector built prior to the interstate system. So it was only natural that that take place. It has certain advantages where you have three interstates that intersect at essentially the State Capitol area. That's unique. It brings a lot of things into the City which otherwise may not have come, would have bypassed the City, and you've got to remember that Atlanta was formed – was born – as a transportation center and a hub, and the interstate system has maintained that for better or for worse.

SHORT: Tell us about 400.

GUTHMAN: [Laughing] 400 had been – or the extension of 400 through the City had been – on the planning books for years. When Jimmy Carter was President and 400 was planned to come through the City, through the Morningside/Rock Springs area, and go south and link up with 285 in the south. When Jimmy Carter was Governor, he, by Executive Order or whatever, axed that plan. So 400 came to 285 essentially and stopped. Later, it was proposed to come south and go down to, I don't know, just, you know, south of North Avenue somewhere in that area and the MARTA plan showed that with a busway in it. And it stayed on the books. And then the State proposed the extension of 400 as a toll road, probably the first toll road other than the bridge going over to Jekyll Island, that the State has. I think it's still the only toll road. Anyway, I was Chairman of the Transportation Committee, which played a very pivotal role in getting that approved. It was hotly opposed by all the neighborhood groups. It was coming through north Atlanta, through the Ivy Road area in there, but it had a lot of sense in that it would connect a growing part of the northern metro area to the City and allow people in the City to get to that northern area where there was not any practical way to get to it. And I took on the task of getting that through Council. I had a lot of angry calls about that because a lot of my strong supporters were opposed to any new road.

I went to Commissioner Moreland – Tom Moreland – with the Department of Transportation, who was pushing the road, obviously, and said, "I'll support it if," and this was a big if, "the plans for MARTA change instead of from a busway to a rail line." Well, that took a lot of

talking and a lot of doing. MARTA agreed to it and finally Tom Moreland agreed to it. So a rail line was proposed. I went to work to support that, and I think we won by about maybe one or two votes on Council. And now while some people say it's a headache, if you look at it every day, the traffic on 400 is just amazing. It opens up the south to the north part and likewise opens up the north to the south part. I don't know how many thousands of cars go through there every day. And the toll road was eminently successful; in fact, so successful that I think the State a few years ago was trying to use some of that money for purposes other than what it was originally designed for.

SHORT: Atlanta's Mayors played musical chairs for several years there. Mayor Jackson was in office for eight years and he was succeeded by Andrew Young. Let's talk a little bit about Andrew Young. You served with him. What kind of a Mayor was he?

GUTHMAN: Andy Young was an exceptionally good Mayor. His personality was terrific. He worked well with the business community. He knew how to take two opposing sides who were daggers-in with each other and sort of bring them together. He used to start off with a meeting when you had these opposites ready to do mortal combat, and he'd put his hands together and he'd say, "Now let's pray about this." And he had that kind of personality. You could disagree with Andy, but you could never dislike Andy. He was one of the few that you just could not dislike, so it was a pleasure working with Andy. He had vision – he truly had vision – of what he saw Atlanta's potential to be: an international city.

He was obviously instrumental in getting the Olympics here in 1996. In fact, I think the two most influential people that got Atlanta the Olympics, in addition to the idea of Billy Payne's, was Andy Young because he was able to really secure the votes from the African countries and Pat Crecine, who was at the time President of Georgia Tech, and he designed or had designed – it was his vision – a virtual tour (we think nothing of that today, but that didn't exist back then) a virtual tour of what the Georgia Tech campus would look like as an Olympic village, what the venues would look like, what the housing would look like, and that was part of – that became part of – the presentation. And that was – no one had done that before. That was the first time that that had ever been done. Today, no one gives that kind of presentation a thought, but it was Pat Crecine who came up with that. And the Olympics, while some people thought it might have been disruptive to the City, in the long run the Olympics did more to put Atlanta on the map internationally and nationally than any other activity, I think. And Andy had a lot to do with that.

Andy was interested in trade and he just knew how to deal with people and how to get that. He was – I can't remember any significant issue that came before Council where, at least from my perspective, I had any violent disagreement with Andy. He was – he was receptive to people with alternative ideas of how to accomplish something, and that's important. The Mayor is the mayor. The Mayor is the chief executive officer. But a CEO who doesn't want to get ideas from other people is not likely to be a successful CEO. Andy was successful.

SHORT: Richard, you were there for what, 14 years?

GUTHMAN: 14 years.

SHORT: What sort of turnover did you have in the Council during that period.

GUTHMAN: Well, initially, we were six – I mean, we were nine and nine: nine white, nine black. In the next election in 1977, as I recall, that ratio changed and it became majority black because some of the white members of Council who were there got elected in 1973 and were holdovers from the old Board of Aldermen. And they had – they had been there for a long time and their age caught up with them and they retired. And so they, a lot of them, lived in areas which had become black, and so that's what – that's what changed. And when I left, I believe (and my memory sometimes is not always that clear) but I think we had gotten to where there were probably 12 black and six white.

SHORT: Uh-huh. Who were some of the leaders on the Council back then?

GUTHMAN: Well, I've already mentioned Q. V. Williamson who was a strong leader. Marvin Arrington was a leader. He later became Council President when Wyche Fowler went on to Congress. Ira Jackson was a leader. Panky Bradley[ph], who succeeded Nick Lambros. She was, she was a leader. Buddy Fowlkes. They were strong leaders and they were – they did their part well on Council.

