

**Chuck Clay interviewed by Bob Short  
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**Reflections on Georgia Politics**  
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BOB SHORT: I'm Bob Short. This is Reflections on Georgia Politics sponsored by the Duckworth Library at Young Harris College and the Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies at the University of Georgia.

We are back with Chuck Clay, State Senator, Chairman of the Republican Party; and, Chuck, we'd like to pick up where we left off last time.

CHUCK CLAY: Your brain is a lot better than mine. Was I fishing or what we did last summer? Point me in the right direction.

SHORT: Well, in our previous conversation we had talked about some of the things of which you were very proud during your service...

CLAY: Oh, yes, sir.

SHORT: ...on the county commission.

CLAY: Okay.

SHORT: Now we'd like to talk about some of the things that you remember and are proud of during your, what? 10 years, 12 years...

CLAY: Twelve years.

SHORT: ...in the Georgia State Senate.

CLAY: First off, you know, to make sure we keep this in check, I've spent 10 of my 12 years in the Minority. One can debate the significant ramifications of minority party legislators. However, having said that, I will say that I tried to take the role of legislating very seriously. And when I say a member of the minority, I came there when we were really an irrelevant minority. Paul Coverdell was the Senate leader; Johnny Isakson was the House leader. And our opinions were asked almost as an afterthought as opposed to any significance into legislation. But that doesn't mean you are irrelevant. And I think in many respects it was a wonderful school to figure out how, when you have no ability with yourself or your party, to pass legislation and you pass legislation. And we were never, and I would say that when Zell Miller was Lieutenant Governor and Pierre Howard was Lieutenant Governor and even Mark Taylor was Lieutenant Governor, and even when sort of the nemesis, if you will, of the Republicans in the House with Speaker Murphy and his trusted lieutenants like Bill Lee, I never felt either put upon or poorly treated because I came as a Republican, what you had to realize you weren't going to be on the conference committee or the budget. You weren't going to be sitting there in the green door committee meetings with the Speaker and the Lieutenant Governor

and the Governor when the big-dollar issues were being divvied up.

So you had to learn to legislate sort of in the niches, and you had to learn seriously how to build coalitions on bills that were probably not partisan; but if you were serious about it and worked hard, you could get things done. And role models like a Paul Coverdell in the Senate and Johnny Isakson in the House were two people that I admired because they were serious legislators. I'm going to talk about some bills, but one of the things that I told myself when I first went down there, I guess a little bit of just sort of common sense politics, is "before you say a whole lot watch." And I may have said this before, but it was to me is watch who your fellow senators or House members go to when there's a complex or difficult issue on the floor. And forget who has a title, forget who's chairman or whatever. See who the people go to in those bodies when it's a tough issue. And whether it was a Culver Kidd, a Paul Coverdell, whether it was a Johnny Isakson, you know, Thomas Allgood, I mean, I could go down of people that, when there's a complex issue, they went to. You follow those folks and learn how they do things, and then you can get things done.

I came as a county commissioner, and I came in as a former prosecutor. So the first things I really tried to work on were some what I thought, law and order issues. The one that I'm single most proud of in the law and order area, and I give Zell Miller a lot of credit because he let me when he revamped and really started getting tough on DUIs, I had a little bill that reduced the blood alcohol levels from a .10 to a .08 and eliminated the presumptive .12, .0 and just said at .08 you're DUI. And he ultimately incorporated that bill as either in the conference

committee or amendment as part of his overall DUI package. He didn't initially want to add that in there because he thought it might snag it up in the House and didn't want to have that controversy defeat other very fine aspects of his bill. Ultimately, by that kind of hard work I'm talking about, it became clear that we could get it passed, and he let us include that in his overall package; and it saved lives. And I can tell you if you go to one meeting of the MADD and watch a day in the life of a parent who has lost a son or a daughter to a drunk driver, it changed me forever; and it ought to be lower. I can't do that now. We don't let airline pilots or truck drivers have any alcohol, none, zero alcohol in their system for 12 hours. Yet you can go out and have two or three martinis as long as you're a civilian driver and be out on the road.

Another issue for another time, but I was proud to have been part of that.

I passed the first bill in this country to make it an additional crime for a spouse to be abused in front of the children because children learn about spousal abuse from watching generally the mother be abused by an abusive father. And, you know, there was already crimes on the book about abuse, but there was nothing on the book that said there's an additional delinquency or cruelty to children charge that could be imposed for doing it in front of the kids. And I got rallied, booed, and hissed by a lot of folks as being sort of a right-wing, and we only passed it as a misdemeanor offense. Later, Mark Taylor incorporated that into one of his key campaign things and raised that to a felony, but I was proud to see again a small area negotiated in a niche that I think is good law.

And so that's the kinds of things you do in the minority. I like to think we're

environmentalists. I dramatically expanded the Metropolitan River Protection Act as a Republican senator and expanded that and extended the protection of our rivers and the setbacks from the rivers to hopefully begin some of the limitation on pollutants that flow into the rivers because of the lack of setbacks in a lot of places, which was just good, sound policy, particularly for the Chattahoochee. But other rivers in this area, too.

I put in a bill that was not passed, but it became a model for around the state of Georgia requiring parents in divorces, before a divorce is granted, to go to counseling, generally court-sponsored if they couldn't pay, but programs that looked at the impacts of divorce on children. And that became a model for around the country. Probably while one could debate whether -- reading the pros and cons, I'm proud of the fact that I also passed the indigent defense program that has taken sort of 159 systems of providing indigent legal care into a statewide system, and it's certainly had some level of controversy or not. But I'm really more proud of taking something that nobody said could pass that folks had been trying to pass for 30 years that ultimately was going to be imposed by a court in a much more expensive method than if we chose to do it ourselves, but take something, an issue that had been out there, and actually having that passed into law and signed into law by Sonny Perdue in his first term as governor. I was at that point in time in the majority, and that does help; but it was a bipartisan effort that I worked very closely with Terry Coleman and Dubose Porter in the House Judiciary Committee to do something that everybody knew in their hearts, you can disagree with the specifics, but knew in their hearts was morally right and constitutionally mandated. But ain't nothing you could ever

go home and say "I ran on providing lawyers with criminals." You can't do it. But, you know, that was something of significance that I do think has changed.

