

BOB SHORT: I'm Bob Short, and this is Reflections on Georgia Politics, sponsored by Young-Harris College and the Richard B. Russell Library at the University of Georgia. Our guest today is Max Cleland, former Georgia Secretary of State and United States Senator from Georgia, who, during his 32 years of public service, has served in the Legislative and Executive branches of both the state and the federal government. Welcome, Senator Cleland.

MAX CLELAND: Well, thank you, Bob. It's an honor to be with you.

SHORT: Let's start with your early life. You grew up in Lithonia?

CLELAND: I grew up in a little place called Lithonia, Georgia; but the first four years of my life was spent at the corner of – in an apartment complex at the corner of Moreland and Euclid Avenue in a place called Little Five Points. It was called Little Five Points in those days--Inman Park, really. And it's ironic that the Carter Center was placed about less than a mile from where I spent the first four years of my life.

So I can remember when I was about four there was something very sad. My father was off in World War II and stationed at Pearl Harbor after the attack. There was something very sad that happened. And, reflecting back, it was the death of President Roosevelt in the middle of April of 1945. And then there was tremendous rejoicing by the adults, and that was the Victory of Japan day later that year. I think it was in September.

And then on December the 8, 1945, my father came home late at night in his Navy uniform, discharged out of the Navy out of Jacksonville, Florida. And our mother said, "Daddy's home, Daddy's home." So he brought me a little red wagon and a pack of crackers. And I remember playing with his ribbons, and I thought they were Dentyne chewing gum because I thought I had – that's the only thing that I had seen that was like that. And so, I remember it was a night of rejoicing. We went to my uncle's house, and I was allowed to stay up very, very late with my cousin. My uncle had been in the Marine Corps, and he had come home. So it was an early rejoicing in my life in December of 1945.

Shortly thereafter, my father moved us out of the little apartment on Moreland down to his hometown, Lithonia, Georgia--Main Street, Lithonia, Georgia. He bought a house from my uncle, who moved out in the country. Of course, my mother thought that Lithonia was in the country, and it was in the country! It was in the sticks in 1945-46. So I grew up on Main Street, Lithonia, Georgia. That was my first real home. And around me there were a lot of male only children that I played with for the next ten years or so, all of which were older than I was. So I was the youngest guy. I was the guy selected to chase the balls out into the woods and go find them. And I was the guy that was often called upon to play ball, to fight, and to wrestle with and to play marbles and, you know, all that stuff.

So that's how I grew up. I went to Lithonia Elementary and High School. It was all on one campus in those days. Lithonia was so removed from Atlanta and very far removed from the seat of power, which was DeKalb County and Decatur. Lithonia was about 20 miles just inland from DeKalb County. The rest was Rockdale County. And so, we had something called the teacherage. It's where the non-married – in those days, they would call them old maid school teachers. But they lived in the teacherage, which was on the campus of the grades 1 through 12 school. And our little elementary school was built brand new with Lithonia granite. And so, that's where I went grades one through seven. And then I went to the high school, grades eight

through twelve. And so, I had the same principal for 12 years, Mr. W.L. Colombo. And his daughter is now a librarian at the University of Georgia--Claire Colombo.

So those were the influential years in my life. I was raised by the Holy Trinity – school and church and home. Home, church, school. School, home, church. All within bicycle distance, all within walking distance, all within a mile of each other. So Lithonia became my hometown. I'm very honored that they have a little street named after me now. It's not long, but that's all right. I'll take it.

So I joined – I started going to the Methodist church there, which was just a block or two – really a block from the school campus and several blocks from my home. And so my mother took me there. She was a Methodist. In about 1946, so I've been going to Lithonia Methodist Church since 1946. So I did everything that you can do in Lithonia and in that schoolhouse and in that schoolyard and in the church and in the home. That's where I was raised. It was highly contained, and I grew up in the '50s, what the TV program called Happy Days.

So it was a time in American life after World War II. We were the successor generation to the – what Tom Brokaw has called the greatest generation. My father came home from World War II, bought that little house on Main Street with the GI Bill. \$2700, and it took him eight years to pay it off. So it – he has always been a lesson for me in frugality. It was, you know, use it up, wear it out, make it last, or do without. That was the motto of the great generation--the motto of those who grew up in the Great Depression.

So my father worked hard after World War II and finally landed a job as a traveling salesman selling automobile chemicals and waxes in places. He traveled the state of Georgia, routes that I would later travel when I was running statewide for Lieutenant Governor, which I lost in '74; Secretary of State in '82, which I eventually won, and the U.S. Senate race in 1996. But my father was one of the last of the great traveling salesmen of the post-World War II era. As 14, 15 million GIs came home from World War II and were discharged, they had the GI Bill and that was about it. They had to find employment. So my father struggled through the late '40s, but then in about 1950 he became a salesman again. He had been a salesman before World War II in part of Roosevelt's CCCs in 1934, stationed up in Clayton at the Warwoman Dells State Park, which is now a state park, but...

SHORT: Also, which is my home town.

CLELAND: That's right. In Clayton. That was his university, out in the woods and driving a truck, resupplying all the camps for the CCC boys, what they called Roosevelt's Tree Army. And he resupplied – drove the truck that resupplied the camps in North Georgia, Western North Carolina, and Tennessee. So that was his university for about a year. And he came out of that and got a job with Atlanta Linen, and he drove a linen truck. He got up early and was in Covington by 6 a.m.--before 7:00, whatever--put in a full day, and then drove the Atlanta Linen truck back to Atlanta. So he covered a wide swath, and he did that before Pearl Harbor--the Pearl Harbor attack, and then joined the Navy and served at Pearl Harbor after the attack and was discharged. So he made a life for us. And he saved and scrimped and built a house about five doors down up on a hill, which is where I spent my teenage years--the house that my father still lives in now. I own an apartment in Buckhead, but my father lives there and pretty much by himself, although we have day people come in. He's going on 95 now. My mother passed away two and a half years ago. She was a beautiful lady--a brunette, out of the Northeast Georgia farms. And she came from a family of tall people. And her father, who died in the 1918 Swine Flu – not Swine

Flu, but Spanish Flu epidemic--he was tall, and I never knew him. I never knew either of my grandfathers, but I knew my grandmothers and they helped raise me. But my mother worked. She worked while my father was off at World War II, like many women entering the workforce, and she became a darn good secretary. And later, after the war--after World War II--she became a secretary at what used to be called Atlanta Paper Company, now it's called Atlanta Packaging, and they do the packaging for the Coca-Cola Company.

So she worked. My father worked. And my grandmother kept me--kept me there on Moreland Avenue, my grandmother on my mother's side. Then my grandmother on my daddy's side kept me during the day while mother and father worked. So I grew up with lots of love, lots of cousins, lots of uncles and aunts. On my mother's side, they were tall; and my father's side, they were stout. In the old country days, they were called stout. So I grew up tall and stout. I was the tallest guy in my high school class. And when I went to Vietnam, I was six-two, 215. So I was tall and stout. But I was very thin in high school.

But I, having played with boys older than I was since I was like third grade on, I learned the sports, taught to me by the local men/young boys in the neighborhood--Edgar Abbott, Bill Chatlain, Weiland Davidson and all those--all older than I was. They were all older than I was. And we played ball in each other's back yards. True sandlot ball--baseball, football, basketball, any kind of ball. If you had a ball, you could get two or three guys together. So--and if you had a ball and a back yard, you could get two or three guys together. So that's where I learned sports. So by the time I made it into high school, I played eighth grade basketball. By the time I was in the ninth grade, I was the first guy in my class to letter, get a high school letter. I lettered in baseball, first string third base; I was lead-off hitter for four straight years. By the time I was in the tenth grade, I played varsity basketball. By the time I was a senior, I placed second in the state in tennis singles, won the tennis championship in singles and doubles. Honorable mention All-County in basketball. And, you know, did all those extra-curricular activities that you need to do.

So I went down to Stetson University thinking I was really something. Not many people went on to college, but my father had saved enough money and he was out traveling and we lived in a good house. I went on down to Stetson University in DeLand, Florida, never thinking about politics at all, thinking that I might major in physics. That lasted three days. I didn't have enough math to get into the basic physics class. So the fourth day -- this is a true story. The fourth day of orientation week at Stetson they said, "Well, you've got to put down some kind of major." So I put down English. I said, "I'm good at English." And so the fifth day I was put in remedial English. So, I had failed the writing sample and the grammar sample at Stetson College English. And so I found out I was bilingual. I spoke Southern and a little English.

So I ended up at five 8:00 classes. We were on the semester system. Five 8:00 classes every morning at 8:00, remedial English. And I learned how to read and I learned how to write. It was basic training for this old boy who thought he was some hot stuff. And I found out I wasn't hot stuff on a college level. And so I worked like a dickens for several years.