SHORT: In the history of Atlanta's growth, one of the outstanding things has been the Atlanta Airport.

GUTHMAN: I think we all have Bill Hartsfield to thank for that. He had the vision to see an old dirt racetrack into the leading, busiest airport in the world. One of the first things that was before Maynard Jackson in 1974 was the development or redevelopment or expansion of the airport essentially as we know it today. He put George Berry in charge of getting that done. George, as so many people will know, is from Blairsville, a graduate of Young Harris College. And he, George, is an amazing public servant and he sort of shepherded that thing. There were a lot of debates because this was when the minority business participation was at its beginning and there was a lot of controversy. What constituted a minority business? How much of a company's business is supposed to be minority in order to qualify as a minority? The courts had ruled that you couldn't set a specific percentage, but somehow or another the accepted figure was that a majority contractor had to have at least a 25 percent minority participation. Some of those were very legitimate, Herman Russell being a good example of that. Others were shams and that got pointed out later.

But the key about that development, more than anything else, was it came in on time and under budget for the building of the four runways and the big terminal facility.

One of the things that comes to mind about that is that I was Chairman of the Finance Committee during this construction. Ira Jackson was Chairman of the Transportation Committee at that

time. We came within a couple of months of the opening of the airport and Maynard had not agreed to contracts with the rental car companies because they did not have minority participation. Well, it was pretty hard for the City of Atlanta to dictate to Hertz and to Avis and some of the national car rental people what their structure ought to be. We certainly bought automobiles from companies who – GM, Ford – didn't have that kind of thing, but Maynard was insistent upon this. So Ira Jackson and I, on our own, we went to see some of the legal representatives locally of the rental car companies. And we talked with them and we finally agreed on a solution that the minority participation could be variable. It could be different things. They might buy their cars from a minority-owned automobile dealership locally. That was one way of having minority participation. They might buy their supplies from a minority-owned company locally. So we worked out a deal, in essence, and Maynard almost at the last moment before the opening ceremony agreed to that, and that's how the airport opened with the rental cars in place. Otherwise, it would've opened without any rental cars. Well, you can imagine what disaster that would have been.

SHORT: Well, there have been continuing questions over the awards of business licenses to vendors at the airport. Does the Council approve those or are those chosen by the Mayor?

GUTHMAN: What the Council did at the very beginning was create a master vendor contract, and it was up to the master vendor to select his subcontractors, the individual. And that worked fairly well for a while because the Council didn't – rightly so – didn't want to be involved in

having to approve and make contracts with individual companies. I mean, you know, there are hundreds of vendors at the airport and to have to get involved in each one of those would have been a nightmare beyond all nightmares. So we had a master contract. That worked well for a while. Then some of the subcontractors started complaining that the rent they were paying was too high and they couldn't – they wanted their rent lowered, and we had to hear a lot of those. And when I would ask the subcontractor, "Can we examine your books? I mean, you're telling us, as the members of Council, that you're not making any money, but while you might not be, if we're going to make some changes, we have to at least examine your books." And almost to an individual, they said, "No. you can't examine our books." Well, that said to me that if they don't want – if their books can't stand – an audit by the City, the agency or the group that they're asking to do something about it, then I didn't have a whole lot of respect for their dire – alleged dire – needs.

One example, without getting into details, was involving a vendor who sold ice cream. And I suggested to the vendor that, "I can buy ice cream – your cone of ice cream – at the airport cheaper than I can buy it from Baskin & Robbins." And I said, "That doesn't make any sense to me. You're the only selling ice cream at the airport. If you need more revenue, why don't you raise the price of your ice cream cones?" That, to me, was how supply and demand works anyway. [Chuckling]

SHORT: For a while there, Atlanta went through a serious time of urban flight. It seems now that the suburbans are moving back to town. What sort of pressure is that going to put on the

future of the City government in Atlanta?

GUTHMAN: Well, the pressures will be the same. Even if there were people who didn't live in – who didn't sleep in – Atlanta, they spent their day in Atlanta, so the needs to have all the infrastructure were just as great. But I think it's an interesting development which is happening about the in-flight now rather than the – or the inward movement rather than the – out-flight.

Most people left Atlanta, I think, because for a couple of reasons. One, they could move to the outer counties and their taxes were lower. They still are lower. Atlanta has a high tax rate compared to the surrounding counties. But a lot of it was racial. They were afraid of a black City government. They were afraid of black neighbors. They were afraid of a black school system. So it was easier just to move out and commute back in.

Well, several things have happened since that time. The City has survived and has prospered with essentially a black government, with essentially black neighbors, with essentially a black school system. It could be better, but everything could be better. Just because it's black doesn't mean it's going to be worse. In fact, quite the contrary in a lot of situations. But in the neighborhood that I used to live in, in northwest Atlanta, Buckhead – Buckhead has a high (not as high as the southwest side of town, obviously) but has a number of black families living, working in Buckhead. And what's happened is that the economics of things have developed in such a way that I always said that green was the most powerful color – not whether you were white or whether you were black, but green, meaning your economic status. And the black, middle upper class now has really developed into a very strong influential part of the City. Plus, the transportation problem. If you're going to get stuck on 75 or 85 in either direction,

north or south, for several hours trying to commute, particularly when the price of gasoline keeps going up, you're going to want to live where you can walk to your job or where you can hop on a MARTA train or bus and get to your work.

