

George "Buddy" Darden interviewed by Bob Short
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BOB SHORT: Hello, I'm Bob Short and this is Reflections on Georgia Politics, sponsored by the Richard B. Russell Library at the University of Georgia. Our guest today is former congressman Buddy Darden, who also served in the Georgia House of Representatives and was District Attorney for the Cobb County Circuit in Marietta.

Congressman, it's a delight to have you with us today.

BUDDY DARDEN: Bob, it's a pleasure for me. You and I have been friends for many, many years. I've always known you, and respected you, and it's great that we have a chance to sit down and have this conversation.

SHORT: Well, I appreciate that.

DARDEN: Sparta, Georgia, Hancock County, that's where I was born on November 22nd, 1943. I was one of five children born to George W. and Francis Darden, and you say Sparta, Georgia. We didn't grow up in Sparta, Georgia. We grew up in rural Hancock County, and I was one of the few people that you will meet in my generation who was born at home, along with my brother, Dr. John W. Darn, from Gainesville, and my sister, Georgia Darden Marsh. We were the three early ones and then we had two siblings later on. And my brother and my sister and I still own our family farm in Hancock County, almost 700 acres, about a mile and a half of frontage on the Ogeechee River, which is the line between Warren County and Hancock County. And I still go down there occasionally and just see my roots, but I own the home in

which I was born and in which my father was born. So to me that's -- I'm one of the few people I think you could ever talk to who could make that claim.

But that's home, and I grew up there. I went to school in Sparta, Georgia, Hancock County.

Graduated from high school in 1961. I was fourth in my class of 36 so that didn't even put me in the top ten percent, but I had a very, very active, active childhood. We grew up on a farm. It was a working farm. It was first a cotton farm and we had four sharecropper families that lived with us on the place, and helped us do the work there. And then my father converted it to a dairy farm just about time his sons got old enough to help out with the dairy. So I worked there and stayed there until my -- the time that I went off to college at North Georgia College for my freshman year.

Now, during that time we played football. The same people on the football team participated in the literary events, declamation. We played all sports and we did all types of activities. We sang in the glee club. We didn't have enough people that we could divide up so we became a very versatile group of students that grew up in Sparta, Georgia in Hancock County. And I'm very proud of my heritage. It's one of the poorest counties in the state. Still is, but I'm proud I grew up there and I still keep my contacts there, and again, I own land in Hancock County.

SHORT: Law School at the University of Georgia.

DARDEN: Well, I had a wonderful experience, but it's a little different than some. I had gone to North Georgia College my freshman year. I don't know why my parents thought I needed

discipline, because we had gotten up at 4:30 in the morning in the dairy, and when we got to North Georgia College, we got to sleep until 6 a.m. for inspection at 6:20 and breakfast at 7. So I thought I was on vacation when I went to college. But I spent a year there in North Georgia college. And that's where I really got my academic footings. I did real well academically there. I wasn't much of a soldier, but it turned out at the time that the guys who were the best soldiers didn't have very good grades. So I got promoted and I was going to be an officer and a gentleman in the Army of the United States. I was planning to go to North Georgia College four years, but the summer after my freshman year I went down to Rock Eagle. I've always been active in the 4H club, and went to Rock Eagle where I served as a counselor. I had a great, great time there. Met a lot of wonderful friends who remain my friends to this day, and Campbell Pritchard, for example, who's on the Russell Foundation with me, I met that summer. The late Mel Wells, a great friend that I came to know so much better later. Jim Breedlove, who just retired as Southern Bell in BellSouth Executive.

We were all friends there and that's where I had my first group of friends that would stay with me the rest of my life. But at the end of the summer, they were looking for some folks to go to Washington to serve as patronage employees for Richard B. Russell. So the person who was supposed to go I think dropped out of the program, and about three weeks before I made the trip to Washington to join the staff of Senator Richard B. Russell, I found out there was a vacancy and I jumped on it. I was very, very apprehensive leaving Eatonton, Georgia and Sparta, Georgia to go to Washington D.C. to work for one of the great, towering figures of the Senate, and certainly a legend and an icon in Georgia, Richard B. Russell.

And my first job when I got to Washington, I found out I was going to be an elevator operator in the United States Capitol. To this day, it's the best job I ever had. We worked about four hours a day. They paid us real good money, and then the deal was that you worked as an office boy or errand-runner in the office of the Senate. So we folded mail, ran errands. We did everything that was asked us to do that the regular staff didn't want to do, but we were honored and pleased to be affiliated with Richard B. Russell.

So I spent my sophomore year in college in Washington, and that more than any other experience in my life probably defined what my future would be and where I wanted to go, and opened up my eyes to the real world out there, and what the opportunities of public service could offer. And it instilled in me, that one year I spent in Washington D.C. as an elevator operator and then a door keeper in the United States Senate, and a member of Senator Russell's unofficial staff, that gave me a true appreciation for what the political world was all about. By the way, during that year I personally could recognize all 100 senators, because at that time if one of them hopped on the elevator, you stopped what you were doing and took them directly to the floor to which they wanted to go. And in the United States Senate those people are kings and queens. So I remember so many -- or I remember every one of the senators that was there when Senator Russell was there. And today, I believe the only two remaining when Senator Russell was there, that would be Senator Robert Byrd, who's well into his nineties and holds the record for service in the United States Senate. And I was in the gallery and saw Ted Kennedy - - Senator Ted Kennedy sworn in as a member of the Senate in January of 1963. So I spent that school year of '62, '63 working for Richard Russell. And I came home at the end of that school year. I also did

a brief internship with my own congressman, Carl Vinson, and Congressman Vinson was kind enough to get me a job for the summer following my experience with Russell. So I put in a full year in Washington in rather lowly jobs.

But as far as I was concerned, I was just as important as anybody in Washington. I was there and I had a chance to be a part of what was going on and to observe history. There were a number of memorable moments I had in that first year. I want to tell you about a couple of them. First of all, the security in the United States Capitol at that time was manned by people like myself.

Patronage jobs, you had usually students who had on police uniforms, sometimes they had guns, sometimes they didn't, but there was no security in the United States Capitol. And it was a favorite pastime of those of us who worked there after hours to take our girlfriends all the way to the tip top of the Capitol, and we had totally unlimited access to the Capitol after hours. That was a great experience that unfortunately nobody has anymore, even though I had a chance to go up there later on as a member of Congress.

Also, during that time I had the opportunity to attend and be on the floor for what was to be the very last State of the Union message of John F. Kennedy. I remember seeing Senator Russell on the floor that day of the House of Representatives. He was very surprised to see me there, but in those days all the elevator operators and police officers knew each other, and we took care of each other, and they let me slip in the House chamber and see the State of the Union address by that young president, John F. Kennedy. I remember it so well and I remember being somewhat brash at the time and pushing myself into the crowd and shaking his hand. So I can tell people today I met John F. Kennedy, and it was one of the great, great experiences of my life.

But then I came back to the University of Georgia - - then having gone to George Washington, I came back to the University of Georgia at the beginning of my junior year, and I doubled up at that time on my studies, got a little involved in campus politics at the same time. All of my friends were older and members of the Independent Party, so I never joined a fraternity - - never got involved in the fraternity scene - - but I got involved in the campus politics of the time, and was very, very into being a student at the University of Georgia. I'd always wanted to go here, but my mother and father didn't like the idea very well when I first tried to go when I was a freshman. And to quote what Dean Tate said one time, my parents thought that the only thing separating the University of Georgia and hell was a screen door.

So I fulfilled my ambition to come back to the University of Georgia. Started here my junior year, doubled up on my courses and got into law school before I actually graduated at the beginning of my fourth year. And it was during my second year at the University of Georgia, which was my first year at law school, that I was also elected president of the student body. And you can't get away with that anymore. I spent more time on campus politics, unfortunately, than I did in law school. But I was a lot more interested in politics. I was a lot more interested in public service. I was a lot more interested in people than I was in my studies. And I think my grades very clearly bore that out.

But I can say I entered the law school before I actually finished my undergraduate degree. I got my undergraduate degree at the end of my first year in law school and then struggled on for two more years and graduated. But in the meantime, and like I say, you couldn't do this these days. They would kick you out of law school so fast it'd make your head spin, but one year I managed

to campaign in 1966 - - fall of 1966 for Bob Stevens. And we became - - Congressman Stevens and I became lifelong friends as a result of that. I was an unpaid campaign manager. My expenses were paid, didn't receive any salary or anything like that, but what a great opportunity for a law student in my third year - - in my third year - - at the beginning of my third year to manage a congressional campaign. And I think my professors just kind of shook their heads and looked the other way. But I've become a lot more interested in the law since I left law school than the time I was here. But what a great experience.

SHORT: Buddy, let me -- before we get too far away from these two icons in Georgia and American political history, Senator Russell, foremost, and Congressman Vinson. Tell us, if you will, a little about those individuals. Time has passed and most Georgians now, you know, don't recall those two people. Would you sort of tell us your feeling about Senator Russell and Congressman Vinson?

DARDEN: I used to be perhaps Senator Russell's youngest friend, and my -- that is my age group, and I thought he was an extremely, extremely old person at the time. Turns out he was about my age at the time I got to know him. And he was absolutely revered on Capitol Hill. All you had to do to tell somebody, to get respect of anybody on Capitol Hill was tell them that you were affiliated with Richard Russell. It didn't matter that you were a patronage employee. Didn't matter that you emptied the trashcans in the office or ran errands and bought coffee. The fact that you were affiliated with Richard Russell was an extraordinary thing. His reputation for

integrity, for knowing the rules in the Senate, for honor was so great that he was, I believe, clearly the most respected man in Washington D.C.

Richard Russell only came home once a year, and I tried to tell Senator Nunn this one time in trying to convince him to stay in the United States Senate rather than retiring is that I think we congressmen and senators overdue it. And I know I overdid it when I was there. You're always trying to come back. You're always trying to go to every garden party. You're always trying to go to every little event, but in my view we make ourselves a little too accessible. When Richard Russell came home to Georgia, it was a big deal. He selected several places to go to where he would see large crowds. He also visited with his old friends. Richard Russell, though, always had an open door.

I never will forget one time I wanted to impress my girlfriend who later would become my wife Lillian, who has been my wife 40 years now, we're now in our 41st year by marriage, but I wanted her to meet Richard Russell. And I was at the University of Georgia at the time, and we were going to drive over to visit her parents in Atlanta. Now, this would have been about 1964, I guess, 1965 and he was home for the annual break. And I called over and got him on the phone, and stopped by and met him, sat and talked with him an hour on the front porch. His home is in Winder on the way through Atlanta. And I remember my wife never said but two words the whole time, and we still joke and laugh about her meeting Richard Russell.

