

**Rusty Paul interviewed by Bob Short**  
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**Reflections on Georgia Politics**  
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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 Rusty Paul, former Georgia state senator, former chair of the Georgia Republican Party, former member of the Stone Mountain City Council and a former member of the Bush administration. Rusty that's a mouth full.

RUSTY PAUL: It is. Now I am a former member of the Sandy Springs City Council so I've done—

SHORT: Oh I missed that. Yes, yes.

PAUL: I served one term and just finished up last year so—

SHORT: The new city.

PAUL: The new brand new city. I was part of the inaugural.

SHORT: Tell us about that. How do you transist from a sort of a—not rural but suburban area into a city?

PAUL: Well it took thirty five years to do it. I mean it was a long time coming and the wonderful lady who's the mayor there now Eva Galambos was kind of the person who started that effort in the 1970s. And for variety of political reasons, it took a long time. Mostly because Sandy Springs was perceived to be kind of the heart of the Republican power center in Metro Atlanta. It was called the—the nick name I knew for years was the golden ghetto and of course the legislature being dominated by Democrats, they really weren't fired up about creating a new city, a new political entity that would be dominated by Republicans. So for that and variety of other reasons, it took thirty five years and really only came after the Republicans took control and then

we had our first election in 2005 and the city has been unbelievably successful. And that's a story of Georgia politics unto itself that you ought to explore in one of these as well.

SHORT: Rusty with your permission, we'd like to talk to you about your early life.

PAUL: Okay

SHORT: Your years as a public servant, and finally your life after politics. Let's get on the way by finding out about Rusty Paul.

PAUL: Well I was—I grew up in a very politicized environment. None of my family had ever run for office and they were—when I first ran for office when I was still just a young kid, my dad was appalled that I would get involved in politics. But I grew up in Birmingham, Alabama and in that area, in the late 1950s and 1960s and I don't have to tell you what a political cauldron that really was and politics was all round. It's what everybody talked about. I mean you would see-- it was rural Alabama, you'd sit on my grandparents porch, my parents and uncles and cousins and everybody would sit there and they were talking about what was going on in Birmingham and the rest of the south, the changes that were going on. And I was you know—being conservative southern white southerners, they weren't real thrilled with a lot of the changes. But that was the conversation and I don't know what it was about me that was drawn to it. My grandmother lived about a quarter mile away and every day when I got old enough, I walk to her house for two things. One, she took the Birmingham Post Herald and they delivered it by post office. The mail man brought it. And then she always saved a couple of biscuits for her oldest grandson; and I'll have a couple of biscuits and honey and then read the Birmingham Post Herald and it was all about politics.

It was the hay day of George Wallace and so I grew up with—you know surrounded by not so much political people but people talking about politics. And I'll never forget when Governor Wallace was running over there, he couldn't run for reelection. I worked for a little radio station in my hometown of Oneonta, Alabama and the owner of the radio station was one of seven state senators who filibustered the bill that prevented George Wallace from succeeding himself. So Lurleen Wallace was running and in fact Senator Bentley, another of seven people ever elected in any office in the state of Alabama after that again. But as a kid growing up on a farm, I had two hours of freedom in town every Saturday. My mom had a two hour hair appointment and I went with her and I got to roam the streets of a small southern town doing the things that you know bull boys are not supposed to go in the pool hall and stuff like that. But one Saturday, I heard music; a band, a country band. I heard bluegrass music coming from the court house and I walked up and there was a flatbed truck parked in front of the court house and there was a band and all the farmers and their wives were in town. And after about ten minutes or so of listening to music, a big black Ford Mercury drives up and out jumps George C. Wallace. He jumps up on the flatbed truck and launches into one of his patented speeches and I am sitting there watching, I was probably about thirteen or fourteen years old. And in the middle of his speech, he just kind

of reached over and he got to that part where you know “I am going to talk about what we’ve done for Blount County Alabama.” He reached over and an aid handed him a piece of paper. He literally read it off and then handed it back. Never missed a beat and went right back into his speech, and to me I was offended by it. I said “This guy he has no clue what he has done for my county”. If they hadn’t given him that sheet of paper, he would never have known.

And I grew up and while my parents—my grandfather was a Big Jim Folsom fan and Big Jim kind of collapsed in that campaign and it really came down to George Wallace and Ryan DeGraffenried. And I was a big Ryan DeGraffenried fan in that 1962 race in the third grade and so I was not a Wallace guy to begin with and that just kind of offended me for some reason; I don’t know why. So I grew up in that environment and my dad every Friday night—no Sunday night after church we drove to Birmingham which is about thirty minutes. My dad worked for a magazine here in Atlanta and they ship the magazines by bus and he picked them up on Sunday at the Birmingham bus station which was where John Lewis and the freedom writers were beaten. And I knew that a police station literally was across the street. My dad was a photographer for the magazine and there was a small photograph he shot on the westside of Birmingham that he dropped his film off at the end of every week. While he was travelling, one of my jobs was to go by and pick up that film and it was operated by a Gentleman and his wife named Chris Doss. Chris’ daughter, Alice, was my age and she was one of the four girls killed in the Sixteenth Street Church bombing. So, that world was not abstract to me, it was real. It was—I knew the people, I knew the places, I knew the Birmingham civil rights area was a very compact—just a very small area, just a few blocks from the Sixteenth Street Church where they started the marches through the killing and part, to the city hall, to the bus station. All that stuff is literally two or three blocks square blocks where all this history occurred; so I grew up in that environment. So at a very early age, was surrounded by politics and the impact of politics and I watched my home town of Birmingham, I came to understand very early on the importance of political leadership particularly, when I came to Atlanta right after that.