A lot of county commission issues, as much of those was just trying to build unfunded mandates. It was really trying to keep a handle on the passion with which legislators often have about balancing state budgets on the backs of county commissioners. And it's a pet peeve of the commissioners. I don't blame them. It's very easy to impose laws that have to be funded downstream. And of course, we complained about the same thing from Congress. So you try to be a little bit of a watchdog. What's good for the goose or what ain't good for the goose should also not be good for the gander.

Those are a few things.

SHORT: Then you decided to run for Lieutenant Governor just at a point when the Republican Party was really picking up steam in the state of Georgia.

CLAY: I think it was. We felt the good part about being a Republican from sort of the mid '80s or even early '80s on, you had a sense of destiny. You had a sense that time was on our side. You had a sense that we really were, while maybe smaller in numbers, and I'm not putting anybody down, but I'd have taken a Coverdell or an Isakson or a Paul Heard or a Bob Irvin or a Steve Stancil or even Matt Towery and Mark Burkhalter, and I could take a Clay Land in the Senate and a Charlie Tanksley, a David Ralston, myself, a number of the other skin-edge,

Sallie Newbill, these folks were top-flight intellects, and they were doggone good politicians. They are fun to be around, and it was an enthusiastic progressive conservative group. And so that was a march that we felt was inexorable. It took a little while, it always takes a little longer. It's those final steps that are the toughest ones. But for me personally, and that was '98 -- and, you know, best-laid plans. Part of it is, as a practicing lawyer, when you're in the minority, somewhere between like six or eight years you kind of get that sense of "I can't afford to do this anymore. I love doing it, so I'm either going to try to run for something else, move up the ladder, or I've really got to get back to building my practice." And particularly when you're in the minority, I think those footsteps are a little louder than, say, if you're a key chairman in the majority party where you can rationalize some other exposure. So that was part of it.

I felt it was a great time. And I'm not picking on him because he's a dear friend, but at that point in time I felt that Mike Bowers was going to be a shoo-in for the Republican nomination, and I thought absolutely, and I still think that today, but for we know the obvious history, that he would have been Governor. And I saw myself, not necessarily correctly so, but I saw myself as that kind of Republican and that if I could get, you know, the nomination, which I didn't, I lost to Mitch Skandalakis, which shows how things go. But part of that was, again, all this when what happened with Mike and the issue of his affair came out. And that was certainly more disastrous than it would be now. Gosh, it seems like today almost people applaud you. But that was not acceptable, and he paid a high political price for it. I don't want to blame his success or lack of on mine or not, but my idea was these were the kind of Republicans

that were going to break through. Guy Millner got in that race, and, you know, I don't blame him one iota. But it sort of turned the tables upside-down, and I wound up losing it. I had been elected the minority leader in '96, and minority was a personal accomplishment; but you talk about a position that neither has carrot or stick, trying being the minority leader of any group of individuals, all who think they know your business better than you do, and you have no ability to impose your will. I'm honored to have had it, and I was unanimously elected. And that was one of the great honors.

And, you know, might have been if you had stayed, you know, one, two, four, another two or three terms, where might you have been in the Senate? You can't look back. Eric Johnson came up behind me, wound up being the minority leader, and then majority leader, and he did a fine job and was and still is, of course, he's right now as we're doing this a candidate for governor in the Republican primary. So I don't look back in that respect; but, you know, in funny ways I lost that, as we well know. Probably the last thing on this earth that I would have ever sought to do would have been running as a chairman of a political party, which I was somewhat categorized as a cast of winged lizards that get together to finally figure out who is the most ideologically pure of, in our case, the right or the left in ways that will ensure that if you adopted all their positions you couldn't get elected anything.

And I say that with real affection though for it. And after I had lost, Paul Coverdell in fact and several folks were talking about we needed somebody with political experience this was post '98. We thought we were going to break through. We lost everything. And I say

everything, we still had the Bobby Bakers and the PFCs. But in terms of the Governor, it was, Roy; Lieutenant Governor was Mark Taylor. Attorney General was Thurbert Baker. Oxendine was insurance and remained there, and Michael Thurmond was labor. And it looked like we had just been held in check. So they wanted somebody with political experience. And after you've lost a race, I guess you're looking for some ways to both vindicate or, if you will, find some return on your investment. And at a certain point in time, I was honored to be asked and put together another campaign. And you have regular political campaigns for popular vote, and then you have caucus campaigns that are completely -- or party campaigns, if you will, that are completely different animals. They're very personal. You've got to get in your car; you drive down and talk to one person at a time in small towns, small crossroads, and convince them that you're the best person for running the party. I think we had three people in the race, all fine people; and I won the election on the first ballot, fortunately, in August in '99.

SHORT: What was your platform? What did you tell them?

CLAY: That if you can't count to 50 plus one in politics, stay home. I mean, it's great if you want to have a breakfast club and it's a debating society. Those are fun. I love to be a great ballroom philosophy. I was one of the best out there. But political parties are about winning elections. They're about nominating people who are the better and superior candidates. They're about recruiting not just a warm body, but a civic and community leader. They are

about platforms that don't have to -- you certainly don't want to abandon conservative principles, but you've got to find ways to put those principles out there that bring people to you, not limit and build barriers. This seems like ABC stuff, try telling that, and I'm talking about both parties. But, you know, this is not necessarily an easy sell. They all thing they're doing it. "Well, if we'd just be more and more this, we'll win. And we'll just be more and more to the left -- oh, you're just not pure enough is why we didn't win," when the reality is American elections are decided in the middle, always have been, always will be. That doesn't mean the others don't have a voice or a place; but it's the same 8 to 10 to 12 percent of people that make the difference in every significant election because they're the ones who vote every time but are independent and they're going to go with who they think viscerally -- I mean, the same group that voted for Ronald Reagan voted for Bill Clinton, voted for George Bush, and are now voting for Barack Obama. And if you can't figure that out, then it seems to me you've missed a fundamental underpinning of American political victory, a campaign strategy. Not necessarily party. Parties have a role. They're the place where the ideological purists are going to be, and it makes sense. And you do, and they do build enthusiasm, and they provide a face for your party out in communities where, in many respects, you know, they may not otherwise see a party official who represents it. So it is important. And they provide enthusiasm.

