

**Jimmy Paulk interviewed by Bob Short
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**University of Georgia
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 Russell Library at the University of Georgia and Young Harris College. Our guest today is former Georgia senator and present-day community activist Jimmy Paulk. Welcome, Jimmy.

JIMMY PAULK: Thank you, first time I've been described as a community activist.

SHORT: Well, that was my judgment.

PAULK: Oh, okay.

SHORT: Fitzgerald, Georgia.

PAULK: I was born in Fitzgerald; I actually didn't grow up there. As a child, I lived in Ocilla. My father and grandfather were undertakers and we had a funeral home in both towns. And before I went into grade school, we moved to Ocilla so I grew up there. It's nine miles down the road. I guess in a sense I grew up in both places. Went to school there until I was a sophomore in high school and then I went away to Georgia Military Academy, which at that time was a military boarding school.

SHORT: In College Park.

PAULK: In College Park, suburban Atlanta. There's nothing remarkable about my youth, I don't think, but at GMA the Captain Brewster, who was the president of the school, had taken an interest in me and he knew that I was interested in politics. And he introduced me to Jimmy Carter, who Brewster had I believe supported the first time around when Carter ran for governor or perhaps I don't remember the entire—his background—but they had become acquainted, and he'd been impressed with him, and he wanted me to meet him. I did. I wound up being a part of his campaign when he ran for governor successfully.

During that era, I was in college, so I was a college student working at—going to the University of Georgia as an undergraduate and working for Carter. That was really my introduction to

politics. I should back up and say that my real introduction was in Athens when I was a rising junior in high school; I was just a little kid. I spent most of the summer at the University of Georgia at a program supposed to be a program for gifted children—it was a National Science Foundation Institute in Mathematics. It was just this—like twelve of us and we were in a class being taught by B.J. Ball, Professor Ball was the head of the math department at the University of Georgia at that time—absurd matching of little kids and this powerful man. He was a great teacher. But that’s what I was suppose to be doing, what I was doing—that was during that race for governor when Carter ran first time—and I was working for Ellis Arnall. He had a campaign headquarters downtown and Mrs. Barrow, Judge Barrow’s wife, Phyllis Barrow, was in charge of it. I was basically working full-time for Phyllis Barrow and just showing up enough at classes to keep from getting thrown out. So that was my first real political job and then that sort of segued into working for Carter, which is where I cut my teeth.

SHORT: So you remember the election of 1966.

PAULK: I do. I was just a little kid—I was stuffing envelopes, doing the kind of things you do when you’re—I’m not sure but I guess I would have been old enough to drive, so I would have been able to drive stuff to the post office and that sort of thing.

SHORT: That was the year that we had no results in the election, it went into the legislature.

PAULK: That’s right, that’s right.

SHORT: And Carter did not make the legislative vote; it was between Maddox and Bo Callaway.

PAULK: I am true Democrat. My first vote, I believe, was cast for Lester Maddox because I decided—even though I had worked for Arnall and he was the write-in candidate—that I should vote Democratic ticket.

SHORT: Okay and then what happened? You were at Georgia.

PAULK: I finished at Georgia, I went back home—I’ll tell you one funny episode. While I was at Georgia, I would—I don’t know, for some whatever reason—I would wind up getting invited to the Governor’s Mansion after Carter was governor, the last year or so that I was in college. Probably because of the kids but for whatever reason I wind up—and I was there the weekend that Senator Russell died. Now, I had barely met Senator Russell; he was certainly not somebody that I knew well—he’s well beyond my orbit. But his funeral was a big deal and obviously, I was there so I had to be included in the funeral. And that meant meeting everybody from the American government pretty much because they all came down for the funeral. And to be in the governor’s party meant that you got treated like a VIP. And it also meant meeting Richard Nixon. And I said that to say my conversation with Richard Nixon. We were in the governor’s office and there was what amounted to a receiving line of whoever was in Carter’s office staff, and family, and friends who were there. And Carter took the president down the line and introduced them. And he came to me and said, “This is Jimmy Paulk. He’s a leader in our Young Democrats, “which is not actually true, I was not that active with the Young Democrats

but he had to say something I guess. And so the president said, “Are you in school?” And I said, “Yes, I go to the University of Georgia, Mr. President.” And he said, “You’ve got some fine schools down here; the University of Georgia, Emory, Georgia Tech” and he went to the next person. That was the entire verbatim quote of my conversation with Richard Nixon at that point.

SHORT: Did you ever visit the White House?

PAULK: No, not until Carter was president—not before.

SHORT: I mean when Carter was president.

PAULK: Yeah but not—only to just see staff people and that sort of thing—not in any serious sort of way, and then later, oddly because of a friend of mine, when Reagan was president. I’m just a simply south Georgia, former political type. My sphere was mostly right here.

SHORT: But you decided to run for office.

PAULK: I did. When I went back—I actually did—I guess Carter appointed me to a couple of state panels. I was on a blue ribbon panel to make recommendations about the medical—it was called the Medical Advisory Committee—to deal with the Board of Corrections or corrections in Georgia. The background was the state was getting sued by prisoners continuously about poor medical care and probably justifiably. At that time the only fully board certified physician in the entire prison system was the head physician, everybody else—it was people who came here and had a foreign medical license and they had practiced under a intuitional license for so long until they could pass their board exams. So that’s who we had plus nurses and inmates. It was a really bad structure. Our job was to make recommendations; most of it was professionals—there were a couple of layman and I was one of those. But beyond that I was just busy with my—I was in the insurance business in Fitzgerald, the business that I’ve been in most of my adult life as far as making a living.

And I guess I was active in environmental issues and have been forever. And I had decided that I wanted to run for the state senate. I believed that Martin Young, who was the Dean of the Georgia Senate, was vulnerable—he had, however, soundly defeated every opponent that he had up to this time, he’d not had a close race and they had been good people. I went to see him and I was trying to—figure out when this would have been—I believe it would have been in ’73 when he was getting ready to run for the ’74 election. And I said, “I want to run for your seat” and “Are you going to step down?” He had been talking about retiring. And he said that he was going to run for one more term and he promised me that he would run for one more time and then step down—this is the conversation that we had, just sitting in his den. And I said, “Okay, I’m going to take you for your word. If you will do that, I will not run. But I am going to run two years from now.”

Two years later, he decided he wanted to run for one more time. He had that conversation again and I said, “I’m sorry Martin—” by the way we were distantly related—I said, “I’m sorry, Martin, I kept my word. I’m going to run.” At that time there was another guy and at this point I don’t remember his name—I was trying to remember that this morning—who had announced or who had run for the prior time and who was indicating that he was going to run; he was putting out feelers. He ultimately withdrew, citing personal reasons, which as a great relief to me not

because I didn't think that I could beat him but because of—it would have probably forced run out, run-off, it likely would have. And just the money; I didn't have any money. My problem was financial. I beat Martin with a total campaign expenditure—at least cash expenditure—of, I believe, eighty-two hundred or eighty-three hundred dollars. This is in a senate district that was six and half counties; almost a hundred miles top to bottom. So that's how that came about.