So there have been a lot of things that have influenced, that have done that. And that has been a good thing because a lot of the areas that had gone down, deteriorated – Midtown being a tremendous example of that – has now had a huge rebirth. Just drive – just drive in Midtown and see all the construction cranes, and most of these are combination condo buildings/hotel/office buildings. A whole new concept for Atlanta.

Buckhead has had a tremendous growth lately. And you drive down Peachtree now in Buckhead, in the very heart of Buckhead between Paces Ferry and Pharr Road, there is this gigantic hole in the ground where a huge development is coming up out of the ground. Condo, office, hotel and shops. I mean, that's just a marvelous combination.

SHORT: Vertically.

GUTHMAN: Vertically.

SHORT: Yeah.

GUTHMAN: Vertically.

SHORT: [Indiscernible]

GUTHMAN: There is no more room. The square foot is so expensive that you have to go up.

SHORT: Richard, some say a billion, some say more, but there seems to be a high price tag on repairing Atlanta's infrastructure.

GUTHMAN: And it is. It is a high price tag. One of the – in my second year, second or third year on Council – I chaired the Public Utilities Committee which had the responsibility of infrastructure. And, at that time, I identified conservatively about \$800,000 worth of repairs needed to bridges and storm sewers. \$800,000. That was probably in 1975 or 6. Today, we're talking billions of dollars. At the time, no one wanted to talk about fixing a bridge or fixing a sewer line. Couldn't see it. Couldn't get your hands around it. You couldn't feel it and people didn't – it was not politically expedient to want to deal with it. But it was an absolute necessity. Nobody, even Maynard, didn't want to hear about it. He just did not want to talk about it. In his second term – I mean, when he came back as Mayor after Andy's two terms were up – one of the first things he faced was doing infrastructure. So it got more expensive and will continue to be expensive. When you consider that some of the water mains that the City had, and may still have, were made of wood because they were put down that long ago. Five Points was a big artesian well. Right where the intersection of Five Points is was a huge, big well. That's where the Atlanta water supply came from at the beginning of Atlanta's history

and wooden aqueducts underground, and some water may still travel in those wooden pipes.

SHORT: So, by and large, you think Atlanta city government's in good shape?

GUTHMAN: No. No, I think it's got some very challenging opportunities ahead of it. Its financial situation is – I've seen it in the paper called a "crisis". I'm not sure what a crisis is. Maybe a crisis is what causes somebody to act. But Atlanta has got to get a better handle on what it's doing. It's got to become more efficient as any company or any operation has to become. That isn't always easy when you're dealing with the public sector. Its constituents in the City, the citizens, the taxpayers demand services, frequently want more than they're willing to pay for. That's been the history of government forever. So it's a continuing challenge to keep meeting these.

We have too many local governments, and the act of the Legislature a couple of years ago that allowed more local governments to be created I think was a mistake. I know my friends in Sandy Springs don't feel that way because they were seeking a City of Sandy Springs for years. I always opposed that because I said you're just duplicating high level positions. The problem that occurred was that you didn't have the response to the local citizenry. Didn't know how to reach down to the local citizenry. And to hear their problems and to be able to explain what you were going to do, that'll always be a challenge. The Legislature has made that decision. That's now history. We've got more local governments. There needs to be a way for local governments to come together and agree on services that are common to the area at large and

agree to have a way that you don't have to have so many individuals at an executive level to provide those services. The Georgia Municipal Association a number of years ago suggested ways of doing that. The Legislature even encouraged that some years ago. I think when either Joe Frank Harris or George Busbee were Governor.

So this is a constant battle, but the City of Atlanta for its size, for its diversity is still a damn good city and will continue to be. It's got all the things that a city needs. If you take a look at other cities, they're generally bounded by some geographical barrier. Atlanta is not bounded by any barrier. It can expand in all directions and, in essence, it has. It may not be called the City of Atlanta, but if you fly over Atlanta – let's say you're going south to Macon – there's not much area between where it's heavily populated and Macon where you've got any land left. Driving up 400, you can't see what's happening on the side of the road because of the trees. And 575, the same thing. Yet, tremendous amount of land now being developed, and it wouldn't be developed if it were not for the City of Atlanta.

Development is not good. I'm living here in an almost pristine area and I love it. I don't want anything. There have to be some areas left where it can be sort of untouched. But when you're in the middle of this big maze, you've got to provide for the people. The people keep coming in. I haven't seen any figure that says that the population of greater Atlanta or the metropolitan area is decreasing. To the contrary, it continues to increase every year. We're no longer – Atlanta is no longer – a sleepy town.

Some would say that Hiawassee, Georgia, right here on beautiful Lake Chatuge, is no longer a little sleepy town. When I first came up here for the weekend 22 years ago, there were no traffic

lights. Now we have five. I mean, that's huge, huge urbanization in our way of thinking. But I have one person to thank for getting me here: Zell Miller. When I used to have interface with Zell on governmental matters or whatever it was when he was Lieutenant Governor and I was on Council, he used to always talk about the beauty of Towns County. I never knew where Towns County was. I finally came through Towns County and said, "He's right." [Laughter]

SHORT: Well, Richard, you mentioned the City of Sandy Springs. There's also Johns Creek, is it?

