

Milton Jones interviewed by Bob Short
2010 March 19
Athens, GA
Reflections on Georgia Politics
ROGP-109
Original: video, 99 minutes

sponsored by:

Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies
University of Georgia Libraries
and
Young Harris College

BOB SHORT: I'm Bob Short, this is Reflections on Georgia Politics sponsored by Young Harris College and the Richard B. Russell Library at the University of Georgia. Our guest is Milton Jones, former member of the Georgia House of Representatives and former chair of the state Board of Regents. Welcome Milton.

MILTON JONES: Thank you Bob.

SHORT: With your permission we'd like to divide our conversation into three parts. First a little bit about you and your early life, then your service in the state legislature and on the board of regents, and finally your life after public service. I know that you were born and raised in Columbus.

JONES: Right. Well, I was. Grew up there and went to school. We were blessed with a fine public school system in Columbus in those days, at least the white kids. I graduated from

high school, Columbus High School, in 1954. I was very fortunate. I got to go to Emory at Oxford, a small two-year college down a couple miles north of Covington. And then I went to big Emory in Atlanta for three quarters and then into law school. And I went straight through law school and graduated in August of '59.

I was fortunate enough -- I couldn't have gone to Emory otherwise, but I picked up some scholarships and financial help, one of which was from the Ty Cobb educational foundation. A lot of folks might not know it, but Ty Cobb started a foundation with the money he made in baseball and primarily off Coke-Cola stock and it educates, I don't know how many thousands of young men it's helped educate in the last 50, 60 years. It does other things. I believe it has a hospital up at Royston and other things, but I take my hat off and salute that gentleman again.

I married my high school sweetheart. Went home and started practicing law, September 8, 1958, and it went on from there. I had been interested in government, primarily in American history and government since I was in high school. Had a great teacher -- I had many great teachers, I owe my life to them -- by the name of Mary Fort, who was the traditional stereotyped old maid schoolteacher in the '50's. Her sister was one too. She taught down in Thomasville Elementary School. But Miss Mary as we called her, she taught American history and government at Columbus high school. We figured it out at one time that out of the people she taught, over forty became lawyers. I mean five or six guys -- Tommy Buck is one you would know for sure -- in my wife's class, the class behind me. But she had a profound influence on a lot of our lives.

And of course, law back then was a little more admired profession than it is today. A young lawyer getting home, I was interested in politics. We had some local political issues that were arising in the early sixties. I was involved and was on the winning side of one or two. And, you know, scratching around trying to build a law practice, you know you got to build name recognition. A seat came open, well, not didn't come open, but an opportunity came to run for the legislature in '62, and I ran. When I started running I was 25, I was 26 by the time I was elected. When I went to Atlanta, I was probably the youngest guy up there.

And that was in January of 1963, the year that Governor Sanders went in. That summer that I was running was a very interesting summer, in that the United States Supreme Court, and I think it was in March of 1962, had ruled -- I believe the name of the case was Baker v. Carr. It was a Tennessee case. But they established the one man one vote rule. And the next month, the federal court in Atlanta -- Griffin Bell, I think wrote the opinion -- said that it applied to the Georgia legislature too. Excuse me, he said that it applied to the county-unit system, and a few words may be in order about the county-unit system.

I'm sure a lot of people that listen to this, or that would be interested in listening to it, probably know about it, but for those who don't, there was a -- the county-unit system was like an electoral college, except it was for Georgia rather than for federal elections. And it was the way we elected all the state-wide offices in this state. It also, in large measure, governed the apportionment of the legislature. It was called, I think the technical title was the Neill Primary Act. And I think it had started back probably in the late nineteenth century, but in the early twentieth century I think it was given statutory form. And back then of course, everyone was a Democrat. That had been one of the legacies of the Civil War and Reconstruction. The only Republicans in the county would be what we called the post office Republicans. So they'd profess to be Republicans so the few times that a Republican got elected president they could be post master. And then when the Democrats come back in, they'd go back to whatever they had been doing and hope for the next president to be a Republican.

But anyway, the only game in town back then was the Democratic primary, because there just wasn't a Republican party. And I always loved that term, that if you won the Democratic primary it was tantamount to a victory. I love that word tantamount. But anyway, the way it worked was the eight largest counties in the state of Georgia had six county-units. The next 30 had four county-units, and the 121 smallest, there were 159 counties, had two county-units. And if someone running for governor or lieutenant governor or insurance commissioner or whatever -- if he carried a county, he got all of that county's county-units. The same as if you carry a state today if you're running for president, you get all that state's electoral votes. I think one or two states have now divided it up, but I don't know.

And you can see that this really discriminated against your larger urban counties. Echols county, of course, was the smallest county down there on the Florida line in extreme south Georgia, I think it had 1800 votes. Fulton county, which was the largest then -- may still be, but I'm not sure. I think it had close to half a million people. Well, if you're running for governor and you carried Fulton county with half a million people, you got six county-units. If you were running for governor and you carried Echols county, you got two. So you got a third as much votes for the governor's race if you carried Echols county as if you carried a county of a half a million people.

The apportionment entered into it because each county got a representative for every two county-units. The ones that had the six county-units, they had three representatives. That would have been Fulton, Dekalb, Bibb, Richmond, Chatham, our county Muscogee. The next thirty, which would have been in the neighborhood of Valdosta, LaGrange, Griffin, stuff like that. They had four county-units, so they had two representatives. And the 121 smallest counties including Echols with 1800 people, they had one representative. And it was a highly stacked deck in favor of the rural interests in the state. And that was what the game was at that time.

Well, after that ruling that spring, the governor's race which had already started -- Marvin Griffin, who had been governor from 19-- well, he was elected in '54 to '58, which means he served from '55 to '5. Back then the governor could not succeed himself, so he was running for reelection in '62. Well, not reelection, but he had been out four years since Ernest Vandiver was governor so he could run to be governor again. Garland Byrd who was the lieutenant governor at the time, was running against Marvin. Carl Sanders, who was a fine, young, up-and-coming senator from Richmond county, Augusta, he was running for lieutenant governor against Peter Zack Geer.

Well, that ruling came down and all of a sudden the county-unit system's out, it's popular vote all the way. And Carl got out the lieutenant governor's race and got into the governor's race. And shortly thereafter, Garland Byrd had a heart attack, so the race kind of devolved down to Carl Sanders against Marvin Griffin, but now it's on the popular vote rather than the county-unit system. And I think he was the favorite from then on. Peter Zack Geer was running against Carl, but then Carl was out of the race. And then Lester Maddox was also running. He owned the Pickrick restaurant there in Atlanta, and I think people know who Lester Maddox was.

But anyway, all of that happened in that summer that we were all running. And of course, I'm sitting down here running a little, small state representative race, but it was of vital interest, because everyone wanted to know who you were voting for for governor, and all that, you know, and you'd have to try to soft shoe that. But it was an interesting election.

Well, one week before that Democratic primary, the federal court ruled in another case that the Georgia General Assembly was malapportioned because it was apportioned based on that county-unit system. I've just described how the House was apportioned, but the Senate had

54 senators and it was divided up -- Fulton county had one senator. I don't believe I remember what the gentleman's name was. And the other 158, they were divided up into senatorial districts. Normally there were three counties to a senatorial district, and they'd rotate it. One county would have a senator for two years, the next county would have a senator for two years, the next county would have a senator for two years. So I mean it was just a constant fruit basket turnover.

Governor Vandiver -- I think you may have been there at that time -- called a special session immediately after the primary for the purposes of reapportioning the Senate on a population basis, and that all happened. In 1962 we went from the county-unit system for the method of electing the state-wide offices, and then we had to go up there -- I didn't because I didn't take office until January, but they were kind to me. I went up there just as an observer and sat around and watched it. They reapportioned the state Senate there in October, and they had another special election after that because they had to reelect the new senators under reapportionment, and that of course is when Jimmy Carter was elected to the Senate and all the problems between him and Homer Moore down there, and the lawsuit. But Jimmy eventually prevailed on that write-in on that second special election for the Senate. It was an interesting year.

