

**Harry Dixon interviewed by Bob Short**  
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**Reflections on Georgia Politics**  
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**Reflections on Georgia Politics**  
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BOB SHORT: I'm Bob short and this is Reflections on Georgia Politics, sponsored by the Duckworth Library at Young Harris College and the Richard B. Russell Library at the University of Georgia. We're here in the home of our guest, State Representative and Highway

Board Member, Harry Dixon. Welcome, Harry, to our program.

HARRY DIXON: Thank you.

SHORT: Well, with your permission, we'd like to divide our conversation into three parts.

DIXON: All right.

SHORT: First, your early life...

DIXON: Right.

SHORT: ...and growing up. Secondly, your public life as a state representative for 38 years...

DIXON: Right.

SHORT: ...and a member of the State Board of Transportation. And, lastly, your life after politics.

DIXON: Right.

SHORT: So let's get started, if we can, by having you tell us a little bit about your family and your early life.

DIXON: Well, I am one of 11 children, the oldest of 11 children, born to Huey and Mattie Dixon here in Ware County. And there's 7 of us still living now and we've come through an era of almost no recognition of talents for a person, a people – and I have been somewhat associated with -- in and around people -- that have been an inspiration to me over the years because of the humor that I hold for people and their shortcomings and things that'll get to 'em, you know. You learn those sooner or later and it'll always be of value to you when you are holding 'em up for ridicule or something, like Hanson, Carter and Rowan. They have always been my punching boy on the other end, you know.

When you're telling tales to various organizations and folks and outings, and I've always enjoyed that immensely. And I've had about as much throwed at me as they have as I have them over the years. But I might say that some of the things, the reflections I had, was for the important people that I've known and the things they've meant to me during my life and how I treasure the things that they've done has helped me along the line along the way.

I was -- we were reared -- my daddy worked with the railroad and we were reared sort of as a railroad family. And he, before we moved here to Ware County, we lived in Brantley County, a little adjoining county down here, and daddy drove back and to every day in a Model T or a Model A or whatever was of style during the time.

I always thought a lot for my mama because of the hard work she done during life. The many

things that she done that I did not give her credit for at the time when I was young and when it might have meant something to her, I did not do it. I've been a little better toward my father. But I feel bad about that. As we go on through life sometimes thinking, "I ought to have done a little more emphasis toward my mother because she done all the work." I remember when I was a kid, I was just a barefooted kid, and we lived out in Brantley County. We had a farm out there, a 5-acre farm that looked like the Pacific Ocean, you know, when it come time to hoe and keep the plums cut down around things. And during that time, we – we learned to live with little and to – and then we was very fortunate compared to other people.

Daddy did have a job, you know, and a lot of people did not have a job and it was during the throes of the Depression. And there was a lot of stories wrote about the various folks like myself that come along during that time that had – that probably doesn't today have any recognition of some of the things that was involved back there and the things that your mama and daddy had to do or your uncle or your granddaddy to keep the old ship's prow in the wind and keep them younguns fed.

By the way, on a note like that, my father was one of 18 children born to the same mother and father. And they lived, about 16 of them, during life. Two of them died earlier on, but they have several different places. I can show you pictures here of them took in '38 and the early '30s.

And it's not indicative of a depression at all. All of 'em had cars.

And we lived, done well as a family. By the way, their daddy kept them on a 26-acre farm and fed and clothed them on that small of a farm, you might say. Had cows and hogs and all that that kept the dinner table going.

Like Rowan, I was telling Rowan about being so keen on soppin' syrup. I told him that I got so good at soppin' syrup until I wore the bottom of the plate out several times and daddy nailed a tin pan down on the table with some #8 nails.

And then I sopped the head off of them nails before I knew what I was doing. I know that's a little off course there, but I'm just sort of rambling there so try to hold me closer to the subject as you'd like 'em.

SHORT: Well, how old were you when you came to Waycross?

DIXON: I was about – it was 1939, and I was about 17 years old. And we moved here into Ware County in the edge of town out there, and I remember very well the day that Pearl Harbor come along and where I was at and having the old crackling radio in the car telling me all about the Japs at Pearl Harbor and everything. And then you had to learn where in the hell Pearl Harbor was because it was not really ordinary suppertime stuff to you, you know?

SHORT: Yeah. Yeah.

DIXON: It was sort of an oddity.

SHORT: Did you go into the service?

DIXON: Yeah. I went into the Merchant Marine. I left here going into the service and got to Jacksonville, and I was with three other fellows – two other fellows. They both got guided into the service and I went on down the street about half a block and went into the Merchant Marine. They were hiring then. And they sent me on to St. Petersburg, Florida, and I done about a full month's basic down there. They had all the facilities down there, and real keen facilities too for service work.

And I got my basic education down there with them. And then when I got out through there, they had a system wherein they'd send you to ships wherever they needed them around and, in this instance, the first place they sent me was to Mobile, Alabama. And we took an old ship there – it was an old, rusty steam-driven reciprocal-type engine – and we took it around to first a little town right out of New Orleans and then around Florida to New York, then to Newfoundland and then to England. And I went to England. I've been there several times on just such a jaunt as that. And I would go into Liverpool or into London or into Cardiff or into North Africa on other cases. I've been in just one time, I've been to North Africa. And on that tour, we went to Oran, Algiers and places like that that was Biblical, you know. Had the old steps that Jesus Christ chiseled in the stone going up to the sound there, Oran, you know. The harbor would be down low, but they'd have no railings on the walkway going all the way to the top of that mountain. And if you was coming down that thing drunk, you'd turn around before you got to where there wasn't no railings over there to hold you and go back and drink some more or something or 'nother before you tried that or you got up some more steam for doing that. Well, that was quite a tour for me to go there and to see the Mediterranean and to go to the Suez.

I went to the mouth of the Suez also and then come back by a place in – off of Sicily, and I could see the Italian coast and everything, but come to that place there and went on to Toulon, France, where the Germans had just turned loose, where'd just got loose from Hitler. And they were trying to go and get back into the fold. But they still had very many off-limit places that you shouldn't go. You know, restricted areas. And it was still in that state when I went into Toulon, and Toulon is where the old general there scuttled the French fleet. It was in the harbor there at Toulon. Oh, you could see the ships turned upside-down and bellied up at the berth and everything where they had done the French fleet that way, trying to keep the Germans from getting 'em. Or getting any use out of 'em. At any rate, I done that to begin with and, later, I done all my trips to – back and to – to England and to North Africa – I mean, north to France, to Normandy. And I also went to Belgium, to Antwerp and Ghent, and there's another town in Belgium I went to. And they're all on canals, see, so you go on – you go in your ship up there on canals, and it'll be just like cornfields almost rowing through your portholes there from the crops coming along.

And I remember well about Belgium, of being a very clean town. The forests were all clean and well trimmed up and they – you could see a piece of newspaper blowing, there'd be a half a dozen Belgians after it to get it and put it in a trash can, you know, because they kept things that clean. And it was the same way on tugs or boats that they had on the canal there where their children went to school off of the canal, off of the tugs there, up and down that canal all the way to Paris.

Well, later I come around, as I told you, to Cardiff, South Wales, and that's where I was at D

Day in June of 1944. And we went in. We went in there, Cardiff, South Wales, and that section of London – of England – was a place where it didn't get daylight until after 12:00 of a night. You had about three or four hours of daylight, and it was after 12:00. And that was kind of odd for a country boy, you know. The streetcars all would quit running and they done sung – done sung *God Save the Queen* and all the rituals that they go through with. And there wasn't nothing left but to go to bed and it still daylight.

So that was another one of the things, the oddities in life, that I come through with and enjoyed. And, also, the friendliness of the people that I encountered along the way, even though they was rank strangers, couldn't speak English or anything, you could tell when their intentions were good or honorable or they wouldn't let you know if it was worrying them.

SHORT: So you saw the world.

DIXON: Yeah, I saw the world through that. Then I come back. I'm just halfway through.

SHORT: Okay.

