

Lewis Massey interviewed by Bob Short
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BOB SHORT: I'm Bob Short, and this is Reflections on Georgia Politics sponsored by Young Harris College, the Richard B. Russell Library, and the University of Georgia. Our guest

is Lewis Massey, former Secretary of State for the state of Georgia. Lewis, welcome.

LEWIS MASSEY: Thank you, Bob. It's great to be here with you.

SHORT: We're delighted that you could join us. You were born and grew up in Gainesville, the son of two well-known parents, Abit and Kayanne Massey. Tell us about your parents and tell us about growing up.

MASSEY: Well thank you. I did grow up in Gainesville which of course was chicken country as you well know, and the year before I was born, Bob -- I was born in 1962, in '61 my dad took the job as the Director of the Georgia Poultry Federation and he's held that position ever since. You don't hear about people in the same jobs that long anymore much, but so I like to say I grew up eating chicken every meal, you know, breakfast, lunch and dinner.

But my mother originally was from Calhoun and she actually was Miss Georgia in 1959 and my father, Abit, was head of what was then called the Department of Industry and later became Industry, Trade and Tourism and now Economic Development, and he had the good fortune of escorting Miss Georgia around one day around the Capitol and those areas and they of course ended up getting engaged and married and I have one sister, Camille, who actually lives in New York now.

But Gainesville was a great place to grow up. It was a small town, not as small now of course, but then we were a long way from Atlanta. Now it seems like it's just a quick drive, but then we

were a good bit apart from Atlanta, or we thought we were, but it was a neat place. Hall County's grown and Gainesville's grown a lot, but it's a great town and I still stay in touch with a lot of people that I grew up with there.

SHORT: So you went then to public schools in Gainesville.

MASSEY: Sure did. Went to Anota Elementary and then on to Gainesville Middle School and Gainesville High School, public schools all the way, and we were the red elephants in Gainesville. I understand that's the only school in the country that has a mascot called the Red Elephants. I don't know if that's good or bad, but anyway then from there I went to the University of Georgia.

SHORT: Well tell us about your days at the university.

MASSEY: Well when I got there in 1980 there was another freshman on campus named Herschel Walker that arrived from down in south Georgia in Wrightsville, as you well remember, so the first thing I think about when I think about my days at Georgia was of course they had a great football team. I think they lost one home game the whole time I was in school over there in the early '80s, and so that was a wonderful time to be in Athens. I majored in finance and was a member of the Lamda Chi fraternity and was pretty active on campus. We didn't have student government at the time because about four years previous to the

time I started there a guy had run for President of the Student Council and his platform was he was going to abolish Student Council, so he was elected and they abolished Student Council, but they did have a position -- all the Student Council presidents from the colleges universities around the state were part of a group called the Student Advisory Council and they met with the Board of Regents twice a year to talk about concerns and issues to students.

So since Georgia didn't have a Student Council, they had a selection process to choose somebody to be on that Council and I was lucky enough to be chosen twice, so twice a year I would come to Atlanta from Athens and I would meet with student government presidents from around the state and we would meet with the Regents and that really increased my interest a great deal in public service and policy and politics, and so that was I think a good training ground for me there.

My dad told me that he'd pay for four years at Georgia and no more, so I got in and out in four years, but had a great time over in Athens and I think I got a good education as well.

SHORT: Do you remember the first political campaign you participated in?

MASSEY: Well let's see. When I was growing up, you know, I would volunteer to help folks locally like Bobby Lawson and Joe Wood. You remember them being from Hall County and representing Gainesville and Hall County in the General Assembly and I'd go pass out brochures, you know, and go to rallies and things like that. Probably my first official duty as a paid position for a campaign was just after college I was hired as the driver for Robert Benham.

SHORT: Um-hum.

MASSEY: He had just been appointed to the Court of Appeals, as you remember, by Governor Harris and he was the first African-American to be appointed -- or to serve on the Court of Appeals. And I like to say because of my driving skills he won that election, but the truth is all I did was get him from place to place, but it was a wonderful learning experience and I'm proud of the fact that I played a real small role in his successful campaign. And then of course he went on to the Supreme Court and was a Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. First African-American Chief Justice at that time in the state's history, and that was my first paid position was driving him around during the summer, I believe it was 1984.

SHORT: Is that when you got to know Joe Frank Harris?

MASSEY: It was because Governor Harris had appointed Robert Benham to the Court of Appeals and I got to know both Governor Harris and his staff, and so when that campaign ended I actually went to work for a financial planning company for a while, but I stayed in touch with the Governor and his staff, and then they were looking for somebody to sort of coordinate some campaigns - - his reelection effort in '86 and the campaigns of several people that he had appointed to office like Warren Evans. Remember Warren Evans?

SHORT: Um-hum.

MASSEY: And Gary Andrews who --

SHORT: Yeah.

MASSEY: Was appointed to the PFC and --

SHORT: Right.

MASSEY: Warner Rogers he had appointed to the state school Superintendent position --

SHORT: Right.