But Richard Russell, as you know, had been, not before he was a senator, he had been governor and speaker of the house, a true icon in Georgia politics. From the time he had his first election, he never had a major political opponent, and even though it was thought several times that he

might be challenged, he never really had a serious challenge. And of course, he died, as you know, in January of 1971, shortly after Jimmy Carter had taken office. And so Jimmy Carter, rather than Lester Maddox, named his successor to the next election, which was David Gambrell. But I was part of a program that Richard Russell had to try and stay in touch with Georgians back home, because he was afraid that he would fall out of contact with the constituency, and especially young people. So he had a deal with the state 4H club, the state 4H program for people like me to come up, spend the year, and then go back home, and we became literal ambassadors for Richard Russell around there.

He was a very shy man. He - - especially around women. He was, I thought, overly deferential towards women. He never married. He was an old bachelor and things I remember too, is that his reputation for being tight with money was legend. They used to talk about how he never spent a dime and he had most of every dime -- every dollar that he ever - - ever earned. He always dressed, dressed immaculately and impeccably, and he always had on his coat and tie. And it's hard to imagine Richard Russell without a coat and tie, and a dark, dark suit on. Courteous, one of the most courteous people that I've ever known, a true southern gentleman insofar as his manners were concerned.

I had a little edge on some of the members of the staff because I have a cousin, William H. Darden - - Bill Darden - - who's still alive today down in Florida. He's in his eighties. But Bill Darden served as his first - - one of his first executive secretaries, and later on as the chief of staff for the Senate Armed Services Committee. And Senator Russell always called him and made it clear that he was the favorite, and because I was Bill Darden's cousin, he always

remembered me, and I had a little bit rapport and relationship with him than a lot of people that came up.

Russell didn't have that much of a relationship with his staff. Only three or four people, Bill Gurden (ph), Leman Anderson (ph), and Bill Darden, only the top staff, Harry Wingate, had a lot of interplay with him back and forth. But he was a very private man, and very - - to a certain extent kind of a shy man. I never will forget a couple of things. He would always remember me when he got on the elevator and he introduced me one day to Senator McNamara. He had always introduced me to his fellow senators who were there with me. He'd like to say, you know, this is one of my boys and that's the way he looked at us, as his boys.

And you mentioned about people not knowing Richard Russell. I came to the foundation a number of years ago, and at that time I was a younger - - among the younger people, and everybody on there knew Richard Russell. And now we're getting to the point on the foundation that fewer and fewer people knew him. And so that's been, I think, the great legacy of the foundation is to tell people about Richard Russell, what an extraordinary man he was, and all the great and wonderful things he did for Georgia.

Now, equally powerful though, on the other side of the Capitol Hill, was Carl Vinson. Carl Vinson was elected to congress in his teens, and served over 50 years as a member of the House of the Representatives - - through war, through depression, through Republicans, through Democrats, a large number of presidents. But through all that, he was known as the father of the American Navy, and he was a congressman for my particular district. At that time, the 06 district, he was out of Milledgeville, and of course that was - - Sparta and Hancock County were

part of it. And if you could get to Washington, Carl Vinson would find you a job. He looked after his people. Now, he never had opposition as well. Carl Vinson's favorite political tact, they used to say, where he would tell various people that he wanted them to succeed him when he left. Of course, he outlived all of them and people used to say that the graveyard is full of people who were prepared to take Carl Vinson's place in Congress. They just never lived long enough to do it.

He, as opposed to Russell who had a fairly good-sized staff, Carl Vinson only had three or four people working for him. He lived very modestly up in Chevy Chase, and he really avoided, whenever he could, the notoriety. But everybody knew that if you wanted your bill passed or if you wanted your appropriations done for anything on the military side, you went to Carl Vinson. And I feel so fortunate that I got to know him, only briefly, but he was probably in his late seventies. He was older than Russell, and he was probably in his late seventies when I got to know him. I believe he retired around 1966, about two years after I worked for him that summer. But I have been truly blessed to know those two great giants in Georgia politics.

SHORT: Getting back now to Buddy Darden, after law school you became a prosecutor.

DARDEN: That's right.

SHORT: In Cobb County.

DARDEN: These days, people apply for jobs, people go through interviews, and they want to go with the big firms in Atlanta, and worry about the job the minute they get in - - they get to law school. With me, I really didn't give it much thought until my last - - my last quarter in law school, and we were on the quarter system in those days. But my very close friend and mentor, Jasper Dorsey, who I had gotten to know through my connections in Washington, who came back to head up what was then Southern Bell here in Georgia, was from Marietta. And nothing would do him except that I would go to Marietta. He said, it's going to grow, has a great future there. They need young leadership and so forth. So Jasper prevailed upon my friend Wyman Pilcher, Jr. and other of his friends to go see the incoming district attorney, a man by the name of Ben Smith, and basically told him if they would hire this young fellow that they would help him be sure he didn't get opposition the next time he had an opponent.

So I came to work in what was then called the solicitor general's office, but then became the district attorney's office for the Cobb Judicial Circuit. And in the Cobb Judicial Circuit, at the time there was just Cobb County. We had two superior court judges and one -- and two state court judges. Now, we have ten superior court judges and we have eight state court judges, and five more assistant state court judges. So the county has grown enormously since I came, but I was the first full time assistant prosecutor in Cobb County. Now, I think there's something like 80. Well, I came at the right time. Jasper had it right. So I came, my first job, made \$600 a month, and I was doing just as well as anybody else in my class. Passed the bar a few months - a few months later and I'm also in my 41st year as a member of the bar of the state of Georgia. I've always been proud of the fact that I'm a member of an ancient and noble profession, and

even though I've been involved in politics and public affairs my entire life, I consider myself an attorney, and I hope - - I'd like to say a good attorney, even though you might get some disagreement there. That's my profession and that's what has served me to this very day.

SHORT: And four years later, you ran for and was elected district attorney. You must have been the youngest district attorney in the country.

DARDEN: Bob, I was, certainly in the state of Georgia. I was elected when I was 28. My boss, Ben Smith, decided that the job didn't pay enough and he was in the prime of his earning capacity, and he had enough time in as assistant DA and DA to retire and get a small pension. So he wanted to go back into the law practice, and so he endorsed me, and I ran as a Democratic nominee, unopposed, for district attorney. But I also had Republican opposition that year and that's when the Republicans were first beginning to flex their muscles in Cobb County. But I won my first election as DA in 1972.

There was a young fellow who had just won the Democratic primary to succeed Richard Russell by the name of Sam Nunn, and Sam, of course, was running in Cobb County at the same time, statewide, for United States Senator. And it's the only time in my life I've ever gotten more votes than Sam Nunn. I won by - - by just less than 2,000 votes the year I was elected DA in the general election of 1972, and Sam Nunn lost Cobb County by 5,000 votes to Fletcher Thompson. Of course, that was the last time he was ever to lose Cobb County, and went on to become an extraordinary United States Senator, and I'm proud to say he's one of the number of people with

whom I have - - I've had a close association during my political career.

I was the youngest DA in Cobb County. I was so proud and I was a little cocky, I'll be honest with you, because that was quite an achievement at the time, and I didn't suffer fools very gladly. And I was also about half as good a DA as I thought I was. And I had the requisite skills, and I had really worked hard and had caught up my lack of scholarship from law school with really putting my nose to the grindstone, and had learned how to be district attorney. I tried a number of felony and misdemeanor cases before I was elected, and frankly was a pretty successful prosecutor. What I did not have, and I look back on it and it's easy -- it's hard to look at yourself objectively, but looking back on it, I really didn't have the maturity I needed for that job. I was a little bit short with people from time to time to time. And looking back on it, I probably could have been a little more gracious in the discharge of my duty.

Two things happened while I was DA. One, I had an extraordinary case involving the murder of two physicians, and I prosecuted those cases. They had happened before I took office, but I indicted them and we based the convictions -- this is the Matthews case, it's documented as Matthews. Their murder cases were based primarily on the testimony of an accomplice by the name of Debbie Kidd. We convicted - - I believe it was eight people, eventually, for those murders and those convictions were upheld by the Georgia Supreme Court. But as I was being sued in federal court, habeas corpus, trying to get those convictions undone, my witness recanted on me. In other words, she said this is not true. And just about time we started to move to - - against her than she recanted her recantation. So bottom line, I was left holding the bag, so those cases hurt me a good bit politically.

At the same time, the Republicans were making their strong efforts in Cobb County. Cobb County was about only the second county to become fully Republican. The first was DeKalb County, which as you know, then there is all Democrat. But, so after four years as DA, being the youngest DA in the state and after my reelection was over, I became the youngest ex-DA in the state. So I was through with politics at age 32. I said that's the end of it, and it's been great, but now it's time to go to work. By that time, I had a son and a daughter. Daughter had been born in '71. Son had been born in '74. So I was out of politics, and from then on I was going to be a lawyer.

SHORT: From 1980.

DARDEN: Until four years later, yes, I stayed involved in politics. That was my true interest. I never played golf. I played a little tennis. I liked to run a little bit, but what really interested me was the political world. So I stayed in touch with the political people. I participated in other people's elections. In 1980 - - 1980 - - a legislative seat came up and several legislators contacted me a little ahead, gave me a jump on it. So I ran as a Democrat for an open seat in West Cobb County. We had multi-member districts back then. Cobb County was split two ways. We had five on - - five on the east side, which were primarily Republicans, and five on the west side, which was still Democratic, and that included Joe Mack Wilson and Al Burris among others. So I was elected to be part of that delegation in the fall of 1980, and that's the same year, by the way, that Senator Herman Talmadge was defeated. And he was defeated

primarily on the votes in Cobb County.

I was fortunate enough, though, to be elected with about 68% of the vote that year. So that was a good, good sign for me, and so I was literally born again in 1980. And I was going to be a lawyer and practice in Cobb County and then be in the general assembly for the next -- for the foreseeable future. That was my plan.

SHORT: Let's talk for a minute about that delegation. That delegation in which you served, I thought was one of the most impressive delegations Georgia's ever had.

DARDEN: It was a great delegation. Let me tell you who was in that delegation, as if you don't recall. I mentioned Al Burris who at one time was Pro Tem, and he even challenged Speaker Murphy for the speakership and managed to get back in his good graces. Joe Mack Wilson, the Chairman of the Reapportionment Committee, and also later to be the Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee when Marcus Collins went over to the Department of Revenue. On the Democratic side, also Steve Thompson, who is now one of the co-Deans of the Georgia Senate. He's still in the Georgia legislature. On the Republican side, that was Johnny Isakson, a freshman Representative. We served together. I think he might have come a few years before me, but Johnny was a part of that delegation along with the late Paul Harrison and Judge Ken Nicks.

