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Roy J. Rowland

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BOB SHORT: I'm Bob Short and this is Reflections on Georgia Politics sponsored by the Richard Russell Library at the University of Georgia and Young Harris College. Our guest is Dr. Roy Rowland, former member of the Georgia House of Representatives and a member of

Congress from Georgia's 8th district. Welcome, Dr. Rowland.

DR. ROY ROWLAND: Bob, it's a real pleasure to be here and I appreciate this opportunity.

SHORT: Before we talk about you and your medical and political careers I'd like to ask you this question. What shall I call you Dr. Rowland, Representative Rowland or Congressman Rowland?

ROWLAND: Well I worked real hard for that M.D. degree so you know it's nice being called doctor. It was a high honor and a privilege to serve in the Congress and in the State House and you know I like those, so why don't you just call me Roy.

SHORT: Roy okay. All right. Uh, Wrightsville, Georgia.

ROWLAND: Wrightsville.

SHORT: Was it your dream when you were growing up in Wrightsville to become a doctor and a congressman?

ROWLAND: Well it was my dream to become a doctor and as a matter of fact my grandfather was a pharmacist. He had a brother who was a pharmacist and a brother that was a doctor and

his father was a doctor. So I kind of grew up in my grandfather's drug store and he had a lot of influence on me so my earlier ambitions were to become a physician and I think I probably decided on that when I was probably around 12 years old. Getting involved in politics was a lot later in my life.

SHORT: Well tell us about growing up in Wrightsville.

ROWLAND: I think growing up in Wrightsville was one of the best situations that I could've had or anyone could've had during that period. It was back in the 1930s. It was during the Great Depression. The times were hard. My father was an attorney. He had a problem making ends meet. Nobody had any money much but we always had enough to eat and a place to stay and maybe we didn't know any different but we didn't aspire to much more than what we had because we were pretty comfortable. It was really a great situation. Both grandparents on my father and mother's sides of the family lived within two blocks of us and I had uncles and aunts, cousins, that lived all around. It was really a safe place to grow up.

SHORT: So you graduated from Wrightsville High School?

ROWLAND: Yes graduated from Wrightsville High School in 1943. One thing that I was very proud of was being an Eagle Scout. I obtained that award in 1942. I didn't get the Eagle Scout badge until 1945 because the war was going on and they didn't have Courts of Honor back then

but after graduating from high school I went off to school at Emory at Oxford for a couple of quarters and everybody was going into the Army, this was 1943, or the Navy or the Marines and so I enlisted in the Army in 1944, and I wound up in the infantry. That was not exactly where I anticipated going but I'm very proud of my military service. I was in the military a little over two years, went with the 13th Armored Division to the European theater in January of 1945 and was involved in two campaigns in the Rhine and the Central Europe and got the Combat Infantryman Badge and received two Bronze stars one for valor and one for meritorious service and I'm real proud of my military service and really proud that I got through without getting injured. So anyway after that I came back and went back to school. Went to South Georgia College for a couple of quarters and then came here to the University of Georgia for my pre-med.

SHORT: Uh-huh. Then you went to the Medical College?

ROWLAND: That's correct. After a couple of years here I was accepted to the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta in 1948 and graduated there in 1952.

SHORT: What happened after you got your medical degree?

ROWLAND: Well I did an internship and a residency in Macon at the old Macon Hospital which is now gone and spent about six months in Swainsboro with a friend of mine. Went in partnership there and then came back to Dublin and that's where I've been since that time. I

came back to Dublin in the latter part of 1954 and I practiced medicine in Dublin after that.

SHORT: For 24 years before you ran for the House of Representatives?

ROWLAND: Well yeah the State Representative Wash Larsen who had that office decided to run for Congress and it left an open seat and so this was in 1976 and so I decided that I was going to run for the State House. In fact, I hadn't thought a whole lot about it and then all of a sudden I said "Well you know I think I'll do this" and I told my wife I think I'm going to run for State Representative and she said "Well I'm not surprised" because my father's side of the family have always been involved in politics. My grandfather was in the State Legislation, cousin was State Legislator, my father was a District Attorney and a Superior Court Judge, brother was a Magistrate who was also a lawyer. So it was a lot of politics in my family.

SHORT: Was it hard to do that and leave your at least part of your medical practice?

ROWLAND: At that time it wasn't because I had pretty well decided that I wanted to. When I ran for the State House that was a little different because that was just a part-time proposition and I really liked politics. I liked the debate and the adversarial things that you had to do in politics and so I enjoyed that and I decided after an opportunity came to run for the U.S. House that I'd like to make it full time. So it really wasn't hard for me to leave my medical practice although let me say that that's wonderful. I could not have wanted my medical practice to have

been any better than it was.

SHORT: So you were elected in 1976 over two opponents in the primary and one in the runoff.

Tell us a little bit about that race.

ROWLAND: Well that was for the State House. There were two attorneys who were both good friends. Now that happens a lot in politics. You are good friends running against each other.

One was Leon Green who lives just down the street from me now, did then and the other one is Ralph Walk whose family I treated. So it was really kind of odd the way that worked out. But Ralph lost out in the primary and I was in a runoff with Leon. We called it after it became apparent to him that I had won. He was very gracious and called me and congratulated me and we've never had any ill feelings at all. You know if you get mad with someone in politics before long you'll be mad with everybody. So you don't get mad with people in politics.

SHORT: So you went off to Atlanta. What was your first reaction to being a member of the House of Representatives?

ROWLAND: Well I was kind of awed at being there to see how the government worked on a state level. I found out there was a lot of great people there, a lot of people that I made a lot of good friends there. Tom Murphy I particularly grew fond of. Everybody knows Tom was a pretty abrupt fellow but always I thought very fair. I tell you a little incident I had with Tom

Murphy. Georgia had not passed the Certificate of Need which they had to pass in 1977 or maybe it was '78 but anyway Georgia was going to lose a lot of federal funds if they did not pass the Certificate of Need legislation for mental health and addictive diseases and a lot of different things and so George Busbee was the governor at that time and this was on the last day of the session and they thought this was would be brought up as kind of a perfunctory thing it wouldn't be any problem about it but I was very much opposed to the Certificate of Need and made that known. And I had the opportunity to get in the well it was around 11:30 in the evening before we would adjourn at 12, to speak against the Certificate of Need and I took the well and I decided that I would just stay in the well until the Legislature adjourned and we wouldn't pass the Certificate of Need. Of course that was not a very smart thing for me to do because the governor would have to call a special session I suppose to get it done but Governor Busbee sent his people up to the floor talking to him trying to get me out of the well and Tom Murphy gave Al Burruss a note to hand to me that said "Get out of the damn well." Well you know I had a chance to be a martyr or get out of the well. You know what I did? I got out of the well. So Certificate of Need passed just before the session ended that year.