MASSEY: And so they were looking for somebody to coordinate all those campaigns sort of under the umbrella of the Joe Frank Harris ticket and they hired me to do that in '86. And then we were successful with that effort, and then I went to work with him in early '87 and spent about two and a half years on his staff.

And, you know, working with Governor Harris was a wonderful learning experience. He was, as you know Bob, not a flashy individual, but a very confident person. He was smart and he stayed close to the people. He understood the government process and the budgetary process, and so I

learned an awful lot from him and was honored to be part of his team for about two and a half years at the Capitol.

SHORT: Tell us a little bit about Governor Harris's administration. He, as I recall, had a strong education program, as well as being very, very futuristic in planning and long-range goals for the state of Georgia. What do you remember about all that?

MASSEY: Well, I think the hallmark of his administration, Bob, is what they call QBE, quality basic education, and he really was way ahead of his time in setting the standard for how education ought to be funded in the state, and his theory was that at child even in a poor neighborhood should have the same opportunities as a child growing up in a rich neighborhood, and so they sort of even out educational funding across the state and the state began to kick in more money for education which has I think been good for Georgia.

We've made great strides, and of course there's always things we can do to improve and certainly we still need to look for ways to improve the system, but generally speaking I think Governor Harris's administration made a great foundation for education in Georgia. He was also a big proponent of higher education and making sure that our colleges and universities around the state received the funding that they needed to prepare students for the 21st century. So that I think was the hallmark of his administration.

He also, as you mentioned, worked a lot in the area of smart growth. He saw, you know, down the road that Georgia was going to continue to grow. I think that was the beginning of when so

many people started moving into Georgia. I think I remember Zell Miller saying in the mid '90s that during those couple of years, '95 – '96 or so, more people had moved into Georgia than any other state in the country except for California and Texas -- or maybe California and Florida.

The point was Governor Harris saw that growth coming and wanted to set a structure for making sure we grew and expanded in a smart way, and so he appointed a couple of commissions that Joel Cowan headed from down in Peachtree City and they did a great job with that effort.

SHORT: Um-hum. The Olympics also came during his administration and I believe you were involved in that.

MASSEY: I was. I tell you that was an interesting scenario. Billy Payne who of course had the idea to bring the Olympics to Atlanta when he started that effort in what I guess was around maybe '92 is when he started, '91 – '92, I remember he wrote a letter to Governor Harris and said, you know, I want to try to bring the Olympics to Atlanta and to Georgia and I'd like for you to appoint somebody on your staff to be a part of what we're doing.

And so Governor Harris gave it to the Chief of Staff who was Tom Purdue at the time and he passed it down to the next person and the next person and the next person. It finally got down to me and it was an interesting scenario because I got to go to the very first meeting, the very first planning meeting that they had to talk about bringing the Olympics to Georgia, and of course nobody at that point except for Billy Payne and a small group of people thought we had any chance of doing it.

Actually it was the late '80s. I was a little bit ahead on the time, but anyway I went to the first meeting and remember the energy that Billy had and the enthusiasm and of course everything grew from there and then Georgia was selected and so but you're right it all started in Governor Harris's administration and again I played a real small role, but it was fun to be involved.

SHORT: Well it brought the world to Atlanta.

MASSEY: It did and of course by the time they had the Olympics here Zell Miller was Governor and he had by that time appointed me Secretary of State. So I got to host and meet with a lot of foreign dignitaries during that time, but that's sort of jumping ahead. We'll get back to that a little later.

SHORT: Yeah. So what happened after -- after you worked with Governor Harris?

MASSEY: Well I went to work for Pierre Howard who at that time was a state Senator from DeKalb County and he decided to run for Lt. Governor. And so he hired me to be his campaign manager in the early '90s. Actually I guess it was early 1990, and so I took on that challenge and we had a lot of very formidable opponents. Jim Pannell and Joe Kennedy and Bud Stumbaugh, you remember that name?

SHORT: Yeah. Oh yeah.

MASSEY: A couple of other folks. I think there were six or seven in that race. George Berry got in that race very late if you remember.

SHORT: That's right.

MASSEY: And we finished second in the primary to Joe Kennedy, and then we won the runoff and then in the general election actually ran against Matt Towery who is now, you know, a political pollster and commentor.

SHORT: Right.

MASSEY: But that was also a wonderful experience because, you know, Pierre had a deep network across the state, and I can remember a lot of people who are in office now were very early supporters of Pierre Howard, including Saxby Chambliss who is now of course a Republican U.S. Senator and Charlie Norwood who served in Congress and unfortunately is not living now, but Charlie Norwood was a big supporter of Pierre's in the early going. And so that was a very interesting experience for me to travel across the state with him and to put together, you know, pockets of support all over the state. And after we won that election he asked me to be his Chief of Staff so I started there in early 1991 and put together a staff and, you know, went on to work for him and really enjoyed my time there was well.

SHORT: Getting back to that election, I'm curious to find out what a campaign manager does in that short period of time between the election and the second primary, which is what we call runoffs. How do you -- what do you go for?