SHORT: That was an interesting decade -- the 60's. The county-unit system was ruled unconstitutional, you had the reapportionment case, you had the strange election of 1966 when Bo Callaway defeated Lester Maddox, but the legislature elected Maddox. And you were involved with all that. What do you remember about those days?

JONES: Well, it was historic times. Because Carl was elected, and he was a very good governor. I mean he was an aggressive guy. Back then a lot had been going on. In 1954, the year I graduated from high school, that was the year that, of course the Supreme Court of the United States decided *Brown v. Board of Education*. Well, that caused significant unrest in the South. You had the push on the national level, primarily in the Democratic party, for Civil Rights. You had the Dixiecrat rebellion in the 1958 Democratic convention there, and Strom Thurmond, I think, was the nominee of the Dixiecrats, but Harry Truman won reelection anyway.

But there was a lot of trouble going on. You had James Meredith out there in the University of Mississippi. Right before all of this started, the very end of Ernest Vandiver's administration, was when you had the integration of the University of Georgia. Hamilton Holmes and Charlayne Hunter and all that situation arose. So there was a lot of turmoil going on. And it's unfortunate, but we do have a strong racial element in that period of history at that time.

We got through that session in 1963. Governor Sanders, he had a right progressive program, most of it was adopted. Then in 1964, we had to do something about congressional redistricting. Back to the one man, one vote ruling that the Georgia congressional districts would not stand muster on the thing, so the federal court said, "You've got to redistrict." And in the regular session of '64, one of the main things that occurred was that we went through a congressional redistricting in '64. And whenever you've got established political districts where you've got counties that have been together for decades, and you come in there and say, "No, you're not going to be a district anymore, this guy over here is going to represent you," and they don't even know him except for his name -- there was a lot of back and forth about that.

There was a representative from Clarke County, Athens, by the name of Randall

Bedgood, you remember him. He drew a plan up that most of us liked pretty well. It didn't suit the governor's office too well, and I don't know why, there wasn't anything particularly wrong with their plan. The long and the short of it was -- it boiled down to whether we were going to adopt the Bedgood plan or the other plan. And that's when the clock on the wall episode occurred.

It was on the last night of the regular session in 1964 and Denny Groover, who was a great legislator, perhaps with the exception of Elliott Levitas, who you've interviewed, was by far and away the most effective legislators I had the pleasure of serving with. Denny had been Marivin Griffin's floor leader in the '55-'59 period and I think he was from somewhere down in south Georgia at that time, but by the time of the '60s came along he moved up to Gray, right above Macon. He was elected to the legislature up there. He was very effective, he was a spellbinder. Incidentally he was a Marine fighter pilot with Boyington's Black Sheep Squadron in the Pacific during World War II.

But anyway, Denny was in favor of the Bedgood plan. George T. Smith, who was the speaker -- we'll talk more about the speakership later, if ya'll don't get tired of listening to me by then -- they didn't have the votes to pass the plan they wanted, so they stopped the clock. If I remember right it was 20 minutes til 12:00 on the last night of the session. Well, we wanted the clock to go on and run so that we'd run out of time, we'd have to adjourn, and we knew if we came back in a special session -- which we had to do because we were under federal court order -- we thought we could get the Bedgood plan through. Well, they unplugged the clock and time stopped. And they continued to pick up a vote here and a vote there, and it was kind of remindful of what's going on in Washington today.

But the long and the short of it is Denny Groover went up in the balcony, not to pull the clock off the wall, Denny was trying to figure out how to get the clock to start running again. He was fiddling around with the clock, he was hanging over the railing with one arm, one leg. Everybody was aghast because we thought he was going to fall and hurt himself. But somehow in all the scrambling and scratching he was doing up there, he pulled the clock off the wall. The clock came falling down on the floor, it was quite a row. But anyway, they got the votes. About 2:00 they put the clock back running, or a clock back running and the Bedgood plan went down. Well, that sowed some more seeds of dissension about the governor controlling the selection of the speaker, we can talk more about that later I said.

SHORT: Let me ask you this question about reapportionment.

JONES: Alright.

SHORT: Is it fair to say that our legislative districts have been drawn primarily for party protection and racial reasons rather than binding common communities together.

JONES: I don't know. I don't know how to answer that question. Because, see, I haven't been up there since 1970. And I was not involved on any of the reapportionment committees. And so I can't say back then -- and I certainly have a clue since then. I don't recall that being all that much of a factor, though that was the primary reason that we in Columbus wanted the Bedgood plan, because the senatorial district under the Bedgood plan that we would have, would have been centered kind of over there on the west central side of the state, with Columbus kind of in the middle of the thing. And that is kind of the trade center of the area, and I think it

probably was more of a geographic plan than others would have been. But I don't know how to answer that, I can't say that Bob.

SHORT: Okay, let's get back to the period we had the county-unit system that was declared unconstitutional, we had reapportionment, then we also had a constitutional revision situation when Governor Sanders appointed a commission and it made recommendations to the general assembly for a new constitution that we never got.

JONES: Well, that was two months after the clock pulling episode in the regular session in '64. Governor Sanders called a special session of the legislature. I guess they'd enjoyed us so much they wanted us back in town, I don't know. But we went up there to draw a new constitution. And by now the House was in high dudgeon, let's say. Going back to the speakership, George L. Smith, a wonderful old lawyer from down in Emmanuel county, Swainsboro, had been speaker of the House under Ernest Vandiver, and he may have been speaker before then, I'm not sure. I think Marvin Moate was Marvin Griffin's speaker of the house.

But anyway, he had been the speaker when Carl Sanders got out of the lieutenant governor's race and got into the governor's race in 1962. He had been over in the Senate for about four years, but nobody in the House knew him. Everybody knew George L. and most of the House members supported Marvin against Sanders. I think they said it was something like 40 or 42 members of the Georgia House of 205 members supported Sanders. So he's got a hostile crowd up there when he comes into office -- well, I'm not going to say they were hostile, but they weren't in good spirits about the thing.

SHORT: They didn't adjust to the county-unit system.

JONES: Well, it was terse, let's put it that way. But the governor back then, he selected who he wanted to be the speaker, and he passed the word and the House went along with it, and that's it. There's no way you can overestimate the power of the speaker of the House in Georgia government. He appoints every committee chairman. He appoints every member of every committee. When a bill is introduced, he decides solely what committee it's going to. It can be a favorable committee, it can be an unfavorable committee. If you get along with the speaker, you get on good committees, if you don't, you don't get on good committees. If he tells the chairman of a committee, "I don't want this bill to come out of committee," that bill does not come out of committee. It doesn't make any difference. It is an absolute power of what happens. It's a negative power; he can't make things happen, but he can keep things from happening.

Anyway, George T., who is representing this crowd that had supported Carl, he was selected over George L., who had been everybody's buddy and had been speaker. So that started this stuff about, "You know, we really need to start selecting our own speaker, rather than the governor doing it. And that started in '63 as soon as George T. replaced George L. And it got worse. Denny Groover was stirring the pot, and a lot of the other guys were too. And in 1964 when that congressional redistricting situation happened and they stopped the clock, it really got hot then. Incidentally that's when the Beatles came to town, that same month. They came over here from England in February of 1964 if I remember correctly. Anyway, we come back up there.

So, all the forces in the Georgia House, "We're going to take our rights. We're going to

start selecting our own speaker. And we're going to write it into the constitution. The governor is not going to tell us who the speaker is going to be." Well, we had the votes to do it. The 121 smallest counties, they formed the 121 club. It was just a rural caucus. You could be completely in sympathy with them, but you couldn't go to the 121 club caucus. But every one of them, they swore that they were going to put that in there. They selected a wonderful guy by the name of George Brooks. You and I were talking about George a few minutes before we started this. He was from somewhere over here around Athens, I've forgotten his county. But he was the chairman of the 121 club. There were a lot of people in the urban counties -- the three and two representative counties -- that felt the same way. Our whole delegation, all three of us were in favor of it. It's just a question of separation of powers between the legislative and the executive. The governor ought not to be selecting the speaker of the House. But there were a lot of votes. Well, Governor Sanders, he was a very good governor, but he was a very effective governor. He started working on that 121 and they kind of faded away. And it did not get adopted.

SHORT: That was in '64?