SHORT: Well in your opinion after all of these years has the Certificate of Need been good for Georgia?

ROWLAND: I'm not sure. I'm really not sure about that. It was good for those who had it and it wasn't good for those who didn't have it. So I did some research on it back then and at that

time I came to the conclusion the Certificate of Need really did not do what it was supposed to do, stop the capital expansion of healthcare facilities, capital outlays for healthcare facilities. I never was sure that it was a good thing for us to do.

SHORT: Incidentally how would you define your political philosophy?

ROWLAND: I'd say I'm moderate. Moderate conservative maybe.

SHORT: Good. Well back to your career and the House of Representatives. You got some pretty good committee assignments. They were assigned to you by the speaker weren't they?

ROWLAND: They were. You're talking about the State House now?

SHORT: State House.

ROWLAND: Yes. Yeah the Speaker made those assignments and when I came Al Burruss from Marietta was running against Tom Murphy for Speaker at that time and Tom Murphy asked Ben Jessup from over in Cochran to contact me about voting for him and I told Ben that Al Burruss had already contacted me on a couple of occasions and I told Ben that yeah I would like to support Tom but I really did want to get on the health and ecology committee. The Speaker wasn't inclined to put doctors on that committee but anyway he made a commitment to do that if

I would vote for him and so I made that commitment to Tom Murphy in exchange for a seat on the health and ecology committee.

SHORT: Do you think that was a good trade?

ROWLAND: I think it worked out all right. I admired Tom Murphy as a speaker and he was kind of an abrupt guy but I thought he was always fair in dealing with members of the House and fair in his political philosophy too. I liked Tom Murphy.

SHORT: You mentioned earlier about political friends and political enemies. After that race between Murphy and Al Burruss as heated as it was they became very good friends.

ROWLAND: They did. That was amazing. Al worked his way back into a leadership position. He became the Whip after he challenged Tom. So Al and Tom became good friends again. So again you can't keep a chip on your shoulder in politics.

SHORT: As a member of the health and ecology committee you helped to address many of the problems involved in the distribution of health services back then. We often hear the question is healthcare a privilege or a right. What do you think the answer to that is?

ROWLAND: I never thought that healthcare was a right. I thought it was a responsibility of

society to provide healthcare to those who couldn't afford it but I wouldn't say that it was a right like a right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. But I think the government has a responsibility to help those people who are not able to help themselves.

SHORT: Well in addition to Health and Ecology you were a member of the Ways and Means Committee.

ROWLAND: I was.

SHORT: A very powerful committee.

ROWLAND: It was and had a good chairman Marcus Collins. Marcus always said he didn't have much education but Marcus had a lot of common sense, and I thought he made a real good chairman of the Ways and Means Committee and I enjoyed serving on that committee.

SHORT: Was that part of your trade with Murphy?

ROWLAND: No it was not. That happened later.

SHORT: And then you were on the Rules Committee. The most powerful committee in the House.

ROWLAND: No I was on the Judiciary Committee.

SHORT: Later weren't you later on the Rules Committee?

ROWLAND: Bob, I think you probably jogged my memory. I think yes I was. My last term there I was on the Rules Committee. Yes I had forgotten that. Bill Lee was chairman of that committee. That's correct.

SHORT: Yeah well tell us a little bit about the Rules Committee and how it works.

ROWLAND: Well I'm not sure that I can recall all of that exactly now but the Rules Committee became all powerful during the last 10 days of the session because if a piece of legislation had not passed out of the Rules Committee and made it through the House during that period of time it would not be considered by the Senate. So it was always a scramble to get the legislation out of the Rules Committee particularly the last 10 days of the session.

SHORT: Yeah Legislators had to come in there and do some begging.

ROWLAND: They did. They really did have to do some begging to get it through but as I recall it turned out pretty well most of the time. I don't recall many people going away really angry

about what the outcome.

SHORT: Putting the bill on the calendar?

ROWLAND: Getting the bill on the calendar.

SHORT: You mentioned Bill Lee. If you will, let's take a minute and talk about some of the other legislators who were in power during that period of the '70s and '80s.

ROWLAND: Well one person that I really admired was chairman of the Health and Ecology Committee was Sidney Marcus from Atlanta who later ran for mayor for Atlanta. I thought he was a really outstanding person and we've already mentioned Al Burruss and Jack Connell from Augusta who was a speaker pro tem all the time that I was there. Wayne Snow who was chairman of Judiciary Committee from Chickamauga, Georgia.

SHORT: Chickamauga.

ROWLAND: I admired him too. There were a lot of people in the State House that I really thought were outstanding people and did a good job for the State of Georgia.

SHORT: You served with Joe Frank Harris I believe.

ROWLAND: Joe Frank was chairman of the Appropriations Committee. I did and it was when it was all business and it seemed like he was always running around doing something but never too busy not to stop and talk.

SHORT: Well you served in the State House three terms.

ROWLAND: Three terms.

SHORT: For six years and then in 1982 you decided to run for Congress.

ROWLAND: Yes.

SHORT: What prompted that decision?

ROWLAND: I had originally thought I wanted to run for governor and in fact got a campaign underway and raised around \$35,000 but Speaker Tom Murphy told me that Joe Frank Harris was going to be the governor, that's who he was promoting and that there was no point really in me running for governor and Bo Ginn was running at that same time and I think Norman Underwood. There were two or three other people I can't recall right now but I wasn't sure what to do and I had some friends tell me that they didn't think the current Congressman from Georgia was doing a very good job and thought it was a good possibility that I could be elected if I

decided to run against him and so I had a friend who did a little poll out of Dublin. They gave me some information that made me believe that it was possible to unseat the incumbent. So that's when I made the decision to run for the U.S. House.