SHORT: What sort of campaign did you run?

PAULK: It was—and part of this was necessity, part of it was what I had learned at Carter's feet I suppose—was very much a person-to-person campaign. By that I mean in south Georgia, at that time and somewhat to this day, men, especially farmers, would gather for coffee early in the mornings at every little town. I had a lot of little towns and I would get up every morning, drive to one of those towns—Unadilla, Ashburn, Vienna, Sylvester, Cordele, Ocilla, Fitzgerald, some of the little smaller communities that had places where people sat and drank coffee—introduced myself and get to know them. And I tell them, "I'm going to run for the state senate, I just wanted to get to know you." And I became friends with all of those people. That was the first thing that I did. I had a newspaper column that I had written in—which I hope has been burned—that I had written in the Fitzgerald paper for a few years and I was able to—syndicate is a strong word when you're not getting paid—but I was able to persuade the Sylvester Local to carry it. I believe the Ashburn paper carried it. So I was in several of the main markets in my—I believe it may have been in the Cordele paper as well, I know that most of my markets had my newspaper column. Again, that was free.

Ultimately, that last year I did a lot of factory gate type stuff. Awful lot of campaigning at festivals and parades and all that sort of thing—in south Georgia, every little town has some sort of festival with a queen and the whole ritual of those things—I did my share of that. And in the summer leading up to the campaign, I did one mass mailing to every registered voter, a postcard, which was such a new technique at that time that one of my counties—it may have been Crisp, which was the largest—but one of my counties they didn't have the ability to give me a copy of the voters list because they didn't have a copying machine. And they actually loaned me the voters list and I went down the street, and made a copy, and brought it back. I remember that because it was such an amazing—that may have been Dooly, it was Dooly County. I just remember that so vividly because it was—and to trust me with their list; there was no back up. And I also did some television commercials. There were no issues with one exception, which we'll talk about in a second, but there really were not issues. It was my campaign and my slogan was "You'll know he's there." Martin had been an odd figure in that he never made speeches; he was sort of an old, classic, backroom political type. Really nice guy, well-liked by everyone in the senate probably because he never asked them for anything. And he never had legislation. He was invisible to the people in his district and he campaigned by the old technique of having community leaders in every little sub-community who were his backers and they would carry that precinct for him. And of course, time had moved on.

So that was how the campaign worked but that slogan was everywhere and that was particularly—became a little more hard edge at the end of the campaign. But it was never a campaign when I—there were no personal attacks, for example, on Martin. I decided early on that I would not get into any kind of mudslinging or that sort of thing against Martin partly for strategic reasons because Martin was a likeable old soul and there would have been a sympathetic rebound. And at that time politics was a lot more tamed than it is now to put it

mildly. But also, it just wasn't me. I was at that time a devout Christian, I was very earnest about this, and I had rules about how I wanted to approach the campaign. So I followed my recipe and I'm happy for the way the campaign turned out.

SHORT: So you won and came to the senate.

PAULK: I did, yeah.

SHORT: I bet it was a culture shock.

PAULK: Let me—just before we leave the campaign entirely—I want to talk about something because it follows me everywhere and just while we're setting records for after I'm dead, let me clarify something. I had been—from the time I was a college kid—I had been an environmental activist. There's no other word for it, I just was. And a dear friend of mine in Ben Hill County, Milton Hopkins—Buddy Hopkins—had brought a lawsuit against the federal government. Hopkins vs. the United States, saying—at that time, Mirex, which is a poison used to kill fire ants was being sprayed—broadcast—all over all of south Georgia, all of the area that was infested with fire ants. That program was very popular. It was also, in Buddy's opinion and I guess in mine, damaging in that it killed other insects and it destroyed the chain of life at the lower levels. And, ultimately, would be ineffective, which turned out to be the case. At any rate, Hopkins brought—and he was, this was not, I don't think his idea, I don't remember—but he agreed to be the—they needed a plaintiff who was a farmer in the affected area. And with the support of variety of environmental organizations, Buddy brought a lawsuit—Hopkins vs. the United States—suing the United States government saying it was a violation of his property rights to spray poison on his land without his consent. And it was not a throw away lawsuit. It got to the Court of Appeals. It did get read and ultimately was not successful. I was involved very profierly in that as a sort of gopher; I was just a little kid, nothing else much I could do except make copies, but I was there at the time.

And during my campaign with martin, things were going swimmingly until—I don't remember what month it was but it was a couple of months before the primary, which was everything, there was not republican in the race—and all of a sudden, everywhere I went, everywhere, people would come up and say, “Oh, you're the one that's been fighting the Mirex program.” Suddenly this rumor had swept the district, which was not just a rumored, that I had been fighting this popular program. And by the way, if this had happen—if Martin was in fact the instigator in this, I don't know if he was, I don't know how that came about—but if had been clever, he would've waited until the very last minute. Because if this had happened if I didn't really have time to respond, it would have killed me. As it happened, I was the beneficiary of great timing. The rumor sort of reached a climax where it was just—there was no other conversation wherever I went, that was all we were going to talk about. So I had—I don't know if I was invited or got myself invited—to speak to the Lions Club of Ocilla, Georgia. This is where I'd grown up; these are my friends.

So I had a speaking engagement. I called Albany Television—Albany was the station that everyone watched in my whole district, maybe in Unadella where they watched Macon, but pretty much everywhere else they watched Albany Television and the farmers all watched it for weather so they watched the news too. And I called them in and asked them, said, “I'm going to do something interesting at this Lions Club meeting and I want you to come.” And I've never

made such a request and they said, “Paulk, this better be good. If this isn’t, you’re never getting another inch of film.” They came and I don’t know if the papers—I guess somebody from the television newspaper came—that was about it and then the local paper there. And I made—I wish it was, the statement itself, was on camera because I would like now for people to see what I actually said. It was the most noncommittal statement that you could possibly make. I didn’t want to lie, I couldn’t say that I had not opposed the Mirex program, or that I had changed my mind—I hadn’t. It was about the importance of pesticides and that sort of thing. And I had a little bowl of Mirex—the county agent, who was a friend of mine in Fitzgerald, explained to me it loses its potency very fast and it’s basically ground up corncob with this ingredient that at any rate is one of the most specific insecticides you could have, it only targets a certain type of animal. So people could eat it, not that they would want to, but this was old and it was gone. I was just eating ground up corncob, and I didn’t eat much, but I had a little piece of a spoonful. Put it in my mouth, let the cameras watch me chew for a minute, and it was magic. The issue disappeared. The farmers laughed for a week or so and then we got on and talked about other things. It never came up again except that I have heard about that episode for the rest of my life as if I had crashed into the senate as an opponent of modern agriculture—or I am sorry, as an opponent of environmental programs—and that wasn’t the case.

