

**Mary Beazley interviewed by Bob Short**

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**Reflections on Georgia Politics**

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BOB SHORT: I'm Bob Short and this is Reflections on Georgia Politics sponsored by the Richard B. Russell Library at the University of Georgia and Young Harris College. Our guest is Mary Beazley, long time staff member of Georgia governors, lieutenant governors and United States senators. Mary, we're honored to have you.

MARY BEAZLEY: Thank you, Bob; I am honored to be here.

SHORT: Before we get into discussion about your many years at the state capital, let's talk about Mary Beazley. Tell us about yourself.

BEAZLEY: I was born in Athens, Georgia. My father was a professor at the university in the School of Agriculture. I lived in Athens until I was about twelve or thirteen years old and then I moved to Crawfordville. I lived in Crawfordville until I moved to Atlanta in 1959.

SHORT: Let's talk about your first job in the state capital.

BEAZLEY: I was hired by Mr. Ben Fortson as one of the receptionists in the information desk on the ground floor of the state capital. My desk sat right in front of the elevators that took everybody up and down to all floors. At the time I came to the capitol, the state government telephone directory was an eight by ten bifold printed on four sides and that gave all the state numbers. Many of the agencies were housed—within the capitol, beginning with—in room 100 we had the commerce department, then we had the revenue department, we had the auditor's office, we had many offices in the secretary of states, the examining boards, some of them were there and also corporations. Then we had an office there you could renew your driver's license, we had the state Purchasing Department and all that was almost on the ground floor. Then on the second floor was the governor's office, some more offices of the secretary of state, the controller general's office was there and the state treasurer's office was there.

The third floor of the capital were the legislative chambers and the clerk secretary of the house. I don't think the clerk of the senate stayed open all the time. I know the secretary of the

senate's office was just open a short portion of the year; from the time the legislature went into session until they approved the journal in March. Then on the fourth floor, we had the Game and Fish, and the Pardon and Paroles, and the Department of Corrections and I am sure I omitted some of them but all of those agencies were housed in the state capitol in 1959 through 1960.

SHORT: Then it was from the secretary of state's office that you went to work for the governor.

BEAZLEY: That's right. I had been there on that information desk where I could meet everybody that worked at the capitol. I got to know many of the legislators as they came and went and that was a really good on the job training for the job that came available to me in the governor's office. When a spot became available there, I was hired to be the receptionist in the governor's office in 1959.

SHORT: And that was Governor Earnest Vandiver.

BEAZLEY: Yes.

SHORT: Tell us about Governor Vandiver.

BEAZLEY: But first I want to tell you what Mr. Ben Fortson told me. He had advised me not to go into the governor's office. He said when your job is over and when Governor Vandiver leaves the capitol, you will not have a job. But that didn't stop me from going into the governor's office, I went right on in.

SHORT: And what were your duties in the governor's office originally?

BEAZLEY: I was the receptionist and handled a lot of the scheduling.

SHORT: But tell us about Governor Vandiver. What do you remember about Governor Vandiver?

BEAZLEY: Well I remember Governor Vandiver won his race for governor by carrying 156 counties out of 159. He lost Worth county, he lost Tift county where Bill Bone Hammer was running against him and Decatur county where Marvin Griffin was from. He came in as a very strong governor.

SHORT: Well do you have a favorite Vandiver story?

BEAZLEY: Well I do know he had to operate a lot under court orders. He had one under desegregation that he had to comply with and in order to implement that, he set up the John Sibley Commission that travelled all over the state of Georgia and then reported back; and they recommended that the schools be desegregated. Then Vandiver had to go back before the legislature in a special night session to request that they change the law because no state appropriations could go in to segregate the schools. And he was fortunate enough to get that changed and we did have peaceful integration.

SHORT: So you were there the whole Vandiver term??

BEAZLEY: Yes

SHORT: Four years.

BEAZLEY: Well three and a half.

SHORT: Three and a half years. Then what happened next?

BEAZLEY: Well when he came in, he was interested in cleaning up some corruption so he had Mr. Bill Bowden in the Purchasing Department to start and find a lots of fraud and waste in purchasing. In fact we had we had some ponds that wouldn't hold water and some boats that leaked. But he was instrumental in getting all that corrected and cutting state government across the board ten percent and then providing more services. But his biggest accomplishment was desegregating the schools and the university system.

SHORT: And then you went to work in the lieutenant governor's office.