When I graduated from college, Birmingham had been the same size as Atlanta. In fact it was called the magic city. It was the one place on earth where you had coal, limestone and iron ore; the three elements needed to make steel. It was all right there in one location and Birmingham was growing unbelievably founded in the 1870s. It was the fastest growing city in the south. Then George Wallace and Bull Connor came in with their political leadership in a negative sense and totally stymied the growth of that city and ruined its reputation nationally. And then like watching Atlanta which is like 150 miles away; same counter city, same town, different political leadership, Alvin Allen, Carl Sanders, and having the right kind of political leadership made all the difference in the world and the communities. So as a result of all that, at a very very young age, I don’t know why I was able to absorb and process that kind of information. I became politicized myself and realized that if I wanted to do something politically or do something significant in my home area the south, Alabama and Georgia, then politics was the way to do it. And I realized that one of the problems of the south was the absence of a competitive political environment. You had the primaries and that was it. And I believed that the south was somewhat politically retarded because of the absence of a strong two party system.

So being basically conservative, believing that we needed to develop a two party system, when I came to Atlanta, I began to get involved politically and looking for campaign. I attended church and I rented an apartment when I came to Atlanta. My wife and I, we married right out of college and we rented an apartment in Avondale. And I went out on Sunday morning and looked at a bumper sticker and it was a guy who is a member of our church who was running for

DeKalb County Commission. And I asked one of the church members that I knew and said “Who is this guy?” And he told me you know local insurance guy running for the county’s commission. I said “Is he Republican or a Democrat?” He said “I’m not sure, I think he is Republican” and I say “ask him to call me”. And nothing happened that week and I saw him again at church next week and I said “the guy never called me” “I didn’t call him” In about an hour after I got home from church, a guy by the name of Jim Kelly who became one of my early mentors called me and said “hey, we’re going to have a campaign meeting this afternoon for Jim Armstrong and I understand you want to help; why don’t you come?” And that was my very first involvement in active politics.

I got involved in that local political campaign because my background was journalism, I could write and so I did press releases and I started learning politics from the grass roots up. At local elections, how to manage local races, got involved in the local Republican Party of DeKalb County and just kind of began to work my way up. That was 1976 and by then I bought a small—my first house in Stone Mountain and was in the city limits and I got to checking and sure enough we had a city election in November, actually early December of 1977. So I thought “I think I’ll run for city council” but I knew enough that I couldn’t just show up and run until I start going to city council meetings, got to understand what was going on and ran and to my surprise and everybody else’s, I won. I beat one of the only football heroes the city Stone Mountain ever had. A guy by the name of Phil Ashe who was found talking to the senator at the University of Georgia, then grown up in Stone Mountain and I learned a very valuable lesson. My daughter who is now in her thirties was eleven months old and I put her on—literarily hand printed my brochures because we had no money and put her picture on the front and said “Why Rusty Paul wants to be your city townsman, talk about creating a city that she can grow up in”. And then two years later I put my picture on it. I won in a landslide the first time when I put my picture on it, I won five by five votes so I learned a very valuable lesson early on. You know that’s why politicians kiss babies. But that is kind of how I got involved in politics. It’s a long, long winded story but that is the path that got me started.

SHORT: What happened next??

PAUL: I ran and was elected to the city council in Stone Mountain and served four two year terms. Fortunately, it was a non-partisan election so nobody knew about my political affiliation. I don’t think if they’d known I was Republican, there’d have been absolutely no way I would have won. But I would never forget right after the election we were at a little banquet around town. I was couple of seats down from the mayor and somebody leaned over to him and said “Hey do you know you just elected a Republican to your city council?” I thought he was going to choke on his steak; and he leaned over to me and said “Is that true?” I said, “Yes, mayor it is.” He thought about it for a while and then he didn’t say anything else. And his name was Randolph Medlock. He was one of the longest serving Mayors in the state of Georgia and was really an important mentor to me. He taught me how to govern. You know he put me in tough situations so I would learn. He also kept me from making bad mistakes. When the night of my election, I was about—you could go in, they had three ladies who counted all the votes. I was going to go in and watch them count the votes. It’s an open process. He literarily—he is a little bit short guy and I’m pretty big guy. So he leaned over and grabbed me by the collar and said “where are you going?” I said “I’m going in there to watch the votes”. “He said “I wouldn’t do that if I were you”. And I kind of looked at him; there was just something about his voice. I knew that he was

giving me good advice and I had no idea why. So I stayed out until they came out and announced the winners of the election in about an hour after they hand counted the ballots.

