

**Peter Banks interviewed by Bob Short 2010 January 29 Athens, GA Reflections on  
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**Reflections on Georgia Politics**  
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**Date of Transcription: DOCPROPERTY "date" February 26, 2010**

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 for Political Research and Studies at the University of Georgia.

Our guest is Peter Banks, former State Senator and current Mayor of the city of Barnesville, Georgia. Welcome, Peter.

PETER BANKS: Thank you.

SHORT: And thank you for being here.

BANKS: Well, I'm delighted to be here and I was excited about the opportunity to be here, so thank you very much.

SHORT: Barnesville, Georgia.

BANKS: I was born in 1938 on August the 12<sup>th</sup> and it was the day after President Roosevelt had come to Barnesville to switch on the REA power, and the only significant thing about that time, and kind of a funny thing, my mother of course was in labor with me and one of the distinguished democrats in Barnesville, Georgia was Dr. John A. Carey. Dr. Carey was a great friend of my grandfather's, and of course my mother, and he had told my mother, and he was going to sit on the platform with the President that day down at the football field, and he told my mother when he came to visit her he said "Kitty" -- her name was Katherine, they called her Kitty -- he said "if that baby comes during President Roosevelt's speech you're going to have to have it without me." And of course she didn't, but Dr. Carey wasn't going to miss the opportunity to sit on the platform with the President.

As I grew up in Barnesville it was what I would call the idyllic years. While we were at war in the '40s, it was still an idyllic time at home. People were not excited about the war, but of course they were deeply engaged in learning and hearing about the war and everybody supported it because they were fighting for our freedom and so on. And so it was a time when neighbors sat on the front porches and talked in the evening. In the summer the kids on my street would come and we'd catch lightning bugs or shoot fireworks or play ball in the late afternoon or something, and it was just an idyllic time, a wonderful, sweet time.

On Saturdays as I got older we would play softball or baseball at the field. Summers field is just a few hundred yards from where my home was on Stafford Avenue. And nobody had to call anybody. We just met there on Saturday morning and started playing baseball blacks and white. It was just a fun, sweet time.

The other activities were of course centered around school. We would play marbles at recess or dodge ball or sometimes later baseball I guess, and the thing I remember about the marbles was that some of the bigger boys always wanted to play for keeps. And so they'd draw a ring in the dirt outside school at recess and then the bigger boys of course could shoot the marble harder than we could, and so I lost a lot of marbles in those days.

And so the 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th grade were all the same pretty much about that time. I remember practicing hiding under the table when we were hiding under our desk when they gave us the Atom bomb threat or something like that, but and I can remember some people building those bomb shelters in their backyard, which was a serious thing in the '40s and '50s,

particularly the '50s I guess.

And then I was looking forward to going to Gordon Military High School and College. They had -- it was seven years there. We started in the eighth grade and the boys wore uniforms starting in the eighth grade. Didn't take ROTC until they were a junior in high school, but if you wanted to you could go two years to junior college there as well, and I did.

I remember thinking I had it pretty well made when I put my uniform on, you know, in the eighth grade that was a lot of fun. And you were pretty serious about it. You weren't that well coordinated to do anything, but it was still a fun time. And it was great training.

Girls in Barnesville went to Gordon as well, the girls that were in the city they didn't have to take military but they went to school there and it was a peculiar, I guess you'd call it peculiar, situation. The Board of Education, the city, had an independent school system and they didn't have a building except what we call the grammar school, and but they let the high school students go to Gordon, and the city paid Gordon to teach their young people from eighth grade to being a senior. And that was an interesting concept I thought.

It later changed of course when they merged with the city public system merged with the county public system, but children within the city limits of Barnesville would go to Gordon if they wanted to. If they didn't, they'd go to the county schools. But I wanted to go there and most of my friends and neighbors all went there. And we had chapel every Wednesday. We had drill and at one time it started in the morning, then later they changed it to the afternoon.

I remember a lot of fun things about being over there. Of course naturally as a young

boy I tried to be a good boy and sometimes the Devil just overtook me, you know, and so I would have to walk what they call the bull ring. That means you had an M1 rifle that you had to walk around in a ring around the school for an hour depending on the severity of the infraction, but if you didn't shine your shoes or if your uniform brass was not clean, and mine, I tried but I didn't always make it, so I'd have to walk the bull ring.

But about the time that I became 15 as a sophomore in high school I straightened up and became really interested in the military. You took -- if you went to college you would have the first two years would be more like a junior ROTC program, and then the last two years would be a senior ROTC program.

SHORT: Did you ever think about a military career?

BANKS: Funny story about that, but the answer is yes I did. Let me go on with this and then I'll tell you about it in just a few minutes. So I was getting into the military program pretty good, and then when I was a junior in high school I took the first two years of ROTC, and then I also joined when I was 17 years old I joined the Army Reserves because I knew I wanted to go to college. My parents knew I was going or better go, and so I told them I was going to join the Reserves and get some Reserve time in so that when I finally got through with my obligation I could get right into the business I wanted to go in.

So anyway, I went on and I graduated in 1956 from high school. And at that time three

or four of my good friends and I that were in the Reserves had signed up to the six months program at that time where you went six months active duty and then seven and a half years in the Reserves. But somehow they changed the regulation a little bit. Instead of going after you finished college, which is what we had hoped, they said if you graduate high school before you're 18 then you have to go ahead after high school and go in the active duty thing. So that was okay. As soon as I graduated 10 days after I graduated high school we all left to go to Fort Jackson, and the military training that we had helped in basic training, it really did. So we were there for six months at Fort Jackson. And then by that time we had already missed three months of a quarter at Gordon to come back to college, and I decided I wanted to do that. Of course my girlfriend was there too and I wanted to be closer to her.

So I came back to Gordon and at night I would go to the veteran school in the summer to pick up the three months or the quarter that I had missed so that I could graduate the following year. Well military was very popular in those days, as you know, and I was into it very deeply and I was appointed the battle group commander at Gordon which was the first time we ever had a battle group. It used to be a battalion, but then the pentomic Army changed that in the '50s, so I became the battle group commander.

And that gave me another one ups I guess in going to the Army and that's when I got my idea about the service. I still had to serve in the Reserves for a long time and I, of course, I did. But the next thing in my career was to go after I finished two years at Gordon I wanted to go to the University of Georgia, and so I came in that summer of 1958 as a junior in the summer

school, and then I went ahead on my junior year, and then they had a six year program at the University of Georgia for law school. So I decided that or thought at least that I would enter law school when I became a senior at the university and, therefore, give me a little break on getting into practice quicker.

I also wanted to -- I had taken ROTC and it transferred to the University of Georgia because I could get a commission from ROTC the year I graduated from college, so that would be one more year. In the interim I had to go to Fort Benning for six weeks of training there before I got my commission. And I did well in the activities over there and I can't remember exactly but I was either in the 3rd or the 4th somewhere, I was in the top five of the guys that finished military and they had offered me a regular Army commission. Well I wanted to get married, but our parents had said that they didn't want us to marry until particularly my wife had finished college. If I went to law school that was okay, but they wanted her to finish college.

But one weekend I came back home right after graduation from Fort Benning and I told my daddy who was wonderful, wonderful, generous, loving guy, and but he could be very abrupt with you occasionally, and I wanted to get him in a good mood because he wanted me to go to law school and I came and sat on the front porch with him one afternoon and I said "Dad, you know, I did pretty good over at Fort Benning and they have offered me if I would consider accepting it a regular Army commission. And Army life is not bad. They have free hospitalization and pay is not too bad and Jan and I could go ahead and get married." And I said "What do you think about that?" He said "And not go to law school?" And I had been accepted



to law school, and I said "Well I wouldn't do that if I went in the Army as an infantry officer." And he said "Well that's the silliest damn thing I ever heard of." So that ended my military career right there. So anyway I didn't know if I really wanted to do it or not but I knew after that.

So I came on back to law school and started my first year in law school. Congressman Flint, Jack Flint from Griffin, had been in the Congress for a number of years, was a good friend of my families and had visited with us and me with him and when I was battle group commander had come to Gordon to take a review of the troops. And so we reacquainted ourselves and I was having dinner one night with -- he had been invited to somebody's house in Barnesville and they had invited me over, and he said "Peter, you'll finish law school this Spring, won't you?" And I said "Well I'll finish my first year in law school." And he said "Do you have any summer plans?" And I said "No, not really. I may go ahead and go on through summer school at the law school." And he said "You ever thought about coming to Washington? You could go to George Washington where I went to school." And I said "No I really haven't because I want to practice in Georgia, I want to go to Georgia law school."