BEAZLEY: Yes. I went to work for Peter Zack Geer. He had been the executive secretary to Governor Vandiver and he had also run in one of the offices of lieutenant governor in the late 1963. He won in '62 and I guess he took office in 1963. He was an excellent presiding officer in the senate. That was his major duty. And the third time in state government, they didn't have an office and a secretary for every senator; and the lieutenant governor's office seemed to serve the entire members of the senate which was about fifty two members because the secretary of the senate's office as I said was not open full time. And I guess the greatest thing he achieved was presiding over the legislature when they elected Governor Maddox governor.

SHORT: That was in 1967.

BEAZLEY: Yes.

SHORT: Then you were asked to join the staff of Governor Maddox.

BEAZLEY: Yes and I talked with—I think I discussed this with my friend Zell Miller and he advised me to go ahead and work for Governor Maddox because Governor—he had worked in the Maddox administration. He was going to work in it. And Governor Maddox had no commitments, no obligations, he had won the race almost independently of the legislature and he had no commitments to hire people. So, I was pleased that I was asked to work for him.

SHORT: What were your duties with governor Maddox?

BEAZLEY: I did his scheduling and was personal assistant to help with anything that I needed to do.

SHORT: Well he was certainly a colorful governor. He had People's Day.

BEAZLEY: Yes he did. We always set that up I think maybe twice a month and he brought in all the agency heads that would relate to any questions he might be asked and everyone that came got to speak with him, shake his hands and post a question. And if it was something that he could help with in another department of agency, he would call in that agency head to take action with the request of the constituent; which was very effective.

SHORT: And he travelled a lot.

BEAZLEY: Yes he never got tired. He was perpetual motion. And you do know he did run for governor—I mean president one time?

SHORT: Yes yes. Did you do that scheduling for him?

BEAZLEY: I was in Chicago with him. I went as a staff person so I have been fortunate to be in two presidential campaigns.

SHORT: All right. How would you remember Governor Maddox??

BEAZLEY: He's very thoughtful and appreciative of all that was done for him; even the smallest thing. He couldn't thank you enough. And even after he left the office, for many years, we gathered to celebrate his birthday on September the 3<sup>rd</sup> with lots of longtime friends and supporters.

SHORT: Governor Maddox was fortunate to be elected lieutenant governor. After he left office, where were you during that period?

BEAZLEY: Well I had just worked for him for four years and then he went to the lieutenant governor's office; with overwhelming percentage. And I had also been asked to stay on with Governor Carter and I was undecided what to do because I had enjoyed working for Governor Maddox. But I had known Governor Carter from his days in the state senate so I discussed it with my friend again, Zell Miller and he advised me to stay with Governor Carter because of the space limitation. He thought I would do better in bigger space than in a smaller confined office. So I made my decision to stay on with Governor Carter.

SHORT: And what did you do with Governor Carter?

BEAZLEY: I did his scheduling.

SHORT: And he travelled a lot.

BEAZLEY: And he travelled a lot yes.

SHORT: Were you surprised when he ran for president?

BEAZLEY: No. You could begin to see signs of that. The last year he was governor, he read

everything that came into the office that was sent in by the federal government; looking at all regional meetings and applying himself to study and know a lot about the federal government.  
SHORT: You know, Mary, later the public saw Governor Carter—President Carter as a smiling easy going person. Was he?

BEAZLEY: He was to me and that's all I can go by. He was very pleasant to work for.

SHORT: Do you have a favorite Carter story?

BEAZLEY: I guess the funniest thing that I can recall was when he was thinking of running for the presidency and he announced to his family and his mother and says "I'm going to run for president" and his mother, Ms. Lillian Carter said "president of what?"

SHORT: So you knew the Carter family very well?

BEAZLEY: Yes.

SHORT: Tell us about the family.

BEAZLEY: Well when he got into the campaign, I did the scheduling for all his family members. And they were very active and helping him win the nomination.

SHORT: It was said at one time that there were thirteen Carters in thirteen different states during that campaign.

BEAZLEY: That could have been because he had a mother that was campaigning, He had Aunt Sissy Dolvin that was campaigning, he had a sister Ruth Stapleton, he had Jack and Judy Carter, He had Chip Carter and he had Jeff and Arnett Carter and of course, he and Roselyn. And they usually campaigned separately. They went in different directions.

SHORT: Were you surprised when he won?