Afterwards, a month or so after I got to know him a little bit better, I –“why’d you do that?” He said “those ladies have been counting those ballots in this city for generations, decades. If you had gone in there, they would have felt that you didn’t trust them. And you might have won this election, but you would never have won another one”. And so it was just stuff like that. He was always giving me good advice, putting me in position to learn. It is like I tell my kids “my job is to make sure you learn to use your wings without breaking them”. He took a very young guy, twenty four years old, and these were all World War II veterans who had come back from World War II, gotten elected. He’d been Mayor since I was two years old so he had been around for a long time. And then he really took me under his wing, taught me how—about governing, about working with people, about the processes, and it was invaluable; absolutely invaluable. That was one of the reasons why I ran for the city council in Sandy springs. It was my way. We had a brand new group of elected officials who had never served before and I was able to pay Randolph Medlock back by going in and doing the same thing for them that he and those older members of the Stone Mountain council had done for me. So that’s how I served four terms.

Everybody thought I’d run for Mayor when he retired. I didn’t. I had a friend of mine who came to me and I said “I really want to be Mayor” and I said “well I would support you”. She ran, Jane Rhodes, and became the Mayor and I went on and did other stuff. The guy that I worked in his campaign, Jim Armstrong, was an insurance agent. He lost. 1976 was Jimmy Carter year and Georgia’s bad time to be running for anything as a Republican so we lost pretty badly. But he was active in the Reagan campaign and they were looking for local—kind of a press person in this part of the south and he recommended me so I started to work in the Reagan campaign of 1980. It was kind of a press aid and did that for about a year and a half and in the process of that, met an old NFL quarterback by the name of Jack Kemp. And Jack became a close mentor to me, and ultimately I went to HUD [Department of Housing and Urban Development]. I managed his campaign when he ran for president. We got to know each other during that process.

So a lot of the relationships and so on that propelled me along the way came from that three- four years of just being a young kid willing to work hard, willing to learn, willing to kind of listen to their seniors a little bit and then had me some really good mentors. I was able to sorta move and it was a lot less competition in the Republican Party those days. So you could kind of move up through the ranks real quickly. So I took advantage of that and was able to take on some positions and responsibility that probably today, a younger person would have maybe years of efforts to get to do some of the things that I got to do at a very early age.

SHORT: Let’s talk for a minute about the ins and outs of a national presidential campaign.

PAUL: It is one of the most fascinating things in the world. You really get to see how diverse a country this really is. You know when you are dealing in Georgia politics; Georgia is a very diverse state. We talked about having two Georgias; we really got three. We got the coast, we got the rest of the rural area and then we got the Metro Atlanta area you know. The politics of Iowa, New Hampshire, and New York, California is a lot different than the politics here and you have to be able to structure your campaigns differently. You got to be able to manage your message so that it becomes a national message but you really kinda have fifty different campaigns with a lot of different pressures, a lot of different traditions, a lot of different rules. And so it’s fascinating

to watch and I have been fortunate. I have worked in the Reagan campaign of '80; I ran Jack Kemp's presidential campaign in Georgia in '88, I got to you know do work at the national conventions, then worked for Steve Forbes in both his presidential campaigns and did a little bit of work for Julie Annie in the last one.

And it is unlike any other thing in politics because you are under a microscope constantly. Everything you think, say and do is analyzed. And yet it's a very lonely existence. You know you are a big—if you are a senator from New York, or California or a governor of Georgia, when you go to Iowa and New Hampshire, they don't know and they don't care. You know that you are a big Whig in your local area, they just really—you know they have their own set of things that they are looking for and you have to—it's a very lonely existence. You go out, you use to—if you are the governor of Georgia which Jimmy Carter was, you know if you are going to hold a speech, you are going to have a room full of people. When you go to Iowa to hold a speech, you are lucky if you got ten people sometimes in somebody's living room. And so it is a lot of retail politics. It's just murder on a political figure's ego because they are having to answer questions, and be poked and prodded and dealt with in ways that they are not—and so in a lot of ways, it is a very humiliating process for the candidates when you sit back and watch what they go through and so on. But it's fascinating because it's—no other country chooses its leadership the way we do. And so you really go through a crucible when you are involved in a national campaign. The pressures, the scrutiny, all of that is just so intense. You are having to go talk to—over a kitchen table with some lady who is important in some small county in New Hampshire or Iowa. She is important in about a five square mile area but in the big picture, you know she is not that important. But in that race, in this area, in this caucus, in this primary, that lady is important and you better you know, you better be nice to her and give her the answers she is looking for. And that is how we do it. It is amazing.

SHORT: Before you became a state senator, you were chairman of the Georgia Republican Party.

PAUL: Right.

SHORT: Very historic time. Tell us about it.

PAUL: It was a marvelous time. It was probably the most fun job I ever had in politics. Well I have been fortunate to hold a lot of elective offices, the thing that I have always been most fascinated by is the—how you put elections together. And being chairman of the Republican Party gave me an opportunity to do that. And we did some things that were really kind of historic. You were right. It was an interesting time. We are in the middle of a transition. You know Republican Party really kind of started in the 1950s in Georgia. You heard what we called "Post Office Republicans" which were people who ran the post office whenever there was a Republican administration, and you had African Americans, and that was pretty much it. And they were like a very outcast excluded group. But in the 1950s, you got a lot of World War II veterans coming back into Georgia, who had served under General Eisenhower. And he was kind of a non-partisan Republican if you would. So a lot of people in the South who had been involved in World War II voted for General Eisenhower because he had been the guy who won the war and they'd served under him and that kind of turned politics and got some people thinking about politics differently.