JONES: That was in the special session in '64, whenever we were up there to draw this new constitution. Well, while we're in Atlanta drawing a new constitution, the federal court ruled again. We had thought -- you know the federal Congress, one house, the Senate is based on geography, the other house, the House of Representatives, is based on population. And this is what that first '62 ruling said, was that one of them had to be -- you know. But when we were in special session, I think it was May of 1964, give me some slack, I'm talking about stuff fifty years ago and I'm seventy-three years old. I may be off a little on the dates and stuff like that. They said, "No, both of them have got to be. You're going to have to reapportion the House." And they did that when we were in special session. And they said, "Furthermore, you can forget about this constitution. We are not going to let the people of the state of Georgia vote on a constitution that is draw by a malapportioned legislature. So ya'll go home." They adjourned us. That was it. Incidentally, and we can get to it later if you want to, and I'm afraid I'm talking too much. One of the finest speeches I have ever heard -- well, I'm not going to say that -- the finest speech I have ever heard in my life in the context of a political moment, was made on the floor of the House of Representatives after the 121 club faded away. Not all of them, but most of them did. By a guy by the name of Bob Flournoy, he was a representative from Cobb county in Marietta, he later served with great distinction as a superior court judge up there. He has a son who is a superior court judge up there now, if I understand correctly. And Bob Flournoy, he was one of those urban legislators, he was one of the three from Cobb county. He would have been in favor of this established legislative independence. He read them the riot act. I've kept a copy of his speech, all those years since 1964, what is that? Forty-six years now. Because it was just such a wonderful speech.

SHORT: What did he say?

JONES: This is five pages. Do you want me to read this thing?

SHORT: I do.

JONES: I've kept this thing because of what I thought was the significance of it, and I

apologize for the length of it, but it is interesting -- I think. "Remarks made by Representative Flournoy, House of Representatives, May 20 --" that's my wife's birthday, incidentally, "--1964."

This first paragraph is just kind of introductory remarks: "Freshman legislator, but perhaps what I lack in experience and intelligence, I hope may make up in sincerity of purpose. For sincerity is a quality I have determined is in rather scarce supply in the House of Representatives in Georgia." This was on point of personal privileges at the beginning of the morning session.

"I take the privilege of these brief moments to tell you of the shattering of a dream of mine. A mirage that was broken on yesterday, and a new dream yet to come true. I was born in an apartment house in the city of Atlanta. It was the second story over a combination delicatessen candy store. That's a polite word for a beer parlor. It was at the corner of English Avenue and Chestnut Street, an area long since taken over as slums by negroes. My parents were of Georgia stock, moved to Atlanta from rural Georgia. They were poor, but honest and proud. All of my life I have been taught and believed that rural people were the salt of the earth and that somehow rural Georgians are the bulwark of freedom and liberty and independence and integrity.

"The proudest days of life were when my grandfather, known far and wide as Uncle Match Hitchcock, carried me every year on the fourth of July to the sacred harp singing at the Paulding county courthouse in Dallas. Somehow, I felt, the hand of God had painted a picture in rural Georgia and here the very soul of our political institutions were found. I studied very hard as a student, reading nearly everything I could get my hand on about Georgia, or history, or political institutions.

"As a boy I had rather listen to a political speech by Gene Talmadge, Ed Rivers, or Walter George, than to eat a meal. As an older boy, I went off to college and I continued my alliance to the most sacred esteem in which I held the face of rural Georgia, her sons and her political leaders. As president of the Demosthenian Literary Society at the University of Georgia, many a night I debated and argued for Georgia's county-unit system and it's system of government which gave greater weight to the soil than to cities. For I truly believed that men that were close to the soil were somehow more honest, prouder, more independent, and less apt to be dictated to. I believed with Thomas Jefferson that an agrarian society was the most fertile soil in which a democratic republic might grow and produce fruit of liberty.

"On yesterday, this dream was largely shaken and destroyed. For I realized that independent men might be found in the middle of streets of concrete as well as in the furrows of fields. And that those men who were from the farms are no more independent than those who live in the shadow of the skyscraper. On yesterday I saw the collapse of a long overdue fraud. The representatives of rural Georgia don't represent farmers and merchants and independent little people. The representatives of rural Georgia are stooges who would sell their birthright for asphalt and gravel. They are Judas Iscariot, who for thirty pieces out of the pork barrel would betray their heritage.

"You may rightly ask me, 'Who do you think you are saying such things to us, 121 representatives from rural Georgia? You apartment born city slicker?' And I'll answer you. On yesterday I voted for your amendment respecting secret ballot regarding the speaker's election. Why? Because I wanted to help those of you who don't have the courage enough to assert your convictions in the open, in the public. I'm not afraid to vote my convictions in the open because I voted this very amendment on the board." Talking about the voting light board. "I voted for it to try to strengthen those of you who may out of fear be scared to vote your choice for speaker of

the House.

"But I voted for it for still another reason. I voted for it because I felt sorry for you. Yes, you 121 representatives from the small counties of Georgia. I felt sorry for you because you are the captives and victims of the years of ubiquitous fraud that you have perpetrated on your own people. Yes, the people of rural Georgia. You have told them that there was no need to make the county-unit system equitable, and because of it's inequity, it was destroyed. You have told them there would be no integration of the races in Georgia. You said, 'No, not one.'

"And now you are telling the rural people of Georgia in this constitution that they can have a House based on geography, when there isn't a man in this House who believes it's present apportionment will last through June the 15th of this year." Within the week, the federal courts had knocked it down. "And when you rural representatives had the once chance to strike a blow for your own independence, you buffed it. You the great bulwark of the democratic republic, you the men upon whom legislative independence rests, you sirs are frauds. I must say to the gentleman from Oglethorpe, Mr. Brooks, a man whose sincerity and integrity is beyond question, you know he must mean everything he does say because he does not have the syrupy drawl of Mr.--" I'm not going to mention that name, "or the quick wit of --" another one, no need in mentioning names. "The commanding presence of," another one, "or the parliamentary smoothness of," another Mr. Anonymous. "All he has is the strength of his own convictions, and that sirs means more to me than all the glib tongues of a thousand orators. Mr. Brooks, sir, for you I felt so embarrassed, so humiliated. "This group of men we were led to believe who would stand fast like the Rock of Gibraltar, the shifted like shifting sand. They said to you, "Lead on, we will follow." And you looked back and they flushed like a covey of quail. Yes I voted for your motion, your own lieutenants, however, left you. I didn't attend your committee of 121, but I along with county representatives like Mr. Groover, Mr. Late, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Funk, Mr. Pickert, Mr. Dicus, Mr. Milton Jones. We helped you muster your ragged little band.

"Some may say, "You're not fair Mr. Flournoy. I really believed in my position and the way I voted." Don't hand me that. When a soldier takes to the field, he doesn't choose where to fight, he fights where the battle lines are drawn. The battle lines were drawn yesterday. You had to either fight there or not at all, and the staunch 121 melted away. Please don't feel badly. I'm not recriminating you, the battle is over. What difference ultimately will it make whether the speaker is elected openly or by secret ballot? Very little, if any.

"The point is when the battle came, wherever is immaterial, you would not fight. You were afraid. The dye is now cast, this House will not write a constitution, it will merely ratify that which is spoon-fed to it, so the quicker the better so the taxpayers will lose as little as possible. The three branches of government in Georgia, legislative, judicial, and executive are gone in so far as this constitution is being drawn. Oh, we in the legislature may cross a 't' or dot an 'i' or change a word evidenced to testimony or vice versa. But your infamous 121 less thirty odd have proved your mettle. To paraphrase Sir Winston Churchill, if Georgia shall last for a thousand years, men shall say this was her poorest hour.

"While 121 represent about 22 percent of Georgia's population, you didn't have the intestinal fortitude to even represent that 22 well, which brings us to the second point I wish to make. It should now be obvious to all, and the events of the last two days have proved it beyond the doubt of even yourselves, the representatives of rural counties of Georgia don't deserve to be perpetuated in this House. You don't represent your people, you don't even represent geography. It should be now apparent that you represent the governor of Georgia and his bidding is your destiny.