GUTHMAN: Yeah, Johns Creek is –

SHORT: --is a new city.

GUTHMAN: Right.

SHORT: The City of Milton in north Fulton County is a city. Now Dunwoody wants to be a city.

GUTHMAN: Wants to be a city.

SHORT: What is that going to do to Fulton County?

GUTHMAN: Well, Fulton County will still collect its revenues, and some of those are outside of Fulton County. Dunwoody is DeKalb County. But Fulton County still has responsibility – and a huge responsibility – for Grady Hospital. I mean, that's a whole 'nother matter, and I'm not equipped to even begin to talk about that. And so Fulton County still operates the school system in essentially all of these new small cities that have come about that you mentioned, so they still have the schools to do. They still have the public health to be concerned with. But what's going to happen is it's going to remove from Fulton County their responsibilities for a lot of zoning and things of that nature. And some would say that's good; some would say that's bad. It's going to see how it all works.

SHORT: Do we have too many counties in Georgia?

GUTHMAN: Absolutely, 159, more than any other state in the Union. Each county has a sheriff. Each county has its own commissioners. Counties have begun to consolidate certain functions – some successfully, some not so successfully. Here in Towns County, we cooperated with Union County for a jail for a long time. For whatever reason, that cooperation ended a couple of years ago and now Towns County has its own jail; Union County has its own jail. We don't need two jails for these relatively small counties. There are a lot of things that could be, but, in politics when you create a job, it's very hard to get rid of that job no matter what the reason.

SHORT: So you don't think that there'll ever be a county consolidation?

GUTHMAN: Never is a long time. The only – the most recent county consolidation occurred when Milton County and Campbell County – Milton in the north, Campbell in the south – went bankrupt and became part of Fulton County. Now there are some living in north Fulton County which was the old Milton County who want to reestablish Milton County. I don't agree with that.

SHORT: Richard, for a hundred years in Georgia, in order to be successful in politics, you had to be a Democrat. Why are you a Republican?

GUTHMAN: Well, let me answer that by first relating a story, an occasion that I had with Bert Lance on that very same subject. I was attending some social event – a political social event – which I was probably one of the few, if any, maybe the sole Republican there. And Bert came up to me, and I'm not very tall in stature, as you know (and politically correct, I'm heightened disadvantaged or something like that). In any event, Bert puts his arms around me, just about suffocated me being this big bear, and he said, "Richard," he said, "you would go far in politics if you were a Democrat." And so I don't know what Bert would say today; I haven't seen him in a while.

Why am I a Republican? I'd like to answer that in somewhat of a jokingly(sic) way. When I used to ask people why they were Democrats, they would say because their grandfather was a

Democrat. So my grandfather on my father's side was a Republican, so that's why I'm a Republican. Actually, because I think the Republican way of government, as we talked about earlier in my political philosophy, was more to my liking than big government. Unfortunately, Republicans over the last ten years or so have strayed from that and have become one of the biggest villains, if you will, in spending more, creating bigger government, I think – I guess – because they think that's the only way they can get reelected. And if that's the reason, that they can get reelected, and not on the merits of their position, then I think that's not very good.

SHORT: You have been active in the Georgia Republican Party for a long time. Tell us, if you will, how the party gained its momentum over the years until they became the majority party in Georgia.

GUTHMAN: Well, I go back to 1952 I guess, or maybe a little bit later than that when I came home from Cornell, when I got active in the Young Republicans and then I evolved into the Republican Party. So, at that time, the joke was you could have a convention in a phone booth. And that was almost true. You know, there weren't that many. In certain areas, particularly in Fulton County and in north Atlanta, northwest Atlanta in particular, and north Fulton County and south Fulton County were pretty strong Republican leaning people. But in terms of getting – gaining – a majority in the State Legislature, that was a long way off and nobody really envisioned it I don't think, or maybe some people in their dreams (and maybe we'll talk about it), but I think if you were – if push came to shove, they would have said, "I really don't see that

happening anytime soon.”

I don't know exactly when the turning point or what the turning point was. Maybe it was the Presidential Election in which George McGovern was the Democratic Presidential candidate and his very liberal philosophy just didn't sit very well with southerners. And so the Republican Party got its surge particularly in Georgia (and I suspect in other southern states) by people who had been conservative Democrats saying that the party is no longer their party. I can remember Zell saying that he didn't leave the Democratic Party; the Democratic Party left him. And Zell is still a Democrat, but he believes in mostly conservative philosophy, and so he – I don't know how he votes. That's his personal thing. I don't inquire as to how he votes. I don't ask. I don't ask people how they vote; that's their business. I'd like to see Zell in the Republican Party, but that's not going to happen. I think he'd be a good influence to the Republican Party.

So people who had been here, who were conservative and had voted Democrat all their life because that was, if you wanted to participate in the electoral process, there were very few places where Republicans were ever on a ballot. So you had to vote for a Democrat. So, just by association, Georgia does not have party registration so you don't have to declare yourself whether you're a Democrat or whether you're a Republican except when you go to vote in a primary.

SHORT: Should we have party registration?