And then the Goldwater campaign of '64 activated a lot of conservatives. I was twelve years old and I went to bed with a transistor—you know most kids listen to transistor radio; they listen to the baseball game. I had my transistor in my bed listening to the election returns. So yeah I was not your normal child. I came back from Washington; I had worked as the assistant secretary at HUD for Secretary Kemp. And I had a group of people in the carpet industry in Dalton who knew me before I left and they for some reason other decided that I would make a good state party chairman. And so I went up to Dalton to meet with them a couple of three times. And they made the case, and I made the case—you know I've been out state for four years, I've been in Washington, I'm starting a new business, you know it's the last thing I need and after the last meeting, I told them no. The third meeting I was driving back and I'll never forget where I was, I was at the intersection of 285 and 75 and I just thought "well you know, it'll be a good way, you probably won't win but it'll be a really good way to get back into state, get around the state, get networked, and meet people again since you have been out of state for a while because politics is very dynamic, people come, people go." And so I called—one of my very first cell phones and I called and I said "I changed my mind, I think I'll run." And the other candidates had been running for a couple of months and the way we select chairman of the Republican Party is different than any other office. I mean you run around the state like your state wide candidate but instead of talking to voters, you are talking to people who are likely to be the delegates to their local conventions. Whether it's their precinct caucus, their county convention, their congressional district convention, then the state convention. There are really four processes then you become a delegate to the state convention. Those delegates elect the chairman. So you are going out explaining what you want to do.

I have given lot of thought. I mean I had gone to Georgia State to get my masters in political science with a major in campaigns and elections. I thought that's what I'll do most of my life; I'll just manage campaigns. And so I'd given a lot of thought to the party structure and in my mind you know—in today's world you have a lot of political consultants and I'm one of them. I manage a lot of—I still manage races but I—if a political party is doing what it's supposed to, there is no reason for consultancy and outside people. The party in my mind should be the largest political consulting firm in the state. And that is what I went around the state talking about. I said "look, we can turn this thing in; we can do some interesting things. One, I am going to take ten young Republicans, right out of college, right out of high school, wherever we get them, I'm going to train them to become campaign managers. I'm going to put them on staff and we're going to put them out in state; they are going to manage legislative races. I'm going to give them ten races and we are going to see if I need to send them to Georgia State, if I need to send them to—there's all kinds of campaigns. We are going to pick ten of our best and brightest young men and women and turn them into campaign managers.

One, two, we are going to operate the party like a consulting firm". And we are going to develop—we ended up developing—I hired—when I got elected, it took four ballots at the state convention in Savannah to get me elected. It was a raucous. I mean it was wonderful, fun. Fun because I won, I guess but you know the whole process of watching a convention, how it functioned, it's not like an election. I mean there have been flow of support back and forth and you're on your walkie talkie listening and you say "well the delegates in this area got some questions so you hustle over there and answer questions" and it literally took four votes with everybody. The lowest vote getter dropping off before I finally won on the last ballot. But I went around the state talking about my vision for how we can take the party and transform it into a political consulting firm. With consultants, we'll have a fund raising operation, and then we

would you know—we had what I called the Republican entitlement program.

One of the big complaints that the candidates always had with the party was that the party leadership, because of limited resources, they would make contributions based on what—who they thought could win. But it was somewhat arbitrary and so I said we are going to take the arbitrariness out. We are going to set a criteria. There are going to be five things and if you meet these five things, you automatically qualify for party support. And we did a lot—we were very creative in how we did it. Before the party was just another contributor, we would contribute the max and so we were just another contributor to the candidates. We really didnt have much cloud beyond that and so we took our contributions. There were several things that the party had that the law helped. One was we got a nonprofit postage rate which was dramatically cheaper than the third class rate for postage. I grew up in the marketing world so I knew about gang printing. If you print all your stuff at once, you can lower the cost of your printing. We could take existing legislators and legislative races and make them mentors of candidates. We would assign candidates “this is your mentor and you got to talk to your mentor”. They have to document to us that they talk to their mentor at least once a week to get advice on how to campaign, to get input on issues, whatever.

Then we had our consultants. They have to talk to their consultant at least twice a week and meet with the consultant once a week. These were in-house consultants and they had to turn in reports saying yes we met with the candidates. If they did that, then they qualify for maximum funding, they got the cheaper postage rate. We did the printing for them at a much lower rate than they could get. And instead of being you know, maybe a two thousand dollar contributor, we were suddenly putting with the savings of consultants, and all this other stuff, we became a 20 or \$30 thousand dollar force in the legislative race and maybe more than that in the Senate race. And no we had tremendous leverage and tremendous cloud and we leveraged all of our resources so that we had maximum resources going into the elections and so we transformed how we managed campaigns. And it worked.