And he said "Well that's a good idea, but what I have in mind for you if you want, if you're interested in doing this, is coming up there and being a legislative intern for me and maybe additional responsibilities. And if you were interested in going to school at George Washington you could take a few courses there at night and transfer them back to Georgia." And I said "Well let me think about it. It sounds like a great time." And so I talked to my

parents and my girlfriend and ultimately I said I think it's a good idea and my parents, my dad particularly, agreed.

So at the end of my first year in law school I went to Washington, drove up with him from Athens, in my car. I had to have a car so we drove up together and I started working up there the next day.

I lived with Jack at his house out in Falls Church, Virginia, and Congressman Flint was one he had been there. He was a very articulate spokesman. He had been District Attorney, President of the Georgia Bar Association, and just a great guy and had children of his own. They were younger than me, but he was a great parent and a wonderful husband to Patty. And so I stayed -- they had a private room there in their home in the basement and that's where I lived and I could ride together with him everyday.

This first or second day that I was there, Bob, Jack took me around to meet his friends. He took me to the Georgia delegation, and at that time Georgia probably had one of the strongest delegations of any delegation in the country. You had people like Paul Brown from Elberton. You had Carl Vinson. You had Prince Preston. You had J.L. Pilcher, Tick Forrester, James Davis from Stone Mountain. Just a great bunch of people who were very well respected up there. They were all pretty conservative. Trying to think of his name and I can't right now from Dalton, but I knew him and Jack took me - -

SHORT: Erwin Mitchell?

BANKS: Erwin Mitchell. And he was a little more liberal I think than the other part of the delegation but he was nice and always nice to me. And Phil Landrum of course was there, and it was again just a great, great delegation.

SHORT: Very powerful.

BANKS: Very powerful delegation, absolutely.

SHORT: Lots of seniority.

BANKS: Lots of seniority and they had a lot of respect, and as you can probably recall that the southern democrats and the republicans came together a lot of times to defeat or to help some of their more liberal legislators. But anyway it was a pretty good coalition.

Eisenhower was a republican and he was President when I came, and then John Kennedy was the democratic nominee against Nixon in 1960. I met all of those incidentally who -- and everybody seemed to be more collegial in those days. The northern states, which had some of the more liberal members, also had conservative members and everybody just seemed to be again more collegial. They worked together. They had a lot of respect for each other and nobody was always slamming somebody over the head where one says it's raining and the other

says it's sun shining. You just didn't see that in those days to a large extent.

During the campaign with Kennedy and Nixon, Jack had supported, he and J.L. Pilcher I believe were the only two in the congressional delegation to support President Kennedy. The others were supporting, you know, different people in the general election. Everybody I think supported Lyndon Johnson in the primary. But in the general election Jack, and I believe J.L. Pilcher, Griffin Bell, of course, who was not in the legislative group. He was a fine judge as I recall or he was just well known in the state as a democrat. So he and Jack and J.L. Pilcher supported President Kennedy.

That in itself created a lot of help if you want to call it for the congressional staff. Bobby Troutman -- I don't know if you remember Bobby Troutman, but he had been a roommate of John Kennedy's at Harvard, and Bobby was a frequent visitor to our office, and because he and Jack genuinely liked each other, but Bobby and I would have dinner in the evening and he would tell me who was going to be what in the Kennedy administration. I got to meet the President. I got to meet Bobby Kennedy and I probably knew Bobby better than I knew the President. I mean he wouldn't have known me, but I knew Bobby and he did know me.

So those were exciting times. In the evening I wasn't married. I was a single guy, but still committed to the girl I was going to marry and we were actually engaged, but we had a lot of fun on the weekends. The staff all lived in the outskirts in Virginia and we got together almost every weekend to do something. Bo Ginn by that time had come up with Elliot Hagan as

his administrative assistant. Phil Landrum was there and Ed Jenkins was his administrative assistant. John Ellis was J.L. Pilcher's administrative assistant. And so we all got together and just had a good time.

Joe Sports was Ms. Iris Blich's administrative assistant, and so Bo and Joe and I particularly would get together on the weekends and I wasn't married so they would come to my apartment, but they'd bring their kids with them and it was really a good, sweet time. And so we had a lot of fun during those times.

SHORT: What were your duties in Flint's office?

BANKS: Good question. Well Jack was very concerned about his constituents. He wanted to make sure if a letter came into the office, that it didn't wait a day before whoever wrote it got a response from us whether it was saying something about a piece of legislation or asking for help in Social Security or other matters, and we did that. So we made sure that we got our letters out and he got a lot a lot of letters. We didn't have but about five people on the staff at that time. Frank Lindsey, who later became the Executive Vice President of the Georgia bankers was there for a little while while I was with Jack, and the bankers hired Frank actually probably about a month or so before I got there, although I worked with Frank for a number of months before he actually left to go to the bankers.

In those days Congress would adjourn usually before Labor Day and then the

Congressman would have an opportunity to come back to their district to politic or to meet people and make a lot of speeches and so on, and then they'd come back in January. In the summer I would come to Griffin with Jack and I would do things like ride around with him or, you know, drive him somewhere to make a speech, but I got to meet a lot of the people that were close to Jack in all of the Congressional district and Jack and I were very close and it was just a wonderful time to be there. I learned so many things from him and met so many people.

**SHORT:** He was a mentor.

**BANKS:** He was. Absolutely he was. And in the summertime I would be back home where I could see my parents and girlfriend as well. In the fall was kind of a more of a fun time for us. We had two secretaries and me that stayed up there and sometimes it was just one secretary and me that stayed up there to do the constituent services at the regulatory agencies or something, and so it wasn't really hard work during those times, and I could do a lot things.

I would take constituents if they came up there in the summer or the fall with their kids I'd take them to Mt. Vernon to the sites around and I had a congressional staff tag on my car so we could park and get them right up there. And sometimes if people came that expected Jack to take them out to lunch, you know, if he couldn't, I would. So if he didn't want to he would put it over onto me, but that was fun again for me as well. And I met a lot of characters.

BOB SHORT: Were you going to George Washington during that period?

BANKS: Yes. That's a good question. I went, but honestly I didn't really study. It just got too hard. My responsibilities at the Capitol were different than, you know, somebody who's going to work from 9:00 to 5:00 or 8:00 to 4:00 or something like that. I had nighttime responsibilities sometimes to be with my member, and so regardless I finally told them I had two courses. I had real estate law and corporate law, and Georgia's peculiar about their real estate and we have some peculiarities in Georgia law about real estate and while they had wonderful teachers and I learned a lot about it, Georgia still had specific rules that it wouldn't really help me when I got back to Georgia.

Corporate law was real good and interesting and I guess I could have transferred that back, but I did not. I asked them to let me withdraw because just too many things going on. That disappointed my father but I told him I didn't know, you know, how long I'd be up there and I could catch up because I still wanted to finish law school.

In the meantime the next Spring my wife had finished college and we had told our parents that we would wait to get married until after she graduated from college, and we did. She graduated toward the end of March and our wedding was in April, April the 8<sup>th</sup>. And she was going to work for Bob - -

SHORT: Stephens.

BANKS: Bob Stephens, yeah. So anyway we came up there. We went on our honeymoon to Sea Island for a few days. And I remember getting down there, Bob, and it was a beautiful place at that time and I don't think they took credit cards and I don't know how much cash I had. It probably wasn't enough, but anyway we got down there and stayed a few days and as we were checking out I had went to the checkout counter and they told me how much my bill was and I reached in my pocket and whatever the bill was I had almost the exact change, and when I got through I had probably 35 cents and we had to get back home but I had filled up the car with gas so I could get back home and it wasn't expensive in those days.

And while we were there though, before I finish that, I had written Jack, I sent him a telegram and I said "Jack, it's wonderful at Sea Island and I think I'd like to stay a few more days." And he sent me a telegram back and he said "It's great everywhere." He said "Come on back to Washington." So anyway we came on back and I think we had 35 cents in our pocket, and we started traveling and I got hungry, you know, and we bought a pack of cheese crackers I think and maybe a Coke. I don't know how much they were that day, but whatever, we made it back home and I was starving and so was my wife when we came back home to see our parents. And we spent one night there and then left to go to Washington the next day with all of her belongings. And so -- clothes primarily. And so we came back to my apartment there.

SHORT: You finally came back to Georgia and finished law school.