DIXON: I come back and got a boat out of Tampa, Florida, a brand new one just turned over to the Waterman Steamship Company or Alcoa (I can't remember), and I took it and went to Honolulu and was broke down with boiler flues in that brand new boat. And boiler flue is supposed to last for a long time, you know. And we had to stay there and cut every one of them

flues out and put new flues in and just redo the boilers and left from there and went on to the real part of the world over there where they got some deep water. That's where the deepest water in the world is over there. It's seven miles deep, which is deep. That's a crevice in this hemisphere. And I remember losing my class ring there. I was lying on the front of the ship one morning at dark, and I had a ring around my neck, a chain, and I had that ring around there. And I'm lying down on the deck and after awhile I noticed that thing had done come in two and there goes my damn class ring over the side. I mean, goes my class ring. Excuse me. You'll have to cut some of that stuff if it gets too raunchy. Okay?

At any rate, I went there to do – done every one of the Philippines on carrying loads back and to here and yonder. And then, from there, I went to Yokosuka, Japan. Let's see. Yokohama?

Yokosuka? I went to Yokosuka, Japan. And they had just been surrendered about – not even a whole week, and there I am spilled in there with all those Japs that would've killed you last week on sight and laughed about it. And I was sitting down there and letting 'em cut my hair. Some people letting 'em shave 'em. That's what you call being optimistic, isn't it?

I remember too, also, in the schemes that they tried to pull there. They had money – a dual money system there, the Japanese system and the Allied Army issue that they put out, and the place was usually under martial order and you had some general in charge of that. And he had to lay down a lot of ground rules. Like you'd say, "To hell with -- to hell with the emperor."

They'd say, "To hell with Ben Crosby." Or, "To hell with the general," over there that was in charge of the martial law. Yeah, and so I stayed there at Yokosuka and Yokohama, and those three cities – Hiroshima, Yokosuka, Yokohama – and Tokyo were all on the same line running

on the eastern side of the Japanese mountain gorges up through the Pacific Ocean.

And there ain't nothing over there level. And if they got a spot of land that big around, there's some sucker up there with his plow or whatever it takes to farm trying to grow a crop on it. I don't care – I don't give a damn if it's that big around. And you'd go by on a train and you would see 'em up there hanging on a hill working on their crops.

But they all were not adaptable, but all of them used – that was public transportation. That's the only transportation they had. They didn't have automobiles or usually it was that they had to do public transportation. And they'd be hanging on that train. It was modern trains too. You'd come into a station and, instead of having one single line going in there, you'd have one goes up, one comes down, one goes straight through, one be going this way, one that way, and they'll all be meeting there and won't be disturbing one another's business. And they'd haul them suckers away from there. And being on the railroad like I was, you know, and seeing some of the things that they would do – like hanging between those cars; they'd all have on those mittens or stockings around their nose to strain the air to be sure they didn't get any impurities in there – and they would be hanging up between the two cars too. You know where the cars come together? There'd be four or five hanging up on each side back there on that. All to keep from having to catch the next train. You know? And that was a lifestyle with 'em. I never done it, but it was a lifestyle with them, you know, to do that.

At any rate, I left there, reloaded. We unloaded there at Yokosuka and went to Korea to Pusan – Pusan, Korea – and stayed there overnight and got unloaded. And the best thing I remember about Pusan was they had a preacher on every corner, and he had a Coca-Cola box to stand on to

get taller than the rest of them and he preached one sermon and then another. And the next block, there'd be another'n down there preaching another funeral – or preaching another sermon, you know. And it was just a different culture in Korea there. But it was more or less a touch of what you expect from the Chinese – the Chinese might and the Chinese – the Chinese largesse over what we, as Americans, know as they've got beaucoups of people, where we've just got a few. A handful. We do a lot with a handful. They do a bunch and more with scads of people that they can make – make go.

Well, that pretty well takes me back to – I come back to Manila and we left that ship at Manila. And I caught another ship and come back to Honolulu and then left another – and then we had to stop there for a good while and (two weeks maybe) I come on to the west coast, come around by Chicago, by train, and back to New Orleans where I got out after the war, or the end of my spiel with them, you know.

SHORT: You came back to Waycross then?

DIXON: Came back to Waycross then, right. Well, I had worked at the railroad in the coach shop prior to that, and when I come back, I hung around here awhile, done a few things, worked at a saw mill my daddy owned and two or three other things, and then finally went back to the railroad but went in the transportation department as a fireman. And I stayed in there about four or five years before I got promoted to engineer. And then I was an engineer from 1946 through when I quit -- I really didn't quit 'til '86. I quit the railroad in '86.

SHORT: That was the Seaboard?

DIXON: Yeah, Seaboard Coastline, right.

SHORT: Did you travel the whole route?

DIXON: No. We just got a district here from here to Thomasville and from here to High Springs, Florida, and from here to Jacksonville. I had one run -- that Southwind that we run from Jacksonville in our district on through Waycross to Thomasville before we got off. So you'd -- my journey there'd be deadhead from here to Jacksonville, take the train and then come through here going back to Thomasville, and doing the same thing over again, you know. Not the next day, but laying over in Thomasville a day.

SHORT: Those were the old steam trains.

DIXON: Yeah, mostly old trains, but they come diesels -- diesels come in pretty soon after I first started with 'em. But, and they were proud to be here too, you see. We'd wrestle with them old, old Alabama coal trying to make it burn in them old steam engines, and they had several ways of making it known to you that you couldn't whip one of them with all the things that could go wrong with them. I got one thing in there that tells you about coming up to the water tank at

Valdosta there and a fellow told me about all the things that you had to do as a fireman. And he went through all that and what all he done and everything, and he come back up there and sat down just beat 'til hell wouldn't have it, and the engineer hadn't moved out of his seat over there. And the engineer took out a plug of old chewing gum and throwed him a plug of Juicy Fruit over there, and he took it and unwound it and put it in his mouth, and he was so hot that – that the sugar – Juicy Fruit melted to sugar water, run between his bottom teeth and down his overall bib. That's what they call a fellow hot, wasn't it?

SHORT: Harry, tell us when you first got interested in politics.

DIXON: Well, I first got interested in politics pretty soon after that, '46. That was in 1962 that I first went up there and they had a vacancy here and my neighbor here talked me into running and I won and it was during reapportionment time and I had to run about three times before I ever got to take a seat, you know, on account of them changing it, the reapportionment, and declaring you had to have a new election – another election. Well, it done that about three times before I really got to take a seat. I beat two fellows one time and another one of them fellows another time. All three times I had opposition by the same three. But then later, as I went on through life, I was there 38 years continuously and I had opposition about half that time. They'd come up for reelection every two years in the House and, of course, they did the Senate also. And I always had opposition and I was always lucky enough to survive through all those years, and I learned as I went along a lot of things. I met a lot of people. You know, after

reapportionment, you had to get yourself stretched out. I had to leave here and go from here all the way to St. Marys and back up to – well, really St. Marys and Kingsland. And all during that time, I had Charlton County also which is Folkston, see. And I enjoyed being in and with the people all that time that I had to do business with and that I knew. And I made many a friend along the route, and I cherish that today.

SHORT: Well, back then, running for public office was hard.

DIXON: Yeah, it was. You're darn right it was hard.

SHORT: Old style politicking.

DIXON: Yeah.

SHORT: Knocking on doors.

DIXON: That's right.

SHORT: No mass communications like you've got today.

DIXON: That's right, not at all. I remember one time I was politicking over there in

Homerville. I'd just gone over there and there's a bunch of fellows around a table at a little restaurant there, you know, where the town hall folks gathered to drink coffee and everything. And there's one fellow there that I couldn't – you know, you can't tell. They were all picking at him a little bit, and I did notice that. And he went to leave and I hadn't worked him yet, and I run over there and caught him at the cash register and told him who I was and wanted to. Well, that damn gang over there just got to laughing like the devil. I didn't know it was the town's idiot. And they was all laughing at me about that, see. And let's see. He had something wrote up here on his – oh, hell. Oh, "No Show" or something. But anyhow, No Show couldn't read nor write, but he worked over there at the grocery store, and the only way he could put – restock – the store was take the boxes with pictures of the cans on it and then get the right ones to go. That's what you call operating at a little bit of a disadvantage, wasn't it?

SHORT: Yeah. I'll bet when you were campaigning out in those country stores, you met a lot of real characters.