MASSEY: Well, of course the runoff then was three weeks after the primary. The law's since changed and it's now four weeks, as you know, but then we only had three weeks after the primary and to tell you the truth what we spent most of our time doing during that time was raising money because, you know, that was the early stages of when television came to be a big part of Georgia politics.

Backing up for a second, Joe Frank Harris's elections in '82 and '86, you know, wasn't as much built on TV. It was more grassroots and getting out into the communities and radio ads, but by the time 1990 came along and Zell Miller was running for Governor and Pierre Howard for Lt. Governor, TV really dominated and it took up I'm guessing maybe 80% of the money that we raised. And so during the runoff we had to spend a lot of time almost around the clock that first week raising money and then the last two weeks of the runoff putting that money into TV commercials and letting people understand who Pierre Howard was and what he stood for. So while it would be great to say that we went around and, you know, shook 400 hands a day, that's not really the case because you're in such a short period of time you don't have the ability to get your message out unless you're on TV. And so that's what we spent most of our time doing during the runoff election. And a campaign manager really coordinates all those activities

and maybe points the staff in the right direction and makes sure everybody's pulling their weight.

SHORT: Um-hum. So you and Lt. Governor Howard served during the term of Zell Miller.

What was your relationship with the Governor?

MASSEY: Well, you know, I think it was very positive and very good. I wouldn't say real close because, as you know, Zell Miller's a pretty independent guy and while he involved Pierre Howard in some discussion and decision making, you know, Zell Miller was his own man and will always be his own man, and of course Pierre had his own priorities and agenda as well. So they worked closely together. I wouldn't say real, real closely, but during the time I got to, you know, be in meetings with Governor Miller I'd say, you know, every couple of months about some sort of an issue, and that enabled me to get to know him better in my respect and admiration for him, you know, increased every time I was with him. And so I'd say, you know, positive.

Again I was not somebody he called on on any regular basis for advice or counsel because that's what I was doing for Pierre. He had his own team and a good team around him, but it really gave me a chance to get to know him better when I was in the Lt. Governor's office. And of course he had served as Lt. Governor for 16 years prior to becoming Governor, as you well know, so he understood the kinds of challenges that we were dealing with on a daily basis.

SHORT: How difficult is it for a Lt. Governor to pursue his own political goals having the

Governor up there looking over his shoulder?

MASSEY: It's not easy. It's not easy, and especially, Bob, when you have a Governor like Zell Miller who is active and engaged and he's media savvy and he's popular, you know, and I guess that was in the early days of the state lottery, you know, that a lot of people forget barely passed in 1992, but once it did pass it of course gained a lot of momentum and then the Hope Scholarship and technology in schools and pre-kindergarten and all the great programs that have been funded by the lottery.

And so it's not easy because the Lt. Governor is the number two guy, but there's a long distance between number one and number two, as you know, in Georgia in particular, and especially when you're dealing, as I said, with a very effective and efficient Governor like Zell Miller, was not easy. Pierre did focus I think and get a good message out and we got some very positive changes made in the state law as it relates to nursing home abuse and protecting children and things like that. So we're proud of that, but in Georgia the Governor is surely the top dog.

SHORT: Well while we're on that subject, a lot of states require the Lt. Governor to run on the same ticket as the Governor. We don't do that in Georgia. Should we?

MASSEY: You know I don't think so really. It obviously does work in some states, Bob, but I think here Georgia has a pretty independent tradition, if you will, in which people run their own race and they may be supporting other candidates, but the people of Georgia get to make a choice

on each individual office according to how they feel about who's running and what they stand for and how effective they think that they'll be.

You know there are a lot of states where you have a cabinet like government too where the Governor will appoint the Labor Commissioner and the School Superintendent and the Agricultural Commissioner and the Insurance Commissioner, but here in Georgia, as you know, each of those offices are separate and independently elected, and I think that's actually a good form of government and it seems to have worked well here in Georgia.

SHORT: You remember Culver Kidd?

MASSEY: Absolutely.

SHORT: Why did he call you Possum?

MASSEY: [Laughs] I thought everybody had forgotten about that. You know, I have such great memories of working with Culver Kidd, and of course his son, Rusty, is over at the Capitol a good bit and I got to see him a lot, and he's actually running for office now. I don't know if you knew that. Rusty's running. Bobby Parham from Milledgeville got elected to the Transportation Board so he'll be resigning and Rusty Kidd is running for his House seat.

SHORT: That's interesting.

MASSEY: But back to Culver, we had a, you know, a wonderful relationship and one of the reasons he called me Possum is I remember during reapportionment he would draw up senate districts like he wanted them because Pierre had appointed him to the Conference Committee, and once he got them like he wanted, Pierre would send me over there about 8:00 or 9:00 at night to change them back to what Pierre wanted. And so, you know, when Culver would try to find who had done that, but nobody would tell him, he finally found out it was me, but he said I would slink over there in the dark of the night and change his districts.

So he called me Possum, but he and I got along great and I tell you what an amazing person. Of course you probably knew him a lot better than I did and worked with him longer, but just a wonderful, wonderful man. And, you know, the Senate I think -- as I think about the State Senate today, and this is no criticism of any current Senator, but it's just not as fun as it used to be when you had folks like Culver Kidd in the Senate.