The one political thing that really injected itself into my world was the 1960 television debate between Jack Kennedy and Richard Nixon. Black-and-white television--we only had three channels: ABC, NBC, CBS. And I would steal away at night and watch those debates. I was 18 years of age. Now, at 18 in Georgia -- not many people realize that today, but in those days Georgia was only one of two states where you could register and vote for a President if you were 18 years of age. Later in the '70s, that became an amendment to the Constitution, the U.S. Constitution. And now everyone 18 years of age or greater can vote for President.

But in those days, in 1960, only two states, and Georgia was one of them. So you became a little bit more aware politically by the time you turned 18. You registered for the draft--hello? And you could register to vote--hello? So I registered for the draft. My father went with me to the Decatur courthouse. I registered for the draft when I was 18, about 1960. Graduated from high school in 1960. I went down to Stetson.

But I had no interest in politics. I was totally apolitical. The only politics I had been aware of was that Herman Talmadge had raised – had put together the state sales tax, three-cent sales tax, in the early '50s and funded the school systems around Georgia. And Ralph McGill, who was the editor of the Atlanta Constitution, was generally disliked, but I didn't know why. Now I know it was because he was even-handed in terms of race. But in those days, you still had the county news system and you had the good old boys and all that crowd that ran the Georgia legislature. Marvin Griffin was Governor, Ernest Vandiver--"No, not one," you know. And in 1956, the schools were almost shut down, because Vandiver had said, "No, not one." But ultimately, the Sibley Commission went around holding hearings, and the schools were kept open after the 1954 Brown versus Board of Education decision, which called for, with all deliberate speed, the integration of the school systems. So my education would have stopped in the ninth grade had the Georgia schools been shut down. But as it was, the schools continued to stay open. I got my basic education there in Lithonia, and then I went on down to Stetson. And I had to struggle just to survive.

Eventually I became a history major. And one day late in my junior year I saw where Bobby Kennedy was shaking hands with some students from Stetson. I looked in the photo, and I thought – I saw this in the school newspaper--and I thought, "How in the world did they get to do that?" Bobby Kennedy by then was a legend; so was Jack, the President, because they had gone through the Cuban Missile Crisis in the fall of '62. And I had seen those tanks and those artillery pieces from the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne and the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne come down Highway 17, which split the campuses of the Stetson University. This was before the interstates. So I saw them en route to Miami and to Key West for the potential invasion of Cuba. And I'm not sure people really realize how close we came to actually invading Cuba. But it was Jack Kennedy who said, in effect, "We'll have a blockade around Cuba, and the Russians should stop there." And then the Russians planked, and they did stop there. So as it turned out, Kennedy made the right decision, saved South Florida from a nuclear holocaust and us going to war with the Soviets. But I had my ROTC uniform on that day that he went on TV in October of 1962. And I realized for the first time, "Whoa, old Maxie Baby might really be out there in the thick of it with these other people." I said, "Oh, my God." But that was averted.

So by the fall of – by the spring of 1963, I had become a big Jack Kennedy fan and a big Bobby – somewhat a Bobby Kennedy fan. He was Attorney General. And so these students from Stetson University had gotten to shake hands with Bobby Kennedy because they were on the Washington Semester Program. I said, "Washington Semester Program? What's that?" I looked at the school catalogue. It said, "See government in action. Go to American University for a semester." So I said, "Oh, baby." So you had to have the head of the Dean of the school--I was in liberal arts--Dean of the school of liberal arts and the head of the history department approve you.

So I was going to class with the Dean of the University. So after class that day, I said, "Do you think I can possibly go on the Washington Semester Program?" And he said, "Well, come down to my office." He looked at my grades from where I had entered Stetson and then the sophomore exit exam, and he couldn't believe that anybody could have improved that much. So, remedial

English paid off for me.

So I got to go on the Washington Semester Program. It became an eye-opening, life changing experience. I had not been interested in politics really up to that point, again except for the Kennedy-Nixon debates, and I kind of fell in love with Jack Kennedy. A young guy, a guy of my generation. He was 43, I was 18. He was much closer to my age. And it was a generation – it was time for a kind of a generational changeover. We see that generational changeover now with Barack Obama and the massive generational changeover in America, and in Georgia politics, too. But then it was relatively slight. Jack Kennedy barely beat Nixon. And so, I went to Washington September 10, 1963. And my life has not been the same since. Hubert Humphrey once said that the only cure for politics is embalming fluid, and he ought to know! So, I haven't had the embalming fluid yet, so I guess I'm not cured yet.

But I went to the Washington Semester Program at American University, September 10, 1963, and within a week was hooked. I had attended my first Congressional hearing, courtesy of Charles Weltner, Congressman from the Fourth District out of Atlanta. And then later, of course, it was split due to 1962 Banker versus Carr, one-man, one-vote, and the Fourth Congressional District was split. In 1964, Congressman Jim Mackey ran for Congress there. I became his errand boy. I had a big job: I took out the trash.

So by 1965, I had a little office in the Library of Congress overlooking the Supreme Court and the U.S. Senate buildings and the Capitol. I mean, I thought I had made a pretty rapid ascent in national and Georgia politics because I had latched onto a winner, Mr. Jim Mackey. He lost in a very narrow election in 1966, and we can get into that. But by the mid summer of 1965, Lyndon Johnson – and you can just hear him now--say, "I want the interns down on the south lawn." And somebody says, "Yes, sir, we'll have the Congressional interns down on the south lawn." And he said, "No, no, I want all the interns down on the south lawn." So he invited all 10,000 interns in Washington, D.C.--not just the Congressional interns, but all the interns and all the bureaucracies and agencies in town, as well as the Congressional interns--10,000 interns! We packed the south lawn of the White House. We thought we were big stuff.

And here comes Johnson out on the south lawn, President Johnson. But followed – and I'm not sure why he did that, maybe General Maxwell Taylor was in the office and he said, "Come on. Go with me. We're going to see these young kids out here," or something like that. I don't know. But Johnson was followed as he went through the crowd of young people, all 10,000 of us, by Four-Star General Maxwell Taylor.

Now, Maxwell Taylor, as a young Brigadier General, had been the first out the door in the Normandy Invasion, which we're going to celebrate the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary coming up June 6 of '09. But on that first June 6, 1944, Maxwell Taylor, at about 2 a.m. in the morning, was the first out the door with the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne jumping at Normandy behind the line. So Maxwell Taylor had already proven his courage, and he had become the – Truman made him Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. And the Kennedy family was enraptured with Maxwell Taylor. As a matter of fact, Bobby – one of Bobby Kennedy's sons is named Max after General Maxwell Taylor. And of course, Max was my name, so, you know. So, I never met General Maxwell Taylor until much later.

But it seems to me that moment is like frozen in time where Johnson had it all. He had the biggest majority in the Congress, in the Senate, and in the House since FDR in 1933. He put the hammer to the – pedal to the metal and pushed through so many pieces of legislation. We're still sorting it all out. But he was stalked by Vietnam. Maxwell Taylor had suggested a build up in '61, '62, to President Kennedy of our ground forces there. Now, there are those who say that

President Kennedy would have handled Vietnam differently. One of his aides wrote a book after President Kennedy was assassinated and said, you know, that President Kennedy had told him that after the election – after the election of '64 that he was going to pull the troops out, because McCarthy had warned him that we didn't need a land war in Asia. Kenneth O'Donnell, I think, was his name. He was one that was very close to the President, one of the Irish Mafia from Boston that Kennedy had with him.

But November 19, 1963, by virtue of being on the Washington Semester Program, I'm in the White House. Now, through no fault of my own or no great shakes of my own. But the Washington Semester Program had put together a seminar with McGeorge Bundy, the National Security Affairs Advisor in the White House, November 19, 1963. And after talking to us a little bit, he mentioned that Laos had become a neutral country in 1962. There was a negotiation by the Kennedy Administration with Edward Hammond taking the lead. That proved fatal to ultimately the war in South Vietnam, because that was the beginning of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, North Vietnam through Laos down through Cambodia into Saigon and various other points along the border. So it provided the sanctuary for the North Vietnamese. And the North Vietnamese said later after the Vietnam War was completed, that had we had successfully cut off the Ho Chi Minh Trail, there was no way they could have won the war in the South.

Now, we tried surreptitiously--the CIA, Special Ops, Covert Ops, all kind of Black Ops, every kind of thing in Laos and Cambodia and some in North Vietnam, but it really didn't work. But I became one of the last people to see the Oval Office under President Kennedy. There was the turquoise rug with the great seal of the United States--Presidential Seal. There was the rocking-back chair. There was the desk--the same Kennedy desk that had been brought to the Oval Office by President Kennedy, given to the American President Buchanan by Queen Victoria made out of wood from a ship--an American ship captured by the British in the War of 1812.