BANKS: I did. Story about that. I'm going to say that April, May, June, July, some time in the summer we learned that Jan was pregnant and the doctor there at the whoever she went to see in D.C. was -- they were great, wonderful people, and she had O- blood and I had O+ blood and in those days that RH factor was -- it wasn't a killer necessarily but it caused a lot of concern. If the the babies had O- then they would have to do a transfusion as soon as they were born. And she was going to have twins we learned. And about that time her mom and my mom said "Guys, you know, we'd just feel better if you all came on home and go to the doctor in Athens." Because Bob had recommended somebody for her in Athens. And so we said "Okay, well let us finish up up here and get our things together."

And I could go into law school there at -- I can't remember if I went that summer because I believe it was in the fall that I was going to start law school. So close to the end of the summer we moved back to Athens and I started law school again with a different class. I had just missed one year of law school.

So we ultimately in February I think -- February the 10<sup>th</sup> -- had the twins and we lived in Myrna Court Apartments where a lot of our other good friends lived at that time. We had a two bedroom apartment I think there, and that got kind of small with children, and twins particularly, but our parents gave us some help, let a nurse stay with us because twins in those days were -- I mean it was just hard. You had to sterilize the bottles and we had cloth diapers and we had to wash them and we washed a lot, and of course I wasn't making any money.

My wife still worked for Bob. He let her work at the district office. So she had that income, but it wasn't much because she was just part-time. So I worked as the night manager at the Key to America Motel in Athens and also worked in the law school library in the afternoons. And I would come home and all I wanted to do was sleep, you know, but I helped with the babies as I could, but again our parents were kind enough to give us some help and they gave me a car, station wagon, so we, you know, we weren't in dire straits. It was just we all felt like we wanted to contribute something to the family and I did too.

SHORT: After that you opened your practice didn't you in Barnesville?

BANKS: No. When I graduated from law school, I don't know if I mentioned it this time or not, but I never wanted to really practice law. I thought I did but I didn't. I had met a lot of people, good people in Washington about who were government affairs people, and I liked them, I respected them, I knew what they did and I said "That's kind of what I think I'd like to do."

I met people like Jasper Dorsey who represented Southern Bell at the time. I remember people like Abbott Massey, Dan Grant, just again all sorts of people. John Lastinger from Georgia Power. And I just respected them so much and I liked them a lot and I got to know them and know their families, and so I decided that's what I wanted to do. So when the law school came out with their brochure about the law students who would graduate, instead of

saying I wanted to be in a corporate practice or I wanted to be interested in real estate, that sort of thing, I said I wanted to be a government relations liaison.

And most of the law firms didn't care about that, so I wouldn't be interviewed when they came along, and most of the companies like Georgia Power they hire people from the inside and promote them from the inside to be their government affairs people because they know something about the company.

But so John Lastinger had told me that and he said but at the time he was President of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce and Walter Cates was the Executive Vice President, and he said "Peter, I've got a good friend, Walter Cates with the Georgia Chamber of Commerce and they probably I think are looking for somebody." And he said "I'm going to have Walter call you and come over here and talk to you." And I said "Fine."

And I was about to graduate and Walter came over one afternoon. We met at the Continuing Ed building and in fact he was here for Georgia Chamber Executives meeting and he said "I'm going to be at the Continuing Education building and meet me for coffee in the afternoon or something." And so we did and we liked each other instantly. Walter Cates was a great guy and very easy to talk to, and I hope I impressed him.

And so a few days later he called me and said if I were interested then he had a spot for me and it would be in industrial affairs and in governmental affairs. Glenn Anthony was their Governmental Affairs Director at the Chamber and had a wonderful reputation. And Penn Worden was their Industrial Manager. And so he said "You'll be working with both of those

guys."

And so I took the job and we moved to Atlanta. Bought our first house in Sandy Springs. Paid \$23,500.00 for it I think and my monthly mortgage was about \$250.00 I believe. So it was a great time, and Walter paid a lot better than some of the law firms at the time. So it was just another good time.

And that job happened to be probably the perfect job for a young man or a young woman for that matter, but for a young man, it was just me, it couldn't have been any better. I was getting to meet the some of the top echelon in the state. I knew the industrial developers. I knew the legislators. And Walter called me in one day and he said "Now Peter, we're going to lose one of our men in South Georgia." They had two representatives." The fault line basically separated the two territories, and the boy that's in North Georgia now wants to go to South Georgia, and we need somebody to represent us in North Georgia."

It was a traveling job, but they'd give me a car and I didn't have to come in the office but one day a week. I'd have to write reports and so on, but he wanted me to contact the Chamber members, the legislators and people that we call "bell ringers" who were the governmental affairs people in that community that we would contact and in turn they would contact their legislator on different issues. It had to be, again, the best job in the world. You met with the top echelon in each community. It was good pay. I didn't have to buy gas. I didn't have to make car payments. It was just again a wonderful opportunity.

Walter sat me down one day and he said "Peter, said this probably is the best job for a

young man in this state." And he said "You're going to be in the spotlight and people are going to come and talk to you about going to work because you're bright and so on." And he said "But I'd like for you to stay on here at least another year and get to know some of these people and really use that knowledge when you decide whatever you really want to do." And I said "Well that's great, Walter, and good advice." And I did.

Sure enough on one of the legislative forums, a good friend -- became a good friend, George Folsom was with Atlanta Gas Light Company, and George asked me -- he and Jimmy Moats asked me if I'd be interested in coming with the Atlanta Gas Light Company both to do some legal work and give me a chance to actually either do legal work or to have some contact with the law because George was Corporate Secretary and that was the legal arm and the lobbying arm of Atlanta Gas Light Company.

So I decided to take it after a couple of years with the Chamber. So in 1965 I went to work with Atlanta Gas Light Company and I was of course low on the totem pole even among the lobbyists at the General Assembly, but they, you know, I got to know a lot of them. George was, you know, generous with his time and the friends he had become my friends. So I stayed there and did that work for seven years.

Some time in the early '60s I guess somewhere around -- well I guess it was in the late '60s that I began to think about my hometown. I had asked George and Bill Lee, who was the President of the company at the time, if they would mind if I took my car to Barnesville and commuted from Barnesville to Atlanta because I wanted to build a home on some property my

father-in-law and I owned and we wanted to, you know, have two homes in what I thought was a beautiful lot in Barnesville.

And they let me do it. And I had the company car that I could use and it didn't take but in those days about an hour to get from Barnesville to Atlanta or less, and so I could leave there at 7:30 and be at work at 8:30 very regularly. And so that's what I did and I did that for, oh gosh I can't remember exactly the number of years but I became involved in local issues.

I've always been civic minded and my father was and my grandfather were. Dad was in the House. My grandfather had been a county commissioner. My daddy had served on the City Board of Education and he was Chairman of County Commissioners and things like that. So politics I had been around most of my life. The Talmadges, the Flints, the Griffins they were all, you know, good friends of my family. And so I didn't think about running for office, but I wanted to be civically involved, and so I was President of the Jaycees, I was in the Rotary Club, the Planning Commission. I was President of the Chamber of Commerce and things like that.

And so Bethel Salter was from Thomaston and Bethel had gotten into some political trouble over the dam over there on the Flint. He had just gotten into some trouble and he was sort of a cantankerous old guy anyway, and so people from over there had asked me if I would be interested in running. And we had seven counties in the 17th district at that time, and I knew people in most of those counties thanks again to the Chamber and to my father and to the fact that I had lived around there most of my life. And so Bethel decided he wasn't going to run and it was an open seat after a lot of us qualified he decided he wasn't going to do it, and it was about

nine people entered that race.

In those days it didn't cost very much to make a senate campaign. We didn't have any television in our area that you would want to advertise on. We had radios, but radios had pretty moderate rates and the newspapers in each town had pretty moderate rates. A lot of people in my community thought that would be a good idea if I ran and they were kind enough to make some contributions, and I had a little money and so I put what I could in the race and I think that race totally cost me less than \$3,500.00. Today that same race would cost you \$700,000.00 I imagine.

But regardless, we had a big campaign and I genuinely loved campaigning. One, I love people and I think that shows when you talk to people and it was fun to me. I enjoyed campaigning more than I enjoyed serving. No, I'm kidding, but I think we ran a good campaign. I was young. Some of the other people were old and I think about that time the Watergate thing hit and people were just a little fed up with government and a young fresh face apparently sat well with them.