SHORT: Well if you'll let me I will quote to you exactly what Culver Kidd said.

MASSEY: Okay.

SHORT: He said that, "Lewis Massey is a Possum. He can get the insides out of a chocolate cake and never disturb the icing."

MASSEY: [Laughs]

SHORT: But he was a colorful guy.

MASSEY: He was.

SHORT: And a good fellow. Now you're with Senator Howard -- Lt. Governor Howard and Max Cleland decides to run for the United States Senate. Give us the history behind all that.

MASSEY: I will. That brings back some great memories. Actually, Bob, at the end of the session in '95 I left Pierre's office and I went to be an investment banker. So I thought I had a long career ahead of me as an investment banker, which is sort of a combination of finance and politics, so it's something I really enjoyed. But about six months after I started there Max Cleland announced, as you mentioned, that he was going to run for the U.S. Senate. So he resigned as Secretary of State. Governor Miller then sort of announced that he wanted anybody that was interested in becoming Secretary of State at his appointment to write him a letter and describe why they wanted to be Secretary of State and what kind of things that they would do in that office and so forth. And I had several people call and say, you know, you ought to submit a letter. And so I did and I understand there were 50 some odd letters that had been sent in and Steve Wrigley who at that time, as you know, was the Chief of Staff to the Governor, called me one night at home. I had had no, you know, conversations since I sent the letter in and frankly I

thought he had, you know, decided to go a different direction. But Steve Wrigley called me at home one night and said that the Governor wants to call tomorrow night that he wants to talk to a few people about the letters they sent in. And I said, "Well great I'll be honored to talk to him and answer any questions he had."

So the next night we were sitting at dinner and the phone rang and my wife answered and the Governor said, "This is Zell Miller, is Lewis there?" And Amy first thought it was a joke but luckily she didn't hang up on him. And so I picked up the phone expecting to answer some questions about my letter and he said, "Lewis, I want to let you know I'm going to appoint you Secretary of State." So Steve Wrigley sort of set that up, you know, in a way I didn't know what was coming.

But certainly a great honor and I was surprised -- I mean I was young. I was 33 at the time, and there were a lot of other qualified folks, including a lot of members of the General Assembly that had expressed interest in it, but I told him I was honored that he had chosen me and that was in December of '95, and then I was sworn in in early January 1996 as the 24th Secretary of State for Georgia, and it was a great honor to be appointed by Zell Miller and to serve at a time that he was Governor, and also a great honor to follow Max Cleland who was certainly a great Georgian as well.

SHORT: What was your view of the job when you took it?

MASSEY: Well, you know, the Secretary of State in Georgia does so many - - is involved in so

many different areas, and I think the reason for that, Bob, is that when Ben Fortson was Secretary of State for so long he was such a confident administrator that whenever the General Assembly formulated or came up with a new program they didn't know where to put it, they just said let's give it to Ben. And so as a result of that the Secretary of State, you know, oversees elections and corporations. You know, everybody that gets incorporated in Georgia has to come through that office and they license 76 different professions. I think even a few more than that now, and they have the state archives and they also regulate the securities industry.

So in some small way almost every citizen of the state is touched or impacted by what happens at the Secretary of State's Office. If you're a registered voter or if you're a licensed dentist or a doctor or a librarian or cosmetologist, you're affected by the office. If you incorporate a business you have to go through that office. And so I really saw it as a way to help the citizens of Georgia do business with state government and make it easier for people to do those types of things.

And one of the things I'm proudest of is that was in the early days of the World Wide Web and you didn't have a lot of websites. I mean everybody has a website now, but at that point not many did and when I got there in '96 the Secretary of State's Office didn't have a website, so I was able to hire some good IT people to come in and establish a site for the first time and make it easier for people to become licensed and to get registered to vote and to file their incorporate papers and to research family history. So by virtue of building the website, and of course it's been improved every step of the way by Cathy Cox and now by Karen Handle, but I saw it as a way to help people and to raise the awareness level of what that office does and why it's

important and certainly following the great tradition, if you will, of people like Ben Fortson and Max Cleland.

SHORT: You had some power over such activities as telemarketing and that sort of thing. As I recall you did a great job in ferreting out some of the abuses in that system.

MASSEY: Well we tried hard to and I appreciate you remembering that. One of the things that I learned from Pierre was how important it was to protect our elderly citizens in Georgia. And what was happening at the time, and it's still happening some, but, you had so many sham artists, if you will, calling folks at night and tricking them into giving them their credit card numbers or bank account numbers or investing in a ponzi scheme, and so we were able to crack down I think on that in a pretty big way in the Secretary of State's Office.

And another issue that I'm real proud of is we established a program that's still in place is that if a licensed profession in Georgia, if you're licensed in any profession in Georgia, and you're not paying your child support, the Secretary of State's Office can suspend your license. And the program's really set up not to suspend licenses, but to force people to pay their child support and that's the way it's worked. I don't remember the exact numbers, but we didn't actually have to suspend that many licenses, but we got a lot of people to pay their child support and that was the intent of the program and I'm proud that we established that and it's still going and hopefully helping a lot of families across the state.