But I basically talked about winning. What are the pieces that we need to do to win? And quit pointing fingers at each other and start figuring out what it is that differentiates us from the Democrats and articulate it in a way that makes that 10 percent that do make the difference

and bring them over. Sometimes it's because what other people do. They thought they didn't like Roy Barnes. They voted for Sonny Perdue. They could go back next time back to Roy Barnes if they figure out they don't like the Republican candidate or, you know, depending on what other national events might play. But you can't benefit from that as a party in terms of winning victories unless you're in a place to win. And that means the door has got to be open, and you better be able to find things in ways, I said my very simple campaign slogan: "If you can't count to 50 plus one, stay home."

SHORT: There was a time when...

CLAY: And I've been on both sides of that 50 plus one count.

SHORT: There was a time when people thought that the Republican Party was not inclusive. You worked on that. Were you successful?

CLAY: We were very successful, and then we somewhat have been harmed to a little bit by our own success. Some of that's the eternal cycle of politics, of youth, vigor, complacency, and senility, which is probably the category I'm in now. And then reinvention. You've got to be able to reinvent yourself in this business. And this idea that the Democrats are gone forever in Georgia and the Republicans are going to forever be out in Washington and then

this other nonsense, because never underestimate the ability of people to blow their opportunities and the opportunity for others to reinvent themselves.

The Republican Party, and I want to give credit to a couple folks that aren't necessarily intimates of mine. One of them is Barry Goldwater, who came out here and redirected and reinvented the word Republican in the south. And the other one was Guy Millner, who doesn't get much credit but was really the first post-Callaway Republican to actually win the vast majority of small rural counties that were always hardcore conservative but were, you know, yellow-dog Democrats. And he brought them into the Republican fold, where they've stayed ever since. Now, that dovetailed with some national policies, growing national conservatism in the Republicans and a perceived liberalism with the Democrats. But he as much as anything helped break those barriers down.

What we did here locally was we went out and really did canvas the areas. And I think I said this last time, and I'm not picking on him; but I'll go to Democrat meetings here, and there are a bunch of old guys like me complaining about yankees and telling, you know, not very funny jokes. And then you went to the Republican parties, and there was dynamic, progressive, smart, and I don't mean they were all PhD types, but from the Warren Herrings at a Lockheed to a Johnny Isakson to a Johnny Gresham to, you know, local Republicans here from Tom Sharon and Al Johnson, Chuck Clark, with groups like this in the greater donut area. But you had to get inside the Republican party any further. See, not only did we have schisms ideologically, but we had schisms geographically, and I'm not going to say any names. But the original sort of

core of that Republican base, which was Buckhead, you know, north Fulton area, they'd never liked us clowns out here in Cobb County, you know. So you always have to deal with you know, the assumption is if you're on this side of the river that you're somehow inherently an intellectual dead end with really nothing to offer because if you were successful, particularly as a lawyer, obviously you'd be living in Atlanta and Buckhead and be part of them. So by definition, you're not. So, you know, and I'm being, obviously, over the top and being a little bit clichéd, and you can obviously tell what camp I perceive myself to be in. And some of that same sentiment flowed back the other way.

It's not fair to a lot of them, but that's where you sort of got that idea of sort the close-knit country club, you know, economically high end folks which are great people, and gosh knows we need them. And there's nothing wrong with any of those things. But that's just the start of a political party. You need suburbs. You needed working families. You needed up-and-coming. You needed young professionals. You needed, you know, all types. While we haven't recruited well African-Americans in the traditional African-American belt, but out in suburbia where neighborhoods have been easily and comfortably integrated for years, we were pulling in those kind of people, and the results showed. So I think combined with both history and Goldwater and a Millner and a lot of individual efforts to put a face on the party that could go into a barber shop and could go down to Main Street and could go to these places and sit down and talk to people. You know, Zell Miller was as good as anybody I know, you know. He could go to a bank board meeting and put on his pinstriped suit like this one and sound as

upscale as anybody, but certainly roll up his sleeves and put on the cowboy boots and sit down at the barber shop or the local trading center and everybody feel like they're talking to somebody who was listening to them. And that's half the fight, is just give people that sense that you're listening to them and you share some of their dreams. You share some of their heartaches. You share some of their challenges. You share some of their economic issues, and you mean it. And you actually live it. And if you do those things, you'll grow a political party because there's always, there is always competition. It breeds and grows in politics just like it does in business. And, you know, you want to keep a politician sharp and on their toes, have an opponent every few years. It's amazing what that does to keep them responsive to constituents.

SHORT: You mentioned Lockheed, and I'm glad you did because I don't think in our last conversation we fully covered the role of your family in Lockheed/Bell Bomber and Lockheed and Dobbins Air Force Base. Would you talk to us for a minute about that?

CLAY: Sure. And I will encapsulate that. Effort of many and a product of certainly the Second World War. My grandfather, General Lucius Clay, had been an engineer and was an engineer his entire career, a West Point grad in 1918. But in the year or two before the war had been tapped out from a civil engineering position to come up and head up the crash airport development program around the world. And they did hundreds and hundreds of airports were established around the world. Being from Marietta, Georgia, and of course realizing for a

variety of reasons this was a transportation hub, it was also his home. One of the airfields they built was Rickenbacker Field out here in Marietta, which at the time was going to be the second airport, at least in their view, post war, the second airport for the Atlanta area, and certainly a number of them, Rip Blair and Jimmy Carmichael and others sort of worked to make that happen.