And out of the eight or nine people as I recall -- I think it was that many, it may not have been, but I came out with 48 something percent of the vote, and my friend Love Mallory in Upson County who's a good man and he was a former legislator too, but I had beat him and he got about -- something. I didn't have quite enough to take me over him so we were going on a runoff and I started running the very next day after the primary results were in, and my good friend Leon Smith who published the newspaper over there called me that day and he said "Well

you surprised a lot of us and he said if you'll just not say anything until later on this afternoon, I'm going to call you back and I may have some news for you."

And so sure enough that afternoon at my law office Leon called and said that Love had said he didn't want to make the runoff and that he would concede. And so I was then the Senator-elect.

SHORT: Of the 17<sup>th</sup> district.

BANKS: From the 17<sup>th</sup> district.

SHORT: 1974.

BANKS: 1974.

SHORT: Very historical year in Georgia politics.

BANKS: It really was because of the number of people that had up -- I mean the senate just did a fruit basket turnover a third of the senate.

SHORT: Reapportionment.



BANKS: And reapportionment. That's exactly right.

SHORT: And that's the year that George Busbee defeated Lester Maddox.

BANKS: He did. Absolutely.

SHORT: And that was the year that Zell Miller was elected.

BANKS: Right. Zell was elected - -

SHORT: For the first time.

BANKS: And George. George was elected - -

SHORT: Lieutenant Governor.

BANKS: Governor and Zell was elected Lieutenant Governor. And the senate had about -- I can't remember, 20 or 30 something new members. Freshman.

SHORT: So Peter, let's go back for a minute to the Georgia delegation while you were working with Congressman Flint in Washington. We didn't mention our powerful United States Senators.

BANKS: They were powerful. That's exactly right. Senator Talmadge on Agriculture and later Finance, and Senator Russell, Armed Services. He and Eisenhower and Kennedy and Johnson they all honestly relied on Senator Russell to advise them. Didn't always listen to him, and they didn't listen to him on civil rights issues, things like that, but on military issues I guarantee, and on a lot of policy issues, they listened to Senator Russell.

I knew him of course and was introduced to him. His grand-niece was a friend of mine in college. That was Bob Russell's daughter as a matter of fact, and she and I were good friends in college, and it was Ernie Vandiver's wife's I guess her sister. And we were good friends, younger sister.

SHORT: What was the relationship between Senator Russell say and Congressman Flint?

BANKS: I don't remember him saying Congressman Flint. I think he called him Jack. And I think most of the people used first names. Now Mr. Paul for Paul Brown or Mr. Carl or Uncle Carl, Mr. Carl or I think was probably their names, but then I think he and Herman called

Herman, Herman and I think he called Senator Russell, Dick. I believe that's the way their relationship was. And Elliott they usually called him by first name. Of course he and Bob Stephens were good friends, John Davis were good friends, Phil Landrum and Hagan. So they all knew each other very well as a matter of fact. J.L. Pilcher, Tick Forrester who was a fantastic little guy and a great speaker. He was shorter than I am. Bob, he might have been 5', I don't know, but he could give one powerful speech in the floor.

I used to love to go over there to the Chamber and a lot of times Jack would want me to be over there because in case he had to do something or send something back to the office we didn't have texts or cell phones so he would put his finger up and look up to me and I'd come down to meet him and he'd tell me what he wanted done. But anyway, I would spend hours listening to these guys debate. James Davis was a fantastic speaker, but Tick Forrester could get down to the lick lock. He could just absolutely do it. John Davis was a good speaker. Ms. Blitch was a good speaker. And they had to be, you know. It's not like stumbling around somewhere. When you get in that league then you got to be a good speaker and articulate. So I used to love to hear them do that.

Lyndon Johnson was one that I used to if I could slip off and get over to the senate I wanted to see Lyndon Johnson as Majority Leader, and I watched him work the floor. I watched him -- I could tell he was cajoling. I'm sitting in the gallery of course, but I could watch him cajole people. I could see him intimidate people. And I just love watching them work.

SHORT: You mentioned to me one time an incident with Congressman Flint that had to do with President Kennedy and the Rules Committee.

BANKS: I did.

SHORT: Would you tell me about that again?

BANKS: Right after President Kennedy was elected, he was having difficulty getting any legislation of national importance passed through the House Rules Committee. The Chairman was from Virginia. I'm trying to think of his name, Bob, and I think it was Smith. But anyway, he was a very conservative guy and held great power over the House Committee on Rules and the Rules Committee, as you recall, is where the legislation gets to the floor. If it doesn't pass out of the Rules Committee it's not considered on the floor. And no one wanted to do one of these discharge petitions and things like that because one, they're hard to do, and it just bypasses the committee system.

So anyway, about that time Jack Flint had the seniority and there was a prized seat on the House Appropriations Committee that Jack wanted and the delegation wanted Jack to get. And so one afternoon I was seated at my desk and Jack came by there and he said "Speaker Raybun just called me." He said "You want to walk over there with me?" And I said "Yes, sir." So we

go over to Speaker Raybun, the two of us, and when we walk in we, you know, we speak to the Speaker of course and he says "You remember Pete?" Anyway, he said "Jack I need to talk to you privately," and Jack said "Sure."

SHORT: This was the Speaker?

BANKS: This was the Speaker. He said Jack "I need to talk to you privately." And so I sit in the outer office there while Jack and Speaker Raybun, and it must have been a half hour and Jack comes out and he didn't look at me hardly, he didn't say anything, and I get up and we start walking back to the office, and on the way over there he said "He offered me the Appropriations slot." And I said "Man that is wonderful. I'm glad to hear it." He said "Not without cost." And I said "What does he want?" And he said "He said, 'Jack, I know you've got a good relationship and actually have some influence over Elliott Hagen, Bob Stephens, and John Davis,' and he said "I want you to get on my team and I want you to bring Hagen, Stephens and Davis along." And I said "What did you say?" And he said "I told him no." And I shook my head, you know, "That's your choice."

And he said "I want to tell you something." He said "If you don't learn another thing while you're in my office," he said "I want you to learn this." He said "If you ever sell your soul one time it is sold forever," and that's a lesson that I remembered to this day. And I hadn't thought about it in years until you asked about it.

SHORT: So now it's 1975. You're a member of the Georgia Senate. You took your seat in the Senate Chambers alongside Norwood Pearce on your left and Ed Barker on your right. What was your first impression of the Senate and your colleagues?

BANKS: Zell Miller had done me two favors. And I knew Zell, but I didn't know him well at all when -- in fact really probably hadn't met him formally. When I was elected I supported him, and I was happy to do that, but I just didn't know him. And I was running my own race too so I couldn't be involved in anybody's race.

But before the session when you go up and ask people about the committees you want to be on, I asked the Lieutenant Governor about the committees you want to be on. I told him that I was a director in a bank in my hometown and I did not want to serve on a banking committee, and that would be a normal place for me to go and I knew some of my friends in the banking industry wanted me to be there, but I said "I don't want to be there. I'm a lawyer. I got to serve on the judiciary committee I know and I'll be glad to do that," so I put that as my second choice. And I said "As a young man," and we've got a lot of freshman in here, I said "I'd like to be on the Appropriations Committee." You know nobody gets on the Appropriations Committee, I said "But that's what I'd like." And I figured if I didn't ask him I couldn't get it anyway. Well he said "Those are three good committees" and I had some good reasons I think to be where I was supposed to be. Oh and higher education. I wanted to be on higher

education because of Gordon College, which had now become a unit of the University system in Barnesville in 1972.

But I said those are the three that I'd like to have, and I left and I saw Al Holloway over at the Institute for Legislators. I can't remember, Bob, I believe that was before we actually had the session, but Al came up to me and he said "Listen I got your committees here and I want to talk to you about them." He said "We didn't put you on the Banking Committee and you have to be on the Judiciary Committee. Got you on Higher Education," he said "but I can't get you on Appropriations. That's just, you know, just not going to have one. And there may be one from one of the metro counties" and I think it was Bud Stumbaugh that they put on there because he was from Decatur and a bigger community.

But anyway, I said "I understood" and he said "But your third one is on Consumer Affairs" and he said "That's going to be an important committee for Zell and for the business community," and he said "you ought to serve on that," and I said "Fine I will." So that all happened. And I mean I didn't think I was going to get Appropriations but I wanted it and so everything after that was fine.

Then about the time right before the session Zell had said that he wanted to restructure the Senate. He wanted to have a committee on committees where the Lieutenant Governor didn't have sole responsibility. The Majority Leader I think and the President Pro Tem of the Senate or something would have that. And he said "I want to have everybody going on record on final votes for passage." And he gave us a number of things that he wanted done and they

were all really good suggestions and things that were good for the public and they were good for the process. A lot of people would lose some power that way, but the Lieutenant Governor was giving up some power.