BEAZLEY: No.

SHORT: Were you surprised when he lost?

BEAZLEY: No.

SHORT: In 1980?

BEAZLEY: No.

SHORT: What do you think happened to President Carter?

BEAZLEY: Well it was circumstances beyond his control. With the situation---with all embargoes, the Iranian hostages and just a combination of many things. The main thing was the

Iranian hostages.

SHORT: So Governor Carter left office in '75, and was elected president in '76, and you went to Washington.

BEAZLEY: Yes after the campaign.

SHORT: With the Carter administration.

BEAZLEY: I was in the campaign here and our offices was in the National headquarters which was at Colony Square, and then after he won the nomination, I went to Washington in November of '76 with an augural committee.

SHORT: So what did you do at the inaugural committee?

BEAZLEY: Well one of the things I had to do was to go back and search the appointment book and find the names and addresses of everywhere he's spent the night when he was campaigning all over the United States. And see that a list was compiled with those people who will be invited to the inauguration and events that he was having at the mansion. And then one of the biggest things I had to do was to work with the Georgia people that were constantly calling and wanting invitations to the inauguration; and that was full time job. And I tried my best to comply with all requests.

SHORT: Mary, Governor Carter and his wife, Roselyn did a historical thing by walking from the stand where he was sworn in to the white house. Was that a planned event?

BEAZLEY: I have no idea.

SHORT: You don't know?

BEAZLEY: I saw them do that. I saw them walk down Pennsylvania Avenue.

SHORT: I bet the secret service had a fit.

BEAZLEY: At that time he was the most popular. He was—from that day forward, that was his high moment.

SHORT: Well the president staff included many Georgians including Bert Lance; in whose office you worked later.

BEAZLEY: Yes

SHORT: Tell us about your duties at the office of O-B-M is it??

BEAZLEY: No office of Management and Budget

SHORT: O-M-B

BEAZLEY: And we were in the white house complex in the old executive building and I did the same thing for him, scheduling and keeping his calendar and keeping him informed on events he should attend.

SHORT: Tell us a little about Mr. Lance.

BEAZLEY: Mr. Lance was a very hardworking person. He would leave the office late in the afternoon and he would be carrying his work in a big pace board box. Very big pace board box. And he went over everything that he did in his home and brought back the next morning to be acted upon.

SHORT: He was very close to the President.

BEAZLEY: Yes. He was his highway director when he was governor.

SHORT: In fact Mr. Lance ran for governor.

BEAZLEY: Yes. He would have made a good governor.

SHORT: Didn't quite make the run off. But he resigned, when, in 1977? Who replaced him?

BEAZLEY: James T Malntyre from Georgia.

SHORT: And how was---Did you work with Jim??

BEAZLEY: I stayed right on there until the end of the Carter administration doing primarily the same type work.

SHORT: Let's talk about some other Georgians that were there. The one that comes to mind is Hamilton Jordan. Tell me about Hamilton.

BEAZLEY: I think you know about as much about Hamilton as I do. Hamilton marched to his own drummer; he was very smart, very intelligent person and a great advisor to President Carter.

SHORT: How about Jody Powell from Georgia?

BEAZLEY: Jody served as the press secretary for the entire term so I considered he did a good job but he wouldn't have stayed for four years. Press secretaries come and go.

SHORT: They don't last very long do they?

BEAZLEY: Not usually.

SHORT: How about Frank Moore from Dahlonga?

BEAZLEY: Frank Moore worked with congress. He called on the congress.

SHORT: And another Georgian who was there was Jack Watson

BEAZLEY: He eventually became the executive secretary to the president following Hamilton Jordan.

SHORT: Did you work any with President Carter after he was defeated and came back to Georgia?

BEAZLEY: No, I did not. He came back in January and I stayed on until March of '81. And of course I was interested in all that he was doing and making plans to build The Carter Center.

SHORT: You are involved in The Carter Center.

BEAZLEY: I volunteer there and half of the last fifteen years and hope it would be available to me to balance of my life. It's a wonderful place to be involved.

SHORT: How would you remember Jimmy Carter?

BEAZLEY: He was a person that was a free thinker and a man kind of ahead of his times. That has been proven in the last few years when you go back and see some of the things that have come to pass that he advised and discussed when he was president. The people didn't listen to him and they should have especially on energy.

SHORT: So after Carter's defeat, you came back to Georgia?