When war broke out, the second part of that was and his assignment was he was made in charge of all procurement and development for the United States military effort for the Army, which at that point in time included the Army Air Corps. And again, a group of Marietta citizens came to Washington and met with them and said, "you know, Marietta I think would be a pretty good place if we're going to be building these big airplanes and big machines and big ships. We don't have a harbor here, but we do have an airfield, and we want to see if you can help us put a plant here, a war development plant." Which wound up being --they did. The leading citizens got the land, put the package together. As Bill Kinney, one of our local historians around here, says the only questions asked is "who's going to build those airplanes? The only thing you got is hillbillies and bootleggers. They couldn't turn a screw or a bolt if they had to." "Thank you, but we'll train them." And they did. And they built the schools here. And so he helped bring what was then Bell Bomber. They built the schools, put in three shifts a day seven days a week and built hundreds of B-29 bombers, which at the time was the most sophisticated piece of fighting equipment in the world, much like the F-22, which is now being built on top of that hill today. It's a wonderful story of civic involvement, a little bit of luck and

happenstance, a lot of vision and leadership, and a great company with great products that, after Bell, became ultimately Lockheed Georgia, and your success story from the C-5 and C-130s and F-22s is just a history in and of itself.

SHORT: An economic engine.

CLAY: It transformed, as any historian will tell you, Bell Bomber transformed Cobb County from a small rural backwater southern county into an industrial giant of its time, but the multifaceted economy that you see in Cobb today is directly attributable to the commitment of Bell Bomber and Lockheed Georgia.

SHORT: Well, it also provided jobs for people outside of Cobb.

CLAY: Zell Miller's mom, one of them.

SHORT: Lester Maddox.

CLAY: Lester Maddox. You can go down. If you go to anybody in this area much over 50, 60 years old, they know somebody in their family, one of their parents invariably worked at Bell Bomber. Invariably. And then it was, you can imagine the small area. They

were running three shifts seven days a week. They brought people from all over: north Georgia, south Georgia, east, west, put up all the little cracker homes you see out there along Atlanta Road and up around the airport, put in schools and trained them. And not only transformed here, which it did, but its impact was statewide.

SHORT: You mentioned Matt Towery. Matt's been a guest on our program.

CLAY: Yeah.

SHORT: And we talked to him about Insider Advantage. You once were a president of Insider Advantage.

CLAY: Yeah, still am.

SHORT: Still are?

CLAY: Um-hmm.

SHORT: Well, what are you up to nowadays with that company?

CLAY: For me it's more of an investment. It's been a lot of fun. In a day of, for sometimes very good and sometimes not of days where it's hard to actually ever find a character anymore, you know, Matt Towery still falls in the category of a character. If you want to have a fun time, go have lunch with Matt Towery and turn on the recorder and talk politics. You will have a great time, and you'll learn something. A fun, creative mind. And what we really try to do and are still trying to do is match both, you know, serious political reporting a la Dick Pettys. You know who Dick is, but longtime AP writer. He now sort of heads up our Insider Georgia website, daily news update, which everybody goes to. I mean, Dick's the dean of the reporting crowd out there, and he's good at what he does. Very good at what he does. And a little bit of the political when I say insider, taking information that have both been gleaned and learned and sometimes suffered through and get ahead of the curve on asking questions or bringing dots together.

What we don't do, we're not trying to be in this community the blogosphere that's out there that's in the business of tearing people down. We don't get into personal lives, even when those personal lives cross into a public arena. We'll let others do that. We might get criticized for it, but I think we'll let the blogosphere figure out exactly what the rules ought to be out there in terms of people's personal lives and what might occur. But I'm very proud of our product, and we also, Matt really heads up, which is a lot of what we're trying to move to, is the polling side of business. Insider Advantage polling was actually rated on a national firm the third most accurate polling firm in the last presidential cycle elections nationally. We're very proud of that

as a small business here in Atlanta that we were able to get that level of accreditation out there from those in the business. So for me, it's more of an investment. I enjoy it. I spend my time either practicing law or building my lobbying firm, but it's still something that's a part of me, and it's something that I've enjoyed doing.

SHORT: Good.

CLAY: I just wrote an article in the last magazine sort of lobbying when the shelves are bare.

SHORT: That's James...

CLAY: Yes, sir. And I'm glad you said that. We have really the only monthly political magazine, and it was really an afterthought. We did all this daily reporting, and this is Matt and this is where he is creative. He said, well, we need to take some of this, the best of it, and I could very inexpensively, his family had been in the printing business for decades...and put together a very inexpensive product that gives us something three-dimensional that people who like to touch and hold something can go and put their hands on. And our rule was no article could be longer than one trip to the bathroom, and we tried to hold firm to that; and it works.

SHORT: Well, getting back to Republican politics, old line Republicans are fiscal conservatives and disciples of smaller government and less spending. Many believe that the party has gotten away from these basic fundamentals since Ronald Reagan. Do you think that's true?

CLAY: There's some truth. Beauty is always in the eye of the beholder, and politics isn't always a moving, you know, object if you will. It would be easy for me and I think it's true that particularly in Washington there was a sense, and I personally think with a certain amount of truthfulness to it that Republicans got too much focused on being the majority and enjoying the perks of it than they were about being fiscally conservative, holding the line on budgets. Yes, the Bush tax cuts were very helpful and probably did as much as anything to bring out the recession, just as Zell Miller did the same here with redirecting tax cuts in Georgia in '90. I'd give George Bush credit for that. But the congress and the ultimate later conduct in trying to have the traditional guns and butter that doomed LBJ. If you're going to fight a war and it's that important for the security of this country, then explain why it is that we need to sacrifice and go fight the war. I did not understand how you can grow your budgets, grow your domestic budgets, throw money to everything to keep folks on the reservation and people happy and then fight a war that was just hemorrhaging red ink out of this country. And I'm not saying that's not the proper policy; history will judge that. Economically you couldn't stay on those

two tracks, and I think the Republicans paid a high price, combined with some of the controversies that occurred up that coincided. But a lot of good Republicans felt like, and, again, truthfully, they're no different. They really are no different. And there obviously was a time when the Gingrich revolution and folks came in and there was some faces. And it began that sense of intensity and enthusiasm and mission that was dissipated, if not lost, over a period of time. And again, they suffered a high price when Obama and the Democrats just swept them out in this past election cycle.