And he put me on that committee. I was the only freshman on that committee. It was me. It was Paul Coverdell who was a republican and a good friend. Hamilton McWhorter. To save my life I can't remember, Bob, who the others were, but I know I was the only freshman on that committee, and that was an honor for me. And we came up with the rules that actually restructured the Senate.

Well the first vote that we were going -- the day I was sworn in and with my parents and folks sitting up in the gallery the first vote that we had was to pass that rule -- the rules that we had offered. And my name is Banks and so I came about the second vote on the Board. And so I knew I was going to vote for him. Wasn't any question about I would vote for him and I thought everybody would vote for him.

Well Hugh Carter from Plains who became a dear, dear friend of mine and was a wonderful legislator and the cousin of Jimmy Carter, who was President, got up and said in his inimitable way he said "I don't disagree with any of the rules except one," and it was one of the keystones of Zell's proposal, and he said "it's about the Rules Committee." And he said "I'm just opposed to that because I think it's something" or something or something, gave a brilliant speech. Made me think about it. And I said "God bless America. There's mom and daddy up there, you know, and my wife and children and here I am going to make a big vote on the first



day of the session." And so I was the first or second guy on the list. Don Ballard I think was first and then it was me. And so I knew that the other freshmen were going to look toward me. And Hugh had made a good argument. I thought he made an articulate and a coaching argument, frankly. And then I said "I helped write these rules and I believe in my Lieutenant Governor." And so I just made up my mind that I was going to vote no on Hugh's thing and I knew I'd feel like a fool if everybody else voted for it, you know, and I voted no.

But anyway the machine wasn't working and so they had to call you by name, and so Hamilton said "Ballard," Ballard said "Aye", and he said "Banks," and I said "No" about as loud as I could say it. So finally it started going on down the row and they did not pass Hugh's amendment and everything else worked out good, but I'll remember the sinking feeling I got when he stood up there.

SHORT: Peter, was that the time when Zell Miller decided that he wanted to open up conference committee - -

BANKS: Yes.

SHORT: -- hearings?

BANKS: Yes. He said - -

SHORT: Was that not his first real battle with Speaker Murphy?

BANKS: Absolutely. But we never did that, as I recall. I don't think the first year I can't remember, Bob, to tell you the truth, but yes he and Speaker Murphy had a big argument over that.

SHORT: What is your reflections of the battles those two had during the 16 years that they served as Lieutenant Governor and Speaker?

BANKS: I remember the first budget that we had, and it was my first time with the state budget of course because it was early, early on. And George Busbee was Governor of course and Speaker Murphy and George Busbee had served together and they were wonderful friends. They were very close friends. And during the budget hearings I had heard Speaker Murphy would say this and that and the other and our people would say something else, you know, and Zell would say something else. So it was having a ripple effect among the members. We'd be fractious at our House member and the House member would be fractious towards the Senators.

And I remember saying -- a reporter asked me one time what I thought about it and I said "Well there was a song going around about that time that said something like can't one monkey run no show, or stop no show" I think is what it was and is and I gave them that quote. I don't

know if Speaker Murphy ever got it or not, but he never said anything to me about it.

But I remember, and again I thank Zell and Al for having some confidence in me, they took Terrell Starr, me, another freshman and Al Holloway and I'm trying to think who was -- I believe Paul Brown was Chairman of the Appropriations Committee.

SHORT: Right.

BANKS: And we went down of us to sit with the Governor and the Speaker and Marcus Collins and Bill Lee and some others were with the Speaker. And we never came up with any solution I can tell you that, but I remember Speaker Murphy who had a tendency sometimes if he got upset that his face would turn real red and he looked over at George and he said "I need to see you in private." And George said "Okay" because George felt like we did, you know. We needed to move ahead. And so whatever they said to each other, and I don't know to this day what that conversation was, that we resolved the issue, that George later called Zell or something and said "I think we got it covered," and that was it.

I can remember so many things, Bob, because Speaker and Zell are just loggerheads most of the time, and Speaker Murphy would always say something derogatory about the Senate, Zell would say something derogatory about him and it would just be an ongoing battle. And honestly it strained our relationship sometimes with our colleagues because J.R. Smith and Marvin Adams they're representatives from my area, and a lot of others as well from the seven

counties I represented. But Marvin and J.R. and I were pretty close, and they would say things and then, you know, would expect me to take on Zell's cause, and I probably did because I think he was right. I really thought Zell was usually right, and the Senate usually was right. Maybe not as conservative as Speaker Murphy, but it was usually the right position.

SHORT: What were some of the main issues when you were in the Senate?

BANKS: The first big issue was the budget and that came down to after the session of 1975 I was practicing law in Barnesville and in my office, and in fact we had court week the next week, and the Governor's secretary called me and said "Next week the Governor is going to call a special session." And I said "Starting when?" And it was some time in August as I recall. It may have been later than that, but I said "What's the problem?" And she said "It's the budget, that we've got to cut X number of dollars out of the budget because we just don't have it."

And so we went to the session and the teachers of course were just up in arms and the state employees because that's where the biggest pot of the money was going in our budget, 50% in those days, over 50% when you count higher education. And state employees' pensions and that's where you had to find the money. And so I remember that was a big issue. We finally resolved it, but it made a lot of teachers mad and a lot of public employees mad. That's one issue.

I remember some of them about the location of a second airport and Speaker Murphy

wanted it somewhere and it would ultimately get into one of our committees and I don't remember which one it was, but I was on the committee and I think I was making a speech honestly the day Speaker Murphy's bill came up and I had an excused absence and I'm glad to tell you the truth. If I hadn't had a speech real I might have tried to make one.

SHORT: Well you mentioned Lieutenant Governor Miller who, of course, later became a two term Governor and a United States Senator. You mentioned Paul Coverdell.

BANKS: Yes.

SHORT: Who is a republican and later elected to the Senate. The Senate in those days was not as partisan as it is today.

BANKS: Exactly right. Very collegial. They didn't have but five republican and they were great people. Paul Coverdell is as nice a person as you'd ever want to meet in your life. Bob Bell was another one. I'm trying to think of some of the others in those days, but and I just can't pick them up off hand, but I remember Bob and - -

SHORT: Jim Tysinger.

BANKS: Jim Tysinger of course who was a wonderful guy and smart. Zell in fact on our Rules revision commission was on the same committee that it was if I didn't say that earlier. And Jim Tysinger was again a wonderful, wonderful, smart thinking guy and he was on this technology committee and all of those because he was smart. Bob Bell was just a great all around guy and he later ran for Governor. I can't remember -- it seems like did he run against Bo Ginn or somewhere along in there? I can't - -

SHORT: He ran the year that Joe Frank Harris - -

BANKS: Joe Frank Harris.

SHORT: -- was elected.

BANKS: That's exactly right. Okay.

SHORT: You also served with Hugh Gillis.

BANKS: Yes and let me tell you Hugh Gillis one of the finest men that ever lived. He was a great legislator. Hugh and I from time to time would find ourselves on different sides of an issue, and I can remember one time one of the lobbyists who was looking at the issue and it

just happened that I was for it and he was against it, and he said "Hugh Gillis is one of the best headcounters of anybody in that Senate. So if Hugh's against it, then just remember that he knows how to count and count well." So I did know that, but he was a dear, dear friend. He and Jean were good friends of me and my family and they were just wonderful, wonderful people.

SHORT: 55 years and seven months in the General Assembly of Georgia.

BANKS: Unprecedented.

SHORT: That record will never be broken, will it?

BANKS: No. Unprecedented. And I'll tell you he loved every minute of it, and was a fine, fine legislator.

SHORT: Roy Barnes.

BANKS: Roy is one of the smartest men I know. He's a wonderful lawyer. He and I were elected together and when I ran for Congress, Roy was there to support me. He and Marie and his children came down to one of my rallies and he endorsed me there. And again he'll

always be a great friend. When Roy was elected, Bobby Kahn was his Executive Secretary. And Bobby was a good man and a good friend. He was head of the Democratic Party from time to time, and he's a good guy. He knows a lot about campaigning. But there was a tendency for Bobby to want to be in the back room and not be out in front because there was an arrogance about him. He's a good friend of mine and I respect him, but I think some of that arrogance came over to Roy when he was Governor, and I believe that's part of the reason that he lost the race, I think, when Perdue ran against him.