So Kennedy had a sense of history. As a matter of fact, the thing he liked most in the White House was the sense of the history, and the thing he feared most was human miscalculation, he said. So Kennedy had a sense of history, and he had a sense of history about Indo-China, too, and the French War there. He had been in the Senate when that happened. Johnson had been in the Senate, too. And he saw the Republicans rise on the backs of the Red Scare, rise on the backs of McCarthyism, and that Communists are now around every tree and the fear and so forth. So, when Bush did all that kind of stuff in the first decade of this century--the 21<sup>st</sup> Century--it was very reminiscent of the way the Republicans rose to power in the late '40s and early '50s. Johnson was very painfully aware of that.

And so, Kennedy is assassinated November 22, 1963. I'm in my dorm at American University. And at about 1:00 I come in my room, headed down to the Capitol to do my research project. Believe it or not, I did it on how a Senate office is run--the administrative assistant right-hand man of the Senator. So, that was my research project.

I looked at my roommate, who was on the floor trying to tune in the radio. He said, "The President's been shot." I said, "Oh, my God." We ran down to the TV room and saw Walter Cronkite say, "A little after 1 p.m. the President of the United States died." Oh, my God.

Anybody that didn't live through that period cannot understand it, but I quickly got a cab and went down to the White House. By that time, I was shocked to see black crape already on the White House. I've not heard anybody really talk about that, but I got to hand it to the White House staff, they somehow were right on the money. I hated that that was the reason, but...

Anyway, I hung around the White House late into the night, and then President Johnson – President Johnson. It was weird to say that. President Johnson flew in on the south lawn with the

black crape still on the White House and those eerie yellow lights on the White House--flew in and landed and that began the Johnson Presidency. Ted Sorensen still wrote some of the speeches, but he was gone. Pretty soon all of the Kennedy people were gone, replaced by the Johnson folks. And so in 1965 Johnson had it all, but he was stalked--on that summer day with 10,000 interns out there and the Congress full of Democrats--he was stalked by the Vietnam War.

The summer of 1965 also was a turning point for me. About the third week of July I was asked to come over to Senator Dick Russell's office. I was a Congressional intern--and the woods are full of them in the summer--and I was from Georgia, and I was an intern with the Congressman from Georgia. But I was asked to come and sit at the feet of Senator Russell. It was a two-hour off-the-record chat with Senator Russell. And that's where I met Buddy Darden. He later became a Congressman from Georgia and a dear friend.

So, I came into the Senate Armed Services Committee room, and Russell was there, and so were the young people from Georgia interning mostly in this office. And we sat down. It was understood that it was off-the-record, but I made some little notes anyway. Russell explained that the French had about ten times better intelligence in terms of Vietnam than we did then and that he wished that the elections had gone ahead in 1958 and that Ho Chi Minh had been on the ballot in South Vietnam and he would have won 80 percent and that would have been it. But he said at the time--the summer of '65, "It is the most perplexing thing ever to face the American people. We're there and don't want to be. We're there and we can't get out." That was Russell's take on it privately. He was very leery of a big land buildup there, and he tried to talk Jack Johnson out of it late one night. I got that from a former Russell staffer.

And also Fritz Hollings before he left for the U.S. Senate told me that he was the runner between Russell and Johnson. Russell would write out a note about Vietnam and give it to Fritz Hollings, and Fritz Hollings would run down to Johnson in the White House and communicate to Johnson that way. Russell had been the protégé of Johnson in the Senate. There's a book out by Robert Caro, who's the biographer of Lyndon Johnson, and it's called *Master of the Senate*, but the real master of the Senate was Richard B. Russell, who taught Johnson all of his tricks.

Now, Johnson was wise enough to know that Russell was the man. And so the tapes, the Russell-Johnson tapes show where Johnson is right up in Russell's face and says, "I want you to be my daddy." In other words, they were two Southerners, and Johnson wanted Russell to look out for him and teach him the ropes in the Senate. Russell knew the Senate better than any man alive, like Robert C. Byrd today. Russell was also the mentor of Robert C. Byrd. Russell was the mentor of Senators who really wanted to know the Senate. He was the mentor for a generation of leaders: Johnson, Robert C. Byrd, and others--Teddy Kennedy.

As a matter of fact, there is a great story where Teddy Kennedy and Robert Byrd are running for majority leader. And Russell is still alive. He's 70, 71--where Russell is dying of emphysema. And aides would run to the caucus and say, "Yes, that Russell is still alive because his vote was for Byrd." And so ultimately Byrd beat Ted Kennedy for majority leader by one vote, and Russell was still alive. And when Russell passed away, Robert C. Byrd came over to Russell's office and quietly went into his office and laid one red rose -- one rose on Russell's desk and left. So Russell had a powerful influence on the Senate.

Later, Joe Biden, who's now Vice President of the United States, told me a story. He said when he first came, he was 30 years old. You know, you have to be 30 according to the U.S. Constitution. Biden was just a few months shy of that, and his wife and daughter were killed in a -- certainly his wife was killed in an automobile accident, and Biden didn't know whether to go

ahead and take the office or not. Herman Talmadge called him and urged him to take the seat; Biden had been elected.

So Biden comes into the Senate, and he goes over to the old man Stennis. And Stennis by now is Chairman of the Armed Services Committee. Russell has passed away. Biden is asked by Stennis. He said, "Why did you run for the Senate?" And so Biden tells the old, Confederate, anti-Civil Rights war horse, "Well, I ran for it because I believe in Civil Rights..." And then he stopped himself halfway through, you know. Now, Stennis was the inheritor of the massively long conference table that Russell had. It was given to Stennis. Now, the end of that story is that when Stennis was leaving the Senate, he called Biden in. Biden. And he tells Biden--he said, "Son, for many, many years, every Monday or Tuesday," whatever time during the week. "The Confederacy met around that table." He didn't say Senators from the Confederate States. He said the Confederacy met around that table. What he was saying was that Richard Russell held 35 votes. You needed 34 to tie and 35 to break cloture, because in those days you had to have 66 -- 66 votes to break cloture or bring a filibuster. So the Confederacy -- Strom Thurmond, Stennis, Russell, others -- could filibuster the Civil Rights Bill. As a matter of fact, the man that holds the record for filibuster time is Strom Thurmond at 24 hours and 18 minutes or something like that. So Biden tells me this story that Stennis said, "Son, every week the Confederacy met around that table." He said, "Son, I want you to know you're right and we were wrong." He said, "I want you to have this table." So today it's Joe Biden who has the rights to the old Richard Russell conference table, around which he was the master and around which he mustered the Senators from the Confederate states and fought against the Civil Rights Bill. He used Johnson in a masterful way, and Johnson put forward the 1958 Civil Rights Bill under Eisenhower. But because he, Russell, knew that he couldn't -- he couldn't do it.

Anyway, Russell has a tremendous legacy as the author of the school lunch program and others. But there are so many stories about Richard Russell around the Capitol to this day that you really can't tell them all. But Dick Russell was very kind to me. So Russell tells us interns that he is very leery, in effect, about the massive land buildup in '65. It was that week, the third week in July of 1965, that Lyndon Johnson made the fateful decision, the McNamara fork-in-the-road decision to do the massive land buildup.

So Johnson goes on TV and said, "We're going to send the First Air Cavalry Division to Vietnam and all this kind of stuff." The moment he said First Air Cavalry Division, I knew where I was going because I wanted to serve with the First Air Cavalry Division out of Georgia out of Fort Benning, an all helicopter unit. And I knew that's where I was going, because I was going on active duty 18 October 1965. I was in the pipeline. I was a young Second Lieutenant; I was going to the Army, but now I knew I was going to war. And I knew where that war was going to be--it was going to be Vietnam.

Ultimately, that's exactly what I did. The sad part about all that is by the time I volunteered in the spring of 1967 and left my job--my cushy job as a General's aide here and went to war--to Vietnam, by that time McNamara had already commissioned the Pentagon papers and knew we couldn't win. That's a hell of a thing to know while he was sending the rest of us to war.

In 1995, when I told--when McNamara's book came out telling that story, I was in Israel with Shimon Peres, and he said, "Did the McNamara book hurt you?" And I said, "Yes, it did." As a matter of fact, I was the quote of the day in the *New York Times*. You know, "If McNamara knew we couldn't win in April 1967, I wish he would have told me."

But I volunteered, and I went up in Vietnam in early June 1967. By that time, the North Vietnamese had already made the decision that they would attack in force with everything they

had and throwing everything but the kitchen sink at Tet in 1968. Tet is the Oriental New Year; it's the Chinese New Year. One February 1968, the North Vietnamese and the VC opened up with everything they had--hundreds of thousands of troops--against the half a million American forces and the Vietnamese forces that were on holiday, because it was Tet. So that battle raged, and the American command couldn't believe it. Intelligence reports came in from the field saying this massive number is whatever. And the intelligence officer said, "No, that can't be true." But it was true.