I don't think you could just lock yourself in stone Democrat or Republican and say "we've got it now and what was good then" -- you know, I'm not talking about the Constitution -- "what was good then is still good now." But you've got to give, you still have to have an anchor, and you still have to have principles. And the principles that got Ronald Reagan in were by and large very inclusive. They were very simple in some respects, not easy to necessarily implement, "but we're going to cut taxes; we're going to win the Cold War, and we're going to cut the owner's burden of government on small business." And repeat it and do it. And if it doesn't meet those tests, then find some other way to do it. Now, what that looks like today may be a little bit different from what it looked like in the '80s and probably should be in some respects. But you're seeing the same thing now with Obama with the incredibly high expectations of his popularity and those of the Democrats, whether it be an expansive healthcare that most Americans right now don't trust. Those are the type of things that make the Democrats look like they're simply appealing to the furthest hardest left of their party as opposed to

mainstream. There goes that 10 or 12 percent, and in another two and a half to three years if that 10 to 12 percent is as disaffected as it is today, you'll see a Republican get elected. I'm not saying they'll necessarily take over the House and the Senate in one term or sweep, but Obama and the difficulty Obama has is he has that albatross of owning all arms of government. I've about decided that the best way to excel is to have divided government.

My phone is always here. Barack has never called me. I'm not holding my breath, but I suspect in a candid moment, if he's having one of his beer summits in the garden, I'm sure he would say "give that House back to the Republicans. If I could just get rid of Pelosi and those crazies from San Francisco. I love to visit there, but the politics is killing me." He'd do it in a minute if he could keep the Senate and then force in the middle where he could get something done.

The same has been a problem here in Georgia. Sonny Perdue, you've got to give him high marks. He was the guy that capitalized on a disaffection, and his timing was right on a shoestring budget, pulled all of that together. The House, the Senate is now all in firm Republican control. And, you know, there could be a discussion as to whether or not that it had been the most legislatively productive because what happens is everybody starts squabbling as to who's most important. And everybody who's a Republican in the General Assembly sees themselves just as important as Sonny. I'm sure every Democrat years ago would see themselves as important as Zell or whoever it might have been. And so you have that tension, where if you have a little bit of a split those folks can stay at each other and let the governance

go on.

So going back to the Republican side, there is angst amongst Republicans. There is tension as to, again, that visceral sort of ideological reaction is to get more pure, and you've got to have that anchor. I'm not saying don't. But if you're getting more pure, it's really basically building walls to young professionals, to African-Americans, to Hispanics, to, you know, women, to, you know, group by group. You've gotten rid of about 35 percent of the vote and boxing yourself in tighter. So angst is not bad; but as I, and again, I'm looking at it through my perspective. It needs to be coupled with outreach and serious outreach because right now the demographic trends are not going in the direction of Republicans, which means you could win, you know, the accidental victories or the confluence of a particular uptick or downtick or things come together; but day in and day out, statistically you're still a minority. The idea is to statistically build what looked like seven or eight years ago is the demographic trend of the Republican way and now has stopped. And that's got to be reversed or the future is, at best, difficult for traditional Republicans. And how you combine the social issues with the fiscal issues, you know, there isn't a perfect answer because people feel passionately about abortion; people feel passionately about their second amendment rights to firearms; people feel passionately about government regulation and taxes. But keeping them all together when your issue in your mind is the single one issue that defines it is not the way to build a party. It doesn't mean you're going to have Nancy Pelosi join or that end of the Democratic party, but you better be able to find comfort so that people who don't agree with you on your key issue but

maybe agree with you on the two-thirds of the others, as Ronald Reagan used to say, "they're a friend, not an enemy." And that's what parties have to be able to be willing to do if they're ultimately going to win.

SHORT: Was it a mistake to go to Iraq?

CLAY: I can't be a judge on that. You know, you get way above my pay grade. I would say I majored in the Middle East at the University of North Carolina enough years ago to now be a windbag. I have always had enormous angst that sending limited troops into an area which I still share today with thousands of years of histories and animosities with the religious overtones is ultimately going to be successful in fundamentally changing that part of the world. I think the hope and the endeavor, if you will, I think that the ideal of what was being achieved was both noble and purposeful, but I do question whether you can fundamentally change a thousand, 2,000, 3,000 years of history with 50,000, 100,000, or 90,000. What are the ways that we can achieve that goal by limiting its purpose, killing the bad guys, but not committing us either to an unending conflict or, even worse, failure because at some point in time Americans will come home. And it had better be in a way, it had better be in a way that the impact is positive, but most importantly that which we were really trying to do, which is eliminate the bad guys and not simply create a -- yeah, you have to create a better platform, but ultimately that's up to the local people. We simply can't oppose it from here.

So, you know, in hindsight would I have liked to see us maybe a little -- would I like to have seen us focus it more on Afghanistan, on building Pakistan's resolve, on truly trying to clear out the mountainous Pakistani-Afghan border, building up the infrastructure in that nation? Yes. But I hope history is going to say that not an America-like Iraq but that a stable government with at least a majority of popular support is taking hold. And if ten years from now that is a government that still exists today, I do think that would be success. Others will have to judge will it be worth the cost and did it truly contain terrorists and religious fanatics. Too early to say.

SHORT: Are we winning the war on terror?