I think another reason that he lost it, and I don't believe it really had anything to do with the flag. That was a courageous move that he made and, as you recall, Zell had tried to do the same thing, and but I believe the other reason that Roy lost was that there was a general discontent with the power grab of the republicans when they did all of this redistricting that just honestly put the republicans down. As it turns out, it did not put them down. It just made people mad and they did a fruit barrel turnover.

SHORT: Did you think the time when you were serving in the Senate with Roy Barnes that he would some day be Governor?

BANKS: Roy as always ambitious for things. I remember when Ed Duncan was there that he ran for one of the policy positions in the Senate. He talked I think at one time about running for the U.S. House I think. But I loved serving with Roy. I love him to this day and I



think he's again one of the smartest guys in the race for Governor now.

SHORT: Pierre Howard also was one of your colleagues at that time.

BANKS: Absolutely and a dear, dear friend.

SHORT: He was a very effective Senator.

BANKS: He was. I'm mad at him that he didn't stay in the Governor's race.

SHORT: Well I was going to ask you about that.

BANKS: I'm mad at him because he didn't run. He would have been elected.

SHORT: He withdrew in 1990.

BANKS: Yeah. I respect him for it, Bob. Let me go back and tell you that. I know why he didn't run and I know it had to do with his children. Pierre and Nancy had children late in life and they were growing up and Pierre just wanted to be with them. He loved them as we all love our children, but he just wanted a better relationship there.

SHORT: Any other senators come to mind?

BANKS: Oh gosh.

SHORT: Culver Kidd.

BANKS: Yeah. Tom Allgood was -- he came in my second term, and Tom and I became just about as close as brothers over the years, even after I got out of the Senate we remained good friends. And I just hated when he and T were killed in the plane crash.

Bob, this is off the subject a little bit, but Tom had told me before they went up to Maine to their home up there, he said "I want y'all to come up and visit with us," and he said "I'll send the plane back down here and get you or you can ride up with me or however it turns out." He said we could and he had asked me to go up on this trip but I couldn't. We were working on some issues with my company and I just couldn't go as much as I wanted to go and enjoy the time with he and T. But we spent a lot of time together. That was one of Zell's better appointments on the Board of Regents.

And Tom was interested and he would have made a good judge. He was a purist in the law. I was never a purist in the law. I enjoyed, you know, jury trials and things like that, but I always had somebody to help have a trial brief, and I didn't like the detail work that that caused.

I had to know it, but I didn't like doing it. And so but Tom was a purist. He was a great trial lawyer too.

SHORT: Let's move ahead now to 1978 and when you decided - -

BANKS: Oh let me say one more thing though about the people in the Senate. Frank Eldridge and I. Tom and Frank -- I was a lobbyist so I didn't have a vote, but Frank and Tom ran against each other for President Pro Tem of the Senate. Was it President Pro Tem or Majority Leader? I can't remember now. I think it was President Pro Tem.

SHORT: Yes.

BANKS: And Tom beat Frank by one vote. And but then later Frank became Secretary of the Senate when Hamilton McWhorter left when Pierre Howard came in, and Frank Eldridge was a great guy as well and became again like a brother.

I was going to mention Ham McWhorter. There never will be a Secretary of the Senate that was smart as Hamilton McWhorter. Hamilton had a great military career. He wouldn't talk about it. He was in military intelligence, and he had a great, great career there and he even served in the Senate where his father had served, as I recall. And when Hamilton retired, Hugh Gillis and Paul Brown, Tom and me and Pierre to some extent, and Jim Groom who was a

lobbyist like me, wanted to have a portrait done of Hamilton and to hang in the Senate, but they wouldn't let us put him in the Senate but we put it in the Secretary of State's reception area.

And so we did that and Jim and I raised the money for the portrait, but the Senators were the ones that presented it to him. Joe Kennedy was another guy, couldn't find a better guy than Joe Kennedy. Just like your favorite dog. He was gentle, but he was a gentle giant. He loved people, people loved Joe and truly loved him, but they respected him for his knowledge in the prison area and he was a great guy and Zell or I believe it was Zell, yeah, that later appointed him to the Board of Regents where he was when he died. Great man.

SHORT: Okay. Let's move now to 1978 when you decided that you would run for Congress for the seat of your mentor Congressman Jack Flint.

BANKS: Right. Bob, a lot of things led up to that. I was enjoying living in Barnesville. I was enjoying practicing law down there, but during the Busbee administration my law partner, one of my law partners, had come to me and said "We're losing our district attorney and I'd like to have that post." So I went to George and asked him and he appointed my partner to that position. It was a big loss to our firm.

My older law partner, Charles Landy was on a visit to his son in Texas and had a heart attack and died. And here I was in the middle of a session and a lawyer in a small town we had a successful practice. We were all doing well but it takes a lot of work to keep up a law

practice. People want to see their lawyer and I was having to get my younger associates and partners to do my work while I was serving in the General Assembly, and I'd still have a draw on the firm. But it's just tough for a guy to practice law in a small town and be in public office, particularly one in the senate where you have to -- I had seven counties, a little over 100,000 people at times, and if you're going to be a senator, you got to get out and see your constituents.

And so I had talked to my family and I had pretty much made up my mind that I was either going to be a full-time politician or a full-time lawyer. And Jack and I on one occasion he never told me that he was going to retire, but he was thinking about it. He said he was thinking about it. And Virginia Shapard who was my colleague from Griffin and I were good friends. We probably had the same voting record most of the time on every issue, and we remain good friends to this day. But Virginia had already made noise about her running against Jack. Whether he retired or not she was going to run. Newt Gingrich for the last two terms had decided he wanted to be a congressman and Newt was the republican and he ran against Jack twice and got beat twice. And he had said that he was going to run again whether Jack ran or not.

And so when Virginia started talking about it, I started thinking about it and I told my law partners one day that I said "I'm going to take a leave of absence from the law firm just to give me a feel around the district to see, you know, how she's going to do and how I might do." I hadn't yet talked to Jack and I might have mentioned it in passing some time about the leave of absence to one of the reporters and he picked it up and put it in the *Constitution* and said

something about and Jack picked it up of course and he called me.

I take that back. I called him the day it came out in the paper because I knew it said it, and I said "Boss I just want you to know that I'm not running against you." I said "I hope you know that," and he said "Yeah I did. I didn't know when I read the article what you were thinking." And he was going to be the Grand Marshall in our Buggy Days Parade in Barnesville. And I said "I tell you what I'll do. I'll ride in the buggy with you and let people understand our friendship because I do love you and I wouldn't have people think that you and I were cross ways," and he said "That will be great." And so we did.

But as I was thinking, Bob, here was my thinking. I represented seven counties in the 17<sup>th</sup> senatorial district. Virginia, I don't know her number but she represented places like the top end of Henry County. I represented Henry County but she represented where the population was on the north side. She represented Coweta County, which was a big county. She represented part of Fayette County. All of these were around up in toward South Atlanta and South Atlanta was in Jack's district or in the 4<sup>th</sup> district I believe it was then. Does that sound right? 4<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup>, I don't remember. I think they changed it later. But whatever.

I was going to lose counties like Upson which was one of my big counties, and I had the greatest support in the world from Upson County. Pike County was one of my counties and it was still in the district. I think Butts was still in the district at that time. Roberta, Crawford County was out. So and I was in Little Lamar and one of the smaller of the counties in the congressional district. So I had to weigh those things and see how that was going to play out.

As it turns out, I decided to make a run for it after Jack announced that he was going to retire. He called me while I was in the Senate one day and said that "I'm going to announce my retirement," and I couldn't talk to him at that time, but I came out of the Senate and called him back and I said "Well I'm going to run," and he said "well I'm proud of you and I hope you do well. And Virginia Shapard of course was from Griffin, which is Jack's hometown and her husband's family was a great friend of Jack's too.

So anyway, I looked at those things and tried to weigh them. I had a lot of good friends that wanted me to run. I had some good supporters. I had somebody I would use as my campaign manager and so on, and I used some of Sam Nunn's people that Sam had used, and Billy Evans and yeah. So anyway I felt good about it but I knew that numbers wise I didn't look as good as Virginia did.

At that time, again, Newt had run twice and lost. I thought our district was still a conservative district and it was democratic. I thought if I could win that race that I could stay in Congress for a while, didn't know how long because it was, you know, we were starting to trend republican about that time. And so I sat down with Virginia one time after we had both announced and I said "Virginia, I know that you're a fine Senator and would make a good congressman. Whether you believe it or not, your perception is that you are moderate to liberal. You and I have probably the same voting record, but I'm perceived as being moderate to conservative and that I believe this district is still conservative and it's got to be if we're going to beat Newt." And so she didn't agree and so we both ran.