GUTHMAN: Absolutely. And I'll tell you why, as an aside, and that's been evidenced in these

primaries that have been going on now which seem to be an eternity for the Democratic Party nominee for President. In states that have open primaries, like Georgia, there's been a lot of crossover voting, and I don't think you get a true sense of who the Democrats in that state might want or who the Republicans if there was any competition there. Also, Primary Elections, in my opinion, are not for everybody; they're for those people who are active and work and believe in the particular party, either the Democratic Party or the Republican Party. Outsiders, frankly, should not be part of that. So if people have to declare, then that will either make people – and if people want to be independent, that's fine. I think they have every right to be; and if they don't want to join a party or participate in a party or claim a party, that's fine. But then they should not participate in the party's primary process, in my opinion.

And you could change your party registration if you wanted to, say like every four years or whatever. If you became disaffected with the Republican Party, you could become a Democrat or vice versa. So I think we ought to have party registration. I'm told that the reason that we don't have it in Georgia is that, and for years, I think, some Republican legislators tried to establish that, but the Democrats who were in control – and rightfully so – said, “Wait a minute. We're doing very fine, very well, without it. There's no need to upset the apple cart. If we have party registration, we may not do so well.” So, but I think we need it and I think it ought to be nationally. Each state I think ought to have – make – that decision. It should not be a national decision, but the state should decide that it has party registration and, in primaries, Republicans vote in the Republican Primary, the Democrats vote in the Democratic Primary.

If the independents don't like the candidates that they've chosen for either case, they have two

options. They can vote in the General Election for the person they least – or that they think is the least – of the evils, if you will, or they don't vote. And they would say, "Well, I need to vote." "Then make a decision. These are the two choices you have. You may not have participated in how they got there, but these are your choices. You had the opportunity to participate if you declared which party you wanted to work with." We're never going to have another party. If we don't have party registration, there's no need for anybody to do that.

So that's how I feel about party registration. I feel pretty strong about it.

SHORT: Do you remember the first Republican statewide candidate? I thought about it and, you know, of course, I'm very young now, Richard, and [laughter] my memory is not as good as it used to be though.

GUTHMAN: I understand.

SHORT: But I think that the first statewide candidate that I can remember running was Rodney Cook.

GUTHMAN: Well, he didn't run statewide though.

SHORT: He ran for governor.

GUTHMAN: Rodney ran for governor? I don't remember...

SHORT: Yeah, he ran.

GUTHMAN: ...Rodney running.

SHORT: Yeah.

GUTHMAN: I was active in a lot of campaigns for Rodney.

SHORT: He ran, I think...

GUTHMAN: Yeah.

SHORT: ...his opponent was Joe Frank Harris.

GUTHMAN: Well, could be.

SHORT: Maybe I'm wrong.

GUTHMAN: But Bo Callaway was the first one that I remember.

SHORT: That's right, yeah.

GUTHMAN: In fact, Bo, I think was the first one – and, certainly, was the first one to run for governor – since Reconstruction. And on that that, in that year, 1960...

SHORT: '6.

GUTHMAN: ...'6, there was Al Fowler who ran.

SHORT: Now those guys were Democrats in the beginning.

GUTHMAN: But they – but they switched...

SHORT: Switched parties.

GUTHMAN: ...to Republican, that's right.

SHORT: You can't count those.

GUTHMAN: Oh, you can't count those?

SHORT: No.

GUTHMAN: Okay, all right.

SHORT: You've got to count Republicans...

GUTHMAN: Okay.

SHORT: ...like you that go back to their great-grandfathers.

GUTHMAN: Oh, okay. Okay.

SHORT: But Callaway, you're right, Callaway was the first, and I should remember that because I was involved in that campaign. I wasn't for Callaway; I was for Carter and I, you know, co-managed his thing. But, anyway, let's talk about that race for a minute. In 1966, and we're speaking now of crossover voting, and I don't know whether this is true or not but I suspect it is. In 1966, Congressman Callaway qualified not through a primary...

GUTHMAN: Correct.

SHORT: ...but by a petition.

GUTHMAN: Petition.

SHORT: So he had no opp – he had no opposition in the primary.

GUTHMAN: That's correct.

SHORT: Then you had three or four candidates running on the Democratic side. You had Lester Maddox, you had Ellis Arnold, you had Jimmy Carter, you had James Gray, you had Garland Byrd all vying for the Democratic nomination. Well, without party registration, you see, Maddox was in the runoff with Arnold and it's been suspected that Republicans went over and voted for Maddox because they thought he would be easier to beat than Arnold.

GUTHMAN: I think you're absolutely right.

SHORT: Is that true?

GUTHMAN: I – I didn't see it happen with my own eyes, but I heard enough Republicans talk about it that I suspect it took place. And my response to that was, "Be careful who you vote for because that's who might win."

SHORT: And that's what happened.

GUTHMAN: And that's exactly what happened. I do not believe in interfering with the other person's primary. That's their responsibility and I don't want to have anything to do with it because that's what happens. In the General Election, the Republican nominee (or the Republican candidate) was Bo Callaway, who'd been a Congressman, and the Democrat candidate was Lester Maddox. There were a number of people who were dissatisfied with either candidate and a write-in campaign was ensued for Ellis Arnold. And, as a result of that, Bo Callaway won the plurality of votes but not a majority that was required by law at that time. Ellis – people writing in, signing, writing in Ellis Arnold's name – probably siphoned sufficient votes away from Bo Callaway that he could not get a majority of the vote, so the law then required that the Georgia Legislature select the Governor when there was no majority in the General Election. That's, since then, that's been changed. There's now a runoff provision I think in the General Election laws that would allow for the top two to run off and there wouldn't be a write-in. But Lester Maddox was the nominee because a lot of Republicans voted in the Democratic Primary, and he won the Democratic Primary. That's one of the negatives of having this open election. Each party should take responsibility for its candidate, good or bad.