CLAY: I think we're winning it in the sense that we have not been attacked. We are winning it in the sense that a lot of truly evil, evil human beings have been killed and contained. I think in terms of that aspect of it, it has been successful because we've been safe now for going on ten years -- eight, nine years going on ten years.

The other side and, of course, I don't have the answer. And smarter minds and many more try to wrestle with how do you just get rid of this bad guy if another one is just going to pop his head up and have a safe haven? So we've got to find a way that there is some ability to curtail the recruiting of bad evil fanatics, to have stable governments in Pakistan, and encourage more people in the world to both invest money and, quite candidly, blood to ensure that the most

dangerous havens are simply not safe. And so we're well on the way to being able through technology and drones and communications to keep knocking the heads off of snakes, but we haven't quite gotten to a place where the den of snakes is cleared out. And that's going to be a long one. And I don't know that you're ever total victory in the way that we thought of as in World War II with Germany and Japan because the world will remain a dangerous place. But I think we will all have a sense that it is a safer place when it truly is; and for that, I think you have to stay at it. I think you have to stay on it. And even I give Obama, you know, credit. He's committing troops to Afghanistan. He's not doing anything on an unwilling basis, and he's been willing to drop those drones into Pakistan whenever they get a tip. And he's killed and been willing to take the heat for doing so. That's got to continue.

SHORT: I'd like to ask you a two-part question: First of all, how would you assess the George W. Bush Administration; and secondly, who are the shining stars of the Republican Party who might be in line to become President?

CLAY: Gosh, now you're getting way from a national level and perspective. Again, you know, one of the things that historians or even folks like us love to do is race to judgment. You were around long enough to know Harry Truman was run out of town on a broom. And I can remember even as a kid thinking that he was the worst, most corrupt human being ever, incompetent moron ever to occupy the White House. And history has a very strange way.

There's not a President who doesn't run now who doesn't quote Harry Truman as being one of their heroes, not a one, Democrat or Republican.

You know, during the '70s when I was in school, we lost Vietnam. But, you know, I could make a plausible argument that we actually won in Vietnam. Even though the country was united under a communist regime, it was contained. The Soviet Union is gone. If you look at it as part of an overall somewhat connected global struggle, you may have lost the battlefield but you're really winning the war. I mean, Vietnam is more capitalist now than it was in South Vietnam when folks were there. And I'm not saying that that means it's a democracy, but my point is you could make an argument that the price paid in some respects and a historian could look at it and say it's the overall struggle; it was part of a victorious policy.

George Bush. Obviously, if Iraq turns out as being a stable platform and the economy turns itself back around, I think in a very few short years, in a very few short years he will be looked at as having courage of conviction and the willingness to take the heat and stay up late at night when you know you're sending young men and women to death. And anybody who says that a President or a Commander doesn't care are just being idiots, and it's insulting. They do agonize over it. I've seen it firsthand, in my own family; I'm not talking about in the White House. And in terms of a person in his own life I think will get high marks.

I do think the collapse of Republicans and the idea that we can keep everybody happy simply by giving everybody enough to take home the bacon, it will be a weak link and will be his Achilles heel on how it's judged domestically. Iraq will be the defining issue. It's just too

early to tell.

The other one would probably be a C at best, though his tax cuts, the early on tax cuts that we're still benefiting from today will be the other potentially I think very successful. Any economist will tell you they as much as anything helped drag us out of the earlier recession that we had when he was coming into office, not exclusively but deserves credit for that. But I think domestically you're going to see an unraveling of what looked to be Republican domination, a lot of that based upon foreign involvement and the encouragement into Iraq. If that winds up succeeding, I think he'll have a pretty good place. If it doesn't, he'll be mid-level at best.

SHORT: Shining stars?

CLAY: You got your card ready to jump in the fray? Well, gosh, you've got to look out. You know, nationally you're seeing, you know, you've got to give some of the folks that were out there last time. You know, Huckabee certainly appeals strong to the conservative base. This most recent incident with these four officers being killed by an individual that he at some level allowed to be paroled when he was Governor, that's kind of the thing that can just kill you, certainly in a Republican primary. I'm not saying it will, and there's a lot of time.

You've got to look at a Mitt Romney. I do think, you know, while there's not perfection on that, I think at a time and place where the economy is reeling somebody like that has a lot of sort of appeal out there.

In terms of the House and the Senate, it's probably too early to tell. You've got an Eric Cantor up there at Virginia gets who gets very high marks in pulling the Republicans together and capitalizing effectively on the issues that have been given to him, like healthcare and federal spending. You know, Senate. You know, you've got good local leaders like a Mitch McConnell, but probably not sort of Presidential just don't have the pizzazz and personality. And, you know, right now if you look out further I look back more to my own backyard. You know, you have your young guys like a Lynn Westmoreland who got a lot of talent that have been up there for a few years, you know. Jack Kingston still has the potential of being a major player. If you look in the House and the Senate, there's of course, in the House we'll know in a day or two who the leadership might be. But I do know in the Senate, with folks coming up like Chip Rogers, Ronnie Chance, who are very bright, articulate, good message people. Gosh, there's a variety of others that -- Tommy Williams is certainly somebody that has potential.

The tougher part, you know, in my view is not necessarily who are the bright shining stars. The stars will arrive. The problem is, for a variety of reasons, politics is attracting fewer and fewer of the kind of people that you truly want in politics. Successful businessmen and women. Not perfection, not people who have lived a world of casting stones at other people's glass houses, but people who have lived in the real world whose lives are open in public, not perfect but have worked to make their communities better and have succeeded. When you have the vast majority of Congress now peopled by folks that that's the best job they've ever had, we're in a fundamentally different place because it's more about job security than it is political

risk and ideas and willing to lose because you always go back and knew you could succeed in business. It wasn't that long ago that people had their businesses, and you had a long session and a short session. And you came back and tended to the farm or you tended to the store or the shop. And we're not going to go back to that, but it's tougher and tougher. You see more people coming into politics based purely on a single issue, a single passion, sort of activism, that don't really in my view represent the core of any nation, which is the performing citizens. And if we don't do better just attracting the high performers to come in. That doesn't mean that they have all the answers. But if we're not getting the high performers to come into politics, then you do scratch your head at what point in time, this has always been a concern of mine, is at what point in time do they simply become irrelevant to American policy?