DIXON: Yeah, real characters. This was such a one. Later, he called me one time and wanted me to buy him a guitar. And, hell, I bought him an old guitar that cost about \$10 and took it to him. And I haven't heard from that fellow lately. I'm trying to think of his name. His – that they had wrote on his – they had stenciled on him more or less. At any rate, he was one of the fellows from Homerville that I had to come along.

Then another time I run over a boy on the railroad over there and killed him. He was on a

bicycle. And I hit him one day on there in the daylight – daytime – going west, and it run over him. God, that bicycle, it squished it up ‘til it looked like no more than a storage battery or a car automobile battery, that bicycle did. And throwed him – knocked him off of the ditch there going through town. And I went on to Thomasville and come back here, and the next day they was having his funeral and I went over there to his funeral and everything. And they sued us in court later. That’s all right too. You’d expect that, you know.

SHORT: Right. So you go up to the Capitol in 1963?

DIXON: 1963, right.

SHORT: Right. What was it like being a freshman legislator?

DIXON: Well, it was like you were having to learn a lot of tricks in a little time. I know that down from this area we had several people, like Hoke Wilson that lived in Nahunta down here, was down there and so one time Hoke wanted me to help him get a Ford automobile. Well, there’s an old boy from -- oh, hell, from north Georgia up there that had a Ford dealership where Jeanette Jamieson’s from.

SHORT: Toccoa?

DIXON: Huh?

SHORT: Toccoa?

DIXON: I believe it was Toccoa.

SHORT: Yeah.

DIXON: There was a fellow named Fred Jones had a Ford dealership.

SHORT: Dahlonega.

DIXON: Dahlonega, right, right, right.

SHORT: Yeah.

DIXON: At any rate, I went back there. Oh, he was back there one evening. I took Hoke with me and we went back there and I sat down behind old Jones – and there's some other fellow talking with him there. And I told him that this is Hoke Wilson and he was from Nahunta and he wanted to buy a Ford truck, but he wanted to get everything coming to him but the green stamps. Said he could have the green stamps.

During that time, old Cheney Griffin was sitting next door, the next seat over, and he heard some of the conversation and come over there and stuck his head in and said, "Hey, bub." Says, "You wouldn't be interested in a 1956 Cub International tractor, would you? Unused." You know, that's what they tried – they tried him about it later.

I mentioned something about that in here in one of these that I was fixing to tell you about, about Cap Hicks was a real -- like you've seen these hanger-ons? Everywhere, every time a governor'd get elected, it wouldn't be no matter who Cap voted for, he'd soon be up there huddling around the governor's office, helping with the chores around there or whatever was necessary.

SHORT: Yeah.

DIXON: And old Frank – old Cap lived a life like that, you know.

SHORT: Yeah. Yeah.

DIXON: One of the funniest things I ever had -- and this is really old and this isn't anything I don't – I might not ought to say this; maybe we'd better talk about something else, but George Bagby was a brand new lawyer and he said he got a call one day from Roscoe Pickett. Roscoe was Mr. Republican in Georgia, throughout Georgia, and the only damn one in Georgia, or the only one that was – you had to go through Roscoe to get a mail carrier job. You had to go through Roscoe to get just about anything. And that was one-half of the – that was one-half of

the show. Well, anyhow, George was telling me – George Bagby was telling me – that Roscoe Pickett called him and wanted him to go with him to Chattanooga and says, “I’ll make it worth your time.” He says, “Well, I can’t go. I’ve been elected over there to recorder’s court, and I have to hold court.” But George said he got to thinking about it. The man said he’d give him a hundred dollars. He said, “Hell, he’d put recorder’s court off,” and went with Roscoe to Chattanooga, and said Roscoe told him, says, “Here, Shorty.” Says, “When I bring the money out here, you count it and be sure it’s all there.” And so Roscoe goes back in and talks and talks and George is sitting out there twiddling his fingers. And after while, Roscoe come out there and threw a briefcase full of money down and told him to count it. Well, he counted it. Everything was getting better and because George was gonna get a hundred of it, you know, his self.

Well, they were coming back to Hiram or wherever they live over there, wherever George lives, you know, over there toward...

SHORT: Paulding County.

DIXON: Paulding County, yeah.

SHORT: Nebo.

DIXON: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SHORT: Nebo, Georgia.

DIXON: And, anyway, old George said that – said that him and Roscoe stopped at a bawdy house there at Rome and said'd they give the woman a sack of the money and told her to keep it, not let it get out of her sight. Well, it got to getting kind of raunchy down there, and they was getting a lot of inebriation around there and doing all kind of crazy around there with the girls, and so she got concerned about it. So she called Cap Hicks, of all people. Cap was a radio man there and he was a recorder's court judge there in Rome, and he went down there that Sunday evening, it was on Sunday evening. So he went down there and found Roscoe and George Bagby both well drunk. And had to get 'em – drill 'em out of that – drill 'em out of that mess. Now a lot of people, that wouldn't mean nothing to, but Roscoe used to be the Republican Party in Georgia. And you remember that, don't you?

SHORT: Yeah. I remember Roscoe...

DIXON: Yeah.

SHORT: ...very well.

DIXON: Yeah.

SHORT: He's from the mountains up there.

DIXON: Yeah.

SHORT: Pickens County. Harry, who were your best friends in your first years in the Legislature?

DIXON: Well, my first years as a legislator, I reckon the best friend that I had was Hanson Carter.

SHORT: Hanson?

DIXON: Hanson. And – and, of course, Rowan was over in the Senate I had to come back and to every weekend with Frank and Frank usually flew back and to after about the first four or five years up there. And I enjoyed that immensely during life. And Frank's gone now. But I'll say this about that. He has always been the best person to me that I think I've ever known, and he lived right here next door to me. Then I had Rowan, and you – you just pick up various ones along the way that – that have impressed you one way or the other. And I have thought about -- Francis Houston come by here the other day and told me that he'd just got to thinking about Jack Brinkley and called Jack Brinkley to see if he was still alive. And he said he went and got right

in to Jack Brinkley. He was working for his son, a lawyer over there, .and Jack has been – stayed in Congress 13 years but retired and hadn't been doin' nothin' since then. But then I've met some real – I sat right there with the Columbus delegation like Milton Jones and Mac Pickard and Harry...

SHORT: Jackson?

DIXON: Huh?

SHORT: Harry Jackson?

DIXON: No, Harry Jackson was from over there, but this was Harry that was a representative that was always trying to pass liquor bills. Harry.

SHORT: I don't remember.

DIXON: Yeah, he's a representative.

SHORT: Uh-huh. Well, if he wanted to pass liquor bills, he came to the right place.

DIXON: Yeah.

SHORT: You were chairman of a committee...

DIXON: Yeah. But that was before I was chairman.

SHORT: Oh, it was?

DIXON: Yeah.

SHORT: Well, let's talk about that for a minute. You were chairman of that committee and, as I remember, you rewrote the liquor laws in Georgia.

DIXON: Yeah, at various times, they renovate them and bring them up to date and you get involved as a result of being chairman. Usually, it's the department wants to zip up on something to give them rule-making power or something that they didn't once have or something's growing into being a problem for them that they need some handle on that, over the years, will just get cluttered up if you don't straighten them out a little bit.

DIXON: And I've been doing that kind of stuff all my life. I was chairman of Regulated Beverages for about 27 years. And prior to that, I never had – well, no I won't say prior to that. But for about ten years after that, I never went to a damn thing they ever had and nothing about

regulated beverages. And then old Fred was their “do it” man, you know. Fred Kitchens.

SHORT: Yeah.

DIXON: And Fred got me to go to a convention with ‘em one time. Well, hell, I got to where I wanted to go to all of them conventions. So it was really on the spot -- nothing but on the spot all the time.

SHORT: Right.

DIXON: They’d ask you to speak a little bit every now and then or something like that. But Fred always throughout has had me – and even since then has had me – every time I was able to go to go down there with them on the conventions, you know.

SHORT: You’re also on Appropriations.