SHORT: In the Bloody 8th..

ROWLAND: I guess that's right the Bloody 8th.

SHORT: Why do they call it the Bloody 8th?

ROWLAND: I don't know. It's such a big it's a such a long district, such a big district geographically. I'm not sure why they call it the Bloody 8th but I do recall it being called that.

SHORT: Well you were elected many more times to Congress but what do you remember about that first election?

ROWLAND: Well I remember that I didn't have a campaign organization. I had some friends that were helping and it was kind of like our campaign was held together by baling wire I guess you might say and people vote mostly against something not for something so they were really voting against the incumbent I think as much as they were voting for me and there was one other person in that race and so I got into a runoff with the incumbent. When the incumbents are in a

runoff they are in trouble and so later Billy Lee Evans who was the incumbent told me that he should have stopped before he did because he realized he wasn't going to be able to win.

But what I remember was the night that the final returns are in and I had been elected and our campaign headquarters, which was in a shopping mall in a vacated grocery store building. People came from all around and there was a lot of ladies. It was like a picnic. I mean it was really a great occasion and my kids came back. I have three children, and they came back and it was just a great occasion that night and you know got some calls of congratulations. It was all of a sudden kind of a different world but you know let me tell you something that was really interesting after that. After I was elected, it was kind of like somehow or another I was different to my friends. I felt kind of like I was alone or something. You know I'd call my friends up and it was like they didn't want to talk to me. It was kind of a weird feeling. I remember that very distinctively. Of course that changed later but I recall it was a it was kind of an uneasy time.

SHORT: Well Bloody 8th was certainly a large district. How were you able to campaign throughout that whole district?

ROWLAND: Just get in the car and ride and ride and walk and walk and ride and ride and let me say that my wife Luella, I couldn't have been elected without her. I mean she was every morning we would part ways. She would go one direction and I would go another. Let me tell you a little story about in Waycross, Lindsay Thomas who was also elected at the same time lived up in South Georgia --

SHORT: Screven.

ROWLAND: Yeah. That's right and there was a function for Lindsay after the election in Waycross at the Waycross Country Club and Lindsay invited me to come down because Waycross was in my district and so I did. I went down and Luella didn't go with me but when I came in the club and Lindsay was standing there talking to one of his friends I walked up and his friend he introduced me to his friend and said "This is J. Roy Rowland here" and the friend looked at me and kept talking to Lindsay and Lindsay said "Where's Luella?" and his friend stopped me and said "Oh you're Luella's husband." So that told me she was all over. She had a lot to do with me being elected.

SHORT: You had no Republican opposition?

ROWLAND: No, and I was the only member that came to the U.S. House that time that did not have a Republican opponent so after the primary that was my election. That primary was put off because it got involved in a court case and we finally had the we had the runoff at the time of the general election at that time in November and so after I was elected in the Primary in the runoff and no Republican opponent so we were able to go on to Washington and look for a place to live and I was the only one in that class of about 78 new members that could do that.

SHORT: Of course that did not help your seniority? It just helped you get located in Washington?

ROWLAND: That's all. No it didn't help me in any seniority. No we were all sworn in at the same time.

SHORT: Was moving to Washington a culture shock?

ROWLAND: No not really. Culture shock? No. Luella was with me. It may have been more so if she hadn't have been. I mean well it was different in the aspect that we were living in a townhouse as compared to the home that we lived in and meeting different kind of people but I didn't detect the cultures being that much different.

SHORT: Shortly after you got there there was an incident that became a controversy involving the Russians shooting down a Korean airline flight with Georgia Congressman Larry McDonald on board and there was some feeling as I recall that McDonald might have been the target of that. Do you recall that situation?

ROWLAND: I do and I recall it just as you did that he may have been the target. It was a 007 Korean airliner that he was on that was shot down by the Russians. Larry was very, very conservative. He was heavily involved in the John Birch Society. In fact I think Larry did not

vote for Speaker O'Neill for Speaker the only Democrat in the house that didn't and he lost his seat on the Armed Services Committee because of that but I talked with Larry on several occasions and Larry would admonish me for some of the votes I cast by saying they were too liberal. We had some conversations. I never did consider myself to really be a close friend of Larry's but knew him pretty good and I do recall that there was a conspiracy theory about that plane being targeted because he was on it.

SHORT: But there's no definite conclusions?

ROWLAND: Not that I recall.

SHORT: When you arrived in Washington it was 1983.

ROWLAND: Yes.

SHORT: Ronald Reagan had defeated Jimmy Carter for president and the country was in I guess what you could call a mess. What do you remember about those days?

ROWLAND: Well it was high inflation rate, high unemployment rate and the misery index I think it was referred to at that time. I think that President Reagan had the ability to make people feel differently about what was going on. He made people feel good about the country and that

the problems could be resolved and the country could be turned around and that was a principle thing that I think he did. He was a very charismatic person and I know Pat Schroeder was a member from Colorado and coined the phrase for him the "Teflon president" because if anything that anybody said about him seemed to just bounce off of him and really didn't cause a problem but the two times that I had the opportunity to talk with him and he would call us he'd call members to the White House to talk with them about various type of legislation but always a very, I thought a very gracious person and very even with the way he approached things.

SHORT: He was supported by a group of Southern Democrats known as boll weevils. Were you a boll weevil?

ROWLAND: Well they changed the name of that. The boll weevil was the name that was given to a group of conservative Democrats who were mostly from the south but that became the Conservative Democratic Forum and yes I was a member of the Conservative Democratic Forum. We probably had about 35 or 40 members, Democrats, and were able to do some negotiating on some legislation. I don't think we had as much influence as the Blue Dogs have now and most of those that were Democrats that were in the Conservative Democratic Forum either left the Congress, became Republican or were defeated. So there was one time that they were probably not more than about I don't know 15 to 20 in that group.

SHORT: It's generally known that most of the work in Congress is done by committees and in

those committees you either defeat or pass out bills to the floor for a vote. Would you be so kind as to explain to us how those committees are chosen?