"I truly wish you could be justified on the grounds that only you rural representatives are independent, self-sufficient, and only you possess integrity sufficient to withstand the autocracy of a powerful executive. But alas, you have failed. And now it only remains for the federal judiciary to preach the funeral oration over a legislative system of rural control that only yesterday proved itself to be lacking in vitality, dead. We of the urban areas didn't kill you, you killed yourself with 121 votes, far in excess of the majority of this House. You didn't have the political, intestinal fortitude to put across a meager crumb of legislative independence for this House.

"At the beginning of these remarks, I told of my unbroken dream of the great independence of the irreproachable combination: lawyer, farmer, statesman. And I am disillusioned to find you just men after all. I also told you of a new dream yet to come. Mr. Cargroan yesterday told you of his dream of rural and urban Georgia walking down the road together. And he also mentioned the dreaming of Reverend Martin Luther King.

I think I too should be privileged to dream a little. I have a dream of a new Georgia, politically. I dream of one where relatively few of you 121 faces will return to the House of Representatives. I dream of a House of Representatives with about 100 members in it, representing a maximum of 50 counties in Georgia. I have a dream of a general assembly where it's members are paid about \$10,000 a year, " it's more than that now. "Where they don't have to depend on anyone putting them on interim committees to make a living. I have a dream of a House of Representatives and a Senate in Georgia that represents no interests except the interests of the people who elect them. Where legislators are not bribed by highway funds, but where such funds are allocated basically as school funds, on some reasonable and equitable basis. Where the legislators don't even know who the highway director is, much less have to make weekly trips to beg roads. I dream of a Georgia where the governor presents his legislation on the basis of it's reasonableness, it's merit, and it's soundness. Not on the basis of doing him a personal favor, paying a political debt, or sucking a political plum.

You say, 'How are you going to take politics out of politics?' I answer, we're not going to take politics out of politics, we're just going to change some of the rules so as to conform to a government where all have some rights and no minority can stampede and trample over the majority. Or the majority deny basics to the minority. Where neither the rural nor the urban can gleefully apply the lash. This new House of which I dream may not be more independent than the present House, but it is a cinch it could not be less independent. Yesterday proved that fact. Not through the newspapers, not through the federal government, not through the urban masses, but by your own willingness to be masters of your own fate. I salute you and bid you a fond farewell." And he did not run for reelection.

SHORT: Pretty courageous stuff.

JONES: Well, you can imagine how many folks took the floor on a point of personal privilege after him. I mean it was like someone poured gasoline on them and set them on fire. He didn't care. He went back to Cobb county, practiced law, became superior court judge. It was very strong, but he said what happened, he told what happened. And of course, like I said, the federal court ruled very shortly thereafter that we were malapportioned, that that constitution would not be submitted to the people, and we went home.

They also ruled that the House had to be reapportioned the same as the Senate had been, congressional redistricting. It was too late to do it for the '64 elections, they were going to let the

people elected in '64 come in in January and serve that session. But there would have to be a special election in '65 to finish up the last of the two year term. You had an election in '64, which was in effect for one year -- the '65 session -- then we had to run again in '65 after we had reapportioned the House in the regular session of '65 to serve the second year. And then we got back on a two year basis. But there were two one year session in there.

SHORT: Let's move ahead to 1966. A very, very strange election that started with Ellis Arnall and Ernest Vandiver as the two main candidates. Jimmy Carter ran, Herman Talmadge ran briefly, and then withdrew. What is your recollection of that election?

Jones: Well, we skipped '65. And I hope I'm -- if time's a factor, just tell me. But '65 may have been the most interesting of all because -- well, it wasn't more interesting than '66, nothing could be more interesting than '66. But '65 is when we reapportioned that House. Now that was bloody. That was one of the most emotionally traumatic things I've ever seen happen to a group of people.

That 121 that Flournoy was talking about, most of these guys had been up there for many years. I mean if you got into the legislature, you'd stay generally. They were small counties, everybody knows everybody in the county next to them, and things of that nature. They were very close friends. And let me say this about them. Particularly after reading Flournoy's speech, I give the impression that they were bad folks. They weren't bad folks. I was amazed when I got to Atlanta -- I indicate how young I was -- I mean I walked around with my mouth hanging open because these guys were so great. People I'd read about and heard about all my life nearby. And they took me under their arms, they treated me like a surrogate son. They weren't a bunch of bad guys.

I think in one of your posings to Elliot you mentioned the fact that they were rural and segregationists and all that. That's absolutely not true. There were a lot of really good people in that legislature. Jamie MacKay for example. I mean, you couldn't find a finer man than Jamie MacKay. There were a lot of good people in there.

But they were then faced with the fact that we're going to apportion the House on population. We had three representatives from Muscogee county. We had to go out and find four other people to run for the legislature. We literally were walking the street, asking people to run for the legislature. I mean, you can think that's a joke, and it is somewhat of an exaggeration, but not really. I mean we'd get together and sit down, "Well what about so-and-so?" "I don't know, I don't know." "What do you think about him?" And we were dividing up name and calling them, saying, "Will you please run for the legislature?" We went from three to seven.

But in these rural counties, you might have four counties, each of whom had one representative. They're going to now be in a district, and they're going to have one representative. And these guys in large measure may have been very close friends, they may have served with each other ten, twelve years. And three of them are going to stay at home and one of them's coming back up there. How are they going to decide? You flip coins? Do you say to your buddy, "You go, I'd rather you go than me go." "Are we all going to run against each other?" It was really, really bad, but we got through it.

Now that was one time, Bob, and I think you were working in Governor Sander's government at that time, when it probably helped for the governor to have a very direct hand in there with George T. as the speaker of the House. I'm not sure with all the emotional conflict in it that the House could have done it themselves. I think that probably Carl and George T. got it

done when we might have had a hard time doing it ourselves. But anyway, that was '65. And so we have the special election in '65. We come back up there in '66, you know, for the regular session in '66. Before that governor's race you were talking about. And now we've got all of these new folks in there. You've got a lot of old folks who are still back home. That was one of the overlays on that governor's race in 1966 that made it even more interesting. You also had the Jullian Bond situation in 1966.

SHORT: Yeah, I was going to ask you about that. You were there.

JONES: I was there. And probably one of the votes -- I can think of two votes I made in the eight years I was in the legislature I wish I could take back. And that was one of them, because I was one of the ones who voted to deny Jullian his seat. Jullian and I later became -- I'm not going to say close friends, but we were friends. And he understood, but Jullian of course, he was a young college student. I think he was still out at Moorehouse at the time. He had come down here -- he had gone to Quaker schools up north, his daddy was a president of some college up there. But he was one of the prime movers in SNCC, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and they were probably ahead of the rest of the county in their opposition to the Vietnam conflict.

But Jullian had gone further. He had made statement that he sympathized with those people who burned the draft cards and went to Canada. That was kind of the triggering effect. And the South has always been a little more conservative about things like that. And so this fire storm broke out, "We're going to deny him his seat." And he was denied his seat January when we went to Atlanta in '66 because of that. Because of that statement that he sympathized with draft card burners.

Interestingly enough, one of the new members we had from Columbus was a wonderful guy by the name of Albert Thompson, who was an African-American lawyer down there. And Albert voted not to seat him too. Albert was born on Fort Benning military reservation, his daddy had been in the army, he was a career army man. And, you know, I'm not saying I was justified to do it because Albert voted to do it too.

In retrospect, I wish I hadn't cast that vote the way I did. The federal court said we were within our power to do it. A few months later, the Supreme Court of the United States, 9-zip said, "No, you weren't in your power to do it. The man was executing his first amendment rights of freedom of speech, and you put him back in there." Well, we had had the new election in '66, Jullian had run for his old seat, he got elected. He came up there January of '67, nobody opened their mouth. Jullian served from then on, he was still up there when I left there. But that was something that happened in '66.

Alright, now let's go to the governor's race of '66. As you mentioned, Ellis Arnall had gotten in that race. And he was going to run against Ernie Vandiver, back to the fact that a governor couldn't succeed himself, Ernie had now been out four years while Carl was governor. He was going to run for governor. Lester Maddox, who had run a surprisingly strong race against Peter Zack Geer for lieutenant governor in '62, he was in the governor's race. Bo Callaway, who had run for Congress for my congressional district over there, Harris county -- Callaway Gardens is the immediate county to the north of Columbus. And he was the first Republican I think elected to Congress from Georgia, since Reconstruction. That was in '64. Everybody was talking about, "Bo's going to run for governor, Bo's going to run for governor as a Republican." And he did.