And I'm not sitting there intimating for a minute that, you know, there's a Julius Caesar who's going to cross the Potomac like the Rubicon and take control, but Congress is more and more about how many angels dance on the head of a pin while families are out there trying to find a job. And, you know, with support and positive ratings at all times I mean, almost to single-digit lows, if you held an election for Congress only, wouldn't anybody vote. And I really mean that sincerely. If you didn't have a Presidential or a gubernatorial race or back-home county commission or mayor's races and things like that and it was just a vote on Congress, would anybody vote? And I'm afraid the answer might be a little bit surprising. It's not that they're looking for somebody better. A lot of people just don't care. They think they're just buffoons and beyond repair.

Now, everybody always likes their own congressman or their own senator to a certain extent, and that's always true. And I don't mean to be gloom-or-doom, but I would like -- and some of it's the media; some of it's the crawl that the media does of everybody's life. It's the absolute extremists on both sides of the parties. They become shriller and with the blogs and all the talking heads and the radio, left and right, it becomes more ideologue. You know, our system, and I've said this before and I don't want to sound too profound. But if you've driven it down to purely being hardcore however you want to define conservatives versus hardcore liberals, then, you know, you'd have a parliament because that's the English system. And that's a democracy; there's nothing wrong with that. But our system from the very inception was designed to force to the middle. And political parties represented a broad base of constituencies. There was always some gap. And the presidency, the checks and balances were all designed to ensure that these folks at some point in time are going to have to find the middle ground or nothing gets done. We're liable to get in the point where nothing's getting done.

So, you know, people do need to take a look and say "it's real easy if I can run from a district that's 85% -- 70% Republican or 70% Democrat," which is what reapportionment has created now because it's real easy. You can just go to the right or go to the left because the only place you're ever going to get defeated is from the left or the right. And we've created that in so many districts nationally and locally that that same politician who a few years ago would have to go to the union hall out there at the machinist union if you were a Republican, as well as your traditional Republican base, or if you were a Democrat would have to get down there at the most

conservative pro business chamber group and tell them why their tax policies were going to grow businesses. And that forced something in the middle.

But now you see less and less of that. And I do think it's something that we ought to take stock of. I don't know that there's an easy answer, but somehow make public service not necessarily a permanent career path but also make it something that's admired. You know, I had the great joy of looking up to people, and they weren't just elected officials. Some were behind the scenes. Some were on public policy, some on public service. But really giants. And I'm sure they had all their warts and imperfections that we didn't look at then when I was a kid and we didn't study in the books where the text is more about their failings than their successes, but were in my mind and whether they were a Richard Russell or whether they were a Dwight Eisenhower or whether they're my own father or granddad or other you know, Walter George or people like Zell Miller that governed and, you know, Republicans like Paul Coverdell and Johnny Isakson, you know, these are giants, and they would and did succeed at anything they would have and chose to do. And they're role models, and we need to find ways to get back where it is an admirable calling, it is a shining calling, and that you find a way to make it look like you're making change and you don't have to sit there for 30 years simply to draw a paycheck and call that public service. You know, that's a big, fat question more than it's an observation more than it is I guess a conclusion or resolution, but we do need to do something about it.

SHORT: Chuck, I don't want to open the can of worms, but I'd like to get your thoughts on the subject of reapportionment, since we're required to do it every ten years.

CLAY: Well, reapportionment, as we all know, is the single most political process that you can endure. And I've seen sort of what I thought were highs and lows. I had, when I first went to the Senate, and I was sort of at the cusp, sort of at the tail end of what would have been considered by some as the good old days or bad old days and in some of the new computer scrutiny and information that we started having from the mid '90s on. It is an innately political process. It should be. But I think we have gone overboard to a level because of almost information overkill that winds up advocating and leaving that responsibility to courts.

I think the first question is why does the General Assembly do it. They do it because it's the single greatest protection they have for either reelection, resurrection, or political demise. And so it's closely guarded. A couple of states do have neutral or independent panels. And if you ask from a policy want position is that how it ought to be done, absolutely. The chances of politicians giving up their very existence to a neutral objective body in this state at least, probably slim to none in our political lifetime. It's just not going to happen. But I watched reapportionment move from when I was first elected and you're talking about a young guy from Zell Miller being -- Zell was Governor. Pierre just out of the blue plunked me on the reapportionment committee in '90, I guess it was '91 or when you do it for the census in '91, '92, whenever the year is that you actually draw the bills up. And I was within my first term and

living large and learning. At that point in time, we were one of two Republicans on the committee: Tom Phillips, who was the minority leader, was the other one, and myself. And two things that I remember distinctly out of that one: Number one, Culver Kidd sort of was heading it up. And to his credit, he got a big map of Georgia and I was up there in his office with folks and a big map, and they started circling sort of geographic and economic hubs. You know, this is the carpet area; here's the poultry industry, you know, Augusta, metropolitan, coastal, you know, Savannah to Brunswick, agricultural bread basket, you know, Columbus. And then metro Atlanta both in terms of Republican, Democrat, and it struck me they really did -- nobody will believe it. They began the process by trying to identify what should be the areas represented, not who should represent them. And I gave them high marks. Completely different animal for both parties subsequent thereto.

The other thing I learned about reapportionment was how personal it becomes because Tom Phillips, who's a great guy from out in Gwinnett, was certainly angling for a potential. They had to draw a Republican district either in Cobb or Gwinnett in that cycle. And Tom was from Gwinnett and certainly had at least some interest in running for congress, and I was from Cobb. So we had the Cobb-Gwinnett side of things. And Culver and the guys, a couple of Democrats came to me literally, I don't want to exact paraphrase, but they hated Tom Phillips for political reasons, not personally. But they said "we're no more going to give that SOB a chance to have a district than fly to the damn moon. I don't know anything about Cobb County. We need to protect Buddy over there; but other than that, draw a dog-gone district."