And Newt had told me one day -- well before I say that, my polls had indicated, early polls had indicated that Virginia would get the most votes, I would get the second number and Betty Talmadge who was been then divorced from Senator Talmadge would be third, and there were about eight or nine candidates on the democratic side in that race. I also during the campaign had done a poll that indicated that Virginia would not beat Newt if they put those two together, that I could but it wouldn't be a very large margin, which again played out what I thought exactly that the thing was and that Betty would not score anywhere close to Newt.

So we went on through the campaign and as it turns out Virginia did come in first, I came in second, and a little lower than I thought than the polls had indicated because we were about to run out of money, and I put in personal money in that campaign to a pretty good extent, and I didn't like doing it, but, you know, I felt like we'd been this far and I needed to do it. My daddy did the same thing or helped the same way, but I felt like if I could win that eventually I could get, you know, my money back with fundraisers and things like that. So I loaned the campaign money is what it was.

So we came down to the race and I thought Betty Tallmadge was going to support me. Her campaign manager was a good man and I had known him before and I thought that he had indicated that he would support me. And there would be no reason for Betty not to support me. She asked me to sponsor the Equal Rights Amendment Bill, which I did. Some funny stories about that too, but again I went out on a political limb to help her but I felt it was the right thing to do regardless. And so I just thought she would. Well she didn't. She endorsed Virginia



because of the woman thing.

And so then the general election came and Newt just creamed Virginia. I lost in the runoff with Virginia. I looked at the votes and I know that, you know, she had the most -- I mean she obviously had the most votes, but her votes were in the places where I needed the most help. If Fayette County or South Fulton or somewhere like that had supported me, then I would have been there, but some of the pundits have said, and one kid in college wrote a thesis about it, that Newt didn't have any real trouble in the primary.

Dave Barrett from over in Carroll County was republican mayor and he was running against Newt, but he didn't scratch, and I think -- well I don't mean he didn't scratch, he didn't do very well. But the theory was that Newt told me one time during the campaign that he thought he and I were going to be the nominees and that we'd be in the general election, and I told him I thought so too. Let the best man win. But when Newt thought that he also knew that the district was still democrat, that he had lost twice and that a conservative that likes to run and likes to campaign and I think I was a good campaigner, that he might get beat.

And so if some of the republicans would hold off in this primary and then if Virginia beat me or if Virginia and I were in the runoff, then to let those people vote in the democratic runoff. You didn't have to vote in the primary. If you voted on the democratic side you could vote on the democratic side in the runoff. And so there were people in South Fulton and Fayette that I think did that, at least the theory goes that the pundits said they did. Now whether that's true, they asked Newt about it one time, I read it, and he said "he didn't have anything to do with it if I

did." So anyway that's my theory. She beat me a couple of thousand votes I think.

SHORT: Let me read you a quote from *Time* magazine.

BANKS: Okay.

SHORT: Describing you as "a moderate, well-respected Senator who was probably the best campaigner in the race."

BANKS: Thank you.

SHORT: How did your campaign differ from your opponents?

BANKS: We had a lot of fun in the campaign. It's hard on your family. I know it was. It's hard on me. It's hard on my wife. It's hard on my kids, but we had fun. I was tired. Everybody was tired, but we kept doing it. And I guess you get involved in the sweep and then you don't want to lose, and I didn't want to lose. And never lost anything in my life and I lost the primary.

So I don't know how it might have differed. We had good signs. We had good TV. Didn't have enough because we were, again, running out of money. And that might have

helped. I don't know if it would have or not. Money plays too big a part in campaigns anyway and too much in politics frankly today.

But I don't know how my campaign would have differed. I think we were all honorable. I did not want to go negative with Virginia. I just I didn't, nor with Betty. That's just not my style, Bob. It might have helped. My campaign people wanted me to do that and I said "No I'm not going to do it. I'm just not going to do it." And as I recall we didn't. And in retrospect that might have made the difference, but I still feel good about my race today, so.

SHORT: But as you look back is there anything differently you might have done to win?

BANKS: Yes. I probably should have campaigned more in the population areas. As we looked back over the times that I spent and the places where the votes were, we probably didn't spend much time, but I guess I've been a small town guy all my life and I just didn't want little counties like Pike or -- I told the people at home when I made one of my speeches I said "Look, you all know me. I hope you'll vote for me. I'm not going to have the time to spend back home and y'all ought to understand that. As much as I love you, as much as I want to be here, I'm not going to be able to spend the kind of time that I am to go by and shake hands with you and see you and meet you all the time like I did when I was in the Senate. I just I can't do it in this league."

So if I look back that would be one of the things. I did spend a lot of time. I'm not saying that we didn't run a good campaign, but I probably would have spent more time in in the vote centers than I did.

SHORT: Peter, we've mentioned government affairs work. Some people call it lobbyists. I'd like to talk to you for a few minutes about that profession. First of all, I'd like to ask you if you think the public has an accurate perception of a lobbyist?

BANKS: No.

SHORT: Why do you think that's true?

BANKS: I think because the media is one place. They portray the lobbyist as -- in the old days they portray them as big heavy people with wide brim hats and a satchel full of money and a cigar. And I think that's generally still the -- I don't know if it's the perception now, but that kind of perception. I think it's unfair to portray them in that way. I think some people deserve it. I mean some people do the things that lobbyists do that don't do them in an honorable way, and, therefore, the public gets a perception whether you or me or whoever we know are good lobbyists. They all get thrown in the same - - the same barrel and it reminded me of the old saying "Don't tell my mother I'm a lobbyist. She thinks I'm a piano player in a

whorehouse," so it's that kind of thing that you get.

The term is you and I had talked sometime earlier about the lobbyist got its term. It was when President Grant was living in the Willard Hotel and he coined the phrase "lobbyist" I think in that he would come to the lobby of the Willard and all of these people would just pounce on him to talk to him about issues. And they probably in those days did wear the wide brim hats and smoke cigars and carried barrels full of money.

SHORT: Let me ask you this simple question. What is a lobbyist and what do lobbyists do?

BANKS: Bob, I see a lobbyist as an advocate for their cause or their client or their company. I see it both as an advocate because I'm a lawyer and I think in those terms. On the other hand, I see them as an educator. The lobbyist is supposed to educate the legislator using it in that context to his company or to his company's position on a particular piece of legislation. And there's nothing dishonorable about doing that.

As a lawyer you wrote me a speech one time and talked to me and in that speech, I didn't use it all, but you conveyed the idea that or advanced the idea that a lawyer would be an advocate before a jury and a lobbyist would be an advocate before the general assembly or to a legislator or regulator. And so I kept that because I believe it. That's the way the nature of that business. And that's the way I began my career as a lobbyist because I saw that when I was in Congress.

I told you when I worked for Congressman Flint. I saw it when I was a member of the General Assembly, and you would try to model the way you handle business or do business by others that you know and respect. And there have been a lot of good people over the years. Because I started at such an early age I can remember people like Bill Bryant with the telephone company. I can remember people like John Lastinger with Georgia Power Company. I remember - -

SHORT: Bob Simonette.

BANKS: Bob Simonette. Parker McCray before Bob. I think of - -

SHORT: John Booth.

BANKS: John Booth. I think of -- John came after Bill.

SHORT: Yeah.

BANKS: And there's been so many guys that are good, good people that knew their business and worked at getting relationships. And the reason relationships with members of the General Assembly are important is that you tend to trust a person you have a relationship with,

and that's what the dinners, that's what the lunches, that's what that's all about. It just gives you an opportunity to talk to somebody in a quiet setting. If a lobbyist and, and there are thousands now. I mean everybody's got one. The Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, the Cub Scouts too probably, and the churches. I bet you there's not one organization in this state that is not represented somewhere by somebody in an association that looks after their business.

SHORT: I can remember when there were only five or six around - -

BANKS: Me too.

SHORT: -- the Capitol.

BANKS: Absolutely.

SHORT: And now there are thousands.

BANKS: Do you know I was one of the first of the private or the independent lobbyist people? I got my own clients and I represented those clients. I did it through the law firm that I was working with, but they were my clients, not the firm's clients. And I enjoyed that career. I made a lot of good friends, and I hope I still have some of them.

SHORT: Well you're very effective at it.

BANKS: Thank you.

SHORT: We hear from time to time an outcry for stronger ethics laws. Do we really need strong ethics laws or the ones that we have strong enough?