ROWLAND: I could tell you on the Democratic side how the members of the committee are chosen. I think the Republicans have a Republican conference and I'm not sure just how that works but on the Democratic side it was a Steering and Policy Committee and there were about 30 members of the Steering and Policy Committee members of the House. Some of them were regional from different parts of the country and some of them were appointed by their leadership, some by the Speaker which of course gave the leadership and the Speaker a lot of power. The last term that I was there I ran for and was elected to the Steering and Policy Committee to represent Georgia, Alabama and Tennessee and South Carolina, and the committee assignments were made in the Steering and Policy Committee and again the Speaker had a great deal to do with who was elected not always but much of the time.

SHORT: Tell us if you will what committees do.

ROWLAND: Well they're authorizing committees. Like the Energy and Commerce Committee or the Public Works and Transportation Committee. They pass legislation to authorize the appropriation of the money for various projects and of course the Ways and Means Committee has to do with taxation, determining the taxes that would be put in place and the Appropriation Committee will place money that has been authorized by the authorizing committee but that has

changed a lot since I was there. We didn't have what they call earmarks now. The Appropriation Committee now can earmark stuff and they can get money appropriated for something without it having been authorized but when I was there it had to be authorized before it could be appropriated. There was some monies that were appropriated before the authorization was done but the authorization eventually had to be done so committees authorize is what they do and the Ways and Means Committee and the Appropriation Committee.

SHORT: Do you think earmarking is a good idea?

ROWLAND: No I really don't. I think it's a bad idea. There's too many trades that can be made that can affect adversely our country in general. I think that's one of the things that has made the deficits escalate so much is earmarking. Any member of the House is going to get what they can for their district because that helps them get re-elected and that's not a good thing in my opinion.

SHORT: Bringing home the bacon.

ROWLAND: Bringing home the bacon that's what it is.

SHORT: Voters understand that?

ROWLAND: Yes they understand that.

SHORT: Well there are few issues in American politics in my judgment that are as misunderstood as national deficit, debt and deficit spending and our deficit spending has increased our national debt many fold since you were in Congress. Will we ever again have a balanced budget?

ROWLAND: Probably not. If you mean that the amount of money that is spent equals the amount of money that is taken in I doubt that that will ever happen again. They say that if the deficit goes up as a certain percent of the gross domestic product and that percentage stays the same all the time it can go up indefinitely and that's what we did for a number of years but now the gross domestic product has fallen and the deficit goes up and the distance between them is much greater now so that puts us in a precarious position. I don't think we'll ever have a balanced budget not in the foreseeable future.

SHORT: There were two incidents during your term up there -- terms, excuse me, that I'd like to talk about. One is the Iran-Contra situation and the other is what was known as the first Gulf War. Would you talk to us about those?

ROWLAND: Yes. The Iran-Contra was during I guess it was maybe the third time that I was there when some monies were taken through a deal with Iranians and given to the Contras to

support them who we supported in opposition to the Sandinistas who were the Communist type government in Central America and Nicaragua.

Interestingly enough, I got involved in that to an extent that I got the attention of the leadership on the Democrat side and that helped me get a seat on the Energy and Commerce Committee which I had been denied for three terms before that but I did have the opportunity to go to Central America to Honduras and visit the Contra camp there with Sonny Montgomery who was from Mississippi. He was a retired general, and he was the chairman of the Veterans Affairs Committee, and we went to Tegucigalpa, Honduras, and we boarded a, later I learned it was an unmarked CIA helicopter, and flew to Baca Valley to this Contra camp and I recall the pilot was flying just above the treetops, it was very mountainous and he was staying just above the treetops and I said "Why are you flying so low?" He said "Well if we get up very high we might get shot down" and I thought "What am I doing here?" I mean I didn't understand the danger that we may have been in at that point but this is the same time that Noriega was being overthrown in Panama and we stopped in Panama on the way there. And if you recall our Ambassador had been withdrawn from Panama at that time and we went to the Ambassador's residence and had dinner but there was no Ambassador there and there were armed guards everywhere and it was sort of a different time.

SHORT: There was a great Congressional investigation into that. You remember Oliver North and that situation. Do you think President Reagan knew about the deal with the Contras?

ROWLAND: Yeah I think he knew about it but I think he let Oliver North manage it. Yeah I think he knew about it. President Reagan, and my observation was, he didn't micromanage things. He generally knew what was going on and he had generally he generally said what he wanted done but he left it to the others to take care of the details.

SHORT: Let's talk about the Gulf War. There was President Bush.

ROWLAND: Right.

SHORT: Were you in favor of the Gulf War?

ROWLAND: Yes. I was in favor of the Gulf War because I thought that Saddam Hussein was the same kind of person that Adolf Hitler was. I thought that Saddam Hussein wanted to control all the oil in the Middle East, control the economy of the world. And I felt that he had to be stopped and that's essentially what the Gulf War did for a time and I learned later that the reason that we stopped and did not depose him at that time was of course Iraq and Iran were bitter enemies and they had been in a war for several years prior to that and the general feeling was that if Saddam Hussein was taken out that Iran would become dominant and in fact we have seen that happen after he was taken out with the war that's going on over there now. So I was in favor of that and I thought it was the right thing to do to stop him.

SHORT: I remember watching it on television and marveling at our ability to drop those bombs through a window.

ROWLAND: Yeah.

SHORT: Wasn't that awesome?

ROWLAND: That was awesome. It really was. I mean those cruise missiles where they could put it in a bucket somewhere. It was amazing.

SHORT: It was amazing. Do you think that we accomplished what we should have accomplished over there during that first war? Should we have continued until we brought down Saddam Hussein or did we withdraw at the proper time?

ROWLAND: Well in hindsight it probably would have been better to have gone ahead and done that and had a different proposal to follow up on the war and I think that's what happened with this invasion of Iraq and what's going on over there now. We didn't have any follow up. We didn't have any plan. We didn't have any way. We had not planned how to deal with it after he was removed.

SHORT: What do you think that these wars have done to the financial aspects of the American

government?

ROWLAND: Made a lot of money. People have made a lot of money out of wars. As a matter of fact I think World War II brought us out of the depression and it made a lot of money for I think it was President Eisenhower said "Beware the military industrial complex" and yeah I think there's been a lot of money made out of it.