BEAZLEY: I came back to Georgia and I came in March and then August, went back to work for Lieutenant Governor Zell Miller.

SHORT: And you worked for Miller until he completed his fourth term.

BEAZLEY: Sixteen years.

SHORT: Sixteen years. Tell us about your relationship with Zell Miller.

BEAZLEY: Well he is one of the best friends I have ever had. I love Zell Miller and his family. And he is always been thoughtful and considerate to me and my family. And I consider him one of my closest friends.

SHORT: So in 1980, Lieutenant Governor Miller decided to run for the senate seat of Senator Herman Talmadge. What do you remember about that election??

BEAZLEY: I was in Washington at that time with the Carter administration and I was very surprised the next day to hear the results of the Georgia senate election. And what went through

my mind was that Zell Miller has elected another senator and it wasn't Zell Miller.

SHORT: So you think that campaign did not serve Senator Talmadge very well.

BEAZLEY: It defeated him.

SHORT: Well you have—you were with Miller when he ran for Governor in 1990.

BEAZLEY: He took office in '91.

SHORT: Yes he won in 1990 and you immediately went down to his office.

BEAZLEY: Yes.

SHORT: And you were his appointment secretary.

BEAZLEY: And scheduler.

SHORT: Yes. Well help us understand what you did as a scheduler and don't say schedule.

BEAZLEY: Schedule. Well, all the invitations came to me and request for appointments. Those people who were trying to see the governor and almost all of them I presented to him, some of them he did always say that he shouldn't have seen and I acted on his decisions. He decided where he wanted to speak; and where he wanted to go and who he wanted to see, other than just the required duties of a governor. Routine meeting that he knew he would be having and he would set those up and we would get them on the calendar. He would do that.

SHORT: He had a very young and aggressive staff. He had young people that---

BEAZLEY: After he became governor when he was lieutenant governor, he had too many old people on his staff and I told him that. And I tallied the age and I gave him a percentage and then I think after that, he kind of looked around for some younger people.

SHORT: Well he had some good ones that served him well. Hank Huckaby was one. Did you know Hank?

BEAZLEY: Yes I did; very competent person.

SHORT: And what were his duties?

BEAZLEY: He was in the office of management budget of State Budget Department I think they called it.

SHORT: Tell us about Miller. What kind of guy was he?

BEAZLEY: At heart, he is a teacher and a writer and I think he got into politics to help the lives

of other people. And he was a thinker ahead of his time. He didn't need think tanks to come to his mind what needed to be done; he was his own think tank. And you could rarely ever change his mind; I never did try to change his mind because he was usually always right.

SHORT: Well they had a very close race for re-election in 1994. Many thought he might lose but he won. What do you remember about that?

BEAZLEY: Well I think the flag was an issue. And at that time he had probably quit making all his own decisions and listen to the people and thought that about.

SHORT: What did you do after Miller left office in 1998?

BEAZLEY: I want to say one more thing about Governor Miller. 1992 I think it was, I went to the democratic national convention with him as a staff person and at that time, he made a keynote address for President Clinton. And he was very instrumental in helping President Clinton win that election because they had some of the same advice from some of the same people. And it worked out for Governor Miller and it also worked out for President Clinton.

SHORT: So what did you do after Miller left office?

BEAZLEY: Well I retired a time or two

SHORT: So you didn't do anything? Were you surprised---

BEAZLEY: Well I was going to the Carter Center, and I was doing some volunteer work, I just wasn't sitting at home.

SHORT: Were you surprised when he was appointed to the senate to replace Paul Coverdell?

BEAZLEY: At first we were surprised that Senator Coverdell had such an untimely, unfortunate death and—yes I guess I was surprised. I knew he had years years back wanted to go to the senate but a lot of time had passed from the time he aspired for the office as to the time it became available to him; and I think he really had some mixed emotions about it.

SHORT: Was he always as independent as he was as a senator?

BEAZLEY: Yes but he changed a lot.

SHORT: How?

BEAZLEY: Well usually we always saw things politically the same. He changed and I didn't but that doesn't make any difference in my respect and love for Zell Miller. I remained a very staunch liberal democrat.

SHORT: What did you think when he made the keynote address at the National Republican Convention?

BEAZLEY: I think you can almost know how bad it hurt me that it happened. But it was his choice and I respected his decision.

SHORT: How do you think Governor Senator Miller should be remembered?