So a week into the Tet offensive, the *Newsweek* magazine had Westmoreland "man on the spot." It was really American strategy that was on the spot. And five thousand Marines were marooned at Khe Sanh--under siege at Khe Sanh, which is the upper portion of South Vietnam. And the question was is this going to become an American Dien Bien Phu? Is this going to be like 1954 and the French, isolated, under siege, where the bad guys build tunnels and come through and start picking off portions of the friendlies?

Well, Johnson told the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "I don't want no damn Dien Bien Phu." So heaven and earth was moved by the American military worldwide to rescue those five thousand Marines at Kai Son. The First Air Cavalry Division was put in position to be the lead element for that force. And like a fool, I volunteered for that. I tried to get out of it when I realized that the rescue force was so small, but I didn't figure out that we had B-52s and every other kind of aircraft in the American arsenal on our side.

So we held at Khe Sanh. Martin Luther King was assassinated April 4, and I was wounded April 8. It was actually the day that the First Air Cavalry Division broke the siege. But once Martin Luther King was assassinated, that was the news back in America. We were breaking the siege of Khe Sanh, the longest siege of the Vietnam War, but nobody seemed to really care by that point. And a week later, the American base was abandoned and plowed under.

So that began for me a powerful sense of meaninglessness about the Vietnam War. I got wounded April 8, 1968, by a grenade dropped by a man getting off the helicopter when we were unloading the radio relay team. I did not know it was his grenade. I certainly didn't know it was live. I reached down to get it, thinking it might be my grenade--in the woods--it fell off my wet gear and everything. And boom, within a flash, I lost both legs and my right arm and am lucky to be here to tell the tale.

A year and a half in military and VA hospitals, and I came back to Georgia December 1969, after testifying before Senator Alan Cranston--freshman Senator Alan Cranston about the lack of the VA healthcare for the returning Vietnam veterans. If that sounds familiar, we're seeing the same story--second verse, third verse, fourth verse--over with the Afghan and Iraq veterans. Although now so many of them have been sent back and back and back and back on multiple tours that they're pretty much fried. And what we can do for them, I think--we have to give them love and support. But what we can do for them is we have to counter this whole hell of post-traumatic stress disorder with which about 750 thousand are going to suffer for the rest of their lives, and many of them with traumatic brain injuries; much less shrapnel in their bodies, lost legs and arms, eyes, portions of their head and so forth. It's awful.

So how did I come to run for Georgia politics? I'm sitting there in December 1969 in my mother and daddy's house on Main Street in Lithonia, Georgia, really. And everybody says I'm a war hero and all that kind of stuff, but there's no job offers. No concrete jobs at all. No firm job offers at all. No job offers, period. And by the spring of 1970, I realized that I'm not going to get any job offers. I mean, nobody is going to hire a guy with just one hand. And even though I had artificial limbs and I was able to drive my car, which by then I had purchased with a VA grant to

use for some of it--I wasn't going to be hired. So I thought, "Well, no girlfriend, no apartment, no future, no job, no hope. Now's a great time to run for the State Senate."

How did I decide on the State Senate? I wanted to run for Congress. I wanted to go back to Washington. But by then, DeKalb County had turned massively Republican, as Georgia is today. And I knew I would lose the race for the Congress. But I took a look at the State Senate seat and found that it was possible, I thought, to run in a race and have a shot to win because it was a marginal seat. The incumbent Republican had won just a little bit in the massive Nixon landslide of '68. So, I decided to announce in April 1970 – I was going on 28 years old – for the State Senate. Nobody thought I had a chance to win. Nobody, no other Democrat wanted to run in that Senate seat because they thought they couldn't win.

I thought Carl Sanders was going to be the Democratic nominee for Governor. He had been a great Governor before. He was one of my personal heroes. I didn't know really a guy named Jimmy Carter until the Carter folks began to approach me in the hot summer of 1970 and said in Redan, Georgia, right up the road in DeKalb County still, Jimmy Carter was going to be speaking at a rally. And so, they wanted me to introduce him. Well, I didn't really know Carter. I didn't think he was going to win. Who's going to vote for somebody from Plains, Georgia? Boy, was I ever wrong. So, I agreed to go stand up on my artificial limbs that hot summer night and introduce Jimmy Carter. I met him and he had a white shirt on, and he had that famous – what became later known as that famous grin. Quiet spoken, but intense. Much like Bobby Kennedy, except Bobby Kennedy was the most intense man I ever met in my life. Talk about being wound tight, as they say in Georgia!

So Jimmy Carter was wound a little tight, and he was intense. But he was calm and soft-spoken. But he had a passion about him. So, I didn't think he was going to win. So, Jimmy Carter's up on a flat-bed truck. There are people out there. It's hot. And I stand up on my limbs. I'm hot. And it's in an abandoned service station in Redan, Georgia! I mean, not exactly the place where you start some big part of your life. But that was the first time I met Jimmy Carter. And I said, "Jimmy Carter is taking his campaign to the people. People need to be listened to. We have a government that's not listening to us." And in my heart, see, I didn't think Jimmy Carter was going to win. I didn't say, "And now, ladies and gentlemen, the next Governor of Georgia, Jimmy Carter." I didn't say that. I had had enough of foolishness, you know.

So I said, "And now, ladies and gentlemen, Jimmy Carter." And he made one of the worst political speeches I had ever heard. He read from prepared text, and he was really god-awful. And I thought to myself off to the side, I said "There's no way this guy is going to win a Democratic primary." But son of a gun, Carter gets Sanders in the run-off, and Carter wins the Democratic primary runoff and goes on to win the Governorship of Georgia, while I went on to become the youngest member of the State Senate at 28 and the only Vietnam veteran.

So I'm in there now in 1971, and Carter makes a statement in his Inaugural Address, "I say to you quite frankly the time for racial discrimination is over." And that lands him on the cover of *Time* magazine that week, just to say that! And I think it gives Hamilton Jordan and Jody Powell the notion that maybe this guy can go places.

Now, I didn't think that. But I saw him quickly begin to buck heads with the Lieutenant Governor, Lester Maddox. Well, Maddox started convening in the Senate, and he deliberately had a gavel that was, you know, kind of pieced together. And when he did the gavel with the television cameras, it shattered. And so I'm thinking, "Oh, my God. We've got this, too." So I became quickly a Carter supporter in a Maddox-dominated State Senate. So I was the odd man out. If Carter was for it, Maddox was against it. If Carter was for state reorganization, Maddox

was against it. If Carter was for MARTA, Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, Maddox was against it. If Carter was for regional planning around Atlanta, Maddox was against it. So I voted for all those progressive Carter things. And soon, me and Bobby Rowan and others became a small band of insurgents. And we tried to change the rules of the Senate--about 1973. We lost.

So Maddox takes away all of our – Maddox, Gene Holly, Hugh Gillis, all those guys--take away all of our privileges for Senate offices on the second and third floor. So we get consigned--all 23 of us--24 of us--get consigned to 24 desks down on the first floor with one secretary. That was the penalty for going against – shooting against the king and not killing him.

But what happened was that that's exactly where Hamilton Jordan and Jody Powell were plotting for some guy named Jimmy Carter to run for the Presidency, which was insane of course, I thought. But I go down there every day, and I'm pretty much the only one down there. And I mix it up with Hamilton Jordan and Phil Wise, who became the Social Secretary, and Jody Powell, and I'm thinking, you know, what a laugh it would be for Hamilton Jordan to start negotiating with the Russians. What a laugh, you know?

CLELAND: But in 1974, I ran for Lieutenant Governor. I said, "This is it. I've got to up route, like the old army major." I lost to our friend Zell Miller. Actually, I didn't lose to him. I lost to Mary Hitt, because Mary Hitt and Zell Miller made it to the runoff. I was one percent out of the runoff for Lieutenant Governor, so I was out. I cried for about a day or two, and then I pretty much forgot it and moved on, went to work on the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee for Cranston and Hartke. I think it was there that a young man named Jimmy Carter, having won a bunch of primaries, became President of the United States. I'm thinking, "Oh, my goodness alive!"

Summer of 1976, Cranston communicates to me, "I think Carter's going to win, and I think you should be head of the VA." I'm thinking, "Oh, my goodness. I'm 34 years of age. I'm here with one pen, one pad, and one desk and one phone. And you want me to be head of the Veterans' Administration?" So after about three days' thought, I said, "Well, if you think it's a good idea, we'll go for it." So he clears it with Nunn and Talmadge. Cranston catches Carter in Seattle behind the curtain and says, "There's only two or three things I really want, and one of them is for Max Cleland to be head of the VA." And Carter says, "I love Max Cleland!"