SHORT: Well, we mentioned election laws. Of course the Secretary of State is in charge of that, and in recent times there has been much discussion over such things as voter ID and the electronic voting system. What do you think about all that?

MASSEY: Well, when I was there, Bob, I actually got the General Assembly to pass the first voter ID law. It was not just picture ID at the time because the Justice Department told us we couldn't be that strict, but I really think that the voter ID law in general terms is a good thing because really if you think about it you have to show an ID to cash a check or get on an airplane or to do almost anything that's official or important today, and so I don't have any problem as long as you have some safeguards in so that you have some people that might not have a particular piece of ID and you want to give them the option and the ability to do so at very limited costs, but we sort of started that ball rolling, if you will, in '96 and it's gotten to the point now where it's gotten a little tighter and, you know, you have to strike a balance there, but in general terms I think the voter ID law is good.

Electronic voting I think is also good. I mean I have to, in the interest of full disclosure I did do some work for a while with a company called Debold Election Systems and they're in the electronic voting industry. I'm not working with them now, but I think electronic voting is a good thing, although it's not taken off statewide. Cathy Cox made Georgia the first state in the nation to do it statewide. There were already eight or nine states that were doing it in pockets, but not all over the state.

Georgia became the first state in the nation to do electronic voting statewide, but since that time

frankly it hasn't grown very much and some states are even going back to, you know, to different types of equipment. But to me you have less chance for fraud frankly than you do certainly with paper ballots, and, you know, there's some counties in Georgia that you used to vote by paper ballots up until just a few years ago. And electronic voting I think generally speaking is safe and it's worked well in Georgia. But I don't know that it will be something that will spread across the country.

SHORT: You remember Roy Harris?

MASSEY: Yeah.

SHORT: Roy Harris once said that he could change the outcome of any election in 39 Georgia counties even after the polls closed.

MASSEY: [Laughs] That's good.

SHORT: Well that can't happen today.

MASSEY: That can't happen today, that's right. And we had a big case -- this was when I was Secretary of State, so before electronic voting, of voter fraud in Dodge County where people were buying and selling their votes and things like that, and we were able, working with Mike

Bowers who was the Attorney General at the time, to prosecute a lot of those folks in Dodge County and send a pretty strong signal. But you're right. It's not like the olden days where I remember back when -- in one of the races Herman Tallmadge ran they said that some folks had cast ballots from the cemetery in alphabetical order or something. So you don't have a lot of that happening in Georgia and that's good.

SHORT: Well on a scale, Lewis, of one to 10, how would you rate the accuracy of Georgia's electoral system?

MASSEY: I'd say it would be a 10 actually. I think the electronic system is very safe, it's accurate, it has safeguards built in, and, you know, I know there's some strong opinions about electronic systems among some people that think that, you know, somebody can get in on a computer and hack it and change the elections and all that, but I just don't see that as being really feasible and I think the system here in Georgia is very safe. Cathy Cox of course implemented it and Karen Handle has continued it. Now she's running for Governor and there will be a new Secretary of State in a year and a half or two years, and so maybe they'll have a different opinion of it, but I think in Georgia it's worked very well.

SHORT: You mentioned Cathy Cox who succeeded you. You appointed Cathy.

MASSEY: I did. I appointed her to the position of Assistant Secretary of State and that was the

first hire I made actually. She had expressed interest to Governor Miller in being appointed in '96. When I was fortunate enough to be appointed the first call I made was to Cathy and I said to her who was in the state House at the time serving in the seat that her dad had served in for years, I said to her that, you know, while I felt good about being appointed, I knew that she had a lot to offer that office and she had a lot to offer Georgia and I needed her help to be successful and I wanted her to come be the Assistant Secretary of State and she agreed to do that. Did a wonderful job working together. I think we made a good team. And then when I decided to run for Governor in '98 she of course ran for Secretary of State and won and served eight years there. So she ended up serving a lot longer than I did.

SHORT: Um-hum. If I recall, and correct me if I'm wrong, shortly after you were appointed by Governor Miller you had to run to finish Cleland's term. Is that not right?

MASSEY: That's right. You have a good memory. The law in Georgia says if you have a vacancy in a Constitutional office, the Governor can appoint to fill that vacancy but then that person has to run at the next general election. So I was appointed -- officially sworn in early January of '96 so I had to run that same year. And so my first year was a combination of serving in the office and campaigning for reelection, which was not all bad because I like to tell people I was going to get a quick review of my job performance, you know.

And so I had, I believe, one opponent in the primary, a lady from over in Augusta, Denise Freeman, and I won that and then I think there were four, Bob, Republicans running and David

Shafer emerged and then he and I squared off and I won that race in November '96. And of course David Schafer is now in the State Senate and actually was running for Lt. Governor until yesterday when Cagle decided to stay in that office and I don't know what will happen now, but it was a wonderful election because as I say it gave me a chance to get out and talk to people about the Secretary of State's Office and why I wanted to be in that position and what I hoped to do and what we were doing and of course almost everybody in the state knew of Max Cleland, so coming behind him was certainly not easy, but it gave me a chance to talk about the office in a way that's unique and a lot of people sort of connected the Secretary of State's Office to Max, and so I had to sort of chart my own course in that regard and we were lucky to win and fortunate to win and glad we did in November of that year.