DIXON: I was also on Appropriations and I done most of my work on Appropriations. I had two or three meaty items here. One of ‘em was the paying a grant in lieu of taxes for some acreage that is in Ware County, Georgia, that the owner gave to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The U.S. Department of Agriculture turned around and gave those properties to the Forestry Commission as long as they used it for things appropriate to the progress of the

development of turpentine and other things to do with forestry. And so I've had to sort of say grace over that a long time. I got, as a result of passing a constitutional amendment, I got it to where the state -- I mean, the county -- could get a grant in lieu of taxes from the state as a result of that acreage here, which is over 29,000 acres. And I got that done when I first went up there. And I have done several things that made me be real appreciative of being on the Appropriations Committee where you could do it the shorthand way and things like that and wouldn't have to go the whole route, you know. And have the chairman help you, you know, and things like that like -- like I was talking about just then about that grant in lieu of taxes. So the county's been getting that for -- God knows, ever since 1963. And they've been getting those monies from the state.

I call the various things that I had done and I have enumerated them there in that leaflet that you've got there. One of the things was more -- I say, the hardest thing I've ever done was a fellow here, a policeman, got blinded in service by a fellow that was mentally deranged, and he killed -- no, he didn't; he blinded -- the policeman with both eyes -- in both eyes. And the only thing -- he worked for the city. The only thing he -- because they didn't have no pension system and he had no way of getting a dime and him blind. Well, they let him have the stand down at the courthouse for selling Cokes and things like that down there, and he got to where he could run that very well.

But I got, when I come along, I got to thinking that maybe I'd be able to get him a pension out of the Peace Officers' Benefit and Annuity Fund, but I found out one thing. The Fund was born ten years after the policeman was blinded. Well, that was gonna really have to do some fancy dancing to get out around that because that's a clear violation of the Constitution is to do

anything ahead of time like that, and particularly before it's in operation. Well, I went to the Peace Officers' Benefit – a Peace Officers' Convention – and got a resolution from them that they wouldn't scrap me for anything I could do that might help the policeman. Well, I got that and that was really cherished.

Well, Carl Sanders come in. I went to Carl Sanders and told him what my plans were and I told him, I says, "You know it's constitutional." I mean, "You know it's unconstitutional." He said, "Yes, I do." And I says, "But you just promise me that you will not veto the bill." So he didn't. Old Henry Neal was his yard dog, you know, and Henry called me, "Well, boy, we gonna have to re – we're gonna have to veto that bill about that policeman down there." I says, "Well, did you ask the Governor about it?" "No, I haven't asked the Governor, but he usually gives me that kind of..." Well, the Governor told him, no, he had made a commitment to me. And that's the case were Carl Sanders didn't have to do it, but he kept his word to me. And I feel quite kind toward him all through the years as a result of that. Well, I, in going through the steps to try to make that walk, I had to call a meeting of the Peace Officers' Benefit and Annuity Fund, of which the Governor was a member. And we had to have a hearing in the Governor's Office, and the Governor called me out there, Carl Sanders. Well then, had Arthur Bolton, who was the attorney for the Fund, somebody – oh, yeah, Frank Edwards, who was attorney for the PO – for the Peace Officers' Association that was on there too. So I had – I was lined up against some heavies and Arthur had got to be Attorney General at that time, see. And Carl Sanders called me in the back and says, "You've got a loser out there. I'm gonna tell you now. You think about what you want to do with it." I says, "I called for a continuance," I said, because I was in a jam.

I called for a continuance of it and put my thinking cap on and went to Arthur Bolton and told him, I said, “Arthur, you can’t stand for this to be on your record for you denying that blind man a pension under those circumstances and ...” Well, that softened Arthur up a little bit. So Arthur agreed that we would take it to court in an area where one of the board members lived. There was three or four right there in Fulton County. So I got it in Fulton County court before a Judge Durwood Pye. And I’ll never forget he issued an order absolute that said as long as that Peace Officers’ Fund had \$100 a month in it, that that blind man got the first \$100. So every bit of that was appealable and a losing situation. I could’ve lost it anywhere along the line because all they had to do was appeal it. So I had it hooked up like that. They went to paying the man and they paid him from 1963 through 1992. And it wasn’t but a hundred dollars a day – a hundred dollars a month – to begin with, but it grew during that time, you know, as minimum – as a minimum fund, you know. Per month.

SHORT: Um. You knew Speaker Tom Murphy very well.

DIXON: Yeah.

SHORT: Tell us about Speaker Murphy.

DIXON: Well, Speaker Murphy was, he was hell if he didn’t like he didn’t like you. But if he liked you, he could let up on it a little bit. And I was kind of in that category that he’d let up on it

a little bit. And I always was worried about something, you know, and it involved getting Tom involved in it one way or another, and he used to laugh about all that being done.

And one thing I would like to call your attention. Tom Murphy one time, this black fellow that was on my committee, a good fellow, J. C. Daugherty from Atlanta. J. C. Daugherty was a lawyer and he was not an ordinary person. He was always trying to do something up and above the cause to help promote.

So he got me one day to come to go with him to Tom Murphy about getting Murphy off of Hosea Williams. And so they had done that. Right after that, Hosea had gone with Reagan or somebody over yonder to Tokyo and he let off a spiel that wouldn't wait, anti-Tom. And so Tom Murphy called me back in there with J. C. and he told me – he told J. C. – he says, “J. C., I tried to help the fellow and he goes over yonder,” and Tom give an article there out of the paper where he'd give him hell. Says, “As far as I'm concerned, he ain't nothing but another --.” And says, “And you can go tell him that I told you so, and anything I promised him has gone with the wind.” In other words, you had your chance and you blew it. And so that – but Murphy called me in there for a witness, see, because he had me in there when he I had gone in there with J. C. to try to get him to lighten up on Hosea. Hosea's hard to help. And he was a beautiful character. Hosea Williams was a beautiful character. And he – you hear him tell them old tales about when he was farming on Marvin Griffin's farm and they whipped him with a full black cow whip -- and all the crap that didn't happen, you know.

SHORT: Made a good story, huh?

DIXON: Made a good story, yeah. Oh, along that line, talking about Marvin, one time Cap Hicks was working with Marvin and Marvin asked him, says, "Cap, can you – is there any way you can get us over to the Fulton County Courthouse?" Says, "Cheney's on trial over there today. I want to go over there and see what it sounds like if I can slip in there." And so Cap Hicks took him through the Sheriff's Office and up through an anteroom and up through so-and-so and finally come up to the balcony of the court – courtroom. And they was back there, the only two back there in the balcony of the courtroom, looking over. And they were right down below 'em there and said the scene, the routine – went kind of like this.

If you remember what they had him up about was some folks from down here around Moultrie went up there, a delegation, and give Marvin Griffin a sack with \$15,000 in it. And so such was the case, you know, about getting the Reed Bingham Park down there in Moultrie. And so they had done that and they had Cheney in court about the money and not accounting for it and so forth and so on, everything to do with that \$15,000. And so him and Marvin was sitting there – him and Cap was sitting up there – and Cheney and them was down there and they was going through their -- "Is this Mr. – do you know Mr. Griffin?" "Yes, sir, I do." "Do you see him in here?" "Yeah, I see him. That's him sitting right there." "Uh-huh, okay. So you – it's established that you know Mr. Griffin. Yeah, you do. All right. Well," says, "If you will, tell us what happened that day that you went in there and took that sack with \$15,000." And the the fellow says, "Well," says, "I went in there," and said, "he was talking on the phone," and said, "I was standing there holding the sack. And he talked on the phone a while." And Marvin told

Cap, say, “Come on, Cap. Let’s go.” Said, “That ain’t a credible witness.” Says, “He’s lying already.” Says, “Marvin would’ve took that,” I mean, says, “Cheney would’ve took that sack first if that’d been Ma on the phone.” [Both laughing]

SHORT: Well, you know something, Harry? Back in those days, there was – you didn’t have to report money contributions.

DIXON: No, that’s right. That’s right too.

SHORT: So it wasn’t illegal.

DIXON: Wasn’t illegal at all, no.

SHORT: Yeah.

DIXON: But they wanted always – the press and everybody – wanted to make it sound like it was funds from Jesus Christ.

SHORT: Yeah. They were after Marvin...

DIXON: Yeah. And even though it’d be sloshed[ph] way on out there on the edge. [Gap on

tape] Oh, old Marvin, though, I – I love to tell those tales because they are so true. Let me see here.

SHORT: Well, you knew Marvin well.