SHORT: Let's get back for a minute to President Reagan. He was accused during his administration of overspending on defense at the expense of programs, social and domestic programs, that needed attention. Is that a fair accusation?

ROWLAND: I think President Reagan with what he did in defense spending, we simply out spent the Soviet Union, and I think that's what brought them down. So I give him and his philosophy and what he did a lot of credit for ending the Cold War although it created tremendous deficits.

SHORT: Let's talk for a minute now about healthcare. You're a doctor, a very successful doctor, a very popular doctor. You were in the Georgia Legislature and in the U.S. Congress at a time when healthcare happened to be a big issue. Have we made any progress over the years in solving some of our healthcare delivery issues?

ROWLAND: Well I don't think we've made many significant progress in the delivery of healthcare in making it available to people who can't afford it. That's a really difficult very difficult proposition to have to deal with. It gets caught up in the politics of the time because there's a lot of divisiveness. There's so many different entities out there that are concerned with money that they might not make or money they'll lose and that's what it evolves around largely the reason I think that we're not able to get some healthcare legislation passed that will make healthcare available to everyone.

SHORT: Let's talk about our federal programs, our Medicare and Medicaid some of the other children's programs. Are they effective?

ROWLAND: They're effective I think the Medicare is very effective for the elderly and of course Medicaid for people who are poor. As a matter of fact, they do a lot more than they probably need to do. There's probably more money spent than needs to be spent. We've got you know we've got PeachCare in Georgia now for children which is certainly a good thing but the delivery of healthcare still is a conundrum that is very difficult to deal with. How do you pay for it? How do you determine who is going to get what kind of care?

You know there's a lot of different reasons why healthcare cost so much. I mean look at the wonderful technology that we have now in diagnostic and treatment. That's expensive and of course there's always a thing the trial lawyers will disagree but that's certainly defensive medicine the liability problem certainly adds to the cost of it. We've moved so far in technology

and healthcare now I think we've gotten to the place where we really can't pay for it for everyone.

SHORT: Well is there a solution to that?

ROWLAND: Well yes but then you get into a biomedical ethical area. I mean how are you going to decide who is going to get what? For example, in United Kingdom people after they've passed a certain age can't get renal dialysis. You have to they make a decision about that. Well if you're in this country anybody can get dialysis who has end-stage renal disease under the Medicare program. So there's some biomedical ethical issues that you get into that you have to deal with and it's hard.

SHORT: What do you think of means testing?

ROWLAND: I think that's a good idea. In fact we had some legislation that I was involved with while I was there. We wanted to create some community health centers around the country. I wanted to create a network of community health centers that would be financed by the federal, the state and the local government. Everyone would invest in them and the people that went to those centers would be provided care on a means tested basis. So you know if you were able to pay you paid. You paid whatever you were able to pay and if you're not able to pay anything then you didn't pay anything and I thought this was a way that we could provide outpatient care

to many, many people in our country.

SHORT: Would means testing be a good idea for Social Security?

ROWLAND: I think you have to consider that as a possibility. I think for Medicare as well to means test it. People who are very wealthy get the same kind of Medicare as people who are not. So I think the people who are very wealthy should pay a little more.

SHORT: Let's talk for a minute if you will about Georgia's delegation in Congress when you were a member. Georgia has always been in a very powerful position in the Congress. We've had Carl Vinson and Phil Landrum and others but as they left they were replaced by a group of what I considered to be very bright and efficient members like yourself for example and Ed Jenkins. You served with Ed. Tell us about Ed.

ROWLAND: Ed is a great guy, very bright. Ed was on the Ways and Means. We were good friends. Ed got along with almost everybody. There's one time that Ed was being pushed to run for majority leader in the House but he did not. I think he would have had a real good chance of being elected to that position had he chose to run but yeah Ed was very good. Doug Barnard.

SHORT: Doug, banking.

ROWLAND: Yeah Doug had a lot of background as you know in politics in Georgia and he was into the banking area and had a lot of information about that.

SHORT: Elliott Levitas.

ROWLAND: Yeah Elliott was there when I came. He was a really super guy. I was kind of stunned when Elliott was not re-elected one time. I think Georgia and the country lost a great leader when Elliott was not re-elected. Lindsay Thomas who went when I at the same time that I did. Richard Ray. Richard really outstanding and a very patriotic guy and you know he was Sam Nunn's Chief of Staff for a number of years. So he really knew what was going on in Washington. He knew the process.

SHORT: You also served with Wyche Fowler who was elected to the Senate.

ROWLAND: Yes. Wyche was. I never did get to know Wyche really well. He ran for the Senate not long after that. Wyche was a great storyteller.

SHORT: And Buddy Darden.

ROWLAND: Buddy is a very dear friend. I've known Buddy for a long time. We were in the Georgia House together, and Buddy's wife, Lillian, her father was a Methodist minister and I

knew of her family and Buddy came from down in Hancock County. Buddy is a real good friend. I think he was an excellent legislator. I'm sorry when he was not re-elected.

SHORT: How deeply are you involved in politics today?

ROWLAND: Well some. Not really deeply. I mean there are people that I support because I think they are good people or because I think they'll make good leaders. I'm still involved to some extent. I don't think I have as much influence as some people say I might have. Folks come to me and say "Well I'd like for you to so and so and help me." I say, you know, "I don't have that much influence anymore. I don't have any leverage anymore you know so."

SHORT: Well I would like to now move ahead to the present day. We're at the University of Georgia. It's 2009. We're involved in wars and deficits and a very deep economic depression. I say depression. That might not be the word but where are we headed?