SHORT: Did you ever read Rachel Carson’s book, *Silent Spring*?

PAULK: Oh, yes, of course.

SHORT: What was your reaction to that book?

PAULK: I read it when I was in college so it was in that whole formative period when I was—I don’t know—building an ideology. To this day, I’m sure I have probably long since thrown the book away but it’s become a part of my persona. I want us to live in a world where we aren’t swimming in poison. But honestly most of my environmental work has not been anything near pesticides. It’s been about water. We can talk about it.

SHORT: I’d like to but first I would like to talk about your coming to the senate.

PAULK: Yes, yes.

SHORT: And what your impression was when you held up your right hand.

PAULK: Well, yes, but even before that my first visit to the capitol as a senator elect was for something most people wouldn’t even—it was for the Senate Caucus meeting where you organize the senate for that year, which is held—I don’t know when it was—but in November or December are spent—before the session started. And so that was the first time I went into the senate chamber as a prospective senator meeting some of my colleagues for the first time. I had made it my duty to go and pay personal calls at their homes, as many people as I could, that I didn’t already know. I did know some of them. And I went in for the Caucus and Martin, the guy I had just beat, was sitting in my chair. And I didn’t know what to do. I’m just brand new at this and there is something totally unexpected and everyone—there was an air in the senate—everyone had noticed this and you could see them

smirking. I didn't want to confront Martin, it's the last thing that I would do. So I was a friend of Al Hallows, who was the majority leader, and Al's office was right there next to where I sat. I didn't know many people as well as Al but our district adjourned; I had known him before I'd visited him. So I just went over to get Al's advice and Al said—I remember the conversation verbatim—he said, “Well, do you think the old son of a bitch is just that stupid?” And I said, “Yeah, Al. That's all I think is going on; he's not venal.” And he thought a minute and he said, “Okay, I'll tell you what you do. Bob Bell's seat is right in front of you there. You sit”—that's whatever, fifth district—“you sit in Bob's seat, he's a Republican, he won't be here. And when I call the roll, I'll call you. I won't call Martin—he'll just sit there, he won't vote—and you'll be fine.” So that's what we did and later—I don't think it was that day but it was at a parade a week or so later—Martin came up to me and apologized. He, clearly, just not understood that he wasn't a part of that caucus. But that was my first day on the job I guess.

I don't remember much about being sworn in. I'll tell you about two things. I'll tell you about the first important vote that happened, and then we'll talk about the senate itself and how the factions were comprised at that time. The first—I believe it was the first day that I was there. For some reason because they needed this vote that I think something that had happened before had to be done again for budget reasons, error they were fixing, or something—it was a vote for those two, the twin towers, the two office buildings across the other side of the capitol. And it was suppose to be a perfunctory vote so that they could start building on them. And it had come up rather suddenly and I hadn't had the time to look at any of this and here were some very big numbers. And I remembered that Jimmy Carter had vetoed those buildings when he was governor saying something to the effect that it would just be twenty more acres of state employees and that's all it would amount to. And so I said, “I'm going to vote against it.” And everyone said, “Well, you're going to have the governor really upset with you.” And I knew—Governor Busbee was the governor at the time—and I knew Governor Busbee.

SHORT: You were his senator.

PAULK: No, no, he was from Albany; I didn't got that far. He had been in the house and his house district adjoined my district, we had meet at functions—our friends, we have some of the same friends—his mother was from Vienna in my district. He had grown up in my district so we had many ties. And I knew this was something that was going to pass overwhelmingly and he could tolerate one vote from me. I just wanted to make a symbolic vote against excess and against voting for something without ever reading it. I probably violated that particular rule a lot of times as time went on and I became a little more jaded but at that time, I thought I could make a stand. So that was my first vote.

Let me talk about what the senate was like at that time because it is so different now. There are fifty-six members. My first term there were four Republicans: Paul Coverdell, Bob Bell—who later ran for governor—Jim Tysinger, and Haskew Brantley. Those were the Republicans, that's it. So the classic divisions that exist for example right now just didn't exist. But what happened—and this didn't happen in the house interestingly but it happened in the senate, which had been the battle ground and still I think was because it was closely divided on key votes. When Lester Maddox was governor, the senate had divided itself into the Maddox faction and the anti-Maddox faction. And then when Carter was elected, of course Maddox was [indiscernible], and those factions persisted. The anti-Maddox faction became the Carter faction and the Maddox faction stayed the Maddox faction of course.

And during—you remember—in the Carter years, every battle was just hard fought in the senate. It was always a vote or two, and he lost a lot of votes, and it was that division. By the time I got there, Carter was president, Maddox was long gone, but the factions were still there. And it's not that one was necessarily more conservative than the other was—although I guess you can make an argument that the Maddox faction was more conservative on some issues, social issues. But unbalanced; this was not a conservative liberal split and it was not a pure urban rural split. It wasn't like that. It was just driven by personal politics and by the stronger for power and leadership. The leadership faction, which was the old Carter faction, was led pretty much by Al Halloway and Zell Miller, the lieutenant governor. At that time, the lieutenant governor still exercised a lot of power not just as the presiding officer but appointing committee chairman—really he was a part of the leadership in every sense, probably the key figure in the leadership. But it was very much a group of people. Jack Riley from Savannah and then on down, Roy Barnes, all the committee chairman, Pierre Howard, Eldridge—that was the leadership faction. Then the old Maddox faction had morphed into the sort of opposition. And that led I would say by Culver Kidd. He was certainly an important figure and it depended day by day what the issue was who really was leading, but Culver was often the leader. Other figures in that coalition were Joe Kennedy, who later emerged as the leader of the group when they took party, which was after I left—after I left, it all went to hell. But Hugh Gillis—looking at my notes so I don't leave people out—Tom Allgood was later came I think a part of that faction—I'm not sure at that time, Tom was more of an independent I would say. I identified with the leadership faction, the old Carter faction. My loyalty was there, however, like pretty much everybody in that faction, I had the ability to vote whichever way I felt. We were—most of the people in the senate when I was there were very conscientious about when they voted on issues. People sat in the room and listened to the debate. You could see a bill's fate change during the debate in the senate. You could see people asking questions and changing their mind. It was that kind of a place. And I'll leave it at that. But I also will say I was a member of Kidd's, Culver Kidd's committee, the Senate Committee on Economy, Reorganization, and Efficiency in Government. Now, this is a committee that had been created, I believe, when Maddox was governor in order to circumvent the other committees and to give Culver a power pulpit. I probably was put there as a loyalist by Zell. I'm not sure that I always performed like he expected but I guess on most of the big issues I came through. Almost everybody in the senate, when I was there, we were great friends with each other. I had great respect for most of my colleagues, not all. And some of them I would qualify it, but most of them were very dedicated people. Most of them were honest. And if they got beat they would just go home; that's how they felt. So that's where I fit in.