So Jimmy Carter wins election night 1976. January of 1977, I'm in my apartment in Washington, D.C., going to work--driving to work every day to the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. And at night in January--I think about January 19 or something like that--the day before the Inauguration--I get this phone call, and it's Hamilton Jordan. And Jordan says, "The President would like to see you tomorrow about 5:00. Can you be here?" I said, "Yes, sir." And he said, "Well, I want you to..." I said, "Where should I go?" He said, "Well, I want you to come in through that side gate there, where there is the south lawn." He said, "I think they called it the south lawn." Jordan hadn't even been in power long enough to find out that it was the south lawn of the White House and the west gate or something like that. He wasn't even sure himself. So I rent this limousine. It's January 20, 1977. Carter makes his Inaugural Address, alright? I'm down there, and I hear the Secret Service guy saying, "He's going to do what?" And I come to find out, Jimmy Carter is going to walk to the White House. Holy goodness.

Well, I make it double time, you know, back to my apartment--change clothes. And I get in a limo that was driven by a former NCO of Walter Reed. And we start trying to make our way to the White House. Well, there's barricade after barricade after barricade. And we tell every officer, "My name is Max Cleland." They don't know Max Cleland from anything! "And I have

an appointment with the President of the United States.” They’re like, “Yeah, sure, right, yeah, lots of luck.” It took us about an hour just to move through the barricades to convince the D.C. Police people that I really did have an appointment with the President of the United States! And so I came in and camped out in Hamilton Jordan’s office. I’ll never forget, all the walls were stripped bare. The Ford people had cleaned that place out, and Hamilton Jordan, with a remote, was playing with the television, watching the parade on TV. And so I’m thinking, “I don’t know. It’s hard to believe, it’s just hard to believe.”

So about 5:20 on Inauguration Day, January 20, 1977, I get ushered in down the hall. And Hamilton Jordan opens the door, and there is Jimmy Carter in the Oval Office in front of what I consider the Kennedy desk. He had the Kennedy desk put back in there. Johnson had had it removed after Kennedy got assassinated, and Carter had it moved back in.

We talked. He says, “Submit your plans to being head of the VA about how you’re going to manage the agency to Hamilton.” And I had some ideas. I could hardly talk. Talk about the shadow of the Presidency or the shadow of the Oval Office? Jimmy Carter was the ultimate good old boy. I mean, I talked to him. I related to him. I mean, he was Governor and whatever. But I related to him. And I couldn’t hardly talk. \*Stutters name\* I couldn’t hardly say my name! I’m in the Oval Office with the President of the United States, and it’s just us. So I was his official – first official appointment. And on the way out, I said, “Mr. President, this is only my second time in the Oval Office.” He said, “It’s only my second time, too!

So that’s how I became head of the Veterans’ Administration. March 2, 1977, I was sworn in as head of the VA--34 years old, first Vietnam veteran, youngest man ever to head the agency, 172 hospitals, 86 outpatient clinics. In those days, it had a budget of about 20 to \$22 billion dollars; now it’s about 50 billion or more. The biggest single presence in America of any other agency other than the Postal Service.

So...

CRAIG BREADEN: Can we pause, and maybe we’ll –

CLELAND: We can pause right there.

[Pause.]

CLELAND: Well, President Carter swore me in as head of the VA. March 2, 1977, we had a ceremony in the Oval Office. I brought my mother and daddy and my minister from the Methodist church in Lithonia. There was Sam Brown.

Sam Brown had led the anti-war moratorium march on Washington in 1970. He was dressed up in a suit. President Carter had appointed him as head of Action Federal Agency. So I approached Sam Brown and I said, “Sam, I see you dressed up in a suit.” He said, “I’ve learned in my years in politics--why offend them with style when you can offend them with substance?” I will never forget that. But Carter had--before I saw him--while he was still at the Capitol, signed the pardon--Presidential pardon for draft evaders. The Veterans’ organizations all called it amnesty. And that got hung around Carter’s neck politically. The VFW, four years later, created a pack. They endorsed Ronald Reagan, and Reagan won. Not because of the VFW, but Reagan won four years later. So in many ways, although President Carter appointed a Vietnam veteran head of the VA and trusted me to do it, we were swimming upstream from the beginning against the Veterans’ organizations.

And so I had to – not had to, but I wanted to go out and do the best I could to shake up the VA without tearing it apart. So I conducted multiple visits out in the field to VA hospitals, multiple visits, and some surprise visits. A huge system. The only way you really manage it is through leadership. You can't even try to manage it, but you try. You try to manage it. And my heart goes out to those trying to handle the VA now with the onslaught of Iraq veterans and Afghan veterans, and that war still is – both those wars are still going on.

SHORT: What do you think of those wars?

CLELAND: I think that we ought to be out of Iraq tomorrow, but you can't withdraw that many troops that fast. So I'm glad the President has settled upon 2011 as the date for which American combat troops will be withdrawn, and they should be. We should have never gone into Iraq, although I voted for the Iraq War Resolution. Cheney was saying there were nuclear weapons there, that there were weapons of mass destruction in the country, Saddam was about to use them. Condi Rice was talking about a mushroom cloud. The Administration put on a massive campaign after 9/11 to use Iraq as the sine qua non of the battle against terrorism. The President actually said that. It was not.

The embarrassment of the United States is that eight years later after 9/11 in 2001, we still haven't killed or captured Osama Bin Laden and his terrorist cadre. So, now we will – with a new President and a new Administration, we will focus on withdrawing the troops from Iraq, going after Bin Laden and his terrorist cadre in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The real danger to the United States now is a nuclear weapon in the hands of Islamic militants headed up by Bin Laden. And the Taliban is really a cover for Al Qaeda.

Now, we funded Al Qaeda in Afghanistan when they were fighting the Russians. As a matter of fact, we funded every one of our enemies since World War II--we funded Ho Chi Minh, we funded Saddam Hussein, and we funded Bin Laden. Now Bin Laden sees the United States and Western Europe and Christians and Jews as enemies of Islam. He is an Islamic fanatic, and his cadre is the same.

Now, I can see some argument for an anti-American point of view, but I can't see going out and killing Americans by the thousands and I can't see just arbitrarily using suicide bombers in Western Europe, Spain, and around just to make a point--just to provide a big news story of you killing a bunch of innocent people. Now, VC did that, NVA did that. I've seen that before. I've seen this movie before. Going against Bin Laden and his terrorist cadre, you're going to have to really think about how to fight guerillas. And in that part of the world, you're dealing with their part of the world, not our part of the world. So it's going to be a bitch, it's going to be hard, and I'm afraid it will be long. But you say we have no choice. We cannot let stand, quite frankly, the assault of 9/11 and Bin Laden. Bin Laden must be brought to justice and his terrorist cadre. Now, I understand that there are grievances out there in the Islamic world--against Western Europe, against colonial powers, against America--but that's not the way to handle it.

So, with the commendation of President Obama, Secretary Hillary Clinton, and one of these days probably a brand new Secretary of Defense and a whole new lineup with the military--withdrawing the Army particularly and the Marine Corps from Iraq and rethinking exactly who is the biggest threat against us and dealing with that, you're going to have a long, long war, but you're going to have a smarter war. We've got to fight smarter. It can't be Vietnam all over again; it can't be Iraq all over again. It can't be no strategy to win, no strategy to end. It cannot be that. So it's a real, real nut to crack for the President. The biggest nut to crack, I think, is the

economy here. We're losing hundreds of thousands of jobs each month, and that will continue for another few years. We are going down into a deflationary depression, because of what the President or the Congress does. I think the end of bailouts is soon to arrive, because there won't be enough money! And some banks are going to fail and some companies are going to fail. Chrysler just declared bankruptcy the other day. I mean, it's going to be a bear, but in three to four months – three to four years, this thing will hit bottom and we'll start another 60-year growth cycle. But it's going to be hell to go through. That and the two wars abroad, I'm telling you, people in Washington have their work cut out for them. But I think that when you commit American forces, the American people have to be with you. And they have to be with you enough to support the wounded when they come home.

SHORT: Let's talk for a minute about our War on Terror here.