The first two years, I was chairman for four years so the first two years we gave money to the candidates. We literally—the second round, we had candidates come to us and say “here’s my budget, would you spend it for me?” Which we did. You know we literally managed the campaigns at that level. It was tremendous amount of fun. Nobody had ever done it that way before and I’m thinking “has anybody taken it to that level since?” But a political party, if managed properly, can be a tremendous force much more than most people realize in how elections are managed and structured and conducted. And won, I think that we didn’t get—I told everybody, I didn’t want to be the Moses of the Republican Party, I wanted to be the Joshua. I want to be the one to guide us to the Promised Land you know. Well didn’t quite get there when my term was up in 1999 so it was really 2000—the 2000 election and 2002 when we got over to the Promised Land. But I think—what we did, the candidates we trained, the structure we put in place, a lot of the things that we did between ‘95 and ‘99, today are still being somewhat used though. Maybe not to the organized extent but the state party, we kind of ingrained that into how they operate their campaigns; it’s made a real difference. And I think it helped get us over the top.

SHORT: let’s talk for a minute about some of the individuals involved in the rise of the Republican Party.

PAUL: well you had a whole group of people like one of my great mentors was Bob Shaw; and

you've already done one of these with Bob. Bob was one of those guys who got involved in the 50s and then in the '60s, he was a two term state party chairman. When you go through life, there are people who recognize—who mentor you—who recognize maybe that you've got skills and talents in a certain area well before you recognize them yourself. And without good mentors, I don't think any of us would succeed. But we had some people like Bob who was early on a party chairman; Mack Mattingly who ultimately became a US senator; Coverdell, Paul Coverdell, who was involved, Newt Gingrich down in Columbus. You had a lot of people like that who really—when you have a state that is so dominated by one party, the people who are on the opposite side are not your normal—are not normal people. I hate to say that; that kind of characterized me too. Not normal from the point of view that it's much easier to get in with the tide and swim with it with the current of the river rather than swim upstream.

The people who got involved in the Republican Party were people who were willing to swim against the tide. I mean it was Coverdell—I worked at the Capitol and I was hired as a press aid for one session by Senator Coverdell. There were five Republican senators and it was Paul Coverdell, Bob Bill, Jim Tyson, George Warren and Haskew Brantley. That was it. We had twenty-three members of the House and I worked with Herb Jones who was a minority leader in the House and did some things for them. But all five of those senators had one office. One secretary and me all in an office not much bigger than the room we are in right now. And they were insignificant as far as being able to affect policy. Particularly in the House where speaker Murphy just hated Republicans and spent more—you know his favorite sport was humiliating them as much as he possible could.

So these were people who swam against the tide. They were not people who would—they were not normal political figures who figure out—well this is how—the easiest way to get to power. They really were trying to transform the way politics was done in the state. And so there was a lot of time that was spent trying to figure out how to get people to pay attention. I mean I will never forget when I was doing press work for the Republican Party, I'd go to the Atlanta Constitution with the press release or whatever name the report. I went there and said look “You guys are not factors in Georgia politics; there's no hope you are going to be factors in Georgia politics and if you ever get to be a factor in Georgia politics, then we'll pay attention but in the meantime, please don't bother me with your press release.” You know I have been a reporter before, I know how busy they are but you know—so what you end up doing is (a) you get a group of interesting personalities. You have people like that who really are the brain trusts. And if you went to a normal—just an average Republican county party meeting every month, the collection of humanity—it was like a freak show to some degrees. Because you had all kinds—you had libertarians, you had all kinds of people who were all outside of the main stream. Because if you're part of the main stream, you were over with the Democrats so you had this collection of humanity that wanted to do politics differently for a variety of different reasons. They came for various reasons and various causes. But the people that we just named were kind of like the brain trust and you had people like Matt Patton who was the former chairman who was a mentor to me. Bob worked closely with Mattingly when he was chairman of the party. And they were trying to get a structure that would allow us to figure out how to win elections. And your candidates—we would go out to recruit candidates. I mean ideally what you want to do when you recruit candidates, you want to go to the chamber of commerce or you want to go to some—a church with you know someplace where they have real strong ties in the community. We'd go out and I'd never forget, when we were recruiting candidates, it was 1978 and the chairman of the Republican party in DeKalb county was at shell station in downtown Clarkston

and we needed—Walt Russell was running—he was a House member from Clarkston who was running for commission chairman and there was a vacant seat there. And we were trying to recruit a candidate. It wasn't a decent Republican seat at all but you have to take every opportunity. So he's sitting there filling up his car and he asked the gas station attendant "do you know anybody here who might want to run for the House?" And he said "yeah I got a customer who might want to run; she knows the neighborhood pretty well". And so Jim called her up and she said "no, I don't think I'll run but my husband might". And so sure enough we recruited him. Roy Groves ran for the House, we got killed; absolutely slaughtered. He didn't even take his own prescient in that race.

But you'd go out, recruiting was just you know, you just throw bodies at the ballot just to have names on there and to try and feel the team of people. It literally got so bad that I was going door to door in Clarkson. I was telling people my name was Roy Groves and I was running for the House. They didn't even know that I wasn't Roy Groves. And because we are just trying to use every leverage, we couldn't—they had no money to pay post it. So we figured out the routes of the post off postman; and we would follow him though the community just out of his sight and we would stuff our polititude in the mail so it'd look like we mailed it. And then—you know to try and get our message out; just to look like a campaign. We would sit in a room full of people, we would have men and woman folding envelopes and hand stuffing them. All these stuff is done with technology today. We would hand write out the envelopes. You know socially, it was a wonderful time but it was an impossible way to manage campaigns. But that's what we had to do. We had no money, no resources, no respect, no dignity and we were just doing what we could to get a little bit of attention and maybe win.