So you've got those guys in the race. Jimmy Carter, who had served four years in the Senate now, from '62 to '64, you might say '63 to '65. He was running against Bo for Congress. I was right close to Carter, I mean his senatorial district adjoined my House district. We were elected at the same time, and in large measure I had run against a guy who was pretty close to Homer Moore, the guy he had run against. So we were fairly close. And he was running for Congress and I was carrying around Columbus, and the next thing I know, when Bo gets in the governor's race, Jimmy gets out of the congressional race and into the governor's race. He followed Bo into the governor's race. So it was an interesting time.

Vandiver had a heart attack. You know Garland had the heart attack in '62, now Vandiver's having one in '64, so the race is now -- Callaway is unopposed for the Republicans -- so they knew whoever was running would have to run against Callaway. This is two years after '64 when Goldwater had carried the state. You'd had the Voting Rights Act, you'd had the Civil Rights Act, you'd had a number of things that had happened in there. So, a Republican was going to be a very strong candidate. Arnall had been a great governor of the state back in the '40's. He was kind of the wunderkind, you might say. He won the freight rate cases against the railroads, and now that the governor's race is on one man, one vote, and not the county-unit system, he's a very strong, viable candidate. But he was running against Maddox, Carter's in there. Jimmy Gray from down in Albany was in there. And it's taken off.

The Democratic primary, they had the election and Jimmy came in a very close third, Lester ran second, and Arnall got the most votes. I think that a lot of Republicans, now they'd deny it --they voted for Lester. Because they thought Lester would be easier to beat than Arnall. And so they have the run off a couple weeks later and Lester beat Arnall. I don't know if it was with Republican help or not. They deny it, but the boy who had run my campaign in 1962 had been a friend of mine in high school -- Bill Amos -- he had run Callaway's campaign for Congress in '64 and he was running Callaway's campaign for governor in '66. I knew a little bit about what was going on and I think they did raid the primary. But that's neither here nor there. They ended up with Maddox as the Democratic nominee. Callaway is now the Republican nominee, so they headed into the general election.

Well, there were a lot of Democrats in the state that were very unhappy about the thing because Callaway had gotten more votes. He carried my county something like four-to-one. It was a bad situation. But Arnall allowed a write-in campaign to be waged on his behalf, and he got about 60,000 if I remember right -- 50,000 or 60,000 write-in votes. And even though Callaway had more votes than Lester, he didn't have a majority. And the Georgia constitution provided that in the event anybody running for state-wide office did not get a majority of the vote -- not a plurality, but a majority -- the legislature selected. So we wake up the day after the general election, the legislature has got to select who the governor's going to be. And it was a situation. It wasn't as bad as the three governor mess in '46, I don't guess, but it was close to it.

SHORT: What do you remember about that? That was another very historical time.

JONES: I was ten years old, I don't remember much about it. But I remember we made national headlines. That was before television news, but we were all over the papers and everybody was laughing at us and everything else.

SHORT: Yeah.

JONES: P.T. McCutcheon, who was Ellis Arnall's executive secretary, he had a son that was in law school with me, Tim McCutcheon, and I knew Mr. McCutcheon later. He could tell some terrible tales about. He was the guy, I think, that got hit by the pistol or something there, anyway.

SHORT: That was a very dark day in Georgia political history. But getting back to '66, there was thought and a lot of media members and pundits thought that Jimmy Carter was coming along so strongly toward the end of that campaign that if it had lasted another week or two he probably would have won. You were involved in it, what do you think?

JONES: I was involved in it, but not very closely. George T. was running for Lieutenant governor against Peter Zach. George T. had asked me to help him in his campaign while Jimmy was still in the congressional race. I tried to figure out a way to go to Atlanta and do it full time, but just never could. I mean, money was always a problem. I was just a young lawyer and had a wife teaching school to support my political habits, you might say. By then we had four kids under five years old on the ground and there wasn't any way I could take off and do it. I was more active, I think, in George T.'s race in '66 than I was Jimmy's, but I kept trying to help how I could.

The night of the election, the Democratic primary, my wife and I, we were in the Dinkler, which was where Carter's headquarters were. And when we went to bed, it was kind of like Wisconsin in '76 ten years later. We were in the runoff. As I recall, we were number two, we were in the runoff. And we figured, if we're in the runoff, we're going to win this thing. And at about 2:00 in the morning, I heard somebody out screaming in the hall, woke me up. I went out and we were out of the runoff. Some votes had come in from down in southeast Georgia, close to the coast, and they had gone heavily for Maddox. And we were out of the runoff.

SHORT: That period of time between the general election and the day that Maddox was elected by the legislature gave you time to really become an independent House.

JONES: That's right. This thing had been simmering since George T. replaced George L. in January of 1963. It had gotten stoked up higher with the Bedgood plan on the last night of the regular session in '64. But in '66, we had been thinking about, "You know, there's a chance we're going to have a Republican governor." A lot of folks thought Callaway was going to win that race. And we're certainly not going to let a Republican governor tell a Democratic House who their speaker is going to be.

Robin Harris who was one of the greatest guys I ever served with. He was from Dekalb county, a wonderful man. He was chairman of the House judiciary committee. And the House judiciary committee was kind of a hot bed of trouble makers. We were all lawyers, you had Elliot on there, you had Reed on there, I was on there, Sam Nunn was on there. I don't think Sam was there in '66. But anyway, we were concerned about it. And so we started thinking that this would be an ideal time to try to strike while there was not going to be as much executive possibility or possibility of executive interference in this thing. And we wake up the day after the general election and no governor's going to tell anybody in the legislature what to do because they're coming to us, hat in hand about, "Vote for me."

So, there was a meeting, and we met out at Robin's house there in Decatur, right off East Ponce de Leon. And we decided we would have us an arrangements committee. We were going

to call a caucus of the House Democratic members. There had been a lot of Republicans elected the year before this redistricting -- the House reapportionment. And they properly had organized them a caucus. And they'd elected a minority leader and stuff like that -- a minority whip. And so we said, "We're going to have us a Democratic caucus, they've got a Republican caucus, we're going to have us a Democratic caucus. And we're going to have a meeting." The arrangements committee sent out this letter. We didn't sign it with anybody's name, we just said, "The arrangements committee." And anyway, we had that meeting. I think that was really before the general election, if I remember right now.

But anyway, had it at Stone Mountain. It was after the legislative day over here at Georgia when all the legislators came over to a Georgia football game and barbecue. And, you know, that letter got out, "We're going to have us a Democratic caucus and we're going to discuss the election of the speaker and legislative independence." So everybody that wasn't on the arrangements committee, they're calling each other, "Who's this arrangements committee? You going?" Stuff like that. We lay low as Brer Fox did -- Brer Rabbit, one. So it was funny, but they all showed up. Everybody showed up at Stone Mountain that morning. Reed has written something about that -- I haven't seen it, but you talk to Reed about it. Everybody was in favor of it. They said, "Yeah, this makes sense." And so an elections committee was appointed. That's right, that was before the general election. The elections committee was appointed to make recommendations about what we were going to do. It wasn't really an elections committee -- it was we were going to select the Democratic nominee for speaker which would be, "tantamount to election," because there were a lot more Democrats than there were Republicans. Anyway, we met in the House of Representatives on the Sunday after the Georgia-Auburn football game. I think it was November the 13th if I remember right.

And Robin Harris ran for speaker, George L. ran for speaker. A guy named Bill Styce, who was a wonderful lawyer from Harris county, he was from Pennsylvania and he had come down to Fort Benning during World War II and married a gal from Harris county and came back after the war. Dick Richardson from Savannah. There were four candidates for speaker if I remember right. And George L., of course, was selected to be the Democratic nominee. George Busbee, interestingly enough, was once of the Democrats in addition to me and several others, who voted for Callaway in January. And there was a lot of concern about -- he was selected to be the Democratic floor leader for the House. And that's when Lester Maddox appointed Tom Murphy to be the administration floor leader. So, you had Tom Murphy who was Lester's administration floor leader, you had George Busbee who had voted for Callaway as a Democratic floor leader, and it was an interesting situation. But the long and the short of it is the House then and ever since has elected it's speaker. The governor no longer tells the House who the speaker is going to be.