CLELAND: Well, again, you have to be smarter. You can't shut down the United States, and what it stands for in the world. You can't obviate the Constitution. You can't do that. What was it Ben Franklin said? You know, those who want security over safety deserve neither. What you have to do – and when I was in the Senate, I voted for the Homeland--the creation of the Homeland Security Department, and I was on the 9/11 Commission. And the best recommendation to come out of there is the intelligence czar, or the single point at which all the intelligence comes together. That was really the focus after World War II--after the attack at Pearl Harbor in 1947 for the Defense Reorganization Act, where Harry Truman and the Democratic Congress created the Department of Defense, the Air Force Department, and the CIA. The CIA was supposed to be the ultimate gatherer of all the intelligence. But 80 percent of the intelligence budget is in the Pentagon. So, you've got a tail wagging the dog here. So you have a battle among the intelligence community, which is about 15 to 16 intelligence agencies. But you do need some person at the top who's analyzing the strategy. My understanding is that it's a four-star admiral now--Rhodes Scholar--who I know personally, and I think he's perfect for the job. And the President will be well-served to listen to him. So I think we've got our intelligence house more in order now. We're getting out of Iraq now. And we're focusing on Afghanistan and Pakistan now. And now I think we realize we have to be a hell of a lot smarter, not just harder. I think we realize we have to coordinate with other agencies--other intelligence agencies, particularly Western European intelligence agencies. We did not really do that. And the FBI and the CIA really weren't talking to each other before 9/11. Whether they're talking to each other now or not, I'm not sure. But you do have Homeland Security that is forcing people to talk together that didn't before talk to each other in Washington. So you're driving the mammoth bureaucracies together to make better sense of all--of this picture out there for the President, whoever the President is. So I think Obama is going to be a hell of a lot better served than former Presidents. This was tried. President Kennedy tried to--after the Bay of Pigs, to put the CIA back in its original role as an intelligence gatherer rather than as a political operative abroad. But he was killed before he could really run that through. So maybe now we can get that act together. I certainly hope so. It's not just an intelligence--see, 9/11 was not just an intelligence failure. It was also an intelligence blind spot, because the Bush Administration was all focused on Iraq. They were not focused on – and some missile defense shield or something over the Pacific rather the growth of terrorism--the growth of Al Qaeda, which had declared war on us in 1998.

SHORT: We're often criticized for mistreating terrorists who we have captured. What do you think about that?

CLELAND: It's my view that you--just because they're terrorists or guerillas, you still have to treat them as POWs. That's my view. Now, that's basically what has come about after the American people have been embarrassed and the American government has been embarrassed by the excesses of, particularly, the Bush Administration and Cheney, where he got the Attorney General's office to write memos legitimizing CIA waterboarding and so forth and hid tapes of waterboarding – CIA tapes of waterboarding from the Judicial branch. And that's obstruction of justice. So, you know, we're in tough shape now. You've got lots to straighten out. The step number one, you've got to treat prisoners of war as prisoners of war. I don't care whether they're terrorists or guerillas or wearing a uniform; you treat them as prisoners of war. You treat them as captured POWs. And that's what – that's basically what McCain is saying, and I agree with him.

SHORT: Let's get back to politics. You decided to run for Secretary of State.

CLELAND: Right.

SHORT: Why not Lieutenant Governor or Governor?

CLELAND: I didn't want to tackle Zell Miller again, and Zell Miller did not want me to run against him in '81 or '82. We became good friends by then. We were always good friends. We became good friends. The Secretary of State's office was in effect open because Mr. Ben Fortson had passed away. David Poythress had been appointed to that slot by Governor Busbee. Zell Miller decided to run for Lieutenant Governor again. And so, I didn't want to tackle Zell Miller, and I thought that the Secretary of State's office would be a much more suitable office for me. It was full-time, it had a good staff, had a good mission, and I liked the way Mr. Ben operated. He was always kind to me, had his door open all the time. That's the way I wanted to operate. And so I ran for Secretary of State, because I felt that being head of the VA under President Carter for four years gave me a leg up in terms of name ID and recognition, and it did. And versus a man who was a wonderful guy, David Poythress, and he's running for Governor now and he's got a great shot. But in those days, he was relatively unknown and had been appointed to that position. He had not run statewide. I had run statewide in '74, knew where the stumps were, and made my share of mistakes, and was ready to run and win in '82. That's what happened.

SHORT: Tell us about the office of Secretary of State. It seems to me that some Georgians don't know really what the Secretary of State does.

CLELAND: Well, they will soon find out. The Secretary of State's office is the chief elections officer of Georgia. I mentioned Mr. Mackey. Mr. Mackey lost in 1966 when a judge ruled that 1200 over votes on a new IBM Voter-Matic card were thrown out that would have given Mackey the election. They were over votes. They voted – people voted for Mackey, and then they voted for the straight Democratic Party ticket. There is no such thing as a straight party ticket in Georgia anymore. But that was the first computer error that cost an election in Georgia.

You move that forward, then you got – in 2000, you’ve got the hanging chads in Florida and so forth. So, Governor Barnes and Secretary of State –

SHORT: Massey.

CLELAND: No, no, not Massey, but the President of Young Harris now.

SHORT: Cathy Cox.

CLELAND: Cathy Cox. Secretary of State Cathy decided that Georgia would be the first state in America to go all computerized voting. It sounded like a great idea. But the contract went to Diebold. Diebold had a President that was in Ohio, and he had – he was represented by a Congressman that was on the – when the Republicans controlled Congress--was on the House Committee that--out of which came the Help America Vote Act in 2001-2002. And so this guy argued against the paper ballot and made sure – or he argued against the paper trail for black box voting in effect. And that’s what Diebold wanted. It was the head of Diebold who – well, it was someone from Diebold who in 2002 came in 24 hours before the election was held, after the Secretary of State had cleared all election machines, and put in fixes in Fulton and DeKalb counties to supposedly fix the clock. The clock never got fixed, but a parallel program was installed. That parallel program is now in the breast of the U.S. Attorney General’s Office. Whether or not that program shifted votes on that black box voting, nobody knows. Why? Because Diebold technicians ran the election that year, not Secretary of State election officials. Why? Because the equipment was so brand new that no election official had ever really done that before, not really. So, it wasn’t the Secretary of State’s office that really ran the elections; it was Diebold that ran the elections. And now we know, because in 2004 it was the head of Diebold that guaranteed Ohio for Bush in a letter--in a fundraising letter. So you don’t know what happened! I don’t know what happened in 2002 in Fulton and DeKalb, not really. And we’re not quite sure what happened in Ohio in 2004.

So black box voting now has gotten a terribly bad reputation and should be followed with a paper trail so that a third party – chief elections officers, like the Secretary of State, and all the elections officials in Georgia – should be able to verify a ballot. And poll watchers should be able to verify a ballot without hanging chads, without the secrecy of a black box. You’re just conducting your vote and some private proprietary organization is running elections. So now we’ve learned a hell of a lot about elections. We know now that the Secretary of State’s office in Georgia is in charge of all elections in the state. It is also in charge of all the corporations--registering corporations, and certainly in charge of investments. Not what you invest, but keeping elections – keeping investments public, so that--or the offerings are public, so that the consumer can be aware of what’s going on.

So the Secretary of State’s office is a very meaningful office in Georgia. It’s a great office. Doesn’t necessarily get caught up in a whole heck of a lot of politics, but can get caught up in politics if you want to. But everybody in Georgia has an interest in the clean elections process. And God knows I certainly do. And we have a vested interested in who gets elected Secretary of State.

SHORT: You were elected three more times.

CLELAND: Yeah.

SHORT: And served in that office for, what, 14 years?

CLELAND: Twelve, yeah.

SHORT: Twelve years. And then you decided to resign and run for the United States Senate.

CLELAND: Right. I thought that I would be – when Zell Miller told me he was going to run for the second time for reelection after saying that he was not, I said, "Fine. Go for it." So I thought that I would spend pretty much the rest of my life as Secretary of State in Georgia. I thought that was it. I said, "You know, God, if you expect me to run for anything else, you've got to open the door." So, I mean, I tried to open the door. I thought about running for Governor, but that didn't work out. Zell Miller ran for reelection, so that was out.

So, I was Secretary of State. And all of a sudden, 1995--'4 or '5--late, late '94--Sam Nunn decides to walk. Sam Nunn decides to retire from the United States Senate. My goodness alive. He shook up alpha carte in Georgia. I was there on the floor of the State Senate when Sam Nunn made his farewell statement and announced that he was not going to run for reelection. Well, one week later I'm in. And January 1995 I resigned as Secretary of State and ran like the dickens for basically two years for U.S. Senate. My potential opponent in the Democratic primary was Buddy Darden, who I had met in Dick Russell's office in the summer of '65. Buddy had already lost the seat in the Congress by then, and I was better known than Buddy and I thought I was in a better position. So Buddy stayed out of it. In many ways, he cleared the way for me to run and win.

I ran against Guy Millner, a self-funder as they say in American politics today. He spent 13½ million. I spent three. And I won by 30,000 votes in '96. Clinton being on the ballot helped. There's no question about that, because by that time there was a big gender gap. Females in Georgia were voting for Clinton and for me. So I won in '96 and thought that – and took the Richard B. Russell-Sam Nunn Senate seat that had been hallowed all of my life by those two men. I knew them. I had been in their offices, and I had been in the office of the – I mean, the Armed Services Committee room. And I had said to myself that there's only one way I'll go back to Washington, and that is to take Sam Nunn's seat on the Armed Services Committee. So, I said, "Well, I know that's not going to happen, because Sam Nunn is going to stay there forever." Well, he didn't.