SHORT: But you decided not to run again two years later.

MASSEY: Yes. Two years later of course Pierre Howard who was still Lt. Governor started running for Governor and then decided not to run, and I had a lot of people call and email and send letters and so forth asking me to consider it, so we did and I say we, my family and friends and so forth, and after about two weeks or so of deliberation once Pierre got out, decided to go ahead and run.

I knew it would be an uphill battle. I was 35 at the time and -- or 34 I guess when I announced. So, you know, pretty young for Georgia as it relates to high office, although Sam Nunn and Richard Russell I think were both elected about that same age, but I felt like, you know, I had

been in state government both as Chief of Staff to Pierre Howard and as Secretary of State and I felt like I had something to offer and so I decided to go ahead and get in that race and announced I believe it was summer maybe of '97. And of course we weren't successful in the end, but it was, you know, something I'll always have fond memories of.

Our children at the time were seven and five and I think they rode in every parade in Georgia, and they went to -- you remember they had these functions down in south Georgia called rattlesnake roundups, so both my kids they're scared of big dogs but they're not scared of rattlesnakes because they've been around a lot of them. But we went to a lot of functions around the state and raised, you know, \$4 ½ million and it was a wonderful experience.

In the primary we ended up behind Barnes, Roy Barnes. I believe he had 48% and we had about 30%, and when I woke up the next day we had a conference call with our consultants and they said you've only got one chance to make up that much ground. You're going to have to raise \$2 million in a week and you're going to have to run negative TV ads for two weeks after that. So I slept on it and I prayed about it and talked to Amy about it and my mom and dad and close friends and so forth and decided I didn't want to do that. I just didn't feel right about doing it for a lot of reasons. I didn't think it was the right thing for me or the democratic party or the state, and so I decided then the next day to pull out of the runoff and not keep going with that and endorse Roy Barnes and then he went on as you know to be successful in his race against Guy Millner.

SHORT: Um-hum. What kind of opponent was Roy Barnes? Was he tough?

MASSEY: Tough no doubt. I mean Roy Barnes is a very smart man, he's been around a long time. He had served in both the Senate and the House. He had run for Governor before. As you well remember, he was in that race in 1990 with Zell and Andy Young and so he was seasoned and a smart fellow. And, you know, we had some -- I think I held my own in the debates and things like that, but he was a tough opponent and was a good Governor. Of course he's thinking about running again now. It's funny how things come around, but, you know, I still -- look, I have a good relationship with him. We see each other occasionally and talk and reminisce and I have a lot of respect for he and his family and he was a formidable opponent and he beat us up pretty good in the primary, but I'm still glad we ran and glad we did what we did.

SHORT: Um-hum. Describe if you will, Lewis, the mood of Georgia at the time you ran.

MASSEY: Well it's interesting that you'd ask that. You know, I think the mood of Georgia -- that was at the end of Zell Miller's administration and he of course at that time, and still is frankly, one of the most popular politicians probably in the history of the state. And so I think people then, Bob, mostly wanted a continuation of what was occurring and everything was going great. It was the late '90s, the stock market was doing good, the housing market was doing good, a lot of jobs being created, a lot people moving to Georgia, and I think one of the things that worked against us was, you know, I was 34 when I started the race, 35 toward the end of it, people looked at me as a new face and maybe as something different and the time just wasn't

right for that. You know, later on it was in '02 when Barnes ran for reelection people were looking for something different and of course he was upset by Sonny Perdue, but in '98 I think my age and the youth that our campaign portrayed was a disadvantage it turned out. I think people were ready to sort of continue on and they felt safer, if you will, with somebody like Roy Barnes who had been around longer and had served in the House and the Senate.

SHORT: Um-hum. Let's talk for a minute about the change in party politics in Georgia suddenly. I think suddenly is probably not the best word, but the republicans took over the state and remained very forceful in our government and in our politics. What happened?

MASSEY: Well that's a great question. It was sort of suddenly, although, you know, the trends were beginning to move in that direction. In fact, just to step back for one minute, Bob, if you'll let me, one of the reasons that I ran in '98 even though I was young and most people -- a lot of people thought I should have waited and run again later, was I could sort of see the trends beginning to develop in that I knew '98 might be one of the last good chances for a democrat to be elected for a while. It turned out to be right.

I certainly didn't predict that Roy Barnes would lose reelection. I don't think anybody did in '02, but it's turned out to be correct that the last time a democratic Governor was elected was in '98. And the reason for that I think was the growth primarily in what they call the donut area around the city of Atlanta. Counties like Gwinnett and Cobb and Henry, you know, and Rockdale, so part of it is demographics.