Now, there again, looking back, I've had second thoughts about that. You know, no good deed goes unpunished. And now you've got all that power that we just talked about an hour or so ago now -- about appointing every committee member, every chairman, assigning every bill, what bill is going to be called, what bill is not going to be called, stuff like that -- is concentrated in one person who is selected by a very small geographic area in the state of Georgia. You got the governor who's elected by the whole state, you've got the lieutenant governor and the Senate that's elected by the whole state, you got the speaker of the House that's elected by one district. And if you've got a good speaker of the House, you've got a good situation. If you've got one though who might not be quite so good, then you've got an intolerable situation. Because with the power he's got, he can pave every square inch of the whole district. Nobody's going to vote

out their local representative because he's speaker of the House. You might have a situation there in perpetuity. But anyway, so far we've stumbled through and it's working I guess.

[Audio gap]

SHORT: We've got Maddox elected. We've got that period of time between the election

--

JONES: Maddox is nominated

SHORT: Nominated. Yes. The period time between the general election in '66 and the convening of the legislature in '67.

JONES: You're right. You're right.

SHORT: Where the legislature --

JONES: See, that was about two months.

SHORT: A lot of time. It gave each of those candidates time to really do a lot of lobbying with the members of the General Assembly. What do you remember about that?

JONES: Are we running? Well, as you had pointed out, Bob, it was two months. I was kind of involved in the Callaway thing. You know, it makes it sound like I'm Forrest Gump and I was involved in everything, and I don't mean it that way. But Bill Amos, who was Callaway's AA when he was in Congress and managed his congressional race in '64 and gubernatorial race in '66, had been one of my closest friends in high school -- Columbus High School. He was a year older than I was. And he had managed my campaign in '62. In fact, the fact that we won that race is the reason Callaway wanted him to run his campaign in '64 and then carried him to Washington with him.

So, they wake up and here they are, they had the most votes, but they're going into a Democratic legislature that's going to have to pick them, and what are we going to do? I was, I think, called fairly early on. There was no way, in all respect to Governor Maddox, that I could support him. I could never have supported the man. When I was at Emory and at Emory Law School, he was running those full-page, on page 2 of the *Atlanta Constitution* or *Journal* ever Saturday, small type ads going on about everything in the world, and running the Pickrick and doing all those things that I just could not have supported. And my county had gone heavily for Callaway. I would have changed parties -- as much as I'm a yellow dog Democrat -- I would have changed parties nearly before I'd have done it -- and Charlie Weltner did, if you recall. Charlie Weltner refused to run on the ticket with him as the nominee.

I knew I was going to be helping. Ellis -- Lester -- I'll get it in a minute -- Elliot Levitas, who was the representative from Dekalb county and a close friend of mine, he was a law partner of Ellis Arnall who had gotten the 60,000 vote write-ins -- the 50,000 or 60,000 that denied Callaway the outright win. He was interested in helping and he helped. Busbee helped. You know, later Democratic governor of the state of Georgia. But my recollection is that George was involved with it.

We started calling folks, but it's kind of like we were preaching to the choir. My close friends in the legislature were going to vote for Callaway. You know, I was preaching to the choir. But, we did. We tried to call folks, and they were scratching around. They were doing things. I think that they mounted somewhat of a campaign with the business leaders of the state. They had bank presidents calling legislators and stuff like that. Because Callaway was a very popular guy. Bear it in mind now, two years before Barry Goldwater carried this state heavily against Lyndon Johnson. So they were not without resources, it was just marshaling them.

Bob Elliot, who was a long serving judge in federal court in Columbus, had been Herman Talmadge's floor leader during the two governor mess back in '46 and during his administration. And by then -- I think Judge Elliot was appointed in '62 by Kennedy -- but I remembered that he had been Talmadge's floor leader and he had been the floor leader during that situation where they would try to resolve the two governor -- three governor, however many you want to call it -- mix up in '46. I asked him, "What did ya'll do? And he referred me to the House journals, the Senate journals. And you know what the House and Senate journal is, a voluminous book that deals in painful detail with every bill, every House, every resolution, everything that happens in the House and the Senate during the session. And we got that thing and went back -- 'cause Bob Elliot is one of the smartest men that's ever lived. And we figured out what he had done from a parliamentary standpoint, the motions he made. And we knew it was an uphill battle, and we lost it eventually. There wasn't any question we lost it, lost it badly. The legislature was heavily Democratic, and they selected Maddox over Callaway. But we got a lot more votes than they thought we were going to get. And what we did -- Peter Zack Geer had been defeated by George T. Smith for lieutenant governor.

Well, in Georgia the way it operates, the legislature convenes on the second Monday in January. And when there's been a governor's election, they are not inaugurated -- sworn in -- until Tuesday, the day after the legislature convenes. So, on the second Monday in January of 1967, even though George L. is going to be the new speaker, George T. is still the speaker of the House. And Peter Zack Geer, even though he's been defeated by George T. for lieutenant governor, he's still the lieutenant governor. When you have a joint session, the lieutenant governor presides. So, here you've got this situation. Peter Zach, who's been defeated by George T., sitting up there besides George T., presiding over this session of the general assembly, the second Monday in January, 1967. And we're going to select who the governor is. A small group of us, we went to talk to Peter Zack Geer. I kept quiet because I was too closely associated with George T., I guess. But we told him kind of what our legislative strategy was going to be. I've heard Elliot's tape with you, and Elliot indicated that he thought P.Z. treated us kind of roughly. My recollection is that P.Z. listened to what we had to say and I was very favorably impressed with the way he conducted the thing. That's a 73 year-old man talking about something that happened close to 50 years ago. I may be wrong, Elliot may be right, probably the truth is somewhere in the middle. But I thought that Peter Zack Geer, he dealt the cards off the top of the deck with us that day. When the day was over though, Lester Maddox was governor of the state of Georgia.

SHORT: That was only after an attempt -- I know representative Reed Harris introduced some sort of legislation to send it back to the people.

JONES: That was the whole idea, was to try to get it -- there wasn't any way they were going to vote Callaway governor. But we were trying to get them to go back and have a rerun

without any possibility of a write-in and whoever got the most votes. That was the strategy that was adopted. Because we knew we couldn't win directly, but maybe we could get it indirectly. We didn't get it either way.

SHORT: Let's talk a minuted about the Supreme Court decision. That case went all the way to the United States Supreme Court. The question being, as I recall, "Is the legislature legally empowered to elect a governor under those circumstances." Or, "Was that provision in our constitution constitutional."

JONES: Well, I don't remember that much about that, Bob, so I can't answer it. But obviously it stood.

SHORT: Yeah, 5-4 vote. In fact, Justice Black ruled that the legislature had the power to elect the governor in the first place, going back to colonial days, I presume.

JONES: I was worrying about other things by then. I wasn't involved in that lawsuit.

SHORT: Well, let's move along. Lester Maddox was elected. That didn't play well with a lot of people in Georgia. But at the end of his term he seemed to get a passing grade.

JONES: I think that's true. I think Lester surprised a lot of us. I'm not going to say -- I think that he didn't do any harm, any particular harm. And one of the things he did that you've got to give the man credit for. He made more appointments of blacks, of African-Americans, to positions of responsibility in the state of Georgia than I any governor had done before. Lester did something else, though. I think that one of the things about being a chief executive of a political situation -- be it president, or governor, or anything like that -- is to, let's say, "show the flag." To be accessible to the people. You remember he to have the little people's day, where people could come and go through his office, or go through the mansion, or something like that. And they could see the governor. Lester would get out -- I think you were in his office. I mean, he'd travel all over this state. I mean, if you invited Lester to come somewhere, for a pig-picking or anything else, Lester was going, he was going to show up. He was accessible to the people. All of those hundreds of high school groups that come to the capital during the legislative session. He was out there with every one of them having his picture taken. And I think that is good. The office of governor is so demanding that I think that good executives, they tend to just hole up in there and make all these big decisions and they become encapsulated. But Lester didn't do that. He was accessible to the people. I think in large measure, though, you had a pretty good Senate running. You had George L. in the House. I think the legislature kept the state on a pretty even keel that four years when Lester rode his bicycle and got his picture taken. But we got through it and it was alright.