DIXON: Here's one. Here's one of the better ones about Marvin. He said that he always felt when he got his nose red with bourbon that he said he got to feeling where he was as wise as a tree plumb full of owls. That's pretty good.

SHORT: That's a great one.

DIXON: It's a damn tree plumb full of owls. And here's another thing he got caught with. He had this tale he would tell about he told me that he had always -- when he he'd get his tongue where it'd trip over his ear sometimes. And said he'd make all kind of messes. One was that he, as when he took that drink and then got to feeling like the wise owls, says he had a urge to be Shakespeare. Or he had a Shakespearean turn about him and that such was the case one time when he was politicking down at Bainbridge, Georgia – no, down at Swainsboro, Georgia – and they was trying to get vocational school down there back when they built that span of vocational schools way back yonder. And so they had been slower getting one because the locals had to get up about a million dollars to slap life into it to get it to going with it. Any rate, old Marvin was fixing to leave a outing he was at down there at Swainsboro, a fish fry. And he got there early of

a evening and they had plenty of corn balls and bourbon liquor, but the fellow skinning the fish wasn't do too well so he – his schedule got to pushing him. He had to get off and go on somewhere else and had started to leave and somebody called him back and said, "Marvin, tell these folks back here in Swainsboro about the vocational school." And Marvin says he jumped up there impromptu back in the back of a pickup truck and said, "I just want you all to know down here, if you elect me your governor, I will see that you get the vocational school." And he says, "I've always said," let's see. "I've always said," "I've always said you can't any more teach what you don't already know how, then you can come back from where you ain't never went." That's what you know of getting your tongue tied. That's pretty good. I got that wrote down there.

SHORT: Yeah. He was quite a speaker, wasn't he?

DIXON: Yeah, he was quite a speaker.

SHORT: Stump speaker.

DIXON: A good stump speaker.

SHORT: Yeah.

DIXON: He sure was. It was like one time Talmadge was down here, old man Gene – Eugene Talmadge. That’s about when I was first involved in politics when old man Talmadge was running that last time. So such was the case and I went down here to the corner or a park that used to be a schoolhouse on it and they’d done away with the schoolhouse, and we was in just one little corner of that park down there. And there might’ve been 25 or 30 people and old man Talmadge got up and says, “I always want y’all to know that I ain’t what you think I am; that I’m a ordinary person like anybody else.” Says, “I would estimate,” and he says, “Folks of radio-land, I would estimate that this crowd is about 2,000. Or that is what – that’s about what the night cop at Odum, Georgia, would estimate it to be.” The night cop at Odum, Georgia. Ain’t got but one damn police if they’ve got any. The night cop at Odum, Georgia.

SHORT: I bet you’ve got a thousand stories about members of the legislature.

DIXON: Yes, sir, I have.

SHORT: Well, tell us a few.

DIXON: Well, Marvin and Cap Hicks had quite a career together there and let me see, Bob. I was trying to – I had wrote something here about Marvin. At any rate, back to Eugene Talmadge, right during that time that he made that statement about that, he says, “And they say I’m mean toward blacks. And I want you to know it’s a lie.” Says, “I’ve got one with me here

tonight. Stand up, Hawk.” Big old fellow stood up back there. “Hawk, you live on my farm?”  
“Yassuh.” Says, “Ain’t I good to you?” Old Hawk says, “Got okra under the cow horn.” That’s  
what you call really sizing it up, ain’t it? “Got okra under the cow horn.”  
Yeah, let’s see. Now I was at that. I was at that gathering right there. But along come modern  
politicking like Carl Sanders. And I was on Carl’s side. Of course, I got scarred up a little bit,  
but not a lot. But I have got scarred up on others that I made the wrong call on it.

SHORT: You served with seven governors, right?

DIXON: Right.

SHORT: Let’s talk about them for just a minute.

DIXON: All right.

SHORT: The first one was Carl Sanders.

DIXON: Right.

SHORT: What do you remember about Carl?

DIXON: Well, I'd done a little stint under Ernest Vandiver too.

SHORT: Did you?

DIXON: A extra session. And then Carl come in 1963.

SHORT: Right.

DIXON: January 1...

SHORT: Right.

DIXON: ...or January whatever.

SHORT: Right. And he was – he got elected for the – as the first governor after the demise of the county unit system.

DIXON: That's right, the demise of the county unit system, right.

SHORT: And Marvin was sort of a county unit politician.

DIXON: That's right.

SHORT: Do you think that if they -- under the county unit system, that Marvin might've beat him?

DIXON: Yeah, he would've beat him under the county unit thing. He would've certainly beat him, because Marvin was riding on a pretty heavy thing there with his rural roads thing, you know. That got Georgia out of the mud really. He could really raise some sand about it. But in so doing, in getting the initial bond issue, he got -- him and Groover and everybody else got beat. Groover was the floor leader, see.

SHORT: Right. What do you remember about Groover?

DIXON: I remember all about him. He's one of the -- he's one of the brightest scholars I have ever known during my lifetime. One of the brightest, the most able persons I have ever known during my lifetime, I'll have to say. You've got other folks that are skilled lawyers or this, that and the other, but Groover absolutely was unselfish as hell toward governors he served under. He'd get up at 6:00 in the morning and go over there and meet with the Governor before anybody else ever got up, you know. And more or less plot out the day's activities. And they leaned on him like that. And some of them wouldn't do it for the first month or two, but they got to where they would. I mean, without him barging in on them, you know.

SHORT: Um. Well, he invented a new verb: Grooverized.

DIXON: Yeah, yeah.

SHORT: Did you ever have a bill Grooverized?

DIXON: Yeah, yeah, old Groover. I don't know of having one Grooverized. He's helped me on several occasions on things I'd get involved in that I was over my head in. And somebody'd be putting me out pretty heavy, and people like Elliott Levitas or Groover would come to your rescue, you know?

SHORT: You know, Harry, a lot of people don't know this, but he was a member of that Pappy Boyington...

DIXON: Right.

SHORT: ...Marine group...

DIXON: Right.

SHORT: ...during World War II.

DIXON: Right. Yep, he sure was.

SHORT: He was a pilot.

DIXON: You know, I went on a place (if you've got the time, just a minute, for me to tell you about one of my railroad doings). I was running for – oh, yeah, I was running a train from here to Thomasville. I believe I was fireman. I was a fireman on a passenger train. And we was going west of Quitman by what you call the Grooverville crossing. It crossed kind of like – there, I got it – it crossed kind of like that. It wasn't no true crossing, but it was a leaning crossing. And a fellow come out from behind there and hit that engine right behind the – right behind the, between the engine and the first car, and knocked the brake cylinder out from under it and that automatically knocked the total brakes on the train. And that's where he hit it, right back there at the back of the engine. So he wasn't planning to stop no how, apparently, you know. He – it was just a what they call aggravated crossing accident.

And so it knocked that fellow – knocked that fellow crazy. Well, when the flagman went by him back there, going back to flag, he said he was cussing like hell. Oh, Lord, just rolling inside that cab. And it'd knocked the engine slick loose from the firewall between the cab and the engine. I'm talking about on the truck. It knocked that truck engine way on down the right-of-way or railroad right-of-way there. So he was really hurt.

Well, they got him outta there and took him to Thomasville and they done everything they could for him at Thomasville and had to send him to Augusta. And they had sent him on up to Augusta, and then I didn't see no more of him for a long time. And a couple of years went by and I happened to be politicking over there around Homerville and I saw this fellow shuffling alongside the road kind of like Joe Hamill, you know.

And I stopped and picked him up, and I just got to talking to him to find out what his name, rank and serial number was. Gonna ask him to vote for me and everything. And I asked him, I says, I says, "Did you have polio when you was a child?" "No." Says, "This just happened to me about two or three years ago." I says, "Yeah? What happened?" Says, "Was you in an automobile accident?" He said, "No. Some son of a bitch in a train hit me over yonder west of Quitman and, uh, and liked to killed me. I've been in the hospital ever since and all."

Well, man, I got to – let me get outta here. I didn't want to have no conference with him. And so later they called me to go to court and he was suing the railroad.

SHORT: Yeah.