So, I ran. I ran in '95 and '96 and was lucky to win really, looking back on it. And we really didn't know whether we had won until the next day, about a little after 9:30 am--the next day when Guy Millner conceded. And I couldn't believe it. I was the junior Senator from Georgia. Coverdell was the senior Senator. Good man. Coverdell and I had come to the State Senate in the same year, 1970. He sat right in front of me; I sat right behind him. We actually worked together! Back in those days, moderate Republicans and moderate Democrats actually worked together in the State Senate. So Coverdell and I had a wonderful friendship--relationship. He was Republican and I was Democrat, but we really had a good personal relationship and a good political professional relationship going.

And then Coverdell had that brain hemorrhage and died. And before I could say 'my goodness,' I was the senior Senator from Georgia. Oh, my God. So I had Dick Russell's office. I had his phone number. Somebody got out of the archives Dick Russell's desk. I mean, I put up my

picture of me and Dick Russell when I was an intern, you know. It was a picture where I had the classic deer-in-the-headlights look, you know, that kind of thing! I was just 21, you know, and he was the old pro. And so I saw myself as a successor to Dick Russell and Sam Nunn, sitting on the Armed Services Committee and rising in rank and stature for America's national security, our veterans, our armed services, and I began to travel around the world and see our services. Then George Bush got elected, and the whole world changed. For me, I was up in 2002, and they came after me big time, and especially after 9/11. They converted the whole country and certainly the Congress, for a while--much like a slummiq, you know, mesmerizes that cobra, you know. You know, they just mesmerized the country with national security and all that kind of stuff.

Well, I had been an early sponsor of Homeland Security legislation with this Senator from Connecticut, not Dodd but--mental block. Anyway, he became Vice President--a Vice Presidential candidate with Gore.

SHORT: I have a mental block, too. But I know his wife very well!

CLELAND: Yeah. Well, anyway, we had cosponsored the Homeland Security legislation together when the White House had opposed it. Then the White House flipped, and they said, "Oh, yeah, we're going to take it over as an issue." And Bill Frist, before--so Bush ran with the war in Iraq and invading Iraq, and Frist, the majority leader, said Homeland Security is going to be our issue. So they came after me big time. Karl Rove came down and recruited Saxby Chambliss.

Another story about that is that Roy Barnes, in his Reapportionment plan, had -- Governor Roy Barnes -- had created a district for Chambliss. Chambliss would have run for the U.S. House again because he was rising in stature and power there. But Tom Murphy did not. He wanted to create some other set of Congressional districts. So he froze out a Saxby Chambliss, just like he froze out Newt Gingrich. So it was Tom Murphy, in many ways, who created Newt Gingrich, and Tom Murphy, in many ways, who helped create Saxby Chambliss. Because Chambliss would have never run for the U.S. Senate against me had he not been frozen out in a Reapportionment plan that Roy Barnes couldn't get over Tom Murphy, the Speaker of the House.

So they passed the -- the legislature passed the Reapportionment plan. Chambliss is recruited by Karl Rove, and they're on the way. So Bush comes down against me five different times. Ralph Reed is now the Chairman of the Republican Party in Georgia. So you've got Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Karl Rove, and Ralph Reed all lined up against me. And they put together an ad morphing my view -- morphing my face into the face of Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein and then me, you know, and insinuating that I was voting against Homeland Security. I did vote against a bunch of amendments by George Bush that would have killed the Homeland Security Bill in the Senate, but they made it look like I was somehow completely out of step with what the people of Georgia wanted.

At any rate, Ralph Reed mustered -- and then the flaggers, the people who were pissed off with Roy Barnes and pissed off at the Democrats, because Barnes and the legislature changed the flag. Ralph Reed did a poll and found that for white males this issue came off the charts. So they went after registering white males. Only white males, not white females but white males, particularly in South Georgia. And the weekend before the election Reed put together and marched out 10,000 volunteers, and the President came to Savannah. And they fanned out throughout South

Georgia and flipped 40 counties in South Georgia alone from Democrat to Republican. Barnes lost, I lost, Speaker of the House lost, many members of the House and Senate lost who had voted for the flag. And that was the end of Democratic domination of Georgia politics for more than a century.

Now Georgia politics is dominated by Republicans--Republican Governor, Republican Lieutenant Governor, Republican Speaker of the House, Republican Committee Chairman--each body. And so -- and basically you have a Republican state now.

SHORT: Why is that?

CLELAND: I think Georgia was going Republican. More and more people were voting in the Republican primary, and I think more and more Republicans moved here from the Northeast and the Midwest. They moved to -- they fleshed out the Republican donut around Atlanta, so that's where you see the massive Republican gains--counties like Cherokee and Forsyth and down south of Atlanta in Fayette County. The percentages of Republican votes on Election Day continue to go up, and the percentages of Democratic votes on Election Day continue to go down.

If you really want to see it, you can see the last Presidential election in 2008 where the Democrats got 47 percent. Obama got 47 percent. McCain got 53. That was the high watermark of black turnout, which was about 30 percent of the total vote. That was the high watermark of Democratic performance in the state of Georgia. About 80 percent of the white people vote Republican, and well over 90 percent of the black people vote Democrat. So you're split now along racial lines in Georgia. And as long as you're split along racial lines in Georgia, Democrats lose statewide.

So, the question is now with the tremendous turmoil and the loss of jobs in Georgia, what happens in 2010? Maybe the American--maybe the people of Georgia want to go back to the party that brought them their prosperity in the first place. So, I mean, the issue is no longer the flag. It's my job and my family; that's what the issue is. And so the candidate that best appeals for that, I think, has a great chance of being Governor and on down the line, except this state still leans Republican. It's not a 50/50 state. It's a 47/53 state in favor of the Republicans. So you've got to have a lot of Republicans either stay home or switch by several hundred thousand to the Democratic candidate if a Democratic candidate statewide is going to win.

SHORT: You're a good friend of President Clinton.

CLELAND: Right.

SHORT: Tell us about your relationship.

CLELAND: Oh, President Clinton is the best single politician I've ever met in my whole entire life. And it's not fake with him. He has in his DNA, in his makeup, a heart, a feeling for people. He matches that with his incredible mind, which -- a Rhodes Scholar mind--which in someone else would come off as cheeky or brash or smart-alecky. But you match a heart as big as gold--as big as the West. You match a tremendous mind, and you put that into a Southern drawl from Arkansas, and you've got Bill Clinton!

And so, now, he loves women, likes women, and that's just the way life is. Now, that ain't going

to change! I will say that Monica went after Bill, as well as Bill going after Monica. That's the best I know of it. She was determined to earn her presidential kneepads, and she got them. Now, that's the way that turned out. Now, what happened was by 1998--99, that was the talk of the world. You couldn't discuss any other subject, no other subject. No newsperson in the world wanted to talk about anything else except Monica and Bill, which gave the Democratic Party as a whole – it left us vulnerable to the charge of being immoral. So you had the rise of the moral voter on the Republican right when they had just lost the Presidential election. And it enabled Newt Gingrich and others to play holier than thou except that they all – that many of them, especially Newt, had feet of clay and had to resign from office themselves, because of such philandering.

So it left the voters in 2000 with a choice between Bush, who people thought was the son of George Herbert Walker Bush and would bring a new tone to Washington. Oh, he brought a new tone to Washington, all right. He brought Karl Rove with him. But somebody that they didn't particularly know versus the Democrats, which looked more and more immoral on the issues of immoral action and so forth.

So Bush wins in 2000 based on the rise of the moral voter, the rise of the moral right wing, the rise of the morality radio and right-wing radio and the creation of Fox News in the early 2000s. So they had it all going for them except that the bottom fell out of the economy after the Democrats lost power. And the Republicans took it in the ear in 2008 because of what? The rise of the economic voter!

History is repeating itself in so many ways. You had the rise of the prohibition voter in the '20s when things were going really well. And prohibition, whether you were wet or dry, whether you were for whiskey or against whiskey, that was the big issue in the 1920s. Then you had the stock market crash in '29, October '29. And by 1932, nobody could think about whiskey or whatever; they're all thinking about, "Buddy, can you spare a dime?" And we had a nation with an unemployment rate of 25 percent.

So, FDR gets elected and wipes out the prohibition--the Volstead Act, and the Congress repeals that. And we have beer and whiskey that's legal, and we start taxing it. So now we have the economic voter. When you're losing jobs by the hundreds of thousands each month now, the economic voter is going to get more and more angry. That's what Barack Obama and the Democratic Congress have to watch out for, because this anger is going to increase. And anger against taxes, against anything, it takes away consumer purchasing power by the anger at the banks, at the bailouts--just rise in anger. Now, the right wing can feed off of that. Whether it's successful in three to four years, I don't know. But it's a very – it's going to be pretty ugly out there in two to three or four years. Much more ugly than it is today. But right now your right wing is struggling for leadership in the Republican Party. They are very scattered and very splintered right now. But that doesn't mean they don't have a chance to come back. They'll come back in an anti-tax, anti-Washington, anti-bigness kind of way.