SHORT: Tell us about Culver Kidd.

PAULK: Well, Culver was charming man and that is just such an understatement with Culver. Everyone fell under his spell. I remember when he died, Jimmy Carter making comments. Even Carr, who had done battle with Culver on a daily basis pretty much the whole time he was in state government, enjoyed him. He was very funny. He was—probably of all the people in the capitol—Culver was the one—even including the lobbyist—Culver is the one that I would probably prefer to go on a trip with. He just was entertaining. There was a ribald element to him. He would say things to people's wives that no one else could get away with but people expected it with Culver because he was Culver.

He had a bar in his office, which was like two doors down from the senate chamber, and the

liquor was in a drawer that was captioned toxic wastes—in a file cabinet—and you would go in and get a drink. But the problem was that every cup—the little plastic cups, the kind that you get from a vendor—they were all imprinted. Culver had everything in his office—little cups, little stirrers, little napkins—everything was imprinted with the words “take but don’t forget.” And you knew, you knew that you were selling just a little piece of your soul every time that you had a little drink in that office. Now, that bar had gotten Culver in terrible trouble one time back when Lester was governor—you remember. Lester had accidentally wandered into Culver’s office at the wrong time and everyone was drinking. And Lester, being Lester and completely out of control of anyone—if anyone controlled him I would suggest that it was Culver—but Lester denounced Culver and referred to Culver’s office in print and on television as a “den of iniquity.” And it took a while for things to be patched back up but the bar didn’t get closed, not while Culver was alive.

Culver had some run-ins with the law about—I don’t know—federal charges of selling his influence and he had won his cases. And when you went to his office, by the way, in Milledgeville—he had a small loan empire—and went into his office, he would take you and show you these huge framed. Apparently when you’re in federal court for criminal charges, if you get out you get this big framed scroll that says go here by without a day or something like that. And he had two of them and he would explain those are the most expensive things on his walls. He was very proud of them.

I don’t pass judgment on anything; I don’t know what happened to Culver and his constituents, that’s for someone else to say. I do think that Culver seemed inclined to represent a lot of industries and businesses that he was on friendly terms with. And you would get trapped into situations, especially on the floor when things were suddenly moving real fast and there would be a floor amendment from Culver that would do nothing but and it would be some harmless little thing, and you would vote along with it; it would pass. Months later you would read in the paper your name would be listed as one of the people who had passed this amendment that gave enormous power to—I don’t know—gambling or the liquor industry, or something terrible. And he had done it again. And I don’t make accusations about why all that happened except to say that was just the way he was. But he was one of my favorite people. After all that, after all the times he got me in trouble, I can’t look back and say I didn’t really love him because I did.

SHORT: What sort of bills did you get in EREG Committee?

PAULK: Oh, it was just a little of everything. A lot of things having to do with the election process—the ballots and that sort of thing, the rules of elections. It had a broad mandate and I think that Zell—by the time I was there—Zell would send things to that committee that he—where he trusted Culver to—and the rest of us—to sort of come down on a certain way. I don’t think a capital punishment bill would go to EREG but it did have a broad mandate.

SHORT: Didn’t he abolish that committee?

PAULK: Not while I was there.

SHORT: Really? I think he abolished that committee later on.

PAULK: Yeah.

SHORT: That committee had subpoena power.

PAULK: Yeah, that's right.

SHORT: Which is very unusual.

PAULK: Yes, that's right, that's right.

SHORT: Particularly with Culver as a chairman.

PAULK: I don't remember us subpoenaing anybody but it's possible that we did. We dealt with all sort of things. We'd get into licensing issues, that kind of stuff—a lot of the day-to-day machinery of state government, which frankly was the thing that Culver was most interested in. And Culver did a lot of good; I don't think anybody could deny Culver his legacy. He introduced more bills than anybody else by far except maybe the governor's floor leader. And a lot of them were really—that's how you got trapped—so much of his legislation was obviously good and harmless. And we all thought that here came another one, seemed to fit the pattern except for later.

SHORT: How did you get along with the lieutenant governor?

PAULK: Always well. I respected him; he was honest, ethical, serious—took his work very seriously. He respected me. He was fair to me. I would bend over backwards to try to support him and when I didn't I would tell him. We had a very open dialogue about what was going on. There was time that—I guess we would get to this—but there was time when a group of us challenged the leadership; but that was pretty rare.

SHORT: Well, tell us about that.

PAULK: Oh, you want to jump to that. I had been, let me. Let's just say one of the things that I was interested in was in limits on government, particular—I think you could say I was more or less a libertarian both on social issues, and on government powers, and economic issues. Some of this has changed over time, I've gotten old and a little bit more liberal and softer on the government side, more tolerant of taxation and spending, which is why I'm not running for office now—certainly not in south Georgia. But at the time, one of the things that I felt strongly about and one of the issues that I carried around was the idea for a constitutional amendment to limit state spending—ala Colorado.

And I had been to national forums about this; I was friends with people in the national tax limitation movement. And we were ahead of our time—this was something that really came more into the public conversation during the Reagan presidency than during the Carter presidency—but that was where I was. And I just wanted to—I know that the bill wasn't going to pass, certainly not as a constitutional amendment—getting it through the house with the Speaker—the idea of such things was funny. But I did want to get a vote on it and at the same time, some of my colleagues had bills that they wanted to get out.

Lee Robinson, who was a good friend of mine, sort of often a partner in crime—Lee was from

the Macon area by the way—wanted to get a sort of modified form of a public initiative passed. Again constitutional amendment required special session, required a two--thirds vote. And Bob Bell, who was a Republican, had a bill that put a cap on the process for spending—I don't remember the details of it now. The three of us get together to try to use a hither to—well a process that had not been used for a hundred years or something like that where you called a special session by getting a certain number of signatures of members of the legislature. And so we were basically going around to the leadership to try to get our bills on the calendar—have a special session. We didn't succeed; we got more signatures than you would think, I think fourteen, fifteen signatures in the senate—that's not terrible, but we needed twenty-eight. So it didn't work but that was the only time I can say I remember having anything like a real challenge—I mean we were in conversation about it even then, it's not like I was called on the carpet or that sort of thing. It wasn't that kind of relationship.