DIXON: I had to come back from the Legislature and went down there, and they kept him in one room and me and the rest of us in another room, you know. And he never did – I never did – run into him during the trial. So they had to put the trial off one Friday evening 'til Monday morning. So they told everybody, "Go to your house. Don't get involved with no conversation about this trial," and all that kind of stuff. And the fellow went home and got up on a mule and

the damn mule threwed him and killed him.

SHORT: Oh, my goodness.

DIXON: Now ain't that a hell of a note?

SHORT: That is.

DIXON: Just before having to tell that fellow that that was me that was on that train.

SHORT: Yeah. Huh. Well, let's get back for a minute to governors.

DIXON: All right.

SHORT: After Sanders, there was Lester Maddox.

DIXON: Right.

SHORT: What do you think about Maddox and his administration?

DIXON: Maddox was a very dear person. He was really, he was reaching out to anybody that

any experience at all about items. About things that affect you. One time, we hadn't been there no time and he was having to make an appointment to State Board of Education. And he called me down there because the fellow was from around Waycross here, and Steve Nimmer was in the Legislature then and he – Steve – wanted him to get rid of Lonnie Sweatt. Well, Lonnie Sweatt was a old-timer and come from over in Pierce County here.

SHORT: He was on the Highway Board.

DIXON: No, he was on the State Board of Education.

SHORT: Oh, the State Board of Education.

DIXON: He was chairman of the State Board of Education.

SHORT: Right.

DIXON: So Lester was set to reappoint him, but Nimmer got to hollerin' and got to hollerin' that he didn't want that fellow elected for a damn thing or reappointed or nothin'. So Lester gets me to go down there and bring Nimmer and let's all talk about it a little bit and see if we can't get some righteousness out of it. And I called old Nimmer and he got down there and I kind of had to side with Lester about the thing. I says, "The old man, he's good for one thing. He'll beat

your behind, Nimmer, just as sure as this comes off like Lester is trying to tell you. He will whip your behind.” Well, Nimmer says – he told the Governor, he says, “Well, Governor, I might not be here but six months, but I want to have done something. If I can get that SOB run off, that’ll be part of my victory.” Well, Lester didn’t appoint him and, sure enough, the old man got in a damn coupe automobile, went all over the district, and beat hell out of Nimmer.

Now I happened to help Nimmer along. I got him a job with 3M as a sort of a spokesman during the session. And he was already helping the Georgia Automobile Dealers Association and others. And let’s see. Oh, the Georgia Automobile Dealers Association and his own outfit; he was a Chevrolet dealer. They had all kind of crap going on charter-wise.

At any rate, Nimmer – Nimmer’s eyes, he was there with Lester and his eyes punched up, looked like a roadmap of China. That’s when he said, “Governor, if I ain’t here but six months, I want to have done something.” And so Lester went ahead and run Lonnie off and that was what developed after that.

But Nimmer was one of those people that was jolly in defeat though, and particularly since he got them two little ol’ skinflint jobs that he could forge all kind of expense accounts on, you know. And make it roll smoothly and one hand wouldn’t know what the other hand was doing. And we used to set him afire a little bit, Nimmer. He was on the Motor Vehicle Committee, and Ben Jessup was the chairman for many years and Douglas Dean was vice-chairman. So things was going real hip. Every year when you have reorganization – or every two years – you have to lay out the lines of what the committee can do. It takes ten to be a quorum and it takes – if we have 20 members, it takes ten to be a quorum. It takes five to report a bill out of a subcommittee

and yeah, yeah, yeah. And Ben Jessup went through all that shit – crap – and he come out the other end and he says, “And, Nimmer, you don’t get to vote unless it’s a tie.” That’s after Nimmer had done been gone two years.

SHORT: Oh.

DIXON: “Nimmer, you can’t vote unless there’s a tie.” One of the funnier moments, you know.

SHORT: Yeah.

DIXON: And then we got to telling, also got to telling Douglas Dean that every year they gave Ben Jessup – the Ford people, the Automobile Dealers Association – give Ben Jessup a brand new Ford and you’d just leave it there, see. Old Douglas Dean, he’s vice-chairman, but you don’t say nothing about that; just let him come and say, “Look here. I’m vice-chairman.” Says, “Can’t – can’t y’all do something to help me a little bit?” I says, “Well,” I says, “I’m not the one that calls all the shots about anything like that, but,” I says, “you’ll have to talk to some of the rest of the boys about it.” Old Douglas would go around talking to first one and then the other about getting him a damn automobile like they giving Ben. And all the time, there ain’t no automobile involved at all.

SHORT: 1970, Jimmy Carter beat Carl Sanders and ran on a platform of reorganizing the state

government.

DIXON: Right.

SHORT: Quite a battle.

DIXON: Well, I went through that and that's probably my first reorganization, although there had been tints of it along. That was an awful undertaking to say you're gonna do that throughout state government because you can mention one thing; if you just said Department of Human Resources, that would be a masterful load right there. But when you say you're gonna do that throughout state government, you're just almost saying things you can't live up to. But you can go through all the departments of it and it would make – might make you feel better or might not. And it's one of those things that's always controversial. There's always more fallout against it than there are for it.

SHORT: Right.

DIXON: Always. Because you upset somebody and then – but, anyhow, Carter – I mean, yeah, Carter; I went to the trial that they had wherein he won. His mother was there with a group of old ladies, and it was a colorful gathering. We was in the Rules Committee room there in the Senate – I mean, in the House. Had the Appropriations Committee there in that – that's where they held

it. And Ms. Carter, got up there and defended that about the old so-and-so that stole the votes from over there around...

SHORT: Lumpkin.

DIXON: Huh?

SHORT: Lumpkin, Georgia.

DIXON: Yeah, yeah, yeah, somewhere over there. I knew that dude, the guy that was elections

--

SHORT: Joe --

DIXON: He worked for old Tommy Irvin.

SHORT: Joe Hurst.

DIXON: Joe Hurst, right. Joe Hurst worked for my – he was in the Legislature.

SHORT: He was.

DIXON: He worked for Tommy Irvin. At the time, Phil Gamble and them.

SHORT: Yeah. That election really set Jimmy Carter on the path to the presidency.

DIXON: That set him on the path to go and to do the thing.

SHORT: Yeah.

DIXON: So one time, it had been real stormy right there. I have always had a close association with the Americus delegation. And George Hooks and the various ones that come along. The old lady, whatever her name was that was there. Told you about her husband all the time, you know.

And just general language out there on the House floor and crap like that. Something she said to her husband, something her husband said back to her and, yeah, yeah, yeah. But, at any rate, one time, they were trying to get legislation passed to create a new judgeship here and they had made two or three efforts to do it, and George Jordan, who was in the House from Coffee County, would find out about it of course, you know, and he would go object to it, just raise hell – just raise holy hell. Well, that, that's hard to create one and the man fit from the host county there raising all that hell. But they was trying to fix it to where Elie Holton could be appointed judge. Well, Frank Eldridge had got it passed through the Senate. Well, we'd try to pass it through the

House and George had beat me. He just beat me all over. He was going around with a damn trash can under – under dope – and he'd be having a trash can he'd use for a briefcase to carry all of his files in. And he would come in there right at the last minute and give you a beatin' on that kind. So I got Eldridge to pass the thing through the Senate and just give it to me and put it in my pocket. And I was gonna catch George Jordan gone. And I arranged for Tommy Irvin to want to see him and he took off. Well, Elliott Levitas was the chairman – I mean, Elliott – I mean, Robin Harris was chairman of the Judiciary Committee, and he took a walk too to keep from getting involved principle-wise. So I passed that damn thing through the House.

But, before I did, Jimmy Carter had come up there in the anteroom and called me out there, and I got out there and he wanted to know if I'd amend that bill. I said, "Hell, I – I's just fixing to do it here!" says, "I've just -- lot of stuff on it. I'd hate to change it right now. I ain't got time." But he, he says, "Well, I was wanting you to change it to where I'd have a chance to make an appointment myself." I says, "Who was you gonna appoint?" He says, "I was gonna appoint --" the guy I just called his name. The guy I just called his name, uh, ...

SHORT: George?

DIXON: George? No. The man that was elected judge, good grief.

SHORT: Oh.

DIXON: Elie Holton. Elie Holton.