You know we had some successes. The night Roy lost. I was also managing Tommy Tolbert. Tommy was in the—was one of the few House members that we had. And he was in a real tough election because he represented south DeKalb which was going through some demographic changes and we were able to pull him out one more time. But that is how we managed and we had a group of people who were dedicated to the cause. Whether you were the top, the brain trust, those names that we talked about earlier or that collection of interesting personalities who would show up and they would have all these outlandish ideas about how we ought to—things we ought to do to take control or things we could do to get attention and it was an amazing time politically. It was really just kind of a grassroots guerrilla movement overthrow the government of Georgia. It was wonderful to be a young guy in the middle of all that.

SHORT: Let's talk about some mile posts. 1964 had to be a mile post to—

PAUL: It was. It was. I mean you had the first real competitive election. The Goldwater campaign mobilized and motivated a group of young—mostly young adults. They were people mostly my parent's age. When I got to Georgia and got involved in politics, As I said I went to bed lis—and I woke up, I was so excited because Alabama had elected about three or four members of Congress. I know Georgia had done the same thing. Ben Blackburn and Bo Callaway and people like that got elected in that era. It was fascinating but it gave that collection of humanity that I just described hope. And hope is the most powerful thing in politics. Because if you got hope, then you'll work harder, and you'll think harder and you'll try and figure out what you got to do to win. So '64 gave Republicans hope and that was followed by some pretty decent elections in 1966. Of course all these were a real reaction to what was going on in the civil rights movement and make some southern strategy and there were a whole lot of things that

emerged during that period. But we were able to have some success. We elected some people to the Georgia Senate and Houses.

First time we really had any—even though they were relatively insignificant number wise, we did elect a few people who came in and distinguished themselves. And we had people that we could then begin start using as role models for other candidates. They came in, they were Tommy Tolbert, I mentioned earlier; people like Walt Davis, people like that that were just phenomenal people who were good office holders, who served as good role models for others. And then we could also prove to people “Yeah you can get elected in some pretty tough districts as a Republican”. So that hope that ’64 generated was kind of the impetus to what really started a thirty-year revolution in politics.

I don’t always mean to use biblical illusions but there was a reason Moses wandered through the wilderness for forty years. He had a group of people that had been slaves, who had come from slaves, who had been slaves for generations. He had to get a different mindset of people out to go into the Promised Land. Well that is the way the Republicans were. We had to have a generation of just kind of older, Southern people who had—like my grandmother and my great-grandmother, when I was sworn in for the Senate, my dad and I were walking across the Capitol and we stopped at the Gene Talmadge statue and he just looked up and said “Your great-grandmother thought that man could walk on water.” You know those people were not going to take the Republican Party where it needed to go. We had to have a group of younger people who thought differently, who worked differently and that hope from ’64 and then we moved on in. Nixon was elected in ’68, he had the southern strategy. You had old line Democrats like Strom Thurmond switching parties and it started the whole—you could see kind of things were changing. You didn’t know how long it was going to take but we did know that from my studies at school, I knew intuitively that from the political socialization, that once you form your political identity bar in some cataclysmic event, you keep it. So, you literally have to start working on the younger generation and get them to think differently because and then you just have to wait until that older generation passes. So from ’64 to ’92, that was kind of the transition that was going on. And so we were training younger people, we were attracting younger people and getting them ready to move into positions of leadership and that’s kind of how—what ’64 did and it touched off that whole process.

And any political transition literally of that earth shattering type takes a long time to effect; simply because of the ingrained political attitudes that you got to overcome and so that is what we were able to do. We just kind of kept the pressure on. And then when we got those office holders in there in the legislature, we started developing—we started using the parliamentary procedures to our advantage. We forced votes that the Democrats, because of the unique nature of the coalition they had, they couldn’t—we were trying to drive wedges into that democratic coalition constantly because you had real white conservatives, you had urban white liberal, you had African Americans all in the same coalition and we knew that that coalition was not a natural coalition. So we were always trying to come up with things that would drive wedges in there. We would have—we would set up votes on the House and the Senate that would put stress on that coalition hoping to break it apart and that took some time to. And then we would take those votes and use them because a lot of these rural—particularly in the rural parts of the south, those votes we were forcing them to take, that their leadership was forcing them on party discipline to take, were not necessarily popular back home. And so then our direct mail and all those little things we stuffed in the mail boxes we talked about “can you believe he is one guy here in your town and when he gets up there to Atlanta he votes this way?”

And it takes a while because they know these people, they don't quite believe it but overtime, it begins to sepp in that there is something not right here. So it took us a while to drive the wedges into that coalition that finally broke in 1992 which allowed us to really start making games. And then really with the redistricting of 2001 and the election of 2002 kind of allowed us to break everything apart and take over.

SHORT: Let's not forget that the Republicans led the ticket in 1966.

PAUL: Yeah, they did with—because I wasn't in Georgia; I was back home watching George Wallace at that time but I followed the politics. My family—I got a lot of family in Georgia even though I was growing up in Alabama. And the elections of—in Columbus—I am beginning to show my own age here by a little bit—ran for governor '66—

SHORT: Callaway

PAUL: Callaway! How can you forget Bo Callaway?