BEAZLEY: He should be remembered first and foremost by the lottery; and the long and standing effect it would have on the state. In what he did in starting the pre-k, what he did all the way through the HOPE scholarship and our education, into the technology he brought into the state by lottery funds. That's enough if he never had another thing to his credit.

SHORT: What were you thinking over those fifty years that you have been involved in government and politics about your career?

BEAZLEY: Well I have had a wonderful career, I have enjoyed every person I have ever worked for and I could almost make a riddle. I've worked for four governors, two lieutenant governors, and one president; how many men is that? That is a riddle for you.

SHORT: I am not a mathematician. Let me ask you this question. Who's been the most influential person in your life?

BEAZLEY: In my life or of these governors?

SHORT: Well, in your life, in your whole life.

BEAZLEY: My mother.

SHORT: Your mother. What sort of relationship did you have with your mother?

BEAZLEY: A mother-daughter relationship, up and down but she was always right when I think back on it. At the time I didn't think so.

SHORT: Who's been the most impressive person in your life?

BEAZLEY: Why do you want to ask me that Bob?

SHORT: Because I am interested. I know you. I know that all your career, you have been a very successful person in your life. I wish my life emulated yours. You've been so successful.

BEAZLEY: That's your thinking.

SHORT: Let's talk a little bit about politics in general. Politics is treated nowadays as a dirty subject. Why do you think that people think so badly about the profession?

BEAZLEY: I think a lot of it has to do with what they hear on television day in and day out from talking heads. And these people that don't think for themselves; they can listen to things that are

not always correct but they form opinions.

SHORT: In other words you think that the media has too much influence over politicians and politics?

BEAZLEY: I do.

SHORT: Why do you think that most present day Georgians are frustrated with government?

BEAZLEY: Wasting government and their economy and some of the things that have gone on in the legislature that were not productive enough for the citizens.

SHORT: How about ethics in government?

BEAZLEY: Everybody is against wrong doing, should be. You can't control a person's ethics.

SHORT: Do you think that the ethics laws in this country and in this state are strong enough?

BEAZLEY: No I do not.

SHORT: How would you change them?

BEAZLEY: They can't be changed because the people that have to change them are not going to change them.

SHORT: I know you might probably not want to answer this question but who's been your favorite boss?

BEAZLEY: I didn't have a favorite.

SHORT: You are being evasive.

BEAZLEY: No I am not being evasive.

SHORT: Who is the best governor?

BEAZLEY: I didn't see any difference in the accomplishments and the people that were coming and going. You always were dealing with the same people in business and in government no matter who was governor, you saw the same people as long as the Democrats were under the gold dome.

SHORT: Let's talk for just a second about females in government. Do you feel that the gender bias hurts female candidates when they run for public office?

BEAZLEY: Yes but not as much as it used to. We are improving that little by little.

SHORT: Have you ever considered running for public office?

BEAZLEY: Never.

SHORT: Would you run?

BEAZLEY: No.

SHORT: Mary what advice do you have for young people who might want to work or serve in government?

BEAZLEY: Well first you really have to have the desire, and then I think you have to be educated to study the issues and know exactly which direction you would want to go.

SHORT: Looking back over your many years as a staff member for important political people, is there anything you might have done differently?

BEAZLEY: I am sure I could have been a better employee in some ways but as far as my decisions and the places I worked, I couldn't improve on them. I do regret that I didn't go back to Georgia State and finish my degree when I could walk from the capital down there.

SHORT: Tell us about your family.

BEAZLEY: I was married for fifty two years. I married when I was seventeen, had two sons and two grandsons, had one brother who is now deceased and also my husband is deceased.

SHORT: Tell us about Herschel. He worked somewhere in the capital didn't he?

BEAZLEY: I had no part in that. He worked as the senate door keeper and I certainly didn't use any influence to get him there. I was surprised when he told me he had been called to come to work. And he was hired by Cap Hicks and he thoroughly enjoyed the job. In fact we rode in and out to work every day together. And I think he was well liked and well respected.

SHORT: He was. But Mary we have covered a lot of ground in a short period of time. Have we left anything out?

BEAZLEY: I think you have asked about everything that you could possibly ask me.

SHORT: Is there anything that you will like to say that I didn't ask you?

BEAZLEY: No.

SHORT: Well we appreciate you being on our program. It's always good to see you. And I wish you very much luck in the future.

BEAZLEY: Thank you very much.