But over on the Senate side, we had a young fellow by the name of Roy Barnes who had been an assistant DA in the DA's office when I was there, and also he stayed on. He had been assistant

DA for me when I was DA. And Roy got elected at age 26 in 1974 and served continuously in the Senate from Cobb County from 1974 up until the beginning of 1991. He ran for governor against Zell Miller, as you recall, in the fall of 1990 and was unsuccessful. So Roy Barnes - - had Roy Barnes, Johnny Isakson in our delegation, Joe Mack Wilson, Al Burris, Steve Thompson, and so many others who I think were truly an outstanding legislative delegation.

SHORT: So you go to the state capital as a state Representative.

DARDEN: I loved being a state Representative. I thought that I had died and gone to heaven. That was the most fun. DA was always a pressure job, and you were always worried about the jurors showing up, and your witnesses showing up, and running into problems about your court calendars. It was a high pressure job, but I loved the legislature. I look forward every day to going there and being, of course, with a law firm out in Marietta, I could run back and take care of my business there as I needed to. But I could also be gone to the law firm when I needed to be. So, I had a great time in my first term in the General Assembly. Made a lot of friends. Ran for reelection in '82 virtually unopposed. I got - - I think I got something like 70% of the vote the second time. Had Republican opposition both times and won overwhelmingly, and I came back. I always - - and I was on the judiciary committee with Wayne Snow, and Wayne gave me a lot of authority since I was new, but I had been -- I had been DA. So he knew I knew a little bit about the court system, and so did - - so did Speaker Murphy. And so they both had confidence in me. So that was my main thrust was on the judiciary committee, but I also did one other thing. Our

more senior Representatives and Senators weren't interested in the nuts and bolts of local legislation. In fact, the saying is - - down in the General Assembly - - stay away from local legislation. It's just making - it's just going to make people mad. But in Cobb, we had a large number of public officials who were always seeking raises. We had a large number of public officials who needed changes in the structure of their office, and so I took on as my own project - - the two terms I was in the General Assembly - - to be in charge of the local legislation. And I took that over because nobody else wanted to deal with it anyway, and being a lawyer, I knew how to do it and the very specific and difficult requirements that you have to go through, like advertising in the newspaper, giving notice to different parties and so forth.

So, I made local legislation my specialty in addition to my other duties in the legislature. Made a lot of friends and learned a whole lot about the process, and also, hopefully, got a reputation for being kind of the go-to guy for the local people there in Cobb County.

SHORT: Tell us about Speaker Tom Murphy.

DARDEN: Oh, great, great man. Great man. He's been eulogized quite a bit lately. Speaker Murphy was a man of his word. He always kept his commitment. He didn't appreciate being opposed. But when - - when you did, you just had to tell him about it and -- I opposed him one time when he wanted to cut the terms of the regents, when we did the new constitution in 1982. He wanted to cut them back to four years. I opposed him on that. I opposed him when I initially supported my close friend my 4H days and from my Russell days, Norman Underwood. I

supported Norman Underwood over Joe Frank Harris for Governor. And he didn't like that either, but I found out if you're always usually up front with Speaker Murphy, he'd get mad, but he'd get over it, because he always knew that he would need you to for something on down the road. But you tried to be as up front as you could with Speaker Murphy.

I think there's no question that he was certainly the dominant political figure of his day. I think probably he stayed maybe a few years too many. Tom Murphy's legacy is truly great and one of the people I admire the most, but I think if Tom Murphy were sitting back here today, he would probably tell you he maybe should have left a few years earlier and brought on a new generation of leadership. I remember one time I was in his office - - this was after I had been to Washington - - and Larry Walker was in there who was, I think, the majority leader, else the Pro Tem at the time, and Calvin Smeyer, and Terry Coleman, who was chairman of the Appropriations Committee, and he would shake his head. He says, "Boys, I tell you, I'm getting too old for this job. We got to turn it over to you young boys. You young boys got to come here and do it." Well, we were in our fifties by that time, and so I guess - - I guess what I'm saying is that Tom Murphy, the only, only thing I would say - - I would say which might be perceived as negative is that he probably should have left a few years earlier.

But he did enormous things for the state of Georgia, and I will always admire and respect him.

We got crossed up one time, which we'll probably go into later, but at the same time, I honor Tom Murphy. I admire him and respect him, and I am close friends with his family to this very day.

SHORT: You're in your second term. Then the plane crash that killed Representative McDonald left that seat open.

DARDEN: I was having a great time, Bob. I was in the House of Representatives. I was making pretty good money at the law firm. My law practice was going well, and it mixed with being in the legislature pretty well back then. And my wife and I had even bought and paid for our living room furniture. You know, that's the last thing you do, and our kids were doing well in school, and we had a great, great life going there. But I'd always had an interest in Congress and hoped it's something I might do later on, but on September the 1st, 1983, there was a Korean Airlines flight 007, flying from Anchorage, Alaska to Seoul, Korea. They wandered over into Soviet airspace around the Kamchatka Peninsula, and the Soviet Union shot it down and - - killing 269 people, innocent people, on that flight, including Congressman Larry McDonald. There was a little confusion in the beginning, as you might recall, about whether the plane had been shot down, or whether it had been forced down and land safely, or whether or not the people were being held captive in the Soviet Union. You've got to remember our relations with the Soviet - - then Soviet Union were not all that great back then, but it came out that in fact the airline had been shot down. There were no survivors. And so then there became a lot of discussion about who would be the next Congressman from the 7th district of Georgia. At that time, the district had just been reconfigured and went from the Atlanta city limits to Chattahoochee River as you enter Cobb County to the Chattanooga city limits. It was extreme northwest Georgia. People used to say that was a geographical and a political term.

But Congressman McDonald had been a pretty conservative fellow. In fact, some people called him radical. He was the national head of the John Birch Society. He only caucused with the Democrats, but had a more conservative record than most of the Republicans there in Congress. But he always looked after his political bases back home, and he was personally a charismatic character. So his last election, he had beaten the Republicans by something like 60% or more in a very conservative district. So he was safe and probably even - - had even considered running for the United States Senate later on had he stayed in Congress. And that's kind of what I was waiting around to see if he did.

But all of a sudden it was over. He was killed and immediately his widow, Kathy McDonald, began appearing on various media outlets. She even flew to New York to be on the Today Show or one of the national shows, and she, rather than showing the sorrow that we normally in the South associate with a widow, she showed outrage and turned a lot of people off by the way she reacted to this incident. I think she could probably blame a lot of her handlers for that, but it was immediate though - - immediately clear to everybody that she would be the next Congressman.

And Governor Joe Frank Harris called an election around the 5th of September - - 6th of September - - setting a general election. Excuse me, a special election on October the 17th, I believe it was, and then a runoff to be held the following, November the 7th.

Well, look at that now compared to what we just did in Georgia. Last time we had a vacancy, the Governor waited until the legislature got out of session and then went around having an election about six months later. But Governor Harris, since everybody just figured that she would be the - - that she would succeed her husband, because widows have done that almost

without fail before and after in special elections, he set a very quick election so she could be elected. Well, people started saying, well she may be elected, but I'm not going to vote for her. She's going to win, but I'm not going to vote for her, and there was a backlash in the district that became pretty evident that Kathy McDonald was going to have some opposition. She had 100% name recognition. Everybody knew who she was, but she was a third wife. And I don't see that as a criticism except - - just the fact that he had been married previously to two other women and she didn't meet him until she got to Washington. In other words, she hadn't gone arm in arm with him and hand in hand with him up his political career, and had not contributed to his first election, being elected to Congress, even though she was very helpful to him as a spouse later on. Well, that's one thing that was going on. Secondly, she was from California and a good bit - - good bit younger than he, and really didn't connect well with the folks in the State of Georgia in the 7th district. But still, I thought - - like everybody else - - that she was going to get elected. So I kind of watched it from a distance, but then first of all, some fringe people started saying they were going to run, and then a few people up in Rome started saying they were going - - going to run. And it became evident to a lot of people that if somebody could get her in a run off, that person was going - - going to Congress. That became more the conventional wisdom. I think the national parties did a poll or two in the district. David Sellers, who had been the Republican nominee the time before, got into the race, and one Juanelle Edwards, who was the grande dame of the Democratic party, said, "Well" - - to Joe Thompson, who was in the state Senate, to Roy Barnes, to Al Burris and Joe Mack, "If any of you boys don't have the courage to run, I'm going to run."

So, she got into the race - - Juanelle did. And the race was beginning to fill up. By the time it was over, by the way, there were about 18 people running on the ballot in that special election. But the day before qualifying closed, Juanelle called me up and she says, "Listen, I know you want do this, and I know you're not going to do it as long as I'm in the race. But my son, Randy, is playing football for Bear Bryant over in Alabama. I want to go to football games. I don't want to be out politicking, and besides, this district is probably not going to elect a woman, and certainly not a liberal Democratic woman like me. And she stood aside and literally pushed me in the race - - literally pushed me in the race.

So, we went and announced on Monday that she was withdrawing on a Tuesday, the very last day of qualifying. September 15th, I qualified. And all of a sudden, we qualified - - what are you going to do? It occurred to me that, "All right, I've done this thing. Now, where're you going? But through the work of some amazing friends and an extraordinary effort, we got into - - after a campaign of just over three weeks - - we got into a run off. The first time - - the first general election in October, Mrs. McDonald got 30% of the vote. I got 27 and a half. Dave Sellers got about 25 and then everybody else was in the single digits. So, then that put me in a run off and then through a very, very tough, hard-fought runoff. Three weeks later I was elected to Congress with about 60% of the vote.

And I came in on a special election -- was sworn in two days later. You know, when you're in the House of Representatives, you have to go to work right then on special election. It's on the office. And I know your viewers know this, but just to remind them, the only office in the federal government that can only be filled by election is the United States House of

Representatives. You can fill every other seat if another vacancy occurs in the federal government, from President on down, by initial appointment. But only the House of Representatives. So, I got elected - - found out I'd been elected on a Tuesday night. Spent Wednesday gathering my stuff up and flew up to Washington with a group of friends and supporters and was sworn in on Thursday morning. And then, two minutes later, I was voting. It was just that quick - - just that quick.

SHORT: How did you come about your committee assignments? Did that happen immediately or did you have to wait a little while?

DARDEN: Well, with the help of my good friend Ed Jenkins and some of my prospective Georgia delegation, we had let it be known that I was going to be a member of the Armed Services Committee, and Ed had leaked it to several different people, and Congressman McDonald had been a big supporter of Lockheed, and so I was able to step in and be appointed to his committee assignments and his subcommittee assignments, which are very well at the same time. I accepted a temporary second committee on government operations, but my real, real desire was to be on to be on Interior and Insular Affairs, but Mo Udall was a Chairman. That's the Parts Committee. They call it Natural Resources right now, but it has to do with the land mass of the country. So, I bided my time for that first partial term and then, at the beginning of my first full term in 1985 - - January of '85 - - then I, of course - - I, of course, was able - - was able to join Mo Udall's committee as well.