One thing I like about Zell is that the difference between his style of leadership, which was appropriate to the senate I think as it was constituted then, and Speaker Murphy was so vivid; the contrast was so vivid. Speaker Murphy was an autocrat, my way or the highway. I never liked him. I thought he was a son of a bitch. I'm sorry, I know he's dead, but I just thought that he wasn't that interested in issues; he was interested in power and I didn't respect that. If your only passion and your only reason for being in that building is power, why are you there? That's not a good reason. Zell was completely different. He was very careful—even if he disliked someone or his least favorite people—he was very careful to treat them fairly, to give them a forum. And he did have positions on issues, which he tried to make clear—he tried his best on the things that he felt strongly about. So that's sort of where that came down.

SHORT: Did you support Zell Miller when he ran for governor the first time?

PAULK: I wasn't here, I don't think. What year was that?

SHORT: That was 1990.

PAULK: Oh, no, I was in New York. I was long gone.

SHORT: Tell us about New York.

PAULK: Well, let's don't get to that yet.

SHORT: But you promise you'll tell us?

PAULK: I will. You got plenty of film and we'll beat the traffic—if we wait long enough we'll have food brought in. Let me talk about a couple of bills and maybe talk about some of the people that were there in the capitol because I think this is a chance to say a few things that might be useful to someone, I don't know.

My first piece of legislation was totally symbolic and there were things—I'm sorry, let me frame this a little differently. When you come from a district like mine that is very conservative, was and is, very conservative—now it's a Republican bastion and also very poor, was and is, and very rural—and in some ways I am not the perfect match for that district—I'm just not, I know that. I lived there and I loved everybody in my district, I can say that I did and I did, I loved

getting out and meeting people and getting to know them. And one of the things about being in the legislature is it give you an incredible entry into the whole world of your district. A that time it wouldn't have been easy or normal for a twenty something young white business guy to be going to black churches, black restaurants, black clubs, for you to be meeting with people whose children's had disabilities, hanging out with the teachers in school lunchrooms—all those kinds of things. You didn't do that, you went to work every day; just didn't meet a broad swath of people. I did and I loved them but I was—just am from a different space and I knew that. So I tried to reconcile the differences by—there are some things that I did that were almost intuitive and symbolic. Chewing tobacco, which was—I don't know, I picked up at some point—and became a point of identification. When I came to the senate, there was something in the rules that you could have a spittoon and they had moved all the spittoons out because there was nobody else that chewed tobacco on the senate floor—I had a spittoon moved back in so I could—they had to go find one so I could chew my tobacco. I don't chew tobacco now; I gave it up.

I'm just trying to think what's some of the gesture were there—I guess the fire ants thing would have been one of those touchstones. And I spent a lot of time hanging out with the farmers in my district because I came from a very agricultural district. My first bill was a bill to make the peanut Georgia's state symbol, obviously replacing the peach—only the peach had never been officially adopted so this was like—we were going to adopted it as a state symbol. That set off a turf war. I discovered by the way that I had a couple of peach farmers, I just didn't know it and they were friends, I just didn't know that's what they did. But you see Jimmy Carter was president, newly elected, so there was this whole thing about peanuts. And I lost. The pine tree people got in that, the chicken people, and everybody came to the capitol and we had all the battle of the little lapel stickers. It was harmless and it was a gesture. And I hope it was good for the peanut farmers.

You have to pick your battles and I think more so when you're from a district where you don't agree with your people on everything than there are times you just have to decide what to take to the wire. What are some good examples? We never had much vote in the way of gun control so I don't think I had to do battle on that. But I can remember voting—every bill you have to make a decision. Is this something that is so offensive that I'm going to vote against it even though I know it is very popular in my district and I'm just going to have to take my licks? Reverse of that would have been the ERA. I'm pretty sure I was the only senator south of Macon to vote for the ERA—I knew that it was wildly popular in my district. I knew it wouldn't pass. There's really no reason for me to vote for it except principle. I was able to cover—I caught hell for that when I went back home—and I was able to cover that by something that I thought was kind of clever. I was able to say truthfully that it was the only time that my mother had asked me to vote for something. But sometimes there will be something that is a little bit odious. I probably wouldn't support it if I thought it was going to pass but it's not going to pass. I just don't want to take—you can't vote against your people all the time and so sometimes you make a judgment—or I did—to support something because this is not the time to call in a chip.

But my battles were probably the ones that I would say are my legacy—issues were environmental—and there were a lot of them. I sort of was the person in the senate who carried the water for the environmental groups on a number of really key fights and unfortunately it tended to be where you were fighting something with one exception. But the exception would have been the bottle bill. At that time there were only really two people lobbying fulltime, more or less fulltime, at the capitol as environmentalist—now they have a huge room full of people—

but at that time there was Betsy Loyless—you know Betsy—a wonderful woman. Later became a senior vice-president of Audubon and head of their national Washington office. And she represented a coalition of environmental groups—or all the major groups really. And then there was Jim Morrison from Georgia Wildlife and you know Jim. I think it was Betsy who came to me and said, "We want you to..." no, she said "Would be willing to sponsor a bottle bill?" And I said, "You mean a deposit on Coca-Cola bottles?" "Yes, yes." Obviously, this is—there were Coca-Cola machines in the cloakroom in the senate. This is like the Coca-Cola state. They picked up the tab, at that time, for everything that you did—that the power structure did. So we talked about it and they knew it wasn't going to pass but they wanted to start a conversation about it. And ultimately, after some discussion I agreed to put the bill in. And we had no—we had intentionally kept this to ourselves until I dropped the bill in the hopper. And then all hell broke loose—huge reaction. The next morning after I had dropped the bill in, I stumbled into the capitol at seven o'clock in the morning or something—I usually would come in early to read the calendar, read the bills, and do whatever I was going to do. And usually very quiet—at that time, our offices were in the basement—and there were just people all over the place. And they were all from my district and a few people from neighboring counties. And what had happened was Coca-Cola had sent a plane down and at four o'clock in the morning had loaded up all of the soft drink bottlers and the beer distributors and some of the groceries from all over my district and this—soft drink bottlers are politically influential, their your friends. And so there were all these people waiting for me and they wanted me to—there was a process where I could withdraw the bill if they did it that day, so that's why they wanted to see me early. So they made their case and I said, "Well, it's not going to pass." And they said, "So why do you want to introduce it?" I said, "Well, I want us to have a conversation." And they said, "Well we don't want to have a conversation." I said, "Well, I'm not going to withdraw it." So sometime later one of those bottlers was one of my good friends and I asked him, I said, "How much trouble am I in?" Because I was worried. And he said, "Oh, I was kind of proud of you for not caving in."