SHORT: You know, that – that provision that resulted from that election – was brought into play when Paul Coverdell defeated Wyche Fowler in a runoff.

GUTHMAN: Yes. Yes.

SHORT: Remember that?

GUTHMAN: Yes.

SHORT: And it was shortly after the Supreme Court decision. There's one interesting thing about that U.S. Supreme Court decision in that, in that Maddox/Callaway case. You know, it was a 5 to 4 vote allowing the Legislature to elect, but Justice Black ruled that a state legislature could elect a governor in the first place, that there's no provision in the law that requires elections. I thought that was very unusual.

GUTHMAN: Yes.

SHORT: So now let's get back, if you will, to your career in the Republican Party. The Republican Party now has control of the Georgia Legislature, it has the Governor, it has the majority in the Public Service Commission. It now is the majority party in Georgia. If you had to pick some individuals who helped to make that possible, who would they be?

GUTHMAN: You mentioned Paul Coverdell. Paul was probably one of the finest legislators to

come out of Georgia in a long time. He truly understood the need to be able to get along with members of both parties and any other diversities that might be in the Legislature, whether it was the Georgia General Assembly or whether it was the U.S. Senate. I think Paul had a lot to do with that when he won the U.S. Senate race over Wyche Fowler and Wyche was seeking a second term, and I think that was sort of the beginning because that was really a statewide race won by a Republican, won legitimately by a Republican with no funny things in terms of who decides who gets elected. And, interestingly enough, Paul Coverdell, who was a moderate, was able to bring the Republican right – the very extreme right – in to vote for him. It's almost sort of reminiscent of what's happening now in the Presidential Election this fall with John McCain. He is certainly not an extreme right Republican, but he is bringing I think a lot of these in to vote for him, and the reason is quite simple. It's better to have a half a loaf or three-quarters of a loaf than no loaf at all. And if you do not believe in the very liberal politics of the Democratic Party today, then by default you might have to – you should – vote Republican, even if you don't like the person that much.

I'll never forget it brings the story of – to mind the story of – when I ran, I had a cousin (my second cousin, my father's first cousin) and she's very liberal. She was, she's dead now. She was a very liberal Democrat, and she told my father that, "I think Richard will be the first Republican that I've ever voted for and it'll probably upset my stomach." And he said, "Well, take a Tum(sic) and vote." [Laughter]

So, you know, voting for somebody is not based on necessarily the person that is ideal and meets all ten of your requirements; it's the person who meets most of your requirements. Politics is the

art of a possible, not – and I digress. But I think that's part of our problem in today's political environment. People are so representative. The elected officials in a lot of cases are so set on their own ideology – and a lot of cases it is ideology – that they can't get anything done because they can't meet somebody else halfway. They either want all a loaf or no loaf. And I've never thought a no loaf result was very good.

But what brought the Republican Party up, the liberal Democratic Party or the liberal philosophy of the Democratic Party turned off a lot of Democrats so they switched. Also, there was a huge influx of people from out of state into Georgia who came from areas where the Republican Party had been strong. They came out of the Midwest primarily, I think, and came to Georgia, and they came from Republican backgrounds. So it was not a big switch or unusual for them to vote Republican. It'd be interesting to note how many of the Republican elected officials in Georgia, as an example, they may have been born in Georgia but how many of their parents came from Georgia. There's nothing wrong with that. That's very good. I mean, you can't grow, you can't expand, you can't expand your thinking if you don't get this so-called cross-pollinization which sort of results from that kind of thing. It's been very beneficial to Georgia.

SHORT: In 1964, when Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act, he told Dick Russell, who was our distinguished United States Senator, that he was turning the South over to the Republican Party. Do you think that is the case?

GUTHMAN: I think there were a number of people – Democrats – who were so opposed to the

Civil Rights legislation that they thought because some Republicans were also opposed to the Civil Rights legislation that the Republican Party was the party of status quo in that regard and so they became Republicans. I think it's a bad reputation that the Republican Party got as a result of that. I don't think that was the case, at least among Republicans that I knew, that they were opposed. They may have been opposed to the way the legislation was handled. A lot of southerners were opposed to it because it singled out southern states as being the only culprits of discrimination and segregation; whereas, in the North, my experience, having gone to school in the North for a couple of years, was that while segregation was not illegal, it certainly was de facto. And the Civil Rights legislation, the provisions of that that required any change in election political boundaries had to be approved by the Justice Department – you had to have Justice Department monitors watching your election – that should have applied all over. Then I don't think the objection to it would have been so great.

But, again, that gets back to the racial aspect of politics. You can't take that away. You may try, and I think we've made a lot of progress in that, but it's always going to show up. At least, I say always; certainly, in the remaining of my lifetime and your lifetime, which I hope is a number of years yet to go. It's just part of the – part of the thing. We don't seem to be as concerned about Hispanics, as an example, being elected, but it's this racial thing which has been in our culture for forever, since we've been a country, and it's going to take a long time to get that out of the way. It's unfortunate. It really is. We ought to judge a candidate or a person on their merit, what they stand for, and not the color of their skin.