SHORT: Yeah.

DIXON: He says, "I was gonna appoint Elie Holton." I said, "Well, hell, I think that's who I was kind of doing this for." I says, "Yeah, I'll change it." I took my pencil and changed it to where Carter'd have the right to make the appointment.

SHORT: Oh.

DIXON: And everything rolled smooth then.

SHORT: Yeah.

DIXON: And the fellow got in as the Superior Court Judge in that circuit. And he was the second judge. They had a single judge in that 6th Judicial -- 6th County Judicial Circuit -- for many, many years, and I got to getting him a secretary and other things to kind of let him keep up with the circuit. And then we got to appointing judges; that cut his work down in half. But that was the way it was born and went on up through. Now they've gone crazy with it now, appointing judges and creating judgeships that they don't need. I just believe if they were once really overworked, they're really underworked now because -- in that same circuit, instead of just

one judge, you've got three. And one of the big – one of the biggest squabbles I had was about that same thing. Roscoe Dean would not pass it unless it had a referendum on it. That, now that was the creation of a secretary's position for which LEAA would pay 60 percent of the salary. A judge, a lady from the -- oh, hell – from the Probation Office was the judge of Superior Court judge's secretary also. I mean, but she was just doing it for them. For him. Got no pay for that. She was getting paid from the other bunch. And didn't have to do it. But that's how it was. But, anyhow, I went in there one time about that secretary thing to the Superior Court judge, and Roscoe Dean was holding it up in the Senate. I went in there to talk to him because it was late; the hours were getting late and everything. And I told him, I said, "Roscoe." I squatted down by him and there, "I've come down here to see you about that bill you're holding up there for the secretary for the superior court judge, Waycross Judicial Circuit." Roscoe jumped up like a crazy man and went to hollering, "He's gonna hit me! He's gonna hit me!" You know, like a damn crazy. It made me feel about that damn little. I got up – me and my ass on out of there. But it made me – that Roscoe pulled a damn deal like that. I got Eldridge and them to get him to do it by I threatened to beat his ass out in the hall right there. Old – old Dean?

SHORT: Yeah.

DIXON: And I mean I'd have – I'd have got used up, but I'd have damn sure been on him like tar.

SHORT: Well, after Carter, George Busbee beat Lester Maddox, and you served with Busbee for a long time.

DIXON: Right, right.

SHORT: Tell us a little bit about Busbee.

DIXON: Well, Busbee was one of them fellows that then you been running up and down the road with you and going with you to places as a representative, you know, and a member of committees and interim committees and things like that. And Busbee was one of the fellows that I was real close to, felt real close to, because of that association.

And then later, the next one to come along was Joe Frank Harris.

SHORT: Yeah.

DIXON: I felt even stronger toward him than I did George Busbee. I knew Joe Frank a little better. He had been in the House and set there with me a lot, and Joe Frank had been a prince of a gentleman throughout the years. You know? And I knew his wife and everything and I knew all about him and the hard feelings that him and Mr. Jake Cullens had.

SHORT: Yeah.

DIXON: That's what some of those blacks used to say. They'd say, they'd say, "Isn't that that Mr. Cullens over yonder a-standing by the door with his hat pulled down over his eye?" I'd say, "Yeah, that's Mr. Cullens."

SHORT: Well, Joe Frank defeated Mr. Cullens.

DIXON: Yeah, he defeated Mr. Cullens...

SHORT: For the House of Representatives.

DIXON: Right.

SHORT: I don't think Mr. Cullens ever got over that.

DIXON: He never got over that at all, no, uh-uh.

SHORT: Yeah.

DIXON: He went in another direction after that.

SHORT: But – but Mr. Cullens and George Bagby were big friends.

DIXON: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, they were great friends, yeah.

SHORT: Then there was Zell Miller.

DIXON: Right.

SHORT: You served with Zell.

DIXON: I served with Zell and it was kind of a sugar sweet thing all the time that he was there because Murphy, you know, was going at a tangent in another damn direction all the time. And you're having to kind of watch your step and be kosher because Murphy was the kind of fellow would just run you off, you know, if he could. And usually he could. He'd find a way to do it.

SHORT: Uh-huh. They had quite a battle for the many years.

DIXON: For many years, him and Zell did.

SHORT: Right.

DIXON: And that, consequently, that got me in another jam with the dearest friend I ever had and that was Cap Hicks.

SHORT: Yeah?

DIXON: Cap Hicks was one of those people that was – had plenty of rich heritage to him, you know? Experiences that'd come along, he'd been able to come along with. I was real proud to have known Cap Hicks during his last days. I went to his funeral. I flew up there. George – let me see. No, Zell Miller preached the funeral and Hovie Lister played the piano and sung the only two or three songs that was sung.

SHORT: Right, right, yeah.

DIXON: And it was held at Martha Berry College.

SHORT: In Rome.

DIXON: In Rome.

SHORT: Yeah. And then you served with Roy Barnes.

DIXON: With Roy Barnes, right.

SHORT: And he was --

DIXON: Roy was on my committee with me.

SHORT: Was he?

DIXON: Roy is the best AWOL fellow you ever heard tell of in your life. He'd just sit on it every now and then about during the middle of the year, says, "If you need me, let me know." Or something like that, you know. And then the rest of the time, he was AWOL.

SHORT: Oh, that's funny.

DIXON: He didn't fool with nothing like a little ol' committee.

SHORT: Yeah.

DIXON: I'll say this. He certainly was a breath of fresh air, Roy was. Roy is a knowledgeable person and I'm sorry that he got on the -- he didn't deserve what he got at the time he lost that election.

SHORT: Right.

DIXON: He didn't deserve it from the school teachers nor nobody. But the school teachers just went out on a tangent. And they made a case out of it.

SHORT: Well, is there anything special, Harry, you want to talk about before we wind it up?

DIXON: Well, I am proud to have been – been in your company and meet the friends you brought around. I am proud that I'm doing very, very well health-wise, but I reckon 2009's been the worse year I've ever had. I have really been sick. I was in a coma for ten days, and that'll take a lot out of you. Of course, that meant I had to go back through Baptist Village and learn how to walk again and things like that. So I've just been back here, back home, about three or four months, you know, with this stuff I've got now, two ladies that stays with me. But I still enjoy television and current events and current news. I enjoy that as my pastime. And I am proud to still hold enough of my faculties that I can see and that I can hear and do the things that'll keep you abreast of living in a modern world.

SHORT: Kick a football?

DIXON: Yeah. Stayed up last night 'til I got punchy, watching that perennial.

SHORT: Yeah.

DIXON: You seen it, didn't you?

SHORT: Yeah.

DIXON: Yeah.

SHORT: Yeah. Well, you've certainly been a great public servant and you've done a lot for Georgia, and I want to thank you for Young Harris College and the University of Georgia for being our guest.

DIXON: Well, thank you so much. I – I am proud to have been a part of the overall operation. I've done several things, if you'll notice when you go through that there, that's self-explanatory you might say. And if you – I got these things wrote down here; if you need verification of it, I'll get Robbie Rivers to put something together that will show the short title or something.

SHORT: You know, we didn't talk about that. You're talking about now, about the no-fault insurance.

DIXON: Yeah, about the no-fault insurance. That's one of 'em.

SHORT: Yeah, we haven't talked about that.

DIXON: The no-fault insurance, right.

SHORT: Well, you were the --

DIXON: The status of no-fault insurance was I was vice-chairman of the Insurance Committee. Old man McCracken was chairman. He was a lawyer from Augusta area, and he -- he -- he'd rather take a dose of croton oil than come down here during the interim. Well, the insurance industry was having a chill about changes they wanted made in that industry and I thought that it was something that presses all the time, but I got to recognize it as being -- as being a worldwide movement to change the proof of guilt from one party to another party, and do it in a manner that you didn't have to clog up the courts for determining fault. So, thus, the no-fault. They changed it from showing fault to no-fault. And the industry got together and, instead of me and you as individual citizens having to go through a lot of rigmarole to get relief for a fender-bender of some kind that you'd usually have to go to court -- going to court would cost you more than that would -- and petition it to where your insurance company insured your wreck to you and they liened against your insurance company on down the road if necessary. You might've been -- you might've been the same insurance company, you know. But, at any rate, that Dr. McCracken

didn't want to fool with it. He was opposed to it, to tell you the truth.