So the entire time until my last term in Congress, and we'll talk about that in a few minutes, I was on the House Armed Services Committee, and then on the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee. And my Chairman, by the way, briefly was Mel Price, and I was part of a revolt - - several years later - - that installed Chairman Les Aspin, and he and I became very, very close friends. And he eventually became Secretary of Defense in President Clinton's first term - - his first two years.

SHORT: How did service in the US House of Representatives differ from service in the Georgia House of Representatives?

DARDEN: It was so much more intense, and, of course, it's a full time job as opposed to a part time job. Now, we went down to Atlanta in the Georgia House in the Georgia General Assembly. We worked hard and played hard for about two months. But then it was over, and we went back to our regular jobs, our regular professions and so forth, even though we stayed in touch with each other over the times. But in the Congress, it's full time, and especially me, because I'd been elected - - I'd been elected - - even though it was 60% of the vote - - I'd been elected in a special election. There were counties I'd never even been to until I was elected to Congress and was running for Congress in those counties. I was from down in South Georgia. I was down from the plantation area, the old part of the state, and Marietta was about as far as north as I'd ever been. But all of a sudden, Marietta was the southernmost part of that entire district. We had Cobb County, Bartow County, Chattooga County, Floyd County, Dade County,

Walker, and Catoosa County. I had never been to Dade or Catoosa. Been to Walker about one time. I'd been to Rome a few times and had some friends in Bartow. I only carried - - in that first election - - in that first election - - not the run off but the general - - the special election - - I only carried about two precincts north of Cobb County. The people were in Cobb County.

When Cobb County gave me an overwhelming number of votes, and so, I was able to get vaulted into the district through my Cobb County support.

But Cobb County having turned Republican, I knew I couldn't depend on it in the future. So, I started working very hard, going back to the district every single weekend, and established - - put my committees together. I was essentially elected on Larry McDonald. People didn't know me. It was either me or Mrs. McDonald and so, consequently, I had to get busy and shore up my political fences. Good thing I did, because my first election, in which I thought I would just cruise to reelection and get all the votes, was the year of the Reagan landslide. And that was 1984 - - Reagan reelected, and it's a good thing that I had worked so hard, because even though I thought I'd get 65% of the vote, I got something like mid-50s that first -- and even below 55% of my first reelect.

And that really scared me, because I thought that after I'd been elected so overwhelmingly the first time in a special election that I was invulnerable. Well, I found out very quickly that you've got to always look to the next election, the last election never matters.

SHORT: I'm curious about this, Buddy. How is a freshman member of the House, who has not had an opportunity to go through the leadership organization and all that, treated by - - say, the

Speaker and the majority leader?

DARDEN: I was treated very well. I was treated very well, because they looked on me -- they looked on me as a person substantially different from my predecessor. Now, my predecessor, Larry McDonald, the last time they had an election for Speaker in the House of Representatives, voted present. So, they knew that anything would be an improvement, and while they didn't expect me to go along with leadership every time, they knew that I had been a Democrat in the statehouse and that I was anxious to be in the Congress. It was going to be my career. I wanted to stay there a while and I was young. I was 39 when I was elected to -- I had already had one political career and thought it was all over then, and it started again for me. And this was my third political career and I was only 39 years old when I was elected, you see.

So it was pretty evident to them I was going to be around a while and they were most gracious -- gracious to me. Obviously, I didn't get everything I wanted, but I got the committees I wanted, and I was always treated with courtesy and respect. And they realized that people like me couldn't be expected to vote the party line, Republican or Democrat, and we had a very popular present at the time -- at least very popular in Georgia. And Ronald Reagan had even carried my district over Jimmy Carter, even though Jimmy Carter, carried the -- President Carter carried Georgia quite well, even his second time. President Reagan carried the seventh district, which I represented at the time, in the general election against President Carter.

SHORT: Tell us about Speaker Tip O'Neill.

DARDEN: Wonderful man. My only regret about Tip O'Neill was I didn't spend more time with him. I got to know him briefly when I got there and we were sworn in, but at the same time - - and I found out that the Republicans were beginning to demonize him, and he became somewhat of a target. And the rap on southerners like me was, he would get big buddy with Tip O'Neill, and so I didn't really spend a lot of time trying to get close to Speaker O'Neill, even though we had some great conversations in the cloak room, and we discussed a lot of times. He was the ultimate Pa. He loved to tell stories. He loved to hear your stories. He had that ability, Bob, to make you feel good, and you loved being - - being around him.

I went to Tip's funeral. I was on the -- it was in 1993, I believe. It might have been '94, but we were on our way to an overseas trip with my then Chairman, Chairman Murtha. And we stopped in Boston and went to the funeral, and I'm so glad -- so glad I did it. But I kept my relationship up with Tip O'Neill even after he left the House, and we were on several programs together, including the mock convention down at our college down in Virginia. So, I really - - W and L - - Washington and Lee has a big mock political convention. We were on that together and I considered him one of the truly fine people I got to know.

SHORT: Were you a Boll Weevil?

DARDEN: I was not really a Boll Weevil even though I probably voted with them more often than not. I liked to - - I tried to stay out of being identified with this group or the other. I went to

some of their meetings. Doug Bernard, of course, was one of the organizers, and I had a tremendously high regard for him. So, for that reason - - for that reason, yes. I - - you allow the people who voted with them on occasion, but Ed Jenkins was probably my closest ally in Congress, and he was not a member of that group. So, Ed was a member of the Ways and Means Committee, and very close to Chairman Rozankowski. So, I didn't - - I didn't want to be stereotyped. I didn't want to say I belonged to this group or that group. I probably in reality voted with them more often than not.

SHORT: Congressman Darden, you were also a member of the Appropriations Committee.

DARDEN: That's right. I was very fortunate to be elected to the Appropriations Committee, and I only served on the Appropriations Committee for one term. Bob, that was the most productive time of my entire congressional career. Just to be candid with you, and I don't mean disrespect toward any other committees, or any other people who served in congress, but the real deals in the House and the real accomplishments in the House of Representatives of the United States of America are done in three areas.

One is Ways and Means, two is Appropriations, and, of course, three is Leadership. And, if you're really going to make an impact in the House, you've either got to be in the leadership of the House of Representatives, and be in a position to influence the Ways and Means Committee, which has enormous jurisdiction over taxes, over trade, over Medicare, over Medicaid, over the entire healthcare financial system, and Appropriations. Now, Appropriations is where the money

is, and a lot of people talk about the tax and spend Congress, but that's the job of the Congress is to raise the revenue and to apportion the money. And, I got elected to the Appropriations Committee at the beginning of what turned out to be my last turn in Congress.

I'll tell you how it came about. Lindsay Thomas had been on Appropriations. He left Congress and I was in a position to get that slot. But, to do that you have to have an in with the leadership and most of the people in the south to stay elected kind of avoid leadership. I tried to walk a narrow path of - - I wanted to be a part of the majority team, which was a Democratic majority team, but at the same time I didn't want to be too close because I had to win back home. But I was asked to serve a couple of terms before on the committee of Standards and Official Conduct, which is known as the Ethics Committee. And my friend, Ed Jenkins, had served there before, and so I agreed to serve on the Ethics Committee because I thought it would be a way that I could cultivate a number of other members of the leadership, and because of my service on the Ethics Committee, which nobody wanted to do, then they would look kindly on my being elected to Appropriations.

And my service on the Ethics Committee actually led to my election to the Appropriations Committee. But I'm glad I served on Ethics, because even though it got a little contentious at times, I got to know some real good people. In fact, the Speaker of the House of Representatives today, Nancy Pelosi, and I sat right next to each other and spent a lot of time together, and I don't have to explain to her who I am or what I'm like even today, some 15 years later, because we sat together on the Ethics Committee. Had some great Chairmen and had some very unusual circumstances. The Ethics Committee, by the way, is divided equally - - at least it was then,

between Republicans and Democrats. And on the other side of the Ethics Committee, I had folks like Fred Grandy - - who was Gopher on the Love Boat on TV; Jim Bunting, who was a former all star baseball player, who's now in the Senate; John Kyl, who's in the Senate; and numerous others from both the House and the Senate. Senator Ben Cardin, I served with on the Ethics Committee.

So, I got to know a lot of people. And also your fellow members, when they get into a little trouble and they know you're on the Ethics Committee, they are somewhat deferential to you from time to time. Not that you're going to do any special favors for them, but they don't want to be on your bad side either. So, my time on the Standards of Official Conduct, I thought was very productive, and I still have a lot of good memories of it. I served two terms on that committee.

Another committee I served on, which I absolutely loved, was the Board of Visitors for West Point. My Committee Chairman, Wes - - excuse me, Les Aspin, was the Chairman of the Armed Services Committee and he was an ex-official member of all the committees that you visit the service academies for. And I asked to be appointed in his place to the West Point Board of Visitors. So, I served on that for two terms as well. There are a lot of opportunities to do things in Congress if you keep your eyes open and a lot of ways in which you can make your influence felt, and it's a way you can make a lot of friends.

But Appropriations, back to that in just a second. I was able to get more done on two years in the Appropriations Committee, than virtually the entire time I was on those other committees when I was in Congress. Also, here's what happens. Your members of the delegation in your own state come to you because you're the Appropriations person and they have to look to you to

take care of some of their very much needed projects as well. So you become an agent for the rest of your delegation, Republican and Democrat, and they know that they've got to come to you and you've got to help make it happen. You've got to push for it because a federal pie is only so big, and it's only going to be divided so many ways, and you've got to get in there and really push for your home state and your home district. Now, you don't need to get greedy about it, but you can also look out for your home state as well as your home district, and so off when your situations coincide.

But that's real authority on the Appropriations Committee. Here's a great thing about it too, Bob, is once you're on the Appropriations Committee and on a subcommittee, then you automatically become a conferee when you meet with the Senate to discuss the differences in your bill. Now, there are 13 different subcommittees on Appropriations and I was on Defense Appropriations, which had the largest discretionary budget in the government. Only 13 of us, and every dollar that was appropriated for defense had to be initiated with us. Sure, the Pentagon submitted their budget and we adopted it to a great degree, but at the same time we were the gatekeepers of the initial budget that was passed, which went to the President and became law. Also, on that - - on that committee we had eight Democrats and five Republicans. So in that group I got a chance to know the Republicans as well, and you worked together. Probably more than any committee in the Congress, Appropriations has to work together, because you usually want to come to a consensus and to an accord.