SHORT: Georgia was the last state in what we consider the Deep South to allow the Republican Party to become a majority. Why do you think that is?

GUTHMAN: Huh, that's a good question. I really don't know. I can remember – was it Eisenhower – I think Eisenhower must have carried every state in the Union but Georgia and maybe Massachusetts was the other one. And I thought that was very, you know, really unusual. When Carter ran for reelection against Reagan, I think Georgia was probably the only state that didn't go for Reagan, or one of the very, very few that didn't. It really shows a deep heritage in the Democratic Party in Georgia, and it's unfortunate that ethnic groups have been somewhat classified as to who they generally vote for. Blacks generally vote Democrat. They didn't until Teddy Kennedy – I mean, JFK, John Kennedy – came in. And blacks primarily, before John Kennedy, belonged to the Republican Party. They were the more educated and the more affluent. The lesser class, the poorer class blacks for the most part didn't vote for whatever reason, and a lot of the laws, of course, prevented them from participating. So I think that's the reason. I don't know how the demographics break out, but I suspect that in Georgia, which has a pretty high black population compared to – percentage-wise, an awful lot of that, over 65 percent, maybe as much as 70 percent – votes Democratic. A lot of that I think has to do with the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr., but, nonetheless, that's what happened. So I think that's probably the reason. It'd be interesting for some political scientist to try and delve into that and do that because, you're right, it's only in recent – real recent – history presidentially, in Presidential Elections, that Georgia voted for a Republican, even though they

elected Republican senators, even though they elected Republican members to Congress.

SHORT: There are those – and I among them – who believe that the Republican Party has done a tremendous job in selecting candidates for public office. Johnny Isakson made this statement, and I certainly concur, that the Republican Party in Georgia has a deeper bench.

GUTHMAN: Yes, and I can – when I first ran in 1966 for the Georgia General Assembly – once I declared my candidacy, one of the first things I did was attend a candidate school. And everybody Republican running for office wasn't forced to attend but were strongly encouraged to do that, and we learned how to do that. The Republicans did more to enlist people to run and provided help in their running. Where there was a Republican in opposition in primaries, the Party did not take sides. They provided the same information to all the candidates. It stayed out of the primaries as such. I think in those -- it was much better organized. The Democrats didn't have to organize, so they thought.

It reminds me of when Dwight Eisenhower came to Atlanta when he was running for President in the summer of 1952. He had a big rally in Hurt Park. Thousands of people. The first political rally I had ever attended. I was – I don't even think I was 18 yet. I'm sure I wasn't; I was a month or two away. I remember going to that rally, and the only thing that I remember from Eisenhower's speech was that when he said, "The Democrats have taken the South for granted too long." Well, you can get used to this being in control and you don't see this other vehicle coming down the street. It's like, you know, Satchel – you know, sort of the antithesis of what

Satchel Paige said. He said, "I don't look over my shoulder." Well, a political party and a politician better look over their shoulder to see what's happening. And the Republican Party today in Georgia, while it's been in the majority a short period of time, I don't believe is winning over the hearts and minds of a great many Georgians in general because I don't believe they have acted responsibly – responsibly – in the General Assembly. You've got a Republican Governor, a Republican Lieutenant Governor, a Republican Speaker of the House, and they can't agree on important legislation. They fight. Now that's not the – that's not a good sign. There's something wrong with that picture, and they'd better figure out how to change that picture if they want to be in the majority for any length of time.

SHORT: On that subject, do you see a Democratic comeback any time soon?

GUTHMAN: Not right away, only because Georgia basically, well, is a conservative thinking state primarily on economic issues, fiscal matters, on national defense. Georgia is a very strong state when it comes to national defense probably because we've had all these bases in Georgia and because of Richard Russell and Carl Vinson and others who were so strong – Walter George, who was so strong – in the support of Georgia in that arena. So it'll take a while for anything – for that – to change, I think.

But if the Republicans can't start getting things done that the State needs to get done, important things that need to get done – the most critical issue the State faces today I think are two critical issues. One is healthcare and the other which affects everybody is water. And the State passed

something this past session, but I don't think it – it basically said, you know, “We agree to agree to do something.” The time is now. We can't wait. And if this drought this last year, this past year, didn't prove it when Lake Lanier essentially runs out of water and when Lake Allatoona becomes a dry bed almost and even when Lake Chatuge behind me drops way down in the middle of the summer, that's time to start thinking about water.

The Atlanta Regional Commission, in I guess '74-'75, identified that in 20 years, Atlanta would be running low on water. And there were a few proposals put out, one of which was even introduced in the General Assembly some years later, to authorize an aqueduct, if you will, a pipeline from the Savannah River over near Augusta over to metropolitan Atlanta. And that went down in a big hurry because rural legislators said, “We're not going to supply Atlanta with our water.”

This brings up the age-old question of two Georgias: Atlanta and the rest of Georgia. But if we don't do something, it's going to be – that surely will be – a crisis. It was a crisis this past summer. We're very fortunate that we've had some rains in the last couple of months which have helped, but all the experts in that area said it's going to take at least the remnants of three hurricanes coming through Georgia to get enough water back in Lake Lanier. And we keep adding people to the mix who are getting their water out of Lake Lanier.