SHORT: He was not an overpowering governor, was he?

JONES: I wouldn't say so. I mean, I don't want to say anything ugly. But you know, I don't think he did much harm. One thing that I've never forgotten though, the departments, the various departments of state government, if they've got something they want enacted into law, the first thing they do, the carry it to the governor. "Governor, how about making this part of

your administration package this year?" And you know, the governor can't take everything. So he takes some, he doesn't take some. But they've still got this bill they want introduced. And so then they get out and try to find them a legislator to introduce the bill if the governor's not going to do it. And I somehow got to where -- what we used to call the Highway Department -- now the DOT -- and Public Safety, they would use me quite a bit on some of their legislation that didn't make the A-team, let's say. And one of them was -- the drivers' license folks wanted to implement eye exams every four or five years. Now, we do that now. Well, I said, "That makes sense to me. People who are blind shouldn't be driving. So I introduced this bill to require over a certain age -- I'm over that age now, I might add -- that you had to have your eyes examined every five years, I think. And we got it passed. I mean, it's hard to argue with that thing. Lester vetoed it. I never will forget what he said. He said, "Well, I know some people that've got poor eyesight that are safer drivers than folks that've got good eyesight." You can't argue with that, I'm sure that there are some out there that way. But he was interesting.

SHORT: Well, in 1970 you decided not to seek reelection. Why?

JONES: Oh, a number of things. I'd been up there eight years. I never was very wealthy. Didn't have any money to speak of. We were doing alright -- had a law partner Lee Grogan, great guy from up in Cherokee county. In '68 we had started growing our firm. We had started picking up some folks. I needed to spend more time there. My children were 9, 8, 7, and 5. I started having to think about financial concerns. Because when you're in the legislature, particularly if you're an active legislator, it takes a lot of time. And I needed to start doing that. Carter was running for governor again. He never stopped running after '66. He just kept running for four years. I wanted to try to help him. I hadn't been able to do as much as I'd wanted to in '66 because I was tied up with George T.'s race a little bit. So I wanted to help some more there. So it was just a myriad of things. And it's kind of one of those things. You know, in the army, you either go up or get out. And in politics it's pretty much the same. I knew I wasn't going up, and there wasn't any sense in hanging around.

SHORT: You were close to President Carter.

JONES: Well, somewhat. We were both elected at the same time, as I indicated earlier - - '62. His senatorial district included Chattahoochee county, which is the county immediately south of Muscogee county. We were part of that freshman class, he was in the Senate, I was in the House. Jeanette and Rosalynn got along fairly well, he and I got along fairly well. He helped me with some legislation when it got to the Senate, and we became fairly close.

SHORT: He appointed you to the Board of Regents.

JONES: Yeah, that was in '74.

SHORT: '74. Tell us a little bit about the Board of Regents. A lot of people don't understand what the group is and what it does.

JONES: A lot of us regents aren't sure sometimes. But, no, it was a governing board -- Dick Russell. We're sitting here in the Russell library right now. When he was governor of

Georgia back in the early '30's, he reorganized state government. Jimmy Carter, I think, was the next one that did it in 1971. He put all of the state colleges under the university system. And the Board of Regents when I was on it -- I don't know what the make-up is now, but we had 15 members. I think it was one from each congressional district, and then you had five at large. I don't even know how many congressmen we've got in Georgia now, but I know it's a lot more than it was back then. But we had 15 people, and they are theoretically the ones -- the board -- who run the university system of Georgia. Which includes your research institutions, such as the University of Georgia, Medical College of Georgia, Georgia Tech -- I don't know, Georgia State and Georgia Southern may be what they call research institutions now, but back in the '70's when I was on it, those were the three. All of the, what we used to call four year colleges, which are now state universities, all of the junior colleges, which are now colleges. But that's what it is.

SHORT: Let's talk for a minute about party politics in Georgia. We've seen a vast change from the time that you were in the House of Representatives back in the '60's. The Democratic party has lost a lot of ground. Some people think that the state party is too urban, too dependent on minorities, too controlled by labor unions, and too liberal. Do you agree with that?

JONES: Well, I can't address the state party. I'm not that familiar with the state party. But I think that you would hear those same criticisms from some circles, let's say, non-friendly circles, toward all Democrats, not just the state Democratic party in Georgia. Obviously, there's been a sea change in politics in Georgia. When do you want to start it? I discussed back when I was getting into it, the courthouse Republicans. Back then everybody was a Democrat. That was in the '50' and '60's. Then you started having all of these upheavals. You had Brown v. Board of Education, you had the Civil Rights movements and pushes of Truman in the late '40's. You had the Dixiecrat rebellion, I think it was in '48. You had the other Civil Rights cases coming along. You had the election of Kennedy in 1960. You had more pushing, more federal court intervention in a lot of things in the South. You had Kennedy's, in November of '63. You had LBJ becoming president. You had the Civil Rights Act, you had the Voting Rights Act. You had the Goldwater/Johnson race in '68, where the South, Georgia went for Goldwater. They'd also voted for Strom Thurmond if I recall correctly in '48, if I'm not mistaken. I may be wrong on that. And you've got things going. Two years later in '66 you had Bo Callaway getting the most votes for governor. He didn't end up being the governor, but he had certainly had a plurality. You had a growing presence of Republicans in the legislature. And then you had the Nixon Southern strategy. You had a lot of things that caused people in Georgia to reassess their situation as to whether they were Democrats or whether or not they were Republicans. Now you can call it conservative versus liberal realignment, you can call it something else if you want to. But I think that the things that you just said about, "They're too close to this, they're too much that, and so forth," that's the same thing you hear on a national level as well as Georgia.

SHORT: You mentioned Republican cross-over voting in the Maddox-Callaway race.

JONES: I can't prove that.

SHORT: Well, do you think that we out to have party registration in Georgia?

JONES: No, I really don't. Cross-over voting is always a problem. There were a lot of things in the legislature that I just didn't worry about a lot. And election law was one of them. I guess it comes from the fact that I was from Muscogee county, Columbus. We've always had honest elections in Columbus. We've never had the first hint of any voter fraud or anything else in Columbus. And it was my experience that the guys in the legislature that were always worrying about election laws, and trying to get this tinkered with, they were from the counties where they had the problems. We didn't have that problem, and I never worried too much about it.

SHORT: So you weren't surprised in 2002 when Georgians elected a Republican governor.

JONES: No, no. Callaway, all things considered, would have been the first one. There was another guy from Columbus by the name of Ed Smith, who ran in 1962 for governor. He was running for governor as a Republican. He was killed in an automobile wreck there in Woodberry, Georgia. He was out driving himself, been to a meeting in Atlanta, and he's in a car going home about 2:30 in the morning. Trying to practice law the next morning and didn't have a driver. Went to sleep and ran off the road there where 85 East and West separate in Woodberry, Georgia. Killed himself. You know, I think that J.R. Allen, who was from Columbus, who was a bright and rising star, but like a lot of others, he'd started off a Democrat and he'd changed over. I think J.R. Allen could have run for and been elected governor of the state of Georgia. But there again, we had consolidated our city and county government in Columbus and he was out speaking around the state in favor of consolidation of city and county governments. Had been to Rome one night, I think it was in '74, maybe '75 Flying home on a late plane, it went in, and J.R. was killed. So, it was just a question of time, in my mind, before it happened. Now we're sitting here, you've got a Republican governor, you've got a Republican controlled Senate, you've got a Republican controlled House.

SHORT: And the majority is increasing every year. How long do you think it will take for the Democrats to get their House in order and regain control of the legislature?

JONES: Well, I'm not sure they ever will. I mean, you're asking the question. There's a lot of demographics in it. And you know as well as I do, a lot of times luck enters into politics. You know, being in the right time, at the right place, and stuff like that. But, unless there's a -- how long was the South solid Democrat?

SHORT: One hundred and thirty-seven years.