But what happened that is indicative was that—and it's kind of sad—was that a short time later—obviously I didn't write that bill, it was written by the environmental groups, the attorney for the various environmental groups who all had signed off on this. But it turned out Coca-Cola was the biggest single donor I believe to the Georgia Conservancy, which of course was the most powerful environmental group in that coalition. And they came under pressure and we wound up—I'll cut to the chase—but we wound up having what amounted to a trial in the boardroom of Coca-Cola. In the Coke boardroom with—this big walnut boardroom with Mr. Candler looking down over one fireplace and Mr. Woodruff looking down over the other fireplace—with the Georgia Conservancy board sitting in the chairs around the board table—they had agreed to go to Coke's location—and Betsy and our little scientist, we made our presentation. And then Coke's scientist got up and explained how container legislation wouldn't really do anything for the environment because what it would take to wash the bottles would use up more energy than—some absurd argument. And ultimately the Conservancy board voted a statement that said—and this is almost verbatim—while we endorse the concept of container legislation, we do not endorse this particular bill. They had written it—they just left me hanging. So that was the one I remember as a bill I actually had my name on as a sponsor. Most of the environmental stuff was trying to beat bad bills.

One that I remember particularly was in 1978; it was the Parks Brown Amendment. Parks Brown, who was a low-key guy, nice fellow, member of the senate who didn't ask him much—

he rarely had legislation so people were inclined to go along with him and he'd been there a long time. Senator Brown had an amendment to some bill that basically removed trout stream protection for most of the Savannah River. You remember this?

SHORT: Mmhmm.

PAULK: And I led the opposition and we had a series of votes. And ultimately beat it but it was after a lot of reversals and people changing sides—it was a protracted battle and hard one because people weren't voting on merits of legislation, they were voting because they liked Parks. They didn't want to vote against him because he never asked them for anything. The other thing that I think is most important piece of legislation I ever did battle against and that is something that is completely forgotten today but I think is significant. In 1979, a bill emerged that had passed the house unanimously. And the background of it was a little complicated but in general, you can have a tri-state compact if the majority of the states involved support the legislation asking for the compact. You have to get congressmen to go along but generally, they do that if you get the majority of the states to ask for it. And you can do almost anything with a compact. This was about controlling the Chattahoochee-Apalachicola-Flint River system; controlling the water flow. And it had already passed the Alabama legislature and had been signed by the Alabama governor before it came to Georgia. Betsy read it—or someone read it and brought it to Betsy—and said, "I think this is a really strange bill." And she finally had somebody who was an expert on compact law to read it and it had been written by someone who really understood a lot about interstate compacts because it was drawn right at the edge of that kind of law. To create a body, the majority of whose members were appointed by the ports authorities in the various states that would ultimately control the water flow in all those rivers. So what did the ports want? They want—when you have a drought, they want to float their barges down in the shallow part where you need to get out to the coast. And so we're talking about draining Lake Lanier and my little lake—Lake Blackshear—and whatever you need in order to float those barges. That's what this was about. But that wasn't what the conversation had been—the conversation was this is an innocuous bill to support the ports authority and give them some voice in the river management. Well, it was a very tough battle about the future among other things of the Chattahoochee River. And it was very hard to get people in Georgia interested in it. The idea that Atlanta might run out of drinking water was not something that was considered such a foreign concept at that time that it was laughable—it just wasn't a discussion that you could have.

Atlanta papers covered it but not on the front page. The coverage that it got in Georgia was basically in places like Columbus, where I was treated like a leper—I was like the anti-Christ—and in Florida, where this bill—because the—I have to give you a little background so you'll understand this. The importance of this to Florida was that the entire gulf fishing industry depends on the life of the estuaries, which depend on the flooding cycles that come in the river. And if you mess up those cycles, you mess up ultimately the fisheries, that whole industry there. So Florida was apoplectic and we're getting a lot of publicity in Florida and the Florida environmental organizations were very interested—of course, they have no influence in Georgia. So it was one of those things that you just have to try to persuade people to do the right thing. And I lost on two different votes each time, I believe, by two votes—it was close but we got beat.

But meantime, I was on a committee called the committee on—something like community

affairs—and Governor Busbee’s transportation plan for metro Atlanta was locked up in that committee. The suburbs were against it, the inner city—the governor—was for it so the governor’s forces were for it and it was basically a tie and I was the tie-breaking vote. And of course, my people didn’t give a damn about Atlanta’s transportation system, they just didn’t care. So I was footloose. I would have supported it but I wanted to get my tri-rivers bill beaten. So the governor summoned me in and he said, “Well, what do you want?” And he’s like, “Why beat around the bush?” And I told him, I told him this bill, I said, “I want you to veto this bill.” And he has a very expressive face and he said, “You want that?” He thought I was going to ask for a jail or something, a prison, and I said, “That’s it.” And you can tell he really wasn’t even that familiar with it. And he said, “Ok, let me study it and I’ll get back to you.” Meanwhile, we got Bob Graham to actually come and meet with him—Bob Graham was governor of Florida at the time—came and met with him and that gave him some cover. And so towards the last days of the sessions—obviously, he probably tried to get that bill out of committee without having to deal with me—but towards the last days of the session—what’s his name, his administrative assistant?

SHORT: Tom Perdue?

PAULK: Must have been Tom Perdue. Tom Perdue came over and got me and said, “All right, it’s a deal.” So I voted for it and we got our veto. So we saved Atlanta’s water supply, saved our rivers. This was before—every time you read about the three states and three rivers, it always talks about 1981 as the date when all these battles started—this was the original as far as I know the original three state, three-river battle.

I was involved in prison reform—I mentioned I had been on that committee and that sort of was the genesis for some interest in trying to do something about the prisons. And not so much trying to make living conditions better for the prisoners but trying to make the prisons more effective in terms of rehabilitation, not being factories for crime. And in my approach, which I was successful at—got some bills passed—was ultimately about trying to strengthen and finance—something that doesn’t sound like a good idea—the county correctional institutions. Everything that we were able to discover showed us that they had a lower [indiscernible] rate at that time, I don’t know what happens now, than people who came out Reedsville or the big state prisons. And prisoners preferred to go to these areas of the old chain gangs, which had been cleaned up, they preferred to do that where they got out and did work rather than being locked up in these huge, awful, smelly places. And they were a lot less expensive to the state but we weren’t supporting them enough that they were still staying in business; they were closing, every year you would lose another. So that was—I’m condensing this—but that was one of the big successful legislative interests I had in terms of prison reform. But that was an ongoing interest and area that I supported.