ROWLAND: Well that's hard to say where we're headed but where I think we are right now we are in a sort of an unstable economic situation because of the tremendous deficits that we have seen built up over the last several years. I think the last time we didn't have a deficit -- well President Clinton did not have much of a deficit but these deficits have really built up. There's been an awful lot of spending by the government on security, on the military, a lot that has been spent socially, social welfare as well. You know we're approaching an area of deflation in my

opinion as compared to inflation. Deflation can be just as bad. I'm not an economist but we've got more goods and services out there than we have money and credit and so we see the price of things have come down a lot and that can be just as devastating to the economy as inflation which is just the opposite of that. I was for putting the money out as a stimulus but I think the secretary of the treasury and the Federal Reserve they did not look after the money. I think Secretary Paulson he just they put the money out there and the financial community took it and there's no accounting for it and it didn't do what it was intended to do. I really kind of subscribe to the Keynesian theory of economics and that really at bad times that the government can step in and help but when times are good then that money needs to be repaid. So I think we're in a period right now where the government needs to help some but that money needs to be repaid when times get better.

SHORT: Uh-huh. How much are we in danger of China?

ROWLAND: You mean financially? Economically?

SHORT: Financially.

ROWLAND: Well I think that's a real danger because they can manufacture goods so much cheaper than we can and people want to buy things as cheap as they can. So I think that that is a real problem but it's not just China. It's all of the countries in the Pacific rim and the Far East

that are doing this and Central America, South America. I mean they produce stuff so much cheaper than we do in this country and that puts us in a pretty unstable situation.

SHORT: Well while we're on that subject let me ask you this question. What would you say our role should be in world affairs? Should we be as aggressive as we have been in recent times?

ROWLAND: I don't think we can be the world policeman. I really don't. I think that we've been sort of forced into that role because we are the pre-eminent military power in the world so almost every other country looks to us when there's a problem to intervene. Then when we intervene it's not appreciated as much as it's just really not appreciated. So while I'm not an isolationist at all I think we are stretched too thin now our commitments militarily.

SHORT: There are those in the country who think that we spend too much money with our allies. What do you think of that?

ROWLAND: Well we do spend a lot of money with Israel. I always thought about Israel as being almost an extension of our country and I feel like they looked after our interest in the Middle East to a large extent. You know then there's an humanitarian thing what goes on in Africa all of the ravages of disease and hunger and all that is almost as though you can't stand to the side and not do something, not be involved in some of that. It's just I think we're caught in a position we're in because we have been the pre-eminent military power. We have been the pre-

eminent economic power in the world. So I mean it seems that that mantle sort of falls to us.

SHORT: I heard an economist say the other day that we have reset our economy and it will be a long time before we get back to where we were. Do you think that's a possibility?

ROWLAND: I'm not sure what they mean by where we were. Get back to where we were?

SHORT: Before all of our national debt and all of the deficit spending we've been doing and the effect it has had on the national economy, the stock market, Wall Street.

ROWLAND: Yeah I think we'll get back some time. I really do. But it's going to be a while and I'm not enough of an economist to put all this together in my head but I have enough faith in this country and the people in this country that I feel that we'll get back.

SHORT: What do you think about all these bailouts?

ROWLAND: Well the bailouts of the financial institutions was necessary I believe but the money was not tracked as it should've been. It was not accounted for as it should've been. I don't think that we could've let our financial institutions follow through. I mean then we would've certainly been like we were back in after 1929. We would've been right back where we were in the 1930s, and I think that's probably one of the reasons we had the Great Depression

is because President Hoover at that time did not intervene. He just let he said it'll take care of itself. The business community and Wall Street it'll take care of itself and we don't need to do anything. Well it didn't happen that way.

SHORT: Let's talk for a minute about the war on terror. Are we going about it in the right way?

ROWLAND: Well we must be doing something right. We haven't had an attack in this country now since 9/11 so I'm not into that enough to make any comment about it other than to say that I feel pretty safe.

SHORT: Let's get back for a minute Dr. Rowland to your role in the National Healthcare System as a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. There's been a lingering fear that the Medicare and Medicaid programs might run out of money. Is that a possibility?

ROWLAND: Well, that's what the actuaries say. That Medicare is in jeopardy. I don't know what the latest figures are 10 or 12 years down the road it may get to the point where it's not able to finance itself and the same for Social Security some time further down the road. That's certainly a danger. I mean there's many more people retired now for those who are working as there were for example when it first started.

SHORT: What if that happens? What if we run out of money?

ROWLAND: I don't think we'll run out of money. I think the full faith and credit of the United States government will see that that does not happen. I mean I think the people will the value of the money may not be as much as it is, worth as much as it is now, but I just don't have that fear.

SHORT: Well you know much more about this than I but as I recall the last effort to develop a national health policy was a Clinton proposal in 1993. You were in Congress at that time. Do you think that it was a workable plan?

ROWLAND: I don't think his was what the country needed. I was very much involved in that as you recall putting Mrs. Clinton in charge of that and had a health policy person come from New England Hour magazine and they met for many months in the old executive office building and they put this plan together and excluded everyone that would be a stakeholder, the providers I mean. The medical community was excluded, the health insurance centers, the pharmaceutical industry. They wrote what they wanted and if it had some commercials called "Harry and Louise" who really took after this but I think that they went about it in the wrong way. They didn't include the people that should have been included and something may have come out of that, not what they presented, may have come out of that but it was my feeling at the time that there were some things that we could do and there was a couple of pieces of legislation that I worked with with a member from Florida, Mike Bilirakis. We had a bipartisan piece of legislation that would address such things as administrative simplification, insurance reform,

critical community health centers around the country, a network of them where people could go to get their care and they would get it on a means tested basis as well but we were never able to get it out of committee in 1993 or 1994.

In 1994 there was several other pieces of healthcare legislation. Bob Michaels, the minority leader, had one, Jim McDermott, who was a psychiatrist from Washington State he had one, the President had one, we had one bipartisan. There was a couple of others. Dick Gephardt told me in the summer of 1994 that after the August recess that he was going to take up all of these pieces of legislation but after the August recess I heard that it wasn't going to happen and I went to see him and he said "Well people are not interested in that now." So we never did get anything out of the Congress. John Dingle who was chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee told me he said "Roy your legislation will never see the light of day out of my committee." I mean John Dingle was from Michigan, and his father had introduced a socialistic piece of health legislation when he was in the Congress back in the 30's and Chairman Dingle had re-introduced that legislation every Congress since then and he didn't want to see anything happen that was any variation much from what his father had originally introduced but I think we had an excellent opportunity to get something done then but it got caught up in the politics of the time and (indiscernible-audio gap).