My Chairman, quite coincidentally, is the same fellow who's the Chairman now of the committee, even though he was out of power for 12 years. His name is John Murtha. Jack Murtha is a

former crusty old Marine from Pennsylvania, Johnstown, and he's in that part of Pennsylvania that James Carnell says is Alabama. And he's very, very attentive to his district, but to the defense establishment as well. And Murtha took us on some great trips. You've probably heard of the very famous Charlie Wilson who wrote the book, and there was a movie about Charlie Wilson's War. This is the subcommittee on which Charlie Wilson served and I served with Charlie Wilson on that committee. We became fast friends. Fascinating person and certainly got along well with him. Now, Murtha liked to take us to these hot spots where there was some kind of problem going on. A lot of times, people were being shot at or shooting at you and so forth. We went to Somalia two different times. We went down to Central America. We went to a number of places where there were a lot of conflicts going on in the world. We went to Bosnia. We went to a number of places where American troops were being deployed and there was a potential for violence.

But Murtha wanted to see that our soldiers were treated right. He also took us to a trip to Kuwait following the first Gulf War, and the Kuwaitis were so gracious in expressing their appreciation to us. So we went, really, to the world's hot spots. One time, when we were in Somalia, there was a mistaken report that we had been shot at and that some of us had been injured, and it got over all the news outlets in Atlanta that I had been severely injured. And they called my wife, and she couldn't confirm it or not, so they assumed that it happened and they were about to have my funeral one time, but it turned out that it was all a big misunderstanding that we straightened out. But Congressman Murtha was a truly outstanding Chairman. Probably the best Chairman I've ever worked with on any of the 23 or so committees and subcommittees that I was on. But

again, that's where the rubber meets the road, is right there on the Defense Appropriations Committee.

And to be very candid with you, I represented the area which contains a Lockheed Martin plant.

And I don't make any apologies for doing everything I could to be sure that their programs were

kept viable, that their various priorities were met, and I'd like to think that I was instrumental or

at least helpful in getting - - getting those programs funded properly. Now, the F-22 fighter was

selected when I was in Congress, not that I had anything to do with selection, but I was always,

always anxious to be sure that once they were selected, it was properly funded. The C-130 and

the C-130J, which has been going on for years. The OC5 renovation programs, and all of those

programs, of course. The planes were manufactured for the most part right there in Marietta,

Georgia. So, it worked real well for me to be on the Appropriations Committee, and especially

Defense Appropriations, because that's where the checks were coming from to pay for these

extraordinarily expensive aircrafts that were manufactured literally in my backyard. I live - - still

do - - five minutes from the Lockheed plant. So I was so pleased to be able to help out our local

- - our local economy and local - - local constituency, as well as do what I thought was right for

the nation.

And that's what happens in Congress most of the time. People talk about these conflicts between

your district and what goes on nationally, and your individual conscience, as well as opposed to

what the people want. But for the most part, these interests have a way of sorting themselves

out, and most of the time they dovetail rather than going in different directions.

SHORT: Nowadays we hear a lot about earmarks. Are you for them or against them?

DARDEN: I'm for them and with no apology whatsoever, because it is a constitutional right and a responsibility of the Congress to set the budget and determine how the money is spent. It's good that the Pentagon makes its recommendations and that the administration gives us an outline of what they need, but our constitution provides that - - in the end - - that the Congress and the Congress alone has the right to determine how the money is spent. And it's good to have input from the executive department, it's good for the President to submit a budget, and the President should submit a budget. The defense department should have a budget and should let us know what their priorities are, but in the end, it is the ultimate - - not only prerogative - - but it's the duty and the responsibility of the Congress to determine how the money is spent.

And frankly, I think I'm a little better judge of how money ought to be spent in my district on a particular park project, rather than somebody who sits in Washington who has never even been to Georgia and who looks at a report. So I think that as a member of Congress, I was the elected person and I made no apologies for various earmarks I was responsible for. I was able, for example, to update the national parks services plan by five years and go ahead and get our visitor's center that we needed at Kennesaw Mountain National Historical Park five years before they said they would do it from the Park Service. I was able to get - - by an earmark - - an instrument landing system for the airport there in Rome, where it turned out that they had had several fatalities and the FAA didn't think that they needed the system. I said we did and we got the money for it. There was a plant in Polk County, Georgia, which manufactured fuel sales for

aircraft - - in various military aircraft - - there were only two places in America that were making these fuel cells. I got a provision through an appropriations bill, which prohibited those from being outsourced and built in France or China or some other country, because I believed that it was my job to protect that manufacturing plant right there in Polk County. And I did, and it's still there to this day because of our efforts in getting a provision - - an earmark - - in an appropriations bill.

So I realize there have been - - there have been some abuses from time to time. There have been some very poor choices made by members of Congress. But as far as I'm concerned, I'll stand behind any earmark that I've ever supported and my only complaint about earmarks is I didn't get as many as I thought that we should have - - we should have. And working with Senator Nunn, working with Senator Fowler, and before him, Senator Mattingly, we worked together as a delegation to be sure that Georgia had its priorities met, and if it didn't -- wasn't provided for in the administration budget, then we saw to it that we had a fair hearing before the Congress.

SHORT: Are we going broke?

DARDEN: No, we're not going broke, but we're going to have to change direction. You know, we were going broke at the end of the first Bush administration and President Clinton came in, made some hard choices. We did what we had to do. We made some unpopular votes. Some say that's the reason I lost reelection in 1994 is because of some hard decisions that we had to make on the budget to raise some revenues and cut some spending. But the Congress will do what it

has to do, and the American government will do what it has to do in order to function effectively. And I think that we're at one of these critical standpoints right now, and for the record, we're in June of 2008, and it's an election here. It's a very important election year, and whoever the next President is, whether it's John McCain or Barack Obama, that President is going to have to make some very unpopular decisions. That President is going to have to say, "All right, there's only two ways that you can make the budget more in line with our resources, and that is to raise revenues or to cut spending." Those two things, there's no other way to do it, and that will have to be done with leadership from the next President and some fellowship with the next Congress. I see our situation now roughly parallel to where it was at the beginning of the Clinton administration, and as you know, when Bill Clinton left office, for his many criticisms and so forth, we were -- the national debt was actually going down and we had a surplus in our accounts. And the next President's going to have to make that same kind of tough decisions.

SHORT: You were very close to President Clinton.

DARDEN: Oh, he was a great friend of mine and I value - - value our friendship. He made some bad choices. We all make bad choices from time to time, and I've never been overly critical about people's - - people's mistakes because I've always believed that you don't judge people unless you want to be judged. Going back to the story of the woman on the well, you know, but President Clinton did a lot of good things, and he could have been reelected when he left office had he run - - had he run for reelection. I'm sure he's upset about the failure of his

wife to win the Democratic nomination this year, but I never saw it happening.

I think I'm the only person in America who did not think that Hillary Clinton would even run for president, because for all of her wonderful qualities, she had about 45% in negatives. And when you start off with 45% of the people who are going to vote against you anyway, you're in trouble.

Two, I thought she was a very and is a very effective Senator from New York. That's a pretty good - - pretty good gig there serving in the Senate from New York and she was -- is well respected by all the colleagues. And finally, I thought Senator Clinton - - Senator Hillary Clinton - - was aware of the - - or would be aware of the negative parts about serving in the White House as well as the positive, but I was wrong. She ran and, unfortunately for her, it didn't work out. But I don't think - - even though all the pundits are talking about the mistakes she made and how she could have won it - - I don't think it was ever in the cards. I just don't think it was to be. I think she made a valiant effort and I think President Clinton did his best to make it happen, but it couldn't happen.

By the way, here's a situation that President Clinton is in. I've been in the doghouse too at home, and he's in a situation where he had to do everything he could to support her. And even though he got criticized for it a little bit, if he hadn't been out there and hadn't been on the scene, people would have said, "Why aren't you helping your wife out?" and so forth. So, he was caught in an impossible, impossible position. Bill Clinton certainly has human frailties, but Bill Clinton knew how to talk to people and how to work it out - - things out. Let me tell you one quality that every politician ought to envy about Bill Clinton, and that is when he's talking to you, you are the most important person in the world. I don't care if you're a head of state from a foreign country, or if

you're somebody he runs into on the street while he's out running. When he's talking to you, you have his undivided attention, and that's a real quality that most political people don't have.

SHORT: Buddy, to change the subject now, we've been the world's protector for the last several decades, and actually found ourselves in unpopular wars in Korea and Vietnam and now Iraq, just to name a few. What should our policy be towards foreign encounters such as these?

DARDEN: We used to joke when I was a young man in Washington and we'd hear Herman Talmadge - - Senator Talmadge give speeches, and every speech he gave about foreign policy, he would say, "The United States can no longer afford to be backup, policemen, and Santa Clause for the whole world," and he would get carried away and some of our friends have always joked about it. But the truth is simple, in that the United States as the only superpower in the world cannot dictate to the rest of the world what kind of government they live under, and what their respective rights are in those sovereign nations. People talk about our struggles in Iraq and how we should give the Iraqi people their God-given rights to be free and have democracy. Well, I don't look at it - - at it that way. We can't go around telling that every nation in the world what kind of government they have and what they ought to do. If we did that, we might as well go down to Zimbabwe, we might as well go into Sierra Leone, we might as well - - and I could go over country after country in which their government is not to my liking and I don't particularly agree with. So we've got to get that out of our mind. Regrettably, we made a colossal blunder going into Iraq. President George Bush the first, even though I criticized him at

the time, I was wrong. I criticized him at the time because I said he should have gone on to Baghdad. As it turned out, he knew a lot more than I did. And regrettably, though, you cannot run the foreign policy of the United States from the Congress. You can't run it from a committee.

We elect a President and the constitution gives that President to conduct our foreign policy as he sees fit. We made big mistake. We've got to figure some way to unravel and extricate ourselves from this situation, because if we don't, John McCain's off the cuff comment about 100 years might come true. It seems like we should have learned our lesson. I was part of the Vietnam era, and we just see Vietnam happening here over and over and over again, and that - - when we come out of Iraq, I eventually say it's not going to be a whole lot different than it is before.

There won't be a Saddam Hussein but there'll be eventually somebody in charge. They will have some type of theocracy and I think we'll end up, in the end, at a tremendous expense of loss and life and resources having one bad government replace another. And I don't think what they seem to be heading to now is much better than what they had.

SHORT: On the subject of terrorism, since 9/11 we've been afraid of continuing terrorist attacks. Are we doing the right thing now to prevent them?

DARDEN: I think a lot of the things we're doing, we're doing of no consequence whatsoever. I think what we've got to do is look at the probabilities and look at ways in which we are most vulnerable, and concentrate our assets and our efforts in that direction. One way, I think, is we

probably need to spend a lot more money and resources on what comes to this country in ships through our ports. I think that's - - that's a real serious one there. I think we've got to do a better job of patrolling our borders. But at the same time, we will never be able to - - in a country such as ours, in a free country, in a democracy - - be able to assure ourselves we're going to be completely free of terrorism.