The other part of I think is that any time you have one party in power for 100 plus years if you will you're going to have - - you're going to have a situation where people are looking for a change and a new direction, and I think the combination of those two things in Georgia plus the fact, Bob, that most people - - a lot of people in Georgia voted republican on the presidential level anyway. You remember Barry Goldwater carried the state against Lyndon Johnson, or one of the few states he carried in -- that would have been '64 I guess.

SHORT: '64.

MASSEY: And so Georgia had a tradition of supporting, except for Jimmy Carter who of course was a former Georgia Governor. Except for Jimmy Carter, republicans by and large have carried the state on a national level and so that also worked in a way that I think allowed the republicans to really gain some momentum and begin to take over. And as you say, at the state Capitol it was sort of suddenly in the respect that you had Sonny Perdue -- huge upset in '02, a few party changes and the Senate went republican even though the House stayed democrat under Terry Coleman, and then the very next year, which I guess would have been '04, the republicans took over the House as well. So I think it was a combination of those factors.

SHORT: If you look back on that election between Roy Barnes and Sonny Perdue, what do you think really caused Roy Barnes to lose that election?

MASSEY: Well I guess it was a combination of the demographics that we just discussed, plus the schoolteachers. You know, Barnes had made the school - - well I'll put it this way. The schoolteachers felt like Barnes took them for granted and blamed them for a lot of the challenges and problems that we had in education, so they pretty much in mass supported Sonny Perdue. Then, you know, Governor Barnes did what I think is a very courageous thing in promoting the change of the state flag, but that created a lot of concern and consternation and hatred and hard feelings, and that hurt him. And then you had the group up in the northern suburbs in Atlanta that was opposed to the northern arc that Governor Barnes was promoting, and so if you take all those groups and start adding them up, you know, eventually you get just over 50% and of course Perdue won in a very close election. So I think it was a combination of those issues.

SHORT: I've had democrats tell me since then that one of the reasons that Georgia was the last southern state to elect a republican governor is because most republicans were quite content with governors like Busbee and Joe Frank Harris and Zell Miller. Something must have keyed the Republican Party into really moving to take over the state government. Did you view much grassroots effort?

MASSEY: I think there was some grassroots effort. Yes, sir. I think that you had people like Glen Richardson who of course now is the Speaker and you had Paul Coverdale who was toiling in the vineyards, if you will, for years as a republican when almost nobody else was and I think he built a great network. And Alec Poitevint from down in Bainbridge who I think was the

republican state chair, not anymore. But you had people like that I think, Bob. You had the cumulative effect of all the years they had spent in the field in building grassroots that allowed the republican party momentum to really catch on and click, if you will, at the right time for them. Even though, you know, most people didn't predict Sonny Perdue winning in '02, had he not won, you know, you got to think that republicans would have won the next election which would have been an open seat in 2006. But I think it happened a little bit earlier than most people thought it was going to.

SHORT: Some disenchanting democrats think the national party and the state party are too dependent on minorities and unions and liberals to win. What do you think of that?

MASSEY: Well the national party is for sure and, you know, generally speaking there's a lot of difference between the national democratic party and the state party. That's been of course true for a long time. The state party here I think, Bob, is beginning to improve some. It's a tough group to piece together, if you will, because the democratic party in Georgia you have rural, white conservatives and then you have urban more liberal, African Americans, and then, Georgia is becoming a more diverse state with now of course a lot of Hispanics here and Asians and other pockets of folks that have come here from all over the world, and so the democratic party continues I think to face a challenge in how you promote and put together, craft a platform that will keep all those people together.

I think, you know, for a while they have relied too heavily on the more liberal part of the party,

certainly on the national level for sure. Less so here, and, I think that as we sit here in 2009, Obama ran a good race in Georgia and almost won. I think two or three points behind McCain, and most -- most folks, and I'm not active in the party currently, but I think most people in the democratic party feel like that the momentum is beginning to swing back in their direction. I guess only time will tell, you know, whether that's true or not.

SHORT: Are you saying there's no politics in the future of Lewis Massey?

MASSEY: [Laughs] Well, you know, I don't think in the near term, Bob. You know, politics is a lot about timing and family and business and, right now I'm enjoying my business. I'm enjoying being able to go to all our kids' events, you know, soccer games and volleyball matches and tennis matches and plays and my wife's a lot happier with me outside the elected part of politics. So I don't think I'll do anything anytime soon, but, certainly wouldn't say never.

SHORT: Um-hum. What has life been for Lewis Massey after public office?

MASSEY: Well I've had some unique experiences. Right after leaving the Secretary of State's Office in early '99 I co founded a financial services company that I'm still on the Board of and still doing well and really enjoyed that. I helped to resurrect a science and technology museum for kids in Atlanta, Sci-Trek, and did that for about two years. And since then I've been working in a government relations firm with Bruce Bowers, who is Mike Bowers's son, called Massey

and Bowers, and we've enjoyed it and have grown and have some good clients, and it enables me to be at the Capitol again, which I enjoy especially during the legislative session.