SHORT: We were talking about the Clinton healthcare program in 1993.

ROWLAND: Right. Well the Clintons didn't include all the stake holders in their proposal.

Consequently there were a lot of people that were very much opposed to it. President Clinton would call small groups of members of the House to come down and he would make a pitch to them and I had an opportunity to go one time and I told him at that time that I thought it was very important for him to include the medical community and the pharmaceutical community, the different groups that were going to be providers, in the discussions about doing the reform. He kind of shook his head. I wasn't sure whether he shook his head yes or no. I mean he was a hard fellow to pin down and so I asked him. I said "Mr. President if you were going to do some reform in the judicial system would you exclude lawyers?" And he didn't answer the question. Obviously he wouldn't exclude lawyers but as that moved along I had some communication with Mrs. Clinton who of course was in charge of it and she wrote me some letters saying that she would look forward to working with me on healthcare reform but I could never get a seat with the group that was working on it in the old executive office building.

So in 1994 I had become chairman of the Hospital and Healthcare Subcommittee of the Veterans Affairs Committee and they had designated one person from that committee that subcommittee to come and the designee gave me his slot. I took his slot to go to those meetings and it ended before I ever attended any of those meetings but I felt that the President was very devious and somewhat deceitful in dealing with members of the House, and I think he thought that he could do everything without having to consult anyone else and in the Democrat Caucus I recall the leadership Dick Gephardt particularly who was the majority leader at that time saying "We can get healthcare reform passed and we don't need the Republicans. We can do it without them." and of course that was the downfall of the whole effort to reform healthcare is because it became

so partisan.

And the piece of legislation that I had worked on there were five Democrats, five Republicans that worked on this legislation. We produced two different bills. The last one we produced the Congressional budget office scored us real well on it and they said we could insure 94% of the people in the country in five years and reduce the deficit by \$90 million over that period of time. At that time full employment was considered if you had 6% unemployment. So if we were able to cover 94% of the people and 6% not being covered we figured we'd pretty well been able to cover most of the people in the country but we were never able to get it out of the committee, never able to get a good hearing on it and in fact 10 people worked on it, five Democrats and five Republicans. It was a good experience. I guess that that healthcare reform legislation was my best and worst moments in the Congress. I think it was the best thing that I did but it was the worst thing that happened to me not getting it out.

SHORT: As you look back over your career is there anything you would've done differently?

ROWLAND: Not that I can think of right now. I worked really hard to try to get that legislation I think I served my constituents well. I had over 300 town meetings in the 12 years I was there, and I came home every weekend. My wife and I spent 11 weekends in Washington in the 12 years that I was there. Sometimes we went somewhere else but most every weekend we was at home.

SHORT: So you could probably say that your proudest moment as a Congressman was your work in healthcare and your biggest disappointment --

ROWLAND: That's correct.

SHORT: -- In Congress was your work in healthcare.

ROWLAND: That's right. That's correct.

SHORT: Do you think there's a way to unite healthcare providers, doctors and pharmaceutical companies and pharmacists and nurses and...?

ROWLAND: You know money is the root of all evil and that's where the problem lies. I think the various providers, the various stakeholders, are concerns about the money that they might lose or the money that they won't make. I think if you could get the leadership and the various providers to come together and talk about some kind of reform that would provide care on a cost efficient basis, quality care, yeah I think it can be done. I really do.

SHORT: What role should the government play in that?

ROWLAND: The government has got to play a significant role in it because there's got to be

some regulation about it, so the government has got to play some regulatory function in it. I think that not only the federal government but state and local governments ought to be involved in investing in it too. If you invest in something, you're going to look after it better and see that it works better and so I think that it ought to be a combination of financing, not just at the federal level.

SHORT: Some people say we're headed toward socialized medicine.

ROWLAND: You already got some socialized medicine. We've got Medicare and Medicaid, PeachCare. We've got several programs that are socialized medicine already.

SHORT: There's nothing wrong with it?

ROWLAND: Well, financing it is a problem. That and then the greed. I mean there are providers who take advantage of it. Money again is quite a big problem is.

SHORT: Older people that I get from AARP, which I'm a member seem to feel that that Obama plan might affect them more drastically than it would others because of their age and they question whether or not you want to give a 90-year-old person a new knee or a new hip, should we worry about that or should we do it?

ROWLAND: Well that you get into a medical ethical --

SHORT: Yeah.

ROWLAND: -- kind of situation there when you decide whether or not somebody is going to get something that the doctor says that they may need and the government will make the decision about that. We really need to have a biomedical ethical board and by the way we did when I was in the Congress we did in 1984, Bill Gradison who was from Ohio and Henry Waxman from California got some legislation passed creating a biomedical ethical board to try to look at those biomedical ethical issues and we had two meetings. The first time we met the subject of abortion came up, and the second time we met the subject of abortion came up again and the debates became so heated about it that the committee never met anymore. There should be some kind of public policy and we would have talk to the medical ethicist people who are involved in that area to get some guidance about what needs to be done in that area. So that gets back to what would you do for somebody if it's somebody that needs renal dialysis. If they are past a certain age or they have certain diseases or whatever should they get it. A lot of decisions like that would have to be made so it becomes very complex.

SHORT: How can the majority of Americans afford private health insurance these days?

ROWLAND: I don't think they can. I think that the private health insurance is far more

expensive than individuals who don't have some kind of group insurance can afford. Individuals have no leverage in purchasing health insurance. The leverage is by companies or employers that buy large groups and I think the health insurance industry takes advantage of these people who try to buy insurance individually. I think there needs to be more insight into what health insurance companies do. I think there needs to be more information about their reserves, how much money do they have in reserves, how much are they making. I don't know that this information is available. It wasn't available at one time and I don't know whether it is now or not but I think health insurance companies really take advantage in many instances.

SHORT: Would more government regulations correct that?

ROWLAND: Well yeah the insurance industry is largely regulated on a state basis now but I don't know how effective that is. The federal government may have to be involved in it because you have so many different states that may have different requirements that it may need to look at it on a federal standpoint just like you've got the Drug Enforcement Administration that regulates drugs, pharmaceuticals and you know habit forming, and so you know we may have to look at something like that for the health insurance industry which I know they would oppose.