The way we do it, in my view, is to be a good world citizen and a good neighbor, and try to be a positive influence throughout the world. And that is the number one thing we need to do, and in addition to taking whatever reasonable steps that are necessary to protect ourselves. But there's no way we can ever become 100% - - 100% assured that we won't have some terrorist acts. And the past bills, like we've passed, creating a Department of Homeland Security, and sending tens of millions of dollars to the Midwest for fire trucks in some Podunk place in Iowa or in Missouri for homeland security of some town of 500, I think is really scandalous. And most of the things that have been done, including the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, I think have been of no consequence.

SHORT: Speaking of protecting our borders, is there a solution to the present immigration problem?

DARDEN: Not that I know of. If I had one, I'd offer myself for office and implement it. But, as you know, there are some 12 million people in our country today who are not citizens and are here illegally. Most of them, for the most part, make a positive contribution to this country. I've

said many times that if you sent all of these people back, you couldn't get the lawns mowed in Buckhead, and you couldn't get the houses built in suburbia, and you couldn't get the chickens plucked in Gainesville, or the onions pulled up in Vidalia. I think that we have been - - and this is my own personal view - - both nationally and locally here in this state, we have been unduly harsh and inhospitable to our neighbors and our visitors in this country. And I for one am very much against most of the initiatives that have been taken against these people.

They don't pose a threat to us. Most of them are here because they're trying to find a better life. And if you look at it, unless you're Native American, most of which we banished and killed and in other ways mistreated, all of us are immigrants. It's just a matter of degree. And I trace my ancestry back to somewhere in England, and many of us to Europe, Australia, who knows. But I don't think it's nearly the problem that a lot of people do, and I'm kind of a live and let live kind of people. As I approach my 65th birthday, I've decided that there are some things that I'm not going to worry about, and that's one of them.

SHORT: Moving ahead now to 1994, not a good year for Democrats in America.

DARDEN: Terrible year! Terrible year for Democrats, and I gave - - I gave my opponent a little bit too much ammunition, probably. They had pictures of me out there running with the President, and said I was running with the wrong crowd. They were able to point out that I had voted with the Clinton administration most of the time. And when I was in Congress and they had a Republican President, I could go about halfway one way or the other, but I felt like that it

was incumbent upon the Congress and the Democratic Congress for the President to succeed, especially in his first term. And I supported him on some close issues on tax bills, on the Deficit Reconciliation Act. I supported him on the NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Act. I had a little - - some doubts about that. So I made my conservative friends mad on that tax issue. I made my liberal friends mad on the trade issue. But I really felt like that we needed - - we as a Congress needed to give this President some leeway.

So I didn't think I'd get beat. I thought I'd have a close election. But on the other hand, Bob, if you're in office, if you can't make some decisions that you think are right and ought to be implemented, what's the purpose of serving in the first place? You know, I could - - if I'm just looking for a job, you know, you can make more money out in the private sector any day. So I made some - - I made some tough decisions. President Clinton loaded us down, by the way.

There were also some gun bills that came up. So it was kind of a perfect storm, and compounding that fact was that we had had a redistricting a couple years before, which had also changed my district around in the areas in which I had developed a very strong constituency. Dade, Walker, and Catoosa Counties in particular, I lost. I lost certain areas of Cobb County, and I picked up Troup, Heard, Carroll, and Douglas Counties, in addition to Haralson County and Polk County. Some of those counties were favorable for me, but some of them weren't, in particular Douglas County.

So as a result of redistricting, but more because I was a weakened incumbent by some of the votes I cast, I was part of the group who came home in 1995. As you know, the Congress turned over and we lost more than 66 in the House of Representatives. It was a total disaster. After it

happened - - after it happened, President Clinton felt so bad he decided to bring all of the House members down there and let them have a session with them. But there were so many they had to divide us up in shifts, and -- but they mixed us up from different parts of the country. So I went down - - I went down with a crowd from Texas, and Danny Rostenkowski, the embattled Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee also got beat that year. Well, he got beat, of course. He had been convicted and was about to go to prison, and he was among that group, and we were sitting around talking to President Clinton. He would call on each one of us individually, and there was all this gnashing and gnawing of teeth, and everybody's complaining about this and that - - getting on the President. But it got to Rostenkowski, and he said, "Well, Mr. President, I can tell you one thing, for whatever reasons, I got beat. Had absolutely nothing to do with you." He says, "I'm the author of my own misfortune." And we all got a big, big laugh about that."

What I told President Clinton that day is - - I said, "Mr. President, I don't think you realize this, but there's no way that this new crowd that's coming in are going to be your friend. And they are committed - - and I'm talking about the new Speaker, Gingrich - - to your absolute total and utter destruction, and I'm not sure you're up to standing up to these people, but you've got to remember that there's no way you can play ball with them." Well, it turns out that President Clinton was totally up to it and that's when he came up with the triangulation, you know, and he also beat - - also outsmarted the House and the Senate and managed to get reelected himself in two years. So, that all worked out - - worked out for the better. But the bottom line is that this is a system, Bob, this is the way it works, and if the country's not satisfied with the way that the

country is going, then this is their ultimate - - their ultimate way of saying, "Hey, let's change directions in midcourse here."

And so we changed directions in midcourse, and I think for the better, and what I've got to realize is that this is not about me, and it's not about who's elected and who's defeated on an individual basis. It's about our system and the country. And after I got beat in 1994 and had to go home, I came away with even a greater appreciation of our system than before, because it's bigger than any of us, and that's what we've got to realize is that - - is that our system of government, for all its many faults, and while it might have dealt me a particularly devastating blow at the time, that's the way it works. I was a lot more upset and a lot more devastated when I lost the DA's race in 1976 at age 32 than I took my loss when I left the Congress, because I looked at it as part of the ordinary course of business, and the way things were. And the fact that I had so many other people getting beat at the same time, I didn't look at it as a personal affront or a personal indictment.

In fact, I thought I was going to slip by because there was a physician by the name of Dr. Brenda Fitzgerald - - who's still on the scene here in Georgia - - who was a highly qualified candidate - - Republican candidate. She was a gynecologist from down in Carrollton. She was a good friend of Speaker Gingrich. She was articulate. She had reasonable and moderate positions on most of the national issues, and she was in a Republican primary with Bob Barr, the eventual winner. And I thought that she would have been - - and I still do - - a more formidable opponent than Bob Barr was. So if -- I thought I, frankly, would skate by when Barr, who was the weaker of the two - - in my opinion - - candidates in the general election. When Barr won, I thought - - I

thought I'd probably slip by. But it was not to be. Still a pretty close election. I don't remember the exact - - I think it was about two points, maybe a point and a half. But, you know, in our system it doesn't matter.

SHORT: Contract with America, that was given as the reason why the Republicans swept into office. Do you believe that?

DARDEN: I think it's overstated. I think they had some good ideas and maybe it did provide a framework for it, but let's face it, the midterm election is a referendum on the President, on the administration, and he lost the referendum big time. I think the Republicans did a good job in articulating it, but I'm not sure - - I'm not sure the fact that they produced a document and a few points for criticism in and of itself - - any of itself - - was the reason that it happened. I think it was general discontent with the Clinton administration and the current Congress, and when you're discontented then it's time to turn it over. The Contract - - so-called Contract with America - - for America, or as we said, on America might have provided a pretext, but in the end - - in the end, I think - - I think its overall effect was overstated.

SHORT: Let's talk for a minute about campaign spending. Do modern day campaigns cost too much?

DARDEN: Absolutely! Absolutely. And most of the money is wasted. Sam Nunn and I were

talking one time about our first race, and I asked him about how the polls went as he was trying to - - trying to win against David Gambrell. He said, "Polls," he said, "We didn't have any money for any polls. We just ran by the seat of our pants and went from day to day, and did our best." My first campaign - - my most rewarding one for Congress - - we spent, as of the day that I was elected in a runoff after having two elections going on seven weeks, we spent a grand total of \$104,000. And we ended up spending, I think, maybe another 25 because we won and because we paid some people that we wouldn't have paid ordinarily who were working kind of on a contingency. And we also paid for transportation to some events in Washington for some prospective staff. So I think we probably ended up spending maybe \$125,000 or so, but we got - we got to election day with \$104,000. Won by 60 - - 60%.

Then, fast forwarding to 1994, I spent the most I'd ever spent and lost. And then here's the ultimate time. In 2002, when I ran in another district for the Democratic nomination, the guy on the other side, I think he spent \$2 and a half or 3 million and I spent about a million and a half and there we were. So, I think most of the money spent in campaigns is wasted, and it's a grim thing to say. But, you see, for every time you've got the money there's a new product that they can produce to you. There's the focus groups. There are the polls. There are the push polls. There are the telephone calls. There are all kinds of - - let's put it this way, as long as the money is there, there are going to be creative and innovative ways to spend it. And I think most of the money that's spent on political campaigns doesn't contribute to the bottom line of producing votes, and you're hearing a minority report here, but I think US campaigns are too expensive. And the sad thing about it is I think most of it's wasted, and regrettably the small contribution

doesn't really matter anymore or get your attention; with one exception - - with one exception. I welcome the arrival of the Internet. Now, Howard Dean, I think, was the first person to effectively use that in his primary battles in 2002, and Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton have taken it to a new level - - to a science. And so, that's good that people are making small contributions through the Internet. That might be something, but in my view they cost too much and most of the money that folks like me, and I consider myself a donor now, because I do give money. I give money generously to campaigns. I think most of it's wasted.

SHORT: Do you think there should be spending limits?

DARDEN: The only problem with spending limits is, as you know, in the Supreme Court case of Buckley v. Valeo a number of years ago, the Supreme Court ruled that - - with some justification - - that it's your money and you ought to be able to spend it, you know, as you see fit. And if you've got \$10 million that you're dumb enough to spend on your own campaign, then you've got a right to do it. I would like to see - - I would like to see some curbs on how money is spent. That is, if you're supporting a campaign, it ought to be attributable to that campaign rather than some group that's made up of citizens to prevent the wearing of green badges and then somehow it turns out to be slamming this candidate or that candidate. I think that - - I think that there are too many loopholes in the campaign laws and I think they need to be more direct. But the problem all boils down to that Supreme Court case I just mentioned. I've always said two things about politics and money. One is, I tell people who come to see me, and, like you,

I've reached senior statesmanship status now and people think just because you and I are old that we know everything. And so we have to sit there and listen to these folks asking for our advice. But the two things I tell young folks running for office is one, don't quit your day job, and two, don't spend your own money. And I've done both. I've violated both of those. But in any event, campaign financing is a great, great source of concern to me.