Well, you know, being the absolutely reasonable person that I am, amazingly enough it just overlapped my Senate district 100 percent. There was a perfect borderline for Mrs. Clay's idiot son Chuck to even have an opportunity. My pointy of that was sometimes being there, being personal, but also starting from a place with what's best for Georgia all combined for the last what I thought was a quasi objective political map of the state of Georgia. Did the Democrats try to load it in their direction to a certain degree? Yeah. What happened in the interim was suddenly the voter ID drives and the computer information that you could literally go into a office and break down a community and go down to a street and, if you wanted to, identify person by person as to whether they were going to be a Republican or a Democrat. And party wonks, and we've both done it, have basically come up with these plans that say "Chuck Clay who lives in Marietta would rather be represented by a Republican from Bainbridge than a Democrat who lives three doors over, which Buddy Darden did." And I just pick Bainbridge out of the blue, but the idea that party ID was more important to cast my vote than somebody who lived in my own dog-gone community. And what would somebody from Bainbridge know about Lockheed or what would I know if I was the one in, you know, vice-versa about agriculture down in that part of the state of Georgia? And we began that disservice of creating districts that were unified in many respects by nothing more than what was perceived a real party affiliation as opposed to any shared community of interest. And every state has suffered because of it. And we have built super districts wherever we could.

At first, you know, it wound getting there. We had what was called in the next cycle the

black max plan, which allowed -- the underpinnings of it were very profound and probably correct, which is there is no question that African-Americans have been discriminated against at every level, including the ability to simply vote and absolutely run for office. And so there was that historical correction that was taking place. But what happened was, and this is part of the Republican takeover, if you drew up absolutely as many overwhelming African-American districts as you could in Georgia, whatever that number is, 35, 40, 45, 50% African-American. What's the flip side of that coin? It put in Republicans everywhere else. So what used to be moderate conservative swing Democrat areas either became African-American, if there was enough base to build it, or they became Republican. And those ones became almost exclusively 100 percent guaranteed Democrat or 100 percent guaranteed Republican. But I think it splintered a lot of communities of interest in the process to maximize the political imperative. The truth of the matter is the two biggest beneficiaries of reapportionment over the last 20 years in Georgia have been Republicans and African-Americans. The dinosaur that was white moderate or even conservative traditional Democrats vanished from the map of the state of Georgia.

SHORT: Let's get back to Chuck Clay now. Are there any future generals, lawyers, or politicians coming along in the Chuck Clay family?

CLAY: I'm trying to really assure that we move back more to halfwits, bootleggers and

hillbillies, whatever the earlier description was. I was the guy, we were the ones that couldn't get a job at Lockheed.

I've got five kids. It's been an enormous honor and privilege. I'm an old guy. I've got a daughter who's graduating from the University of Georgia almost as we speak with an education degree as a benefit of the Hope Scholarship, a product of Governor Miller. And I can tell my daughter that I cast a vote to create the Hope Scholarship that allowed her, at little or no cost, to attend a superb university. What a wonderful circle that is in terms of both politics, upgrading if you will of our educational institutions, and a member of my own family.

I've got a bunch of smaller kids, and it's too early to tell. I think, you know, there's the smart one, there's the athletic one, there's the Harley-Davidson waiting to happen, and then there's my little daughter. This community has given me a great opportunity. I don't pretend to put anything I've done on a category of some of the folks that we've discussed here both in my family and not. As a historian by background and somebody who loves to discuss and look at these things, I enjoy discussing perspectives because I think it's important and meaningful in something like this. I'm proud to have played a small part of it.

I hope that my kids are as fascinated with or admire public service and public policy as much as, and embody as much of it as I was able to do. You know, I could grow up hearing what it was like to serve on the staff with Douglas McArthur or sit across the table from Joseph Stalin or, you know, discussions about Vietnam and the strictures and the things or organizing Eisenhower's presidential campaign. And I say that not necessarily of importance because

those same things could be said about local leaders, whether it be a mayor or city council, the Ernest Barretts of a community that have made in many respects. Bell may have been the engine, and Ernest Barrett was the messiah that brought Cobb County. These people are giants. If I do one thing I would like to imbue in my five kids sort of that love of community and love of service. And whether, as my dad used to say about West Point, he said "I am never going to ever tell you that I think you ought to go to West Point; I'm never going to do so. If your passion -- if it's not something that drives you on a daily basis, there's somebody right behind you who would give their right arm to be there. But if you do want to go, I'll help you any way I can." I'm never going to tell these kids they ought to either run for office or do this or be lawyers or whatever. What I will say, and it's the cliché and the love of any parent, "be the best you can be, but do know who and what got you where you are." And if you do that, then there will be not only Clays but a lot of other generations of successful political business and community leaders.

SHORT: Well said. Well, Chuck, on behalf of the Duckworth Library at Young Harris College and the Richard B. Russell Library at the University of Georgia, I want to thank you for being our guest.

CLAY: Well, it's a privilege. I hope we didn't scramble history too much, but everybody, as I say, everybody's got a view and it entitled to one. And it's an honor. It's a

privilege, and I hope at some point for those who are really looking at the minutia of politics that if this plays some small role in helping the folks to understand who and what we are, then I'm proud to have been a part of it. And for you and everybody at both schools, Merry Christmas and long and successful lives.

SHORT: Thank you. Thank you.

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**University of Georgia  
Chuck Clay**

**Page**

**3525 Piedmont Road, N.E.  
Eight Piedmont Center, Suite 310  
Atlanta, Georgia 30305  
800-872-6079  
FAX 404-873-0415  
[www.wordzx.com](http://www.wordzx.com)**