That's number one. They couldn't agree. They couldn't agree on important legislation in the budget. I mean, when you control all of those, I'm almost speaking in favor of the days of Tom Murphy and Zell Miller, who didn't get along that well politically, but they managed to get legislation through whomever the governor was. Unfortunately, for whatever reason, maybe the

Republicans haven't had enough time to learn. Eight years is a long time, or six years; you'd think that they would have gotten it by now, but maybe they need a little more time. I hope that they figure out how to pull it together.

SHORT: Richard, you've had a wonderful career. I'd like to ask you now some personal questions. Through all the years you've been in politics, what has been your biggest success?

GUTHMAN: I have several I think. One was the participation in the successful – in a leadership role in the successful – MARTA referendum. The other was I think I exerted positive leadership, particularly in the financial area, when I was in Council. And the third, I don't know whether you'd call it a success or not, but I was fortunate enough to participate in both the Georgia Municipal Association and the National League of Cities, so I got to work with state leaders in local government outside of Atlanta and on the national level. And that was exceedingly beneficial to me. I call it a success. I was privileged to serve on the Board of both of those organizations. I chaired two of their most important committees, both at the national level and at the state level. And while that's not legislative success, per se, I think it's success because you can't be a successful elected official if you're myopic, if you have blinders. You've got to be exposed to the way other people do things, how other people think, what their likes and dislikes are, why they think the way they think, why they act the way they act, and that does, if nothing else, it expands one's own mind, but it also teaches you how to work together. And I said earlier politics is the art of the possible and, if you're going to be a one-man band and

you've got a hundred conductors or you've got a hundred one-man bands and you've really got no conductor, that's the recipe for disaster.

Some years ago, I was involved in a Leadership Atlanta course, and one of the first things that we did was they played Revel's "Bolero" and they played it without any conductor in essence leading it, and it was just a lot of sound. It didn't make any sense. And then they played it as it's recorded with, you know, first it starts off soft and slow with the roll of the drums and then all the different instruments come in at different times and they all come together and they make a marvelous piece of music. And that was an example of how leadership is so important and how to be a good leader you've got to have very good followers, and you can't be a good leader if you don't have good followers. I've been fortunate. I've been a leader (at least some will say that I have), but I've had good followers. And without the followers, there could be no leader.

SHORT: What is your biggest disappointment?

GUTHMAN: That even in the metro area that we couldn't coalesce; even the governments in Fulton County, at which time there were 11 municipalities then in Fulton County, we couldn't get very much agreement on anything. It was always the "not in my backyard", the NIMB, thought process. Sure, we need this to happen, but over there in someone else's backyard. We weren't able to cross that very well, and that's evident. We don't have a regional – Atlanta does not have a regional water plan or water system. It's fragmented. The transportation system is still fragmented. There's some plans – I mean, there are some rules – that you're supposed to

observe when you do something, but it's not like it ought to be. It's very hard to happen because everybody is elected by their own little constituency and they think that if they don't do exactly what their constituency wants, they're not going to get reelected.

I think the late Kel Townsend, who was very strong on this issue, he used to say in essence (and he was reelected to the Legislature year after year after year) that without our – well, occasionally, he had opposition, but it never amounted to much – and he said, “It's my responsibility,” and I agree with this wholeheartedly, “that you may not like what I voted for or how I voted, but at least I hope you will understand the reason that I did. And if the people don't like what I did, they have an opportunity to express that by voting for somebody else.”

I used to say the same thing. “If you don't like what I'm doing, that's fine. At least, listen to me as to why I felt the way I did, voted the way I did, and you have an ample opportunity to express that in certainty at the next election.” After my first election to Council, I never had any more opposition, and I was successfully reelected three more times. So I must've been doing something right, although I sort of like to say that nobody wanted the job. [Laughing]

SHORT: Did you ever consider running for another office while you were in the City government?

GUTHMAN: Yes. I thought when Maynard was completing his second term, his last term, I thought about running for Mayor. I visited several people. I was even called to the office of one of Atlanta's and Georgia's most distinguished citizens who was not involved in government but

had a lot to do with the success of Georgia, particularly the educational system when segregation was – or desegregation was – coming about. And I'll never forget his remarks to me. He said, "Richard, you should run for Mayor. You should be Mayor. But you can't get elected." And, so at that time, I don't care who you were, if you were white, you were not going to be elected Mayor.

SHORT: Uh-huh.

GUTHMAN: Today, we're getting toward that point. I'm not sure we're there yet. But we're getting toward that point that that might be changing. I think the Mayor maybe in eight more years or something will be elected because of who they are, not what they are.

SHORT: How would you like to be remembered?

GUTHMAN: [Chuckling] Just to be remembered would be very nice. As someone who did their best, who didn't try for the impossible, but who understood the practicality, represented not just his own district but the City as a whole and tried to do what was right.

SHORT: So we can't convince you to get back into politics?

GUTHMAN: There's a certain woman that you'd have to go through first and I don't think that

– I don't – I don't think there's anyone that could succeed in doing that.

SHORT: Not even if you could be anointed?

GUTHMAN: Not even if I could be anointed. [Laughing]

SHORT: Richard Guthman, thank you very much for being our guest.

GUTHMAN: Thank you very much for coming and sharing my house.

[END OF RECORDING]

**University of Georgia
Richard Guthman**

Page PAGE 42

**3525 Piedmont Road, N.E.
Eight Piedmont Center, Suite 310
Atlanta, Georgia 30305
800-872-6079
FAX 404-873-0415
www.wordzx.com**