And so, my time in public service is something I'll never forget, I'll always treasure, and I feel like was wonderful for me. At the same time since that time I've been more than happy and feel very fortunate about how things are going in my life.

SHORT: Tell us about your family.

MASSEY: Well my wife, Amy, is from St. Louis and she is a triathlete. Does triathlons and just did her first Iron Man a few months ago, Iron Man competition, and I get tired just watching her swimming and running and biking, but a wonderful lady. And then we have three children. Our oldest son Chandler is 18. He's an aspiring actor. He's moved to LA and he's finishing high school online actually and is planning to go to school at UCLA. And I've discovered they don't have the Hope Scholarship out there, so that's going to be a challenge, but our daughter Cameron is 16 and she's a sophomore. They both go to Norcross High public school in Gwinnett County. And then we have a 10 year old and he's in fourth grade at Simpson Elementary in Gwinnett County. And we live in Peachtree Corners, just outside the Perimeter in a good location, and so I feel very blessed.

SHORT: What advice would you give young people, Lewis, today who aspire to run for public office?

MASSEY: Well I think the first thing, Bob, is to get involved with a campaign or an elected official early, even if it's on a volunteer basis. I mean one of the things that I really enjoyed, and I think that other people have whether or not they actually run for office later or not, is being involved in campaigns and helping somebody that they believe in whether it's stuffing envelopes or answering phones or going door to door, whatever it may be.

So I think as I think about college students, for example, in Georgia today, you know, one of the things they could do in the upcoming elections in 2010, because there's going to be a lot of them, is to hook on with a campaign and promote a candidate, help them, work for them and give out brochures and get other students on campus involved and active, and I think that's a great training ground and a great foundation upon which they can build to go on and either run for public office or to serve in some other capacity at the governmental level.

SHORT: Well for your age I think you must be the most experienced political campaigner in the world.

MASSEY: [Laughs] That's where I got all my gray hair I guess now, Bob. But I appreciate it. Yeah I, you know, again growing up around politics and going to the Capitol with my father at an early age I knew I'm guessing from maybe the seventh grade on that I wanted to do something in this arena and field. I didn't have anything written down specifically what I wanted to do, but I knew I wanted to be involved in government and public service and Georgia

politics.

And I can remember going -- my mom always tells a story that when I got my hair cut when I was around I guess eight years old that I would ask the barber was he going to vote for Jimmy Carter or Carl Sanders, and so, you know, at an early age I knew I wanted to be active and involved somehow and I've been fortunate enough to be able to.

SHORT: So you were taking a poll?

MASSEY: Taking a poll, that's right. It wasn't scientific I guess.

SHORT: [Laughs] Well Lewis, we certainly appreciate you being our guest. There's one thing though I would like to ask you, which I ask all of our guests. As you look back over your political career, is there anything you would have done differently?

MASSEY: Well I'm sure there is, Bob. I would have to think about it a little bit. You know a lot of people ask me do I think I ran for Governor too early. Since we didn't win I guess the answer to that is yes. But if I had not run for Governor in '98 there wouldn't have been another chance for a while as it turned out because Barnes ran for reelection in '02 and then I would have had to run against an incumbent in '06 and so it would be up to today probably, you know, looking ahead at 2010 before I could have run again, and I had been around the Capitol for a while and I was ready to sort of move up or to move on and do something different. So I don't

really regret that decision. I guess, I wish at the time it had been a little bit different or better for me. I could have been a little bit older and maybe would have been more successful, but as far as doing anything different, I don't really think so, Bob. And that doesn't mean I've been perfect by any stretch, but I think the campaigns I've been involved in and the decisions I've made and the experiences that I've had have been some of the best anybody could have hoped for.

SHORT: Have you ever been involved in national campaigns in Georgia?

MASSEY: No, you know, I really haven't. I've always focused on the state level, so I really have not been other than working with Pierre, we'd be invited to things for Bill Clinton, you know, when he was running in '92 and '96, but I was never really active in any federal race.

SHORT: Your decision to seek the governorship parallels Zell Miller's. You know he waited 16 years before there was an open seat. He would not run against Governor Busbee and he would not run against Governor Harris. And, you know, there's an open seat in 2010.

MASSEY: There is. You're right. [Laughs] You're right about that. But again I think -- I don't think the timing's going to be right for me. You know, again with business and family activities and all that, I just don't think the timing's going to be right for me, but maybe there will be another chance down the road. You're right. Open seats don't come along much and as I recall now Zell Miller, correct me if I'm wrong, ran for the Senate in '80 --

SHORT: Um-hum.

MASSEY: Right, against Tallmadge I guess.

SHORT: Right.

MASSEY: So then when '82 came along he decided not to run for Governor, and that's when Joe Frank ran and ran for reelection. So you never know about politics, do you?

SHORT: That's true. Well Lewis, thank you very much for being our guest.

MASSEY: Thank you, Bob. It's been an honor to be with you.

SHORT: I want to thank you on behalf of Young Harris College, the Richard Russell Library and the University of Georgia.

MASSEY: Thank you.

SHORT: And wish you good luck in your future political career.

MASSEY: Thank you very much.

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