SHORT: What else, Max? You're a great man, great public servant. Is there anything you would like to tell future Georgians?

CLELAND: I think--to echo the sentiment of a man I ran across today at lunch--politics used to be fun. Now it's gotten to be war. I lay that at the feet of Karl Rove and George Bush and Dick Cheney. They created war. They created political war in this country. They're paying for it now. We are going to withdraw from Iraq; we'll pursue the real bandits--Afghanistan and Pakistan--as

they cross the borders there. How we heal our land? I think Obama's trying to do that. I think some members of the Democratic Congress in the House and Senate are trying to do that. But ultimately, the campaigns themselves have to be more than just a money chase and who can put together the most brutal negative ads against someone else. Only the public can do that. The public--the Georgia public in this case--will have to vote against those people en masse--vote against them en masse, who use surreptitious ads and campaign tactics that are not straightforward.

There was an effort under McCain-Feingold, which I cosponsored when I was in the Senate, to kind of clean up American politics, clean up some money, clean up some ads and so forth. And now the soft money known as 527s, arguing some particular case can come into any campaign--any federal campaign in America and undercut it and there's nobody in charge, nobody to blame. So maybe the Internet, maybe iPods, maybe Twitter, maybe whatever, I don't know; there's 50,000 different ways to communicate to the American public now other than just television. But the American people are going to have to take responsibility ultimately for the quality of politics that we have.

They can blame those in office. They can blame the government. They can blame whoever they want to. But ultimately, as Benjamin Franklin said, "You know, it's our system." I mean, a lady came to Franklin after the Constitutional convention in Philadelphia and said, "Mr. Franklin, what kind of government do we have?" He said, "Young lady, you have a Republic if you can keep it." So it's up to each generation to keep it. It's up to each generation, I think, to make America just a little bit better. I think it's up to each generation to make Georgia a little bit better. Otherwise, why run? Why put up with this foolishness? Why go through all this stuff? I really do believe there was a time, probably -- you don't have to go too far back in the Senate--in Sam Nunn's day--when there was a certain camaraderie in the Senate. Now, it's war. I can tell you it's war. It's kill or be killed. And what is it? A Republican said, "Morality lies on the side of the heaviest guns--the heaviest artillery." Who's got the votes in the Senate now? Who's got the votes in the Senate? Well, right now, the Democrats--it looks like they've got the votes--60 votes to stave off cloture and so forth, which more and more makes the Republican Senators irrelevant. I don't think the Republican Party, as hardcore a Democrat as I am, ought to become irrelevant in the Senate or anywhere else. I think there's plenty of room for argument. Democrats don't have all the wisdom.

But I can tell you it is war in Washington, and Karl Rove and George Bush--George Bush let that happen, and Karl Rove made it happen. They went out to kill anybody that disagreed with them, anybody. And I know that personally. So it breeds kill or be killed. But maybe there's a little bit higher standard in Washington now. Whether there's a higher standard in the State Capitol or not, I'm not sure. What I hear about the Republican takeover of the Governorship and the House and the Senate does not please me at all. I mean, I don't see a bunch of good government types running around down there.

So the American people, or the people of Georgia certainly, they've got a chance to speak their mind in 2010. And what we have to do--those of us who care about the election process--have to make sure it's a fair election and one where every ballot is counted. I kind of trust the people more than I do any other entity, because if you count the ballots fairly and throw it out there and count all the ballots fairly and tally them right, the American people are going to be right more times than they're not. So, we are in the business of self-government. We have a Republic if we can keep it. And for those of us who have fought for it, that means a whole hell of a lot to us.

SHORT: If you look back over your career, is there anything you might have done differently?

CLELAND: Oh, yeah. Yes. Start with the Senate. I would not have voted for the Iraq War Resolution. That was a mistake. I screwed up. I should have known better. But I went through 9/11. Bush pushed it, brought it right down to the election--the vote itself. He came after me big time. I had grave doubts about the Iraq War Resolution. I knew that the Administration would just check it off, just like Johnson wanted to check it off so he could do what he wanted to do. And Bush did what he wanted to do in Iraq, just like Johnson did what he wanted to do in Vietnam. I still don't think it really matters, certainly in terms of Vietnam at all, and I'm not sure Iraq has been so permanently changed by our presence there or not. We're in either Afghanistan and Pakistan due to the attack against us 9/11, in which we have to bring some justice to that situation. But otherwise, you know, we keep our guard up but our hand out. I mean, that's our posture. It's not a bad posture; it's a moral posture, a good posture. It helps the world. And here in Georgia, you know, what's it all about? Is it all about power? Is it all about office holding? Is it all about campaign contributions? Is it all about a judgeship? Is it all about having your way for a little while? I don't think so. I think it's all about politics in Georgia and in this country. It's all about making a difference so that you can sleep a little bit better at night. I mean, that's the reason why I participated in it.

SHORT: What has been your proudest moment in politics?

CLELAND: Probably when I was sworn in as head of the VA under President Carter. There I was young, I was 34, I had my mother and father there, my Methodist minister there. I was in the Oval Office. It was the first President from Georgia. And I'm kind of surprised I didn't pee in my pants really I was probably so excited! I will never forget that feeling. I still look at my VA days as my finest days of public service, where I did the most good, probably in the shortest period of time. But it's where I did the most good--made the best contribution.

SHORT: Your biggest disappointment?

CLELAND: That I voted for the Iraq War Resolution, because I grieve for those kids that have been killed and for those kids that have been blown to hell that I see at Walter Reed. And I grieve for the ones coming back from Afghanistan and Pakistan too. But at least they're in Afghanistan and Pakistan--going after the bad guys, I mean the really bad guys. Iraq after 9/11 didn't make any sense. And I have to wonder, Bob -- you've been around politics for a long time -- you have to wonder, if you weren't just covering your own rear end by doing that, if you hadn't turned into what you said you were never going to turn into, and that is just somebody trying to hold their own seat, you see the extent to which the people will go. Arlen Specter is kind of a case in point with the old Everett Dirksen line that, you know, "When you feel the heat, you see the light." So Bush put a lot of heat on us, and on me--all of us up in 2002 to vote for the Iraq War Resolution, because if we didn't then we were going to be unpatriotic. I voted for the Iraq Resolution, cosponsored the Homeland Security Bill, and I was still accused of being unpatriotic and having my picture morphed into Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein. So, yeah, that's my biggest single disappointment, because by that move, I participated in sending young men into war for no clear reason, and that is the one issue that I have to disagree with Johnson on. No clear strategy to win, no clear rationale in the Vietnam War except kill the

bad guys, with no understanding of the history behind it. And ultimately, no strategy to get out except ultimately to lose your rear end and get kicked out. That can't happen. So as a Vietnam veteran--fool me once, shame on you, fool me twice, shame on me. I have regretted the Iraq War Resolution vote more times than you can possibly imagine, and yet I cannot try – I can't dwell on Vietnam and the Iraq War Resolution. I have to move on with my own life and do what I can to help others, especially those who are suffering. I can identify with them.

SHORT: How would you like to be remembered?

CLELAND: As Secretary of State, I used to go to those – do those tours at the Capitol rotunda, and I would see those busts of people that were famous in Georgia history. And I said, you know--I would say jokingly that, "You know, they won't have to dismember me; all they've got to do is just pour some bronze over me and I'll be there, you know." I used to joke about that. I think every politician wants to be remembered in a positive way.

I don't know. I used to think about that a lot. I don't think about it much anymore. I think more about now just living, trying to live well today and trying to make sure that my daddy is as well off today as he possibly can be. He's going on 95. I'm not quite sure. I think the impact you make on other people is primarily in their own eyes, and maybe that's okay. I mean, Churchill said, you know--he said, "History will be very kind to me because I intend to write it." So I'll do my share of writing--writing my own history.

But I don't know, maybe as somebody who just – I used to think about the Vietnam War, that the only thing that I could say about myself is I kept faith with my country when it was most difficult to do so. That's it. I'm no hero and I'm not full of courage and all that kind of stuff. And I came back and I tried to do my best, given my circumstances, to try to turn the country around and try to make a little bit of difference for people who had been screwed up in war and who might become disabled in some way or experience trauma. I don't know. I find myself on that side of the ledger more and more, just somebody who survived and who tried to make things a little bit better for those others who have survived.

SHORT: Well, to many of us you are a hero.

CLELAND: Well, thank you, Bob.

SHORT: And we appreciate all you've done for your state and the country.

CLELAND: Thank you very much.

SHORT: And I want to thank you on behalf of Young Harris College and the Russell Library at the University for being our guest today.

CLELAND: Thank you very much. It's an honor to be associated with Young Harris and with the Richard B. Russell Library. The more I think about the life of Richard B. Russell, the more I admire it. And the fact that I was glad to serve in his Senate seat for six years is one of the highlights of my life. Thank you.