SHORT: Yeah. Well let's get back to a little politics. How has politics changed since you got involved?

ROWLAND: How has it changed since I got in?

SHORT: Except for the cost of seeking public office.

ROWLAND: Yeah well it's changed that way. I don't know that politics has really changed. It seems to me it's pretty much the way it always has been. You've just got the, if you want to get involved in politics you've got to get out and convince as many people as you can that you're the right person for whatever office you're running for but yes it does take a lot more money now. I believe that my first campaign was around \$350,000.

SHORT: That's for Congress?

ROWLAND: For Congress and that included runoff. I mean that was about what I spent and now what is it now \$3 million or \$4 million? I don't know.

SHORT: I would say at least.

ROWLAND: It's out of sight.

SHORT: Yeah. Well has politics changed you?

ROWLAND: I think it's made me a better person and more appreciative of the country that we live in. I have a better understanding about it. I find myself not being as critical as I could've been had I not been involved and learned something about it and the process and what all goes on. I think that gives me an understanding. I hope it makes me a better person.

SHORT: Well your old district as we said the Bloody Eight has remained in Democratic hands since you left Congress.

ROWLAND: Well let's see. Charlie Norwood had part of it and --

SHORT: Well that's after reapportionment though.

ROWLAND: Yes.

SHORT: We haven't talked about reapportionment. That affected you when you were in Congress.

ROWLAND: It did. It did.

SHORT: They reapportioned your district.

ROWLAND: Yeah the last term I was there I got I had 32 counties or portions of counties. I got a lot of area I didn't have, Valdosta, Albany, part of Warner Robins that I didn't have before. So yeah it changed it a lot. Yeah reapportionment makes a lot of changes and it put some people out.

SHORT: Yes it did. But still that 8th has been Democratic and the reason I mentioned that is that the Republicans in Georgia have made a great effort to capture the 8th district and despite the fact that they have won other districts handedly they have yet to have a Republican from the current 8th.

ROWLAND: Right. Well you know I don't think I think probably Jim Marshall he may not even have an opponent this next time a, Republican opponent because they've thrown everything they could at him three times and he got by all three times.

SHORT: Well let's talk a little bit about party politics in Georgia. What do you think is the reason for the Republican party to take over after so many years of Democratic rule?

ROWLAND: Well I think the Democrats "messed up". I think again I think people vote against something more than they vote for something and I think the reason we lost the governorship is because the people were voting against the incumbent and I'm not sure about why the legislature changed as dramatically as it did unless it followed that Republican sweep.

SHORT: Well the Republican party has been very active in the state. They have as I see it you know just outmaneuvered the Democrats with local grass roots effort.

ROWLAND: Yeah.

SHORT: And they have recruited good candidates and they worked hard for those candidates and those candidates have won but what do you think it would take if it's possible for the Democrats to regain the governorship and the Legislature?

ROWLAND: Well I think it will happen. It always does. It swings back and forth and who knows when it'll happen. I think there's a reasonable chance that the Democrats could get the governorship in this upcoming election. I don't believe the Legislature will change that much. Maybe there will be some better Democratic candidates. You know after you've been in office for a while though so many people become complacent with what they've got and they don't work as hard.

SHORT: Yeah. Many disenchant I guess is the word Democrats feel that the state party is too urban and too dependent on minorities and labor unions. Do you think that's true?

ROWLAND: I think that has a significant effect on it. I do. The make up of it is largely a

minority. The Republican party doesn't have that many minority and they do lean toward more labor unions and we a right-to-work state here. So the general population I think doesn't go along with that and maybe that's again because they are voting against something rather than for something.

SHORT: Did you ever consider switching parties?

ROWLAND: No.

SHORT: Would you switch parties?

ROWLAND: No.

SHORT: Why wouldn't you switch parties?

ROWLAND: Well Democratic tradition. I mean it's just a tradition. I could be a well I have supported Republican candidates. I was still a Democrat. I can call myself a Democrat but when I thought the Republican candidate might be the best person for the job again I'm kind of a moderate conservative partisan. I'm not fiercely partisan but I do consider myself to be a Democrat.

SHORT: Well that brings up the question of cross voting and party registration. Now do you support registration by party in Georgia?

ROWLAND: Not necessarily no. No not really. I think you ought to be able to cross vote if you want to.

SHORT: Do you favor term limits?

ROWLAND: No. The people can limit terms.

SHORT: That's right. A lot of people don't understand that.

ROWLAND: Yeah.

SHORT: When I hear complaints about something I say well look you already got term limits. If you don't like 'em kick 'em out.

ROWLAND: You take 'em out and that happens. You know I look at the U.S. House now and the membership of the U.S. House now and I bet they are not. There's 450 members in the House. I bet there's not 75 members there that was there when I left.

SHORT: Really?

ROWLAND: Yeah. I think it's I haven't counted that but I'm just looking at it generally.

SHORT: The cost of campaigning as we talked about has really increased with television and computer ads and that sort of thing. Do you favor public financing of federal elections?

ROWLAND: I think that's all right. I think it's okay to have public financing. I think it's okay like we have now. I'm not opposed to that.

SHORT: Well it's been a pleasure talking with you but I'd like to ask you a final question. If you were a candidate today, for the Congress, what would be your platform?

ROWLAND: My preference?

SHORT: Your platform.

ROWLAND: Oh my platform? To get healthcare legislation to get some kind of healthcare legislation passed because that's a thing that I'm most familiar with and I would again support a Constitutional Amendment for a balanced budget. I think that is really important. Those would be the two things that I would be most interested in and then of course I come from a rural area.

So you know the farmers are difficult. That's a hard avocation. The farmers need some help and so you know I would look at that as part of a platform too.

SHORT: Well you certainly had a very exciting and successful career in both medicine and politics, and we appreciate what you've done for Georgia and I want to thank you on behalf of Young Harris College and the Richard B. Russell Library at the University of Georgia for being our guest.

ROWLAND: Thank you very much. It's been an honor and a privilege to be in public office in the State House and the U.S. House and I really do appreciate the opportunity to come here and talk about this. Thank you very much.

SHORT: Thank you.

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