SHORT: Bo Callaway

PAUL: Bo Callaway. You know those elections, you had others, you had—Fletcher Thompson got elected, Ben Blackburn got elected, you know we began to get some momentum there. That Watergate truly did set us back in 1972. Then Carter in '76. We probably lost about a decade in there because of Watergate and the reaction against that than Jimmy Carter being from Georgia and a lot you know. Carter wasn't particularly—Carter was governor when I came to Georgia. He wasn't particularly popular. But because he was from Georgia, everybody—so created a real and Watergate—everything else kind of created a democratic mood. So it just kind of wiped us out that it took us about another ten years really to recover from all that.

SHORT: Let's talk for a minute about your Senate career.

PAUL: Okay. It was very short. I am a one-term wonder. I was sitting in my office, and the phone rang. And I represented a district, the Senate district that had a lot of history in it. It had been Paul Coverdell's seat; and then when Paul ran for the US Senator, Mike Egan who was one of those early Republicans ran and won. I was the only Republican in the city of Atlanta. It was Sandy Springs, Buckhead largely, came on down into Midtown but went into Roswell and a little bit of Alpharetta. But I was sitting in my office one day and the phone rang and it was Mike Egan. And he said, "I need you to come down to the Capitol, I want to see you." So—Mike was one of those very interesting early Republicans personalities. He kept it. He was a curmudgeon, very frank, and just—whatever was on his mind was what was going to come out. You know old Irish political guy.

And so I came down, his office was down the basement of the Capitol. I sat down at his office and there was no—with Mike there was no "Hey, how are you doing, how's the family". He said let me ask you something "If I decided to not to run for re-election, would you run for my seat?" And I started counting "Well Mike you know I would never run against you, you know" he said "That is not what I asked you, if I ran—if I decided not to run for re-election,

would you run for my seat?" I said "yeah, probably would." He said "well get ready to run because I am not going to run for re-election." That was it. Thirty second conversation and I was out his office. So I started to go putting a campaign together and I was scared to death. A campaign, I have been chairman of the state Republican Party; I have been telling everybody how to run campaigns and so on. I ran scared because I said "Everything that you've said, everything you've done, you are going to be putting on the line if you don't win this election. And it was a very competitive election. We had five good, really good candidates running for the seat. It was me, John Mitnick who had run for Congress in DeKalb County; a guy who is in the legislature right now, Edward Lindsey, currently the majority whip; a young community activist named Jim King who was hardworking, family was well connected and then Art Moore was a very wealthy attorney and so we were all running together. And I put a campaign plan together and when I got out there, one of the first pieces of mail that my opponents dropped, John Mitnick, had an endorsement from Mike Egan. I said "what in the world is this?" So I picked up the phone and called Mike and I said "Mike, I am in this race because you said to run" and he said "Yeah Rusty but I got to thinking, you know we don't have enough law"—this is one of the most ironic things I have ever heard anybody say. He said "We don't have enough lawyers in the Senate and I am going to be leaving and we need to have another lawyer in there. I said "Mike"— if it been anybody else, I just have gone nuts on them but being Mike, I said "well that is Mike being Mike; there is nothing I can do about that".

So I just got out and ran, ran hard, went door to door. I mean it was really—I left my office everyday between two and two thirty to go out. By three o'clock, I was on the street and I went door to door. Every afternoon from about three o'clock until I saw the first family, noticed that they were having dinner, then I would go home and did that five days a week. Saturday, I was on the street by ten o'clock, and went till night and then Sunday afternoons after church, one till night. And I covered—and I started in April. I wish I had started in March because I still didn't get around the whole district. But was in a run off with John Mitnick and ended up winning. And then church—in the Senate—I was in the Senate; you know I was not your normal freshman senator I guess. I had been in Washington; I had been chairman of the party, city council, so I kind of walked in and because the leadership of both parties knew who I was, my very first meeting as lieutenant governor was rather interesting. I walked in and he didn't even shake my hands. He said are we going to be running against each other in two years? And I had known Mark forever. I said "Mark I don't know, I just got here".

SHORT: Is this Mark Taylor?

PAUL: Mark Taylor yeah. I said—He said "well how are you going to play it? Are you going to be one of those Partisan guys, you are going to try to work with people" I said "Mark I am very adaptable to my job description. My job description for the last four years has been has been chairman of the party and to win elections and to go out and try to beat people like you and I did that to the best of my ability. My job description has changed. I am now a state senator; my job is to work with people and try and get things done". And then I said "but truthfully, you are going to have a lot to say about that than I do because you are in charge, I'm a rookie senator." And then he kind of calmed down. We had a nice little conversation after that but there was some reason other I could get under his skin. I mean there were a few times when he would—I thought he was going to throw the gavel at me. Of course we were misbehaving back there; trying to throw sand in the gear still. I mean we were still a minority so we were trying to figure out how

to you know get some electoral advantage out of it. And I was—it was me and Eric Johnson, Casey Cagle, Sonny Perdue, Tom Price you know, we kind of structured and planned the debates on big issues.