SHORT: Yeah.

DIXON: And I was vice-chairman. I had to do a study committee; I was chairman of that. And then I had to draw up the legislation, but I had a-plenty of help with that. Draw up the legislation. And I passed it through the House against Tom Murphy railing against me. (That was before his time as Speaker, you know.) And so, I passed that almost single-handedly. Although they had several names on there, somebody's got to do the work. You know? That's the name of that game there. There might be four or five names up there, but that fellow's got his name on there first, he's the one that they always look to to answer all the question.

SHORT: Right. Right.

DIXON: The others' just to be pretty about it or something. Or prove something later on, you know, that they done this, that or the other.

SHORT: Right. Any other bills you're proud of?

DIXON: Any what?

SHORT: Any other legislation?

DIXON: Oh, oh.

SHORT: Matters that you passed that you're proud of?

DIXON: Yeah, let me see. No-fault insurance. I also created a fund in the Agriculture Department that would reimburse beekeepers for the inspectors tearing up and burning their hives as a result of American or European Foulbroods. Now that was – Clinch County is the biggest honey producing county in the state of Georgia. And I had a hold of 'em. I created that at that time (although it was almost nothing when I created it), but funded it through the Agriculture Department. And then if a state inspector stopped a truckload of bees that's transitory, you know -- that's been to Florida working the orange groves and coming back to Georgia, that's where they usually do it is the state line, check them bees. And if they're bringing back Foulbrood, they'll destroy that hive and everything right there. Setting a match to it, you know. So this reimbursed them for the cost of having to let the Agriculture Department there burn the bees up and burn the hives up.

Bob, when you get down to it, when you get to looking through it and going back and trying to remember stuff and forgetting stuff, I've really forgot about as much as I can remember. And I don't know whether that's the old human being in a cycle or what. But I feel like for the things I did remember that I'd done, and I could talk about it pretty much accurately. And I know from

whence a lot of that stuff comes and you'd be surprised at the people that go through life and don't even know that, you know.

SHORT: Right, yeah.

DIXON: But I, I feel honored to have had the opportunity to have been subjected to the things I have been subjected to since I have been in the legislature and representing Ware County. You see there where down here one time we had the chairman of the county commission and a fellow that he had working for him stole timber from the county. They just went out there and cut all the timber at the airport and split the money up between them. Well, we had a mean superior court judge here – one of those that was a single judge, you know – and he put that chairman in jail and would not give him bond. And so there he was in the jail. He was elected. He was in the jail. He couldn't get bond, but he was running the county from the jail cell, signing the county checks to the county employees and everything. Well, that's sort of an atrocity, you know, and it just don't roll that well. Well, I done a bill there that I might have mentioned here (and I don't know), but, any rate, it fixed a provision for the governor to make an appointment in a case like that if they've been convicted and found guilty. And the governor could go ahead, even though he was elected, and make an appointment to his position. And then if he redeemed his self in some way through – he could go right back to where he was, but it didn't hold the county hostage while he and his problems could be – well, hell, in that case, him and that fellow was just robbing the county out of that much money. And he was a young fellow just come off – just

come off the scene here, never been in politics before. And was a likable fellow and everybody liked him, and, damn, they went to doing that the first damn thing. And so I'll never forget I was – I had that bill in the House and was giving it the music and old -- that fellow from Savannah that's such a controversial black fellow that --

SHORT: Bobby Hill?

DIXON: Huh? Yeah.

SHORT: Bobby Hill.

DIXON: Bobby Hill. Bobby Hill come up to me and wanted me to allow him to put an amendment on that, and it was because he was attorney for the group down around Warrenton that the county commissioners had stole a bunch of money and so forth and so on, and he was representing 'em. And I allowed him to put that amendment on there, and it was something inconsequential. It didn't change it in any way at all; it was something just minimal. I expected him to ask for more, but that was minimal and he did and I changed – or let him change it to that. And that was – so I've been tried just about every way you can be tried when it comes to dealing with public items and people, you know. Then when I went to Camden County down there, I got a full dose of the sub base. I had hit St. Marys and Kingsland, and they were real nice people to me. There's about four sections – about four factions – down there. Damn, if I wasn't friends

with all four factions.

SHORT: That's unusual.

DIXON: That's unusual. You didn't usually drop your foot in a rut somewhere along the line, won't you?

SHORT: Yeah.

DIXON: Well, Bob, I know that it's hard – that it'd be hard – for you the way that I've been inconsistent with things here and carried on here with no more of a format than we had going. I just hope that you can pick it clean.

SHORT: It's been great.

DIXON: That you can pick it clean and I won't have to --

SHORT: It's been great. I wouldn't change it.

DIXON: -- won't have cussed anybody.

SHORT: Listen. It's been great. I wouldn't have changed a thing.

DIXON: Is that right?

SHORT: That's exactly right.

DIXON: Well, I want you to know that I've just done about half of it. One of the things I got to remind you of, old H. W. Lott was a Superior Court Judge. You remember him from way back.

SHORT: Berrien County.

DIXON: H. W. Lott.

SHORT: Yeah.

DIXON: All right. He lived over in the circuit over here next door, the one that Brooks Blich is in.

SHORT: Yeah.

DIXON: So he was – got appointed as a traveling judge, you know, like one circuit'll get

another judge to hear cases over in theirs. So he was over there at Douglas one day, which was out of his – which was in the Waycross judicial circuit. But Judge Lott was over there looking down the jury list one morning, and George Jordan and another fellow was there trying a case. And the judge was looking at his book. The jury was sitting over there. And George and the fellow got in a squabble and George hit him right in the nose and it went to blowing blood everywhere, and he went to his knees and old – and the fellow got up and got to hollerin' and snortin' blood and said, "You seen him, Judge! You seen him, didn't ya?" Old H. W. had been looking at the jury list and he looked back out there at them and says, "Lookie here. Y'all cut that out." That's what you call a hell of a comeback.

SHORT: Yeah.

DIXON: That's what you call order in the court, wasn't it?

SHORT: That's great.

DIXON: "Lookie here. Y'all cut that out." He just knew that George was gonna get him in trouble out there, sure enough. And old George, George was my friend. He was a good friend, although he was really out of it in his latter years. He was out of it. One time I went by Douglas and they had a undertaker's thing out there on the courthouse lawn and had three or four people out there around and everything, and I looked over there and it was George Jerdan and he was

holding a big service for burying Miscellaneous. He had cut it to where the county could not operate with a -- you know, that kind of fund, Miscellaneous Fund, and was burying it on the courthouse lawn.

SHORT: That's pretty funny.

DIXON: That's pretty funny.

SHORT: Yeah.

DIXON: And that, you know what? I've enjoyed that kind of stuff.

SHORT: Yeah.

DIXON: Being in -- being involved in it and knowing something about it.

SHORT: Yeah.

DIXON: Knowing something about it. And, by the way, before Groover died, I -- I was on the Highway Board. I got that highway between -- between Macon and Gray named Groover. It's a four-lane highway. And me and Langdale was up there here a while back and come down that

highway, and we got about halfway down it and old Langdale says, “I haven’t seen none of Groover’s signs.” I, finally I seen one or two and then there’d be a skip, wouldn’t be none for a long time. And then so that DOT wasn’t keeping them up worth a damn, you know.

SHORT: Yeah.

DIXON: Because Groover had died too, you know.

SHORT: Yeah. Yeah.

DIXON: Yeah, the day that I had that occasion up there recognizing that as Groover Road, he had to stop me during the initial part of the ceremony there because I had forgot to ask the preacher to say the -- and imagine old Groover, as tough as he is, having to remind me about saying the blessing. Asking the blessing. That’s one of the things, as Marvin said, “You’ll get your tongue over – hung over your ears.”

SHORT: Harry, thank you.

DIXON: Well, Bob, have I...

SHORT: It’s been a wonderful conversation.

DIXON: I just...

SHORT: We appreciate it.

DIXON: I hope so because if you want to, we'll do part 2 and 3 later.

SHORT: Okay. Okay.

DIXON: Yeah.

SHORT: We could do that. Love to do it.

[END OF RECORDING]

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