This will never happen, because these jobs are already counted and picked out for serious partisans, but I'd love to serve on the Federal Election Commission and try to make some kind of impact and try to help straighten some of that - - some of that mess out. But what the Congress does is they, on purpose, make it just vague enough to - - so that the responsibility is not on them, it's on the donors, and it's on the companies that give. So on the one hand, they're banging us - - and I'm talking about from a donor standpoint now - - to give, give, give, give, but to follow this rule, rule, rule, and I think that - - I think that what you do is you put the restrictions on the donee rather than donor and you'd see a lot more compliance and a whole lot less problems.

SHORT: What do you think of public financing?

DARDEN: Public financing - - I'm on public financing like Ed Jenkins and I have been on abortion. We've been on so many different sides, we can't remember which one we're for now, and that's about - - that's about the way I've been on public financing. I have generally supported public financing and I think that in the end, in a perfect world, that might be the best way to

handle our federal campaigns. But as a practical matter, I don't think it's ever going - - ever going to come. If you could put in a system where you could restrict the amount spent, but the way you get around public financing, you see, is merely opt out of it and spend your own money, and there's no way you can force, in my opinion, public financing on someone.

SHORT: Let's turn now to party politics in Georgia. Were you surprised when the Republican party took over power in the state government?

DARDEN: Surprised? I was shocked. A friend of mine said that I might have to be on suicide watch for three or four days, but it was a big surprise to me. I thought Governor Barnes would get by, and not by a lot, but I thought that would give four years in for the Democrats to kind of get their act back together and to get a bench going, and to try to - - try to rebuild the party. It didn't happen. We took a devastating, history making loss when Governor Barnes was defeated in 2002. And what made Georgia unique is that we were the only Southern state and the only state I guess in the Union that had never had a Republican Governor since reconstruction, as far as I know anyway. And they say the bigger they are, the harder they fall. And when Georgia fell, then, of course, it fell all the way. You remember that several of the state Senators switched their party allegiance right after Governor Purdue, a former Democrat, was elected Governor, and then a couple of terms later than the House turned over. I think the House was two years after the Senate.

And so we'll have to play through this thing, and it'll run on cycles. And everybody says we'll

never have another Democratic Governor, we'll never have another Democratic legislature. And it won't happen overnight, but I think I'll live to see it. And I believe in the two-party system, and we had kind of a convoluted two-party system in the state. They were just divisions of the Democratic party, and then Republicans were the swing votes.

But I think we've probably had more of a - - we've had a major realignment now in the state, and I think that - - I am really fascinated by the prospects of the general election and Presidential election this year. So once this is over, we can kind of take stock and see where we are. We have some excellent Democratic candidates out there who could be Governor, including Thurbert Baker, our Attorney General, who's an African American. Now, I'm going to talk to him about this, but I would suspect that Attorney General Baker, right now, is keeping his powder dry to see how Barack Obama does in the state of Georgia after this next election. And if Obama carries the state, or if he makes a strong creditable showing, I think Thurbert Baker may emerge as a leading candidate for Governor in the next cycle. But of course, he's in a situation now where he can - - in this off year, he can sit back and assess his situation.

That's just one example of the many things that could happen. I think you're going to see a realignment in Georgia, though. Starting with the rural whites who now have gone Republican. The suburban whites are coming back toward the Democratic party now, connected with the urban. And look at where the people are in Georgia! The people in Georgia now have pretty much left the farms, and they are centered in these various population - - population metropolitan areas such as Savannah, Brunswick, down in Columbus, over to Augusta. Athens, where we're sitting right now, is becoming a metropolitan area of its own. It will join Atlanta pretty soon.

It'll all be one and going on all the way up to Chattanooga.

The Atlanta-influenced area in this state, as you know, is something like 65 - - 65% now, and the media market covers that amount of the state. So, I think this state is realigning. Doug Bachtel told the Farm Bureau in Carrollton about ten years ago - - to their horror - - as they sat there bemoaning the fact that farmers didn't get enough attention. He told them that there are more private security guards in Georgia than there are farmers. This was ten years ago. So, this state has dramatically changed right under our noses and I don't think we've seen the end of it. So I think the Democratic party, of course it will - - it will realign. There's a lot of work to be done, but I think the future of the two-party system in this state is very, very good.

SHORT: Many disenchanted Democrats say that the state party is too dependent on minorities and labor, and they feel that that's a detriment to the party. Do you think so?

DARDEN: I think that the party needs to broaden its base. I won't say too dependent because you have to rely on those people who are there and you can't say, well, we want this and we want that when they're not available to you. But we've got to keep what we've got to the extent of offending them from time to time to time, and now it's time for the minorities, specifically the African-Americans and the labor people, to be more tolerant of other folks. And that's my criticism of labor in this state is they have not been overly tolerant of other groups, and nor have the African-American segment of the party.

And so, I think it's time now that - - I think the onus is back on them. This party - - this

Democratic party has been very good to those two groups, but now I think it's time for them to make some concessions back to the rest of us.

SHORT: Would you ever consider switching parties?

DARDEN: I never considered it. I never considered it, because I'm one of those people who, once I join the team, I stay with it. I'm a Democrat. I'm a Methodist. I'm a Kiwanian and I'm a University of Georgia supporter. I'm past chair of the LaGrange College Board of Trustees. Once I join and become a part of an organization, I try to improve it, I try to enhance its efficacy, rather than going off to another side because, like - - and so I'm one of those folks who like to say I've been there in good times and bad times. And I believe in sticking with something and trying to improve it, rather than going off to another direction.

SHORT: Many states require registration by party. Do you think we should do that in Georgia?

DARDEN: I'm not sure that's a good idea. I kind of like some of these other questions you and I have talked about. I've changed my mind several times on it, but my current position is no. I don't think we ought to have party registration. I think that you empower the electorate more. You empower the electorate more to be able to come in and out of primaries and affect those primaries. Because I think that the parties have a tendency to nominate the most ideological on either side, and having given the people the right to come in and affect the party primary, I think

adds to the broad-based appeal of the candidate. At least that's my position these days. I've heard arguments for both sides. California, by the way, has party registration and whoever nominates generally speaking the most ideological candidate loses. And I know there are a lot of good people in California - - Democrats in office right now because of some of these kooks that Republicans have nominated out there. And it's easier for a small group of people to get control of a political party if they can keep anybody else from coming in and voting. So, that's where I am today.

SHORT: Were you surprised when Governor Roy Barnes appointed Democrat Zell Miller to the United States Senate to replace Republican Paul Coverdale?

DARDEN: I was surprised when I heard that he had - - I was not surprised by the time he did it. I was surprised when he first considered it and decided to do it. But at the same time, you got to remember that this was before Senator Miller's latest experience on the road to Damascus. This was another Zell Miller that we had known. He left - - Zell Miller left as Governor - - very high popularity ratings. He'd done great things for this state, and I think that affected Governor Barnes' decision to a great extent. But the real reason Zel Miller was appointed by Roy Barnes is that it was extremely important to the Democratic caucus and the United States Senate to keep this seat. And the polling done by the Democratic Senatorial campaign committee showed that there was only one person in Georgia, a Democrat, who could be assured of winning that seat and holding onto it.

We were under a pretty fast time frame here. You know, Senator Coverdale tragically died in July, which meant that the special election would have to be held in November. Now, had Senator Coverdale died after around September the 29th or 30th, then the Barnes appointee could have served beyond the incoming election to the next election. However, since Senator Coverdale died in July, it became necessary for Governor Barnes to appoint somebody who would have to be elected - - have to stand election at that next - - at that next election, which was in November. So consequently - - consequently Zell Miller - - and the plan worked, as we all anticipated it would. Senator Miller was reelected overwhelmingly. Well, not only was he reelected overwhelmingly, nobody of any consequence, with the possible exception of Senator Mattingly - - former Senator Mattingly - - even ran against him.

So none of the incumbent members of Congress, who had huffed and puffed about running for the Senate, none of them would give up - - risk their seats to run. So, it was a good choice politically, and you've heard the old expression, "Seemed like a good idea at the time!"

SHORT: Do you think that Senator Miller's keynote address to the 2004 National Republican Convention was appropriate?

DARDEN: Well, I'm not one to determine what's appropriate and what isn't, and I'm a friend of Senator Miller and I admire and respect him in many ways. Having said that, I wouldn't have done it myself.

SHORT: Who, if anyone, is your political role model?

DARDEN: No question about my political role model would be Richard B. Russell, who really inspired me to a life of public service. I probably knew him personally less than any of the other people that I've worked with over the years, but because of the particular age I happened to be and the particular accomplishments he happened to have made, I think it's unquestionably Richard B. Russell. I had very minimal contact with Congressman Vinson - - Chairman Vinson - - but I had a lot of respect for him too.

Looking on to modern day, Carl Sanders. Carl Sanders is someone that - - he's gotten better with age, in my estimation. The more I've found out about Carl Sanders, the more I've come to know and admire him. And among my contemporaries, of course, you know about my deep affection and friendship with Governor Barnes, but there's also Norman Underwood. Norman Underwood, who I consider among my very closest friends, and a man of total and impeccable judgment and integrity. And I think - - I think those are primarily my role models. Having said that, there are a lot of people - - I like a whole lot more people than I dislike, and I like to think that I've tried to benefit from the strong points of all the others.

SHORT: Looking back on your political career, can you think of anything you might have done differently?

DARDEN: Oh, you can always think of dozens of things that I could have done differently. Going back to my service as DA, to my service in the Congress in the United States, from decisions I made in one campaign or another. But I'm not one to look back, Bob. I always look to the future, and if you sit around here wondering about what if or if or what had happened had this - - I told somebody I was going to write a book one time and the name of it was going to be, "Almost Rich and Almost Famous," because there're always, if you'd known this or if you had thought of this, you might have done something differently. But I leave - - I leave my political career, and looking back on it, I feel blessed. I've had a great run. I ran 12 elections. I never ran unopposed. Never ran unopposed. Always had Republican opposition when I ran. Sometimes I ran a landslide, sometimes I got beat three times. That's .750 batting average. As you know, that puts you in the Hall of Fame in baseball, but you're just another politician in this field. But looking back on it - - always little things, but if you get carried away with what you should have done, or could have done, or ought to have done, it'll ruin your life. So, the only thing I can say is I had a great run. I don't have any real regrets, and knowing what I know now, I'd do it all over again.

SHORT: What's your fondest memory?

DARDEN: Gosh, that's hard to say. But I will have to say, though, that my greatest thrill in politics was the day in November - - early November of 1983. The initial day I came and was sworn into the Congress of the United States. Now, I've had a lot of great moments and a lot of

highs, a lot of lows, but that - - the one culmination of that - - of that day - - to have come all the way from the elevator to the House floor, you know, was a great - - a great step. And it was personally rewarding.