JONES: Well, we've got a few to go, haven't we?

SHORT: What's life been for Milton Jones after public service?

JONES: Wonderful. No, I did go home. I helped Carter a little bit in that first session in 1971. But I went home April 1st of 1970 and then he appointed me to the Board of Regents in '74 and I served 'til '81. And that was my last involvement on any official basis in public service.

I practiced law forty years. As soon as I was able to, I retired. I've been retired 12 years, the best 12 years of my life. And I have been a truly blessed individual.

SHORT: Good. Let me ask you this question. What do you think is your most satisfying accomplishment as a state legislator?

JONES: Well, oh Lord, Bob. In Georgia, there was a doctrine called the time-price differential. And what that was was the appellate courts of this state had said that if I sell you a watch for \$50 and you pay me \$5 a month for ten months, that that is not a loan of money, that is a time-price. And the usury laws control only interest on loans of money. So in effect, anything that was sold on time in the state of Georgia could be charged a time-price differential unlimited, anything. And when you look at all the automobiles that were sold in the state of Georgia, all the refrigerators that are sold in the state of Georgia, all the revolving charge accounts that were in the state of Georgia -- this was before credit cards, this was '65, '66, '67 -- you can see that there were abuses like you could not imagine.

There was one fellow they called the Bedspread Man in Columbus. And he'd load up his car with those Chenille bedspreads they used to make up there in Dalton. He'd go out through the poorer sections of town -- black. And he'd sell bedspreads. And he'd sell bedspreads to these ladies for \$2 a week, stuff like that. And he'd get two dollars, and he'd go back the next week and collect it. And eventually they'd miss a payment. Would never get them paid for. He'd take the bedspread back, put it in his car, sell it down the street. They call it the bedspread game. But that was an abuse.

But a particularly flagrant situation arose in the mid-60's, '65 in particular, where these people were out making second mortgages to unsophisticated borrowers. What they would do, is they would go by and they'd tell them, "You need a new roof. We're going to put some shingles on there." Or, "You need some siding on your house," or "you've got termites, we need to go in and do your floor and your house is going to fall in if you don't." And they'd get them to sign a contract, "We're going to fix your house for \$2,000." But the contract -- they'd end up paying over \$5,000. They'd put on an origination fee, they'd put on exorbitant attorney fees. They didn't pay the lawyer, they called it that. This kind of fee, a \$10 notary fee, stuff like that. And then they'd charge them 20 or 30 percent simple interest on the loan. A typical example would be a \$2,000 job, which was probably a jacked-up price to start with, and a \$5,000 payback. And I saw it kind of as a young lawyer, when people started coming in to me, "I'm losing my house, I'm losing my house. What can I do?" And I went to the legislative counsel's office -- Veron Slatondon, Harvey Finley, and some of those great guys. They're the legislature's lawyers. They found a bill that the state of Florida had introduced and passed and we copied that bill verbatim. And we got it passed. It was a terrible fight. We got it through the House, had trouble, but we got it through the House. And you talk about Carter, Jimmy Carter, he owned me lock, stock and barrel after that bill, because I had a fellow over there, a great guy, good friend of mine, he was handling that bill over in the Senate. And you know about the rules committee and how you've got to not only clear the Senate committee, but you've got to clear the Senate Rules committee to get on the rules calendar. And it's two days before the end of the session. It was on the Senate rules calendar, but somebody -- I won't mention his name, he was defeated for reelection that following election -- he got it off the rules calendar. He got it removed from the rules calendar. And Jimmy just happened to be in the rules committee and saw it. Even though he wasn't my floor manager, he came, he hunted me down and told me, he said, "Your second mortgage act is

off of the rules committee calendar." And I went back over there and I acted badly, but we got it back on and we got the thing passed. The following year, it had been very widely received, well-received. Probably the first piece of consumer protection that had been passed in that century, to be honest with you. That wasn't a high priority back then. Like environmental measures weren't a high priority either back then too when Reed started on the marshes and stuff like that. But the next year, we got passed the automobile sales finance act, and retail installment sales. And I'm not real proud of those bills, because in order to get them passed, we had to give them, in my opinion, exorbitant rates of return, but at least there was a limit, if you follow what I'm saying. If I had to say anything, those would be the things I'm proudest of, because we were able to kind of bust up that racket.

SHORT: Your biggest disappointment.

JONES: Well, I don't know. I think probably the way that thing worked out in 1967 about Governor Maddox ending up as governor and Robin Harris not being elected speaker of the House. I think that if we'd had Callaway and we'd had Robin Harris as speaker of the House, the bar would have been set very high for future speakers.

SHORT: We haven't talked about the 1970 governor's race between Jimmy Carter and Carl Sanders. What do you remember about that year?

JONES: Well, like I said, Jimmy never quit running for governor in '66. I think he went home long enough for -- Amy was born a little later. But he kept running. And he travelled this state, I think day and night for four years and he really built up -- well, Jimmy was a personable guy. It'd be hard not to like him if you got to know him and he made a lot of contact. He was very active in Lions, if I remember. He was just a governor, and he ran very long and very hard. Brooks Pennington, of Pennington Green, had been very prominent in Jimmy's gubernatorial race in '66, along with Ford Spinks from down in Tifton. They were two guys who had served in the Senate with him. Brooks, of course, supported Governor Sanders again in '70 when he ran for reelection -- well, not reelection, but election for a second term. But you had Hamilton Jordan closely involved in the race, you had Jody Powell, you know they were driving and doing things like that, handling press. But you had people involved in that race like Charlie Kirbo and others in Atlanta, and it was a different race than the '66 race. And it moved right along. My law partner, Lee Grogan, he chaired Jimmy's campaign in Columbus that year. I was fairly active in it.

SHORT: Two schools of thought I've heard over the years about that campaign. One was that Governor Carter ran sort of a tough, dirty campaign and the other school of thought is that everything's fair in love, war, and politics. What is your reaction to that?

JONES: Well, number one, I don't think it was a dirty campaign. I would dispute that highly -- strongly. I think Jimmy did move to the right a little bit and that caused some concern among some of us. There were discussions about that. But we understood and we stayed with the program, won the race. And in his inaugural address, in his inaugural address, Jimmy Carter said, "The time for racial segregation in Georgia is over."

SHORT: If you had your political life to live over again Milton, would you do anything differently?

JONES: Not run.

[Laughter]

SHORT: Did you ever think about running for a higher office?

JONES: I think everybody thinks about running for higher office. And there was speculation about me running for Controller General in '66 after that second mortgage situation. Because the Atlanta newspapers were all over it and Baldy was drawing cartoons and I was the guy in the white hat and all that. You know, you get back to it, I'm a young lawyer in my early '30's and I haven't got any money. And you know, unfortunately, particularly in secondary races, the most folks who give you money are people you're going to end up regulating. And then you find yourself in that situation, "Well, if I do that, am I going to be able to do this?" Stuff like that. And it just never was a real possibility to me. If I had been older and I had been wealthy, maybe so, but I wasn't, and I didn't.

SHORT: How would you like to be remembered?

JONES: I guess that presupposes that I want to be remembered. I'm sure there's some folks that I'd just as soon forget about me. But I don't know. I'm glad I did what I did. I'm really glad I did what I did. I wouldn't take anything for the experience. It was one of the most educational experiences I've ever had. And while there was a lot of heartache and disappointment and a lot bad nights and stuff like that, overall it was a wonderfully positive thing. I've met some of the finest people I've ever known in my life. Those ole' boys, that country boy legislature when I went down there, despite what Bob said about them, and with some truth, they were wonderful people and I made friends that'll be my friends the day I die. Most of them are already dead, 'cause they were quite a bit older than I was. But people like Elliot Levitas, Robin Harris, Jimmy Carter, Sam Nunn, you know. I wouldn't take anything for the experiences I had and the friendships I made. That's not necessarily how -- that doesn't answer your question, but I'm proud of what I did.

SHORT: Have we forgotten anything? Is there something else you want to talk about with us?

JONES: I'm sure that I've already talked five times longer than you wanted to listen to me, so let's just call it now.

SHORT: Milton Jones, thank you very much for being our guest.

JONES: Thank you.