I was telling you, so much of what you do in the legislature is—you look at the calendar thirty years later and you have no idea what all that stuff was and most of it was sort of perfunctory, some of it was local, this was the stuff that keeps state government running. Most of it’s not even controversial. There’s always a handful of issues every year that really define what’s going on and of course, there’s the budget and that’s always the big one. But I’ve tried to single out some of the stuff where I played a little bit of a role.

Now, looking back, a lot of your time as a legislator—and it’s an enormously time consuming job, it’s ruinous to any kind of real occupation where you make money—is spent as sort of an

ombudsman. Helping everything from local government and county governments, little city governments, with what they need. Running interference for them with the state agencies and helping your constituents—people get themselves into the most amazing messes and they call you because they don't know what else to do. And sometimes it's people who are leaders. Realtors who didn't renew their license in time and all of a sudden they've got to go back to school and they want you to—I don't know what they want you to do. Sometimes it's who are really poor who have desperate problems and don't know where to turn. Sometimes it's completely inappropriate and that's rare, but I do remember people coming to me, wanting me to get someone out of jail, and offering money, and they didn't know any better. But you do field an awful lot of calls about all this other stuff that's really not a part of legislation and voting and yet it's what you do.

SHORT: In other words, you're constituency knew you were there.

PAULK: Yes, I guess that's a way to say that.

SHORT: That was your slogan.

PAULK: Yep.

SHORT: I'd like to get back to water for a minute. You were in the legislature how many years ago?

PAULK: Well, I left in '80. It's been a long time.

SHORT: We still have the water problem. Is there a solution?

PAULK: Yeah, but it's not popular. We have to learn to live in Atlanta—in metro—has to learn to live with less water per person, we could do that. And we have to be rational about growth. We need to not build unless we know that there is water available for whatever we're hooking up to. The idea that we're going to ship water from Tennessee River to Atlanta is—that's not going to happen. But we can live with Chattahoochee River, even in times of drought, if we're—yes, we'll probably need another reservoir. I think, the ultimately those sorts of solutions are helpful.

SHORT: On the Chattahoochee?

PAULK: Somewhere, yes. But Atlanta's not going to have large amounts of water coming in it doesn't already have here in the basin—it's just not. So we have to learn how not to use so much water for our yards, for our toilets, for everything we do, and we can do that. And the other part of the equation—and I am not being true to my farmers—but the user of water in Georgia is agriculture and at some point we have to talk about that. There's not an unlimited amount of water for agriculture. This isn't California, fortunately, but we have limits and we've been acting like we don't. So the solution—

SHORT: Rationing?

PAULK: Oh, yes. Right now, there's just no process; you just draw what you want. Actually, I think I was involved in—I wasn't the principle author—but I was involved in a bill that licensed or had a process for large water users where we could at least gather information for how much they were collecting but that doesn't limit them, it just says—we find out what's happening.

SHORT: So you don't think inter-basin, transfer of water, will work.

PAULK: I just don't think it's going to happen politically. I think we need to learn to live within our means in terms of water and I think we can—I don't think we've even scratched the surface. We haven't even passed basic things like low flow toilets in Atlanta and new construction. How simple is that. There's so many thing that you can do. But we've got to start doing that.

SHORT: Then you decided not to run.

PAULK: I did.

SHORT: Why?

PAULK: There's no simple reason and it's very much about what was happening to me at the time. Politically, I was in a bad situation in that—in terms of the ability to run for higher office, to run for congress, which is what I would have liked to have done—I was in the corner of three congressional districts. And I had basically two counties in each of them except in one district I had two and half. So I was just in the corner there; I wasn't in a good situation to run for congress. In terms of statewide office, I didn't have a network of friends statewide. And to compound matters running for anything, I was a terrible fundraiser for me. I got lucky when I ran against Martin in that I was able to do that without a lot of money. But to take the next step, to go to the next level and run for a statewide job, would have required what at the time would have been an enormous amount of money for me and I didn't have it.

So I had limited resources, no real political options except to stay in the senate, and I felt then as I do now that you shouldn't hang around. There's a time to go and a time to leave and it was as good a time as any. And there was just—in terms of my personal choices—I wanted to move out. I wanted to live somewhere else and experience something else. And I wound up accepting a job in New York with the National Audubon Society, which I did for a couple of years—I created the bird-a-thon, which to this day is their main fundraising venture. And I enjoyed it enormously but then I went back in the insurance business up there.

SHORT: In New York?

PAULK: In New York. That's what I did the whole time I was there; I was there for twenty-seven years in New York.

SHORT: City?

PAULK: Living right downtown, yes. And I've always had an interest in classical music; I wound up writing as a music critic for a variety of magazines. That has transferred over—when

I moved here, I was able to start writing as a stringer, just as a part time person, for the Atlanta Journal Constitution. Again, almost entirely about classical music because that's my area—I do occasionally write about the theater or something like that but it's mostly about music.

SHORT: But you decided to come back home.

PAULK: I did.

SHORT: Why?

PAULK: Well, I had always thought that when I got old I would probably retire down here. And I got old—probably not as old as I'd been thinking I would eventually and expect to get—but the insurance company that I was and am affiliated with—it's a franchise arrangement—and we had some problems in downstate New York with hurricane risk management. We stopped writing homeowner's policies, they started non-renewing enforce homeowner's policies—I couldn't figure out how to make money. I was able to get a good price for my business, I sold it; I came down here, I was going to retire, travel around, concentrate on my writing—that didn't work, I was just bored. So I went back into the insurance business, which is what I do again. You're right, I suppose, there is a certain amount of political activism that I like to dabble in so I'm not completely gone from the political process but I am gone as a candidate.

SHORT: Really?

PAULK: Oh, yeah.

SHORT: They say never say never.

PAULK: Well, I've pretty much said never.

SHORT: Well, let's talk a minute about your community activities. I know you're involved in a lot of activities here in Atlanta that are not political.

PAULK: It's mostly about begging. At this point, I'm mostly about asking people for money whether it's for a charity or for a political candidate. I'm still a Democrat, a yellow dog Democrat. I try to support candidates that I like who I think have a good chance whether that's in a statewide race, like the governor's race, or in a—particularly legislative races cause that's what I'm interested in is the legislature. I don't come down here much. I was just thinking, I came down here, I was having trouble figuring out where to go. I don't find the capitol—this is just me—but to me the capitol today is kind of a mean place. It doesn't have the congenial atmosphere that it used to have. It's just too partisan and I regret that; we lost something when we lost the ability to sit down and talk things out and persuade each other. That's what it really was like when I was here. But those are the kind of things I get involved in. Whether it's something to do with—I don't know—the Grady High School orchestra or my rotary club or a project that my rotary club sponsors for—furthering, we're partners with AID Atlanta to further AIDS awareness in the Atlanta public schools—those kinds of things. I do do some on-hands stuff but its most about begging for money.