BANKS: I would try to answer that in a different way, Bob, and say that we have good ethics laws, but sometimes they don't go in the right direction. The legislator has to be a good person too, not just the person that is entertaining him or -- I think for ethics to be effective that it's got to be reported on both sides. Somebody's got to check you out.

I'd say 95% of the people that I've known in this business have been honorable people that wouldn't think of bribing someone, wouldn't think about giving somebody money that wasn't accounted for in some way. I'd say 95% of the people that I know wouldn't do anything illegal or unethical. But there's nothing wrong with ethics laws that can put a check on it. But I do think they're being done the wrong way. A company in Georgia that looks after legislative business in Washington or lobbies in Washington, if you don't report yourself, then nobody ever knows what you do. And they would never know that this person that goes up on behalf of this company is actually lobbying in Washington. They probably should.



I don't know how you cure that except to make everybody that goes into a congressional office to sign up. I don't like the idea of *ex parte* communication with a regulator. I don't believe in that. I served in that industry a long time and I know that's the only way sometimes that you can ever see anybody and is to have an *ex parte* conversation, but that never bothered me and doesn't to this day.

SHORT: If you were in the market for a lobbyist, what would you look for?

BANKS: One, somebody that was smart. Somebody that knew what they were talking about. As a legislator on one side you can spot a guy that doesn't know what he's talking about in a New York second. So I would want somebody that was smart, that knew his product or knew his company or knew the issue that he was talking about. If he didn't do that, I don't think he could be effective.

I would want somebody that was trustworthy, and you can't tell just by meeting going up and saying "Hi I'm Peter Banks. I represent such and such." They can't tell if I'm trustworthy, if I know what I'm talking about. So you have to find some kind of relationship with that person and it's hard to do it in the halls of the General Assembly. You got hundreds of people in the lobby. You've got a stretch guy or girl in the House and Senate that doesn't have time to just stop everything that they're doing and coming out and talking to you. It's just hard to do.

And if you've got a complicated issue and you have to talk to them about various points,

you got to have some time with them in order to do that. The only way you can get time is either go visit in their homes or in their offices at their home, or try to sneak in some time with them while they're here. But time is short, as you know, when the General Assembly is in session. That's a heck of a time to start lobbying, but you got to prepare for it.

SHORT: Well now, Peter, I'd like to talk to you about party politics in Georgia.

BANKS: Okay.

SHORT: After 138 years of Democratic Party rule, Georgia republicans became the majority party. What happened?

BANKS: Before I say this, let me say that I was a democratic when I ran for the Senate. I was a democrat when I ran for the House. I on a national level I can't remember voting democratic in a long time. I think I voted for Bill Clinton because I thought he was a southern Governor and would be a centrist. And I was disappointed in him with some of his tax legislation. I was disappointed in him as a human being because I think he was a smart a president as we've ever had. I think he had the morals of an ally cat, and I don't like those people. It's just simple as that.

Now, getting back to your original question. I think part of what happened was that

there was an arrogance of the democrats. I think they gave a show in the General Assembly that, you know, we've been the party of all the good things that have happened over the years and you ought to keep us there. I think the arrogance showed when they had after the decennial census was done and they saw the population increase and where it was increasing and the end roads of the republicans that they wanted to ensure a reelection. And they gerrymanded the districts to really hurt the republicans, and I think that was one of the major causes. I'm sure there are others, the way people vote or something like that, but I think the real turnover came because that kind of arrogance in the redistricting.

SHORT: Well many disenchanting democrats feel like their state party is too liberal, too urban and too dependent on minority groups and labor for support. Do you think that's true?

BANKS: Yes. I think at the national level I could tell you that's absolutely the truth. There's no doubt in my mind. But that's been true for a long, long time. On the state level that's not quite true I don't think. The democrats still would look at the minorities as a clear vote, although I'm not sure that that's happening again, Bob. It did for President Obama, but I'm not sure there's an educated group of people out there that don't just vote their pocketbook, that just don't vote for things that are going to affect me. There are people that actually think about the issues and I'm not saying that about minorities. I'm saying that about everybody. I think that people are beginning to think about what's good for this country. I hope they do. I hope that's

a trend that will continue.

SHORT: So you think it's safe to assume that the political pendulum will swing back?

BANKS: I think it will do that in this state, yes, and I think the reason for that is that the poor leadership that has been coming out of the state capitol. I don't mean to say that about the Governor, but I mean to say it about the House in particular. I thought that was -- when Glenn Richardson, who was a nice fellow. I don't say that, but I don't think he understood power. I don't think he understood how to exercise power, and I think he was campaigning on local issues as opposed to campaigning on state issues.

I mean the talk about putting a cap on assessments on real property, the state doesn't get very much money from real estate, ad valorem taxes as we call them at home, so why would the state -- the cities and counties however do, and so why should the General Assembly be thinking about issues that I have to stand up to as the Mayor of my town or as the County Commissioner Chairman has to do as the Chairman of the County Commission. Those are local issues and we've got to have some way to pay for the services that people demand. And when you put a limit on us, then you're putting a limit on the services that we can provide because we have to balance high budgets just like the state does. I think that's what I saw in Speaker Richardson.

But again saying that the moral issues that he had, I mean that's horrible for a leader. It shouldn't happen. It does. It's natural sometimes for people to fall into those things and that's

wrong, but yet it affects their party and it affects his leadership. And when people get thrown into the same barrel I think again, Bob, when I was there and when I observe what's happening now, I think back about people like Terrell Star, about Al Holloway, about Zell Miller, about Speaker Murphy, about all the good guys that were there that they knew business they honestly looked after what was best for the state.

I think it was Jack Flint one time told me that if he's going to have to make a tough vote, you don't have many tough votes. You have some, but none that are earthshaking, but when you do what do you do? You look first at whether this is right for America? Second is it right for my country, my county or my congressional district? And then third, do I feel right about it? And you don't get many issues where you have to start that whether it might be not exactly like you think, it might not be like your constituents think, but it might be the best thing for America. And I would hope that you would vote for what's right.

And again back to your question about leadership in the General Assembly, I would think that they've got their responsibilities and local officials have theirs, and don't mess with us and we won't mess with you.

SHORT: You came out of retirement and got elected Mayor of Barnesville. How do you like your job?

BANKS: Oh I love my job, Bob. I've been involved in some form of public life since I

was a young adult. And when I retired from my company, when I retired from my law firm I said "I'm going to St. Simons and I'm going to live on the beach and I'm going to enjoy life and visit my grandchildren and children." That was fine for a year or two, and then I thought about -- I've got my daughter and her husband and two grandkids in Barnesville and I've got children, got triplet grandchildren that are teenagers in Columbia, South Carolina and two small ones in Orlando, Florida, and I want to have some time to know them and let them know me. So when I decided to come back to Barnesville, one, I have interests there and I was coming back and forth a lot anyway, and I said "So why don't I just move on back up there?" And when I did probably one of the first things I was at a party one night and somebody said "Why don't you run for Mayor?" I laughed and I said "Well my good friend, Dwayne Bell," who was our first Minority, I said "Dwayne's doing a good job. He's reaching across the community to get both sides of an issue and he's done a good job, so I wouldn't run against him." And Dwayne died right after he was nominated for a second term or elected for a second term. And then I said "No I'm not going to run because I don't really have a vision. I don't know that I know all the issues." And but then the more I thought about it, you know, I saw or heard some of the people that may run and that bothered me. And I said "well darn it I'm just going to do it," and I did and I didn't have any opposition, bless their hearts.

But I think you have to love your community. You have to want the best for it. Not necessarily what's right for you, but for what's right for the community. It's a way to in my older age to feel relevant, that I'm still involved in the issues and things that I think are important

for our community. I want to see the right kind of growth for our community. I want to help the college continue to be the economic engine that it is. I want to expand our tax base and we've been able to do a lot of that. So I like being involved and I think I can offer some leadership and that's what I tried to do.

SHORT: Well, Peter, I guess our time is up and you know that you and I could talk more and more about Georgia politics.

BANKS: No question about it.

SHORT: Maybe we'll get another chance.

BANKS: I hope so, Bob. It's been a lot of fun.

SHORT: In the meantime I want to thank now for the Duckworth Library at Young Harris College and for the Russell Library where we sit at the University of Georgia for being with us.

BANKS: Well I loved Senator Russell. I loved, I didn't know him real well, but I did know Justice Duckworth and I've known you a long time, and - -

SHORT: That's right.

BANKS: And so thank you all.

SHORT: Let's don't say how long.

BANKS: I won't. Thanks for everything, Bob.

SHORT: Thank you.

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