I guess the most emotional moment I ever had was about three weeks later, though. There was a ceremony held in the Rotunda of the Capitol for members of Congress, House, and Senate, presided over by Tip O'Neill, and presided over by the President of the Senate. And the President came, and the purpose of it was to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the death of John F. Kennedy - - the assassination of John F. Kennedy. And that event had occurred on my 20th birthday, right after I returned from Washington having met Kennedy. And 20 years later to that day, I was in the Rotunda in a ceremony commemorating the 20th anniversary. This would have been November 22nd, roughly, of 1983. And the emotion of that moment and what had happened to me since that time was truly overwhelming. And, looking back on that, it's perhaps the most emotional moment I've spent in Congress, thinking about my journey for the last 20 years. But that would not be a high moment, that would be an emotional moment. But again, that first election to Congress was the greatest election of all.

SHORT: Congressman, your friend Governor Roy Barnes said this about you. "Buddy Darden is a great campaigner, but Lillian is even better."

DARDEN: He's absolutely right.

SHORT: I know you agree, so please tell us about your wife, Lillian, and your family.

DARDEN: Lillian and I met here at the University of Georgia next to a ballot box in front of Creswell Hall when I was running for student office and she was running for student office. She was a native of Atlanta, but our parents had known each other through our Methodist church connections long before either one of us were born. Lillian was Lillian Budd. Her father and mother are Warren Candler Budd and Dorothy Budd. Her father's been deceased for a number of years, but her mother is still with us at age 89. She lives out at Wesley Woods on the Emory Campus.

Lillian and I got married on February the 18th, 1968, and we recently celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary. She's a truly great campaigner. Being a preacher's daughter, she learned how to meet people and how to get along with people, and really has a true - - has a true knack. She, of course, from the time we got married until the time that our children went off to college - - except for a two-year teaching stint - - she primarily raised the children and helped in all of my activities. Since that time, she has had a career of her own. She is President and CEO of the Foundation of Wesley Woods on the Emory Campus, and she has raised millions of dollars for Alzheimer's research and for indigent care, and also to help construct and modernize some of those facilities. So since 1995, she has had a career in her own right, and has been recognized many times as a truly outstanding individual. Just this year alone, she was selected as Cobb County's Woman of Distinction by the Cobb County YWCA. But more importantly, during my career as a public official, she was invaluable. From the time we campaigned in the first election

beginning in 1972 for DA, through my campaigns for House of Representatives, through my campaigns for Congress - - I ran six campaigns for Congress the first time, an unsuccessful race in 2002 - - but she's always been there and has been a truly great asset to me. I don't know how - - and I've spoken to several friends of mine whose wives have either not been involved, or else who frankly did not have somebody available. I frankly don't know how I could have gotten by without her.

When I was in Congress, we - - she had pretty traditional roles. She looked after things back home. She looked after the kids. When I went to Congress, my daughter, Lillian Christine Darden, was in the sixth grade, and my son George W. Darden, IV, was in the fourth grade. So, they came up under the shadow of being kids of the Congressman, but because of about 99% of Lillian's work, they both did well.

Christy was the valedictorian of her high school graduating class. George was an honor student. They both went onto college. Christy, after she got a degree here at Georgia and a master's degree from Georgetown, had a great career with CNN as a producer and was a White House producer - - her last job before she left. She was in the room with President Bush when he was reading "My Pet Goat" in Sarasota, and she was working for John King at the time, who's head of the CNN bureau, and she was producing that. And she's very, very accomplished in languages, but she saw that that was a young person's job and that - - she went back to law school. And she finished Georgetown Law School two years ago. She's married to Patrick Francis Brennan, who works for the federal government, and they have two daughters: Katherine Lillian Brennan, who will be four in this coming August, and Cecilia Christine Brennan, who

will be a one year old in September. And she's employed at a law firm in Washington.

My son, George W. Darden, IV, we are equally proud of him. He has almost finished his PhD in education at Georgia. He's a schoolteacher by profession and he teaches in the inner city in Atlanta. He's married to Casey Schoen Darden of Dalton. They were married at the Carter Center last July the 14th. They have no children, but they're both very dedicated teachers. She teaches at Inman Middle School, a science teacher, and, of course, George teaches social studies and honors and AP history at Grady High School in Atlanta.

So I believe that - - primarily as a result of Lillian's work and very little of my own - - that our children have done quite well. They both have a very healthy sense and a great attitude about public service, and so we believe that we have instilled in them, you know, a lot of our feelings about it. But I've got to give Lillian about 99% of the credit for raising the kids.

SHORT: She's a great lady.

DARDEN: I was gone the whole time. You see, I would leave on a Monday and - - or a Tuesday at the latest, and come up to Washington and return on a Thursday night or a Friday, or sometimes I'd be out of the country on the weekend. So she carried - - she carried the ball most of the time.

SHORT: Now, if you don't mind, I'd like to ask you about your life after politics. What have you been up to?

DARDEN: Well, that's very important because the one thing I was convinced is that after I left politics, I had two goals. One, that I wanted to continue to stay involved and I wanted to make - - continuing hopefully to make a contribution, and still be part of what was going on. So, and my other goal was this. Bob, I don't have to tell you, you're in public life, but I was 51-years-old when I left Congress and I basically had a zero net worth. Now, I didn't owe any money. I never had been in trouble before. I had a good profession, ability to make a living, but I had spent - - I had educated my children for the most part. We lived in a decent house. The bank and I owned a nice house, but essentially - - essentially I had, except for a little amount of equity I had in the house, I didn't own a thing.

So, one, I wanted to start accumulating a little money too. So, I went to work for a great law firm. It was Long, Aldridge and Norman downtown, Clay Long's firm. My friend Gordon Giffen was the one that kind of got me involved with the firm, and I've been with that firm since March of 1995. And the great thing about the firm - - this law firm, for me, and the reason I've stayed there, is they've given me the flexibility to do whatever I wanted to do. Of course, I had to account for my time and I had to put some money in the till, and I had to get business, and I had to handle business. But they've given me the flexibility to work on political campaigns. They've never questioned. They've never told me I couldn't do this, or - - they've told me sometimes maybe it wouldn't be a good idea, but I've done it anyway for the most part. But the firm's been very supportive of what I've done.

So during the time that I've been a practicing lawyer with the firm, I've also done some

government relations in Washington. Not much, I'm not a registered lobbyist in D.C. or anything, but I have on occasion helped out with projects we had going and clients we had in Washington, as well as here in the state. I even tried a couple of cases - - to the horror of some my malpractice carriers recently - - but I still go to court every now and then. I've been very involved in Governor Barnes' campaigns, both of them, and I served as chairman of his Judicial Nominating Commission, and I also served as Governor Barnes' outside counsel on a number of things. At the request of Governor Barnes and with the support of Attorney General Baker, our firm and I have served as a counsel for the state of Georgia Special Assistant Attorney General to try to resolve our water disagreement with our neighbors from Florida and Alabama, and also with the federal government. And we made a lot of progress during those years. We still represent the state in a number of lawsuits. Other people are primarily handling the work now, but we've been up and down. We've had some great successes, but lately we seem to be at somewhat of a stalled situation, but I've been involved in our negotiations.

But the great thing about my education here at the University of Georgia and a liberal arts education is it gives you the flexibility to have a profession that you can reinvent yourself. And we've laughed - - since I've been at the firm, I've reinvented myself five or six times and for a while I'll do just this kind of work, and then I'll end up going to court and all of a sudden a problem will occur. I represented the head of the state police from Puerto Rico at one time, several years ago, before the Justice Department on a complaint about some testimony he gave before Congress, and that was a pretty involved thing for several months. So I've had a lot of exciting things that I worked on from a law firm standpoint, but at the same time, like any job,

you've got to be able to turn a profit and do some work, and make yourself useful to the firm.

SHORT: President Clinton appointed you to the Overseas Private Investment Corporation. Tell us about that.

DARDEN: Well, regrettably - - regrettably, I never got a chance to serve less than year because by that time the new administration had come in and they decided that they didn't want any Democrats in there. So, we were all replaced, but that's a great board. What it does, it guarantees loans for companies - - American companies who want to make investments in other countries, but can't do it because of the risk involved, either due to an unstable government or to an unstable currency or an unstable financial condition. So, it gives American companies that protection, and so we either guarantee loans or make special - - special accommodations to see that they can carry out the projects. They're a very good agency and it's a public/private type organization that I think the government ought to do more of.

SHORT: You've also done work with the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs.

DARDEN: I've been used as a resource. I've volunteered to go. I've been to Indonesia. I've been to Turkey a couple of times. I've been to various hot spots in the world. I've been to Africa, West Africa - - West Africa for the purpose of lecturing and - - I hope in a positive way,

let's say speaking to various members of Parliament and government leaders about our system of government. And in particular, when I went to Senegal and spoke to an international conference of leaders, we were trying to sell them on the concept of a civilian government, and how just because you've been a commando and you put on a suit doesn't really make you - - doesn't really make you a civilian leader. And so I've talked there about the necessity - - the necessity of a civilian control of the military. So that's been one of my specialties.

Another area in which I'm regarded with hopefully some respect is the ethics - - the need for an ethics code. I talked to the Parliament of Turkey - - members of the Parliament of Turkey about doing that with very limited or no success, but National Democratic Institute tries to export our democracy and our ways of government through discussing our ideas and exchanging ideas with democracies - - emerging democracies. And so I've worked in that area. I've had a chance to go to some very exciting and interesting places. Of course, this is volunteer. They pay your expenses, but you, of course, give your time and your expertise. And I want to start doing a little bit more - - a little bit more of that.

SHORT: Finally, Congressman Darden, have you ruled out elective politics in the future?

DARDEN: Well, they say you ought to never say what you're never going to do, but I have absolutely no intention of ever running again. As I told my good friend, Wayne Mason, up in Gwinnett County, who has been a great supporter of mine financially and morally and every other way, I said, "After this last time I've been cured like a Talmadge hound for politics.

So I think when I left Congress the first time, I always felt like I had another race in me. I either -- I considered running in 1998 against Senator Coverdale, but realism caught up with me and I decided not to do that. And I had hoped to be appointed to the Senate when Senator Miller was appointed. That didn't work out, but I always felt like I had one more race in me, and I made it. And in 2002, I made it unsuccessfully, but so my thirst to serve has been quenched. So I can say I have no real desire to get back into public life.

SHORT: Well, you've been a great asset to the state of Georgia and we certainly appreciate your being with us on our program.

DARDEN: Well, thank you, Bob, and I hope to be around a good bit longer.

[END]

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