SHORT: Let's talk about for a minute about the Democratic Party?

PAULK: You want to give me some money; I'll talk to you about that. About Democratic Party?

SHORT: What happened to the Democratic Party in Georgia?

PAULK: Well, I think the Democratic Party for a real long time was the umbrella for all serious political organizations. There wasn't a counterweight. And there were people in the Democratic Party who were certainly more conservative than the Republicans I mentioned like Coverdell and Bob Bell—those would have passed as liberals compared to some of my Democratic colleagues—more so in the house I think. I think that an era passed and Georgia became a part of the two-party system I guess and at the same time, the parties developed more of a partisan aspect than they might have elsewhere. Some of this had to do with timing.

I've never met Newt Gingrich or if I have I don't remember—it is possible when you go to a lot of receptions when you're a legislator—I probably met him at some point because he would have been a congressman but I don't remember it. But I've told people—two of my people that I most admired are people that he ran against and in each time, it was almost a new low in political campaigning. The first was Jack Flint, who was the father of one of my college roommates, and I think he ran against Jack first as a Democrat running to the left of Jack. And didn't win so then he ran against him on the right and I don't remember if it was the second time or the third time but Jack decided having experienced one campaign with Gingrich that he didn't want to put his family through what he knew was coming. Not that he had anything to hide, he just wasn't worth it, so he withdrew.

And then Virginia Shepard, who was my colleague—sat two rows behind me, a good friend—ran as the Democrat in that race. And I suppose by moderns standards even that race was pretty tame but at the time it was a defining mean race with the suggestion that she was abandoning her children to go to Washington—that sort of thing. It was just nonsense personal stuff. Those kinds of things came into play but I think also though politics has—and this is not about your question but about what's happened to politics. I just think we live in an age where—everybody used to read the same paper, they used to read the Atlanta paper and maybe if you were in Macon you read the Macon paper, and you read Shelly McCosh and all those people—but that was what we did and that was where you got your news. Now, we've got these bloggers who are partisan, and personal, and mean-spirited. It's a take no prisoners approach in the press, that is the press, because for one thing we have lost a statewide press—the Atlanta paper barely covers the capitol at all and they're only interested in a comprehensive look cause they can't afford it. They don't have the money and there's no one to take their place. What's taken their place is this patchwork of bloggers and that can be anybody—it can be a conspiracy theorist, it can be someone who's brilliant. But a lot of people, people tend to read the one that agrees with them and that drives them further into the corner, I think.

SHORT: Do you agree that the present political philosophy in Georgia is the old Democratic philosophy that has turned Republican?

PAULK: No, I don't agree with that. I don't know if there was a Democratic philosophy, it was

just a big tent that included a lot of people including Lester Maddox, Herman Talmadge, right on through the most liberal Democrats from midtown Atlanta. And I should talk about Lester Maddox for a minute because I think Lester is a—the thing I am most capable of talking to you about is what happened back then because that when I was more of a player, I'm just an observer now and who cares about what I think. But I think Lester is an interesting, and complicated in some ways, and often misunderstood character. I would make the argument—I guess I'm making it—that Lester was the most liberal governor Georgia has had since Ellis Arnall and I am including Jimmy Carter in that and Carl Sanders in that list. Lester Maddox—part of this was because of timing—he was governor during the Johnson years and there were just a lot of money and things were happening—regardless of the reason, Lester was an innocent, extremely naïve man who arrived here with no idea how to run a complex office. And when that happens, people will find you who have pretty good ideas. He had the reputation for agreeing with the last person he talked to and so if you were smart you knew you wanted to wait until everybody else has come out and then go in and give him your opinion. And of course, Zell Miller was his press secretary—Zell had some position I don't remember.

SHORT: He was his executive secretary.

PAULK: His executive secretary. But those people that I worked with in the senate—that I just described to you—were his—Culver and Zell, back then, were the guys feeding Lester his opinions on day-to-day issues but he had a heart. And he had a compassion for poor people because he'd come a very poor background. And he used to have little people's day when he would open—what was it? Saturday or Friday, I don't remember, I think it was Friday.

SHORT: Wednesday afternoon.

PAULK: And anyone that wanted to could line up and go and talk to the governor about anything, whatever their problem was. And he'd have his department heads there and he would hand stuff off to them. And they would get their problems solved. It was wildly popular. He took the stripes off the prison uniforms, which was very popular among black people. He said things that were not politic but you have to go by what he did and what happened in terms of spending for poor people and for nutrition. And that was an era when a lot happened. Now I dealt with him off and on from long before I got elected until when I was elected he was just a phantom that would show up at the capitol. I will tell you my favorite Lester Maddox story. Years after I had left office when they remodeled the capitol—I'm pointing at the wrong direction—they remodeled the senate chamber and after that, the senate sponsored a party for all former members of the senate and former lieutenant governors because they were presiding officers. And really, no one else except of course Coca-Cola had paid for it so they were there. But had a party, reception, in the capitol, in the senate chamber and the rotunda. And it was black-tie and my niece who was—I was living in New York and I came down and I took my niece who was probably sixteen or seventeen at the time. All dressed up. I was trying to introduce her to all these famous people—George Smith and people that she didn't really recognize the name—but I introduced her to Lester Maddox. And you know one thing about Lester, he could never remember anybody's name. He had absolutely no memory and I knew that so I told him who it was. And he remembered and he asked me if I was related to—there used to be a chiropractor named Paulk in I think Marietta, everybody went to him. He must have

had a huge practice because back before there was Earl Paulk, jr. and Earl Paulk, sr. there was the chiropractor, that was—I can date how old people are by what they ask me when they hear the name Paulk—and people would always ask me if I knew this guy. I said, “Well, he’s related but it’s pretty distant.” And he said, “I had a digestive problem and people kept saying ‘go see Paulk, go see Paulk.’ So finally, I went to see him and he gave me an adjustment. I went home and I had the first good BM I had in six weeks. One adjustment.” What could I say? I thought a minute and I said, “Lester, that’s great.” And my niece was standing there with her mouth open trying to figure out who this guy was. So there you have it, what can you say?

SHORT: It’s been very delightful.

PAULK: Thank you, it’s fun.

SHORT: Is there anything we’ve forgotten?

PAULK: I’m sure there are.

SHORT: or left out?

PAULK: I forget a lot but I think we’ve covered some main things. I’m glad, it sounds good to me.

SHORT: Well, we’re delighted to have had you and I want to thank you on behalf of the Richard Russell Library and Young Harris college, and invite you back if you so desire.

PAULK: Alright. If I think of some new things, I’ll call you up.