And we had some big issues when I was in the senate. The flag; which nothing created more anxiety for me. I did even campaign on changing the flag. I told people I thought it was time to change the flag. And even smart politicians do dumb things from time to time. We talked earlier about Sandy springs. The folks from Sandy springs said “well if you are going to vote to change the flag, would you do us a favor? Would you try and leverage your vote for the flag to get our bill on the floor of the Senate?” I said “oh yeah, that’ll be no problem, I’d be happy to do that.” So I actually took the day off. I had you know—all of us legislators have to work and I had a client up in Kentucky that I needed to go see so I took a day off out of the session; I just had to go up and see him. And was driving from Atlanta to Lexington, Kentucky when my secretary called from here in the city and said “you are not going to believe that they came out this morning with a new flag and it’s already gone through the House”. And I just panicked. I said “is it going to be on the Senate floor today?” She said “no it is under the rules, we can’t vote on it till next week”. Because I could just see my constituents on the most important emotional issue in the state of Georgia he’s missing in action; “where were you?” “Why weren’t you voting?” And then I’ll have to explain “I had a business trip”. So I think that was on a Thursday, we were off on Friday and had the weekend.

And I’ll never forget, I got a phone call from Roy Barnes, governor because I campaigned and in fact when it came to the committee, I was on the committee of State and Local government. And the lieutenant governor stopped me after the service and said “hey senator can we have some help out of you on the flag today? I said “Governor, it is Mark Taylor. I’d love to vote for that. I just need one thing; I need you to let my Sandy Springs bill out”. And he said “well that is an interesting proposition, let me see.” So I went to committee and I said what I—you know but I voted against the flag because I wanted to send him a signal “look, you can’t take me for granted, I’m serious about this”. And so on Saturday I was speaking to a group in Sandy Springs and my cell phone went off and it was Governor Barnes lobbying me to vote on the flag. And I said “Governor I won’t help you; I won’t vote for this thing, I need you to let my Sandy Springs bill out”. We had a very contentious conversation right there. He said “well I didn’t come to negotiate about Sandy Springs, but you know this is a bill that is important and these are”—and I’ll never forget these words he said “ninety percent of things you do in the Senate you can phone in, there are few things though that really matter”. And I knew it mattered and Roy being the good politician that he was, knew where my pressure points were.

My old boss Jack Kemp was probably—he was and still is—even though he is no longer with us, my political hero. I always wanted to emulate Jack in his approach to politics because I thought he was the perfect guy in politics; smart, debated well, but had a positive face on conservatism. And made it—he was the happy warrior I guess of the Republican Party. So Jack being the guy who really wanted outreach to minority voters and bring them to the Republican Party, Jack called me four/five times over the weekend and said “hey you need to vote for this flag”. I said “Jack I want to vote for the flag, you just have to tell the governor to let my bill out”.

And so it came down, we went in on Monday morning for the flag vote and I didn’t know how I was going to vote. And it was agonizing to me because I really did believe that it needed to be changed but I had made a commitment and I couldn’t just walk away from that commitment.

And I was really—I never did—the only time my wife ever stopped me on the way out to the legislature, stopped, put her hands on my shoulders and said, “I’ll be praying for you today” and

then gave me a kiss on the cheek. She knew that it was agony for me and I went in and I finally said “I can vote, I’m going to vote because I”—our whips knew what our count was and—but they wouldn’t tell me so I said “well, I’m going to take a gamble, I’m going to vote against it” hoping that enough Democrats vote against it; we can block it and then I’ll be able to negotiate and get my bill out.

So it was kind of a calculated decision but it was—you know. And so when it came out and it voted and it won, I just walked out of the chamber. I felt—it was one of the worst days of my life. I just felt I had not followed my conscience. And even though I had done what I promised my constituents I’ll do, I was not proud of my vote. I went to the well and I spoke and my daughter called me; my daughter was in Annapolis Maryland. She was in tears. “Daddy I heard you voted against the flag, how could you—how could you do that after all the things that you’ve brought us up to believe in and doing the things”—and she was just—and reporters, they didn’t ask me but they said “how could Rusty vote that way?” And I had a lot of explaining to do; I mean I had a—I’m an Episcopalian and a episcopal priest just wrote me the nastiest letter I’ve gotten from anybody. And I responded with kind of a normal political letter and then he fired back at me an even worse letter and I finally just kind of told him in a letter just what I said here and he finally said “okay, alright, it was a stupid thing to do but I kind of understand the motivation”.

But the good thing there is redemption in politics. When Governor Perdue put the flag up, they had done a poll and the poll showed the current flag was going to lose. Now this was in the presidential primary of 2004, Bush was running for re-election on the post so they were not going to be very many Republicans and it was all going to be decided in the Democratic primary. The poll showed that it was going to lose because African American voters looked at the flags as the Republican flags and the Democratic flag. They had gotten politicized. In that way, and so they call me, John Watson who is the governor’s chief staff, who had worked with me, was one of my staff members in party causes and said “come down here, I need you to come look at this poll and help us out”. And I looked over at the poll and I said “John I want to take this home, you know how I felt about my flag vote that it was the wrong thing to do”, and I said “I need redemption.” So they let me manage the flag referendum. This was three weeks before the referendum and I worked with the Georgia chamber was the name of the stuff we gave but the Atlanta chamber raised all the money. We raised enough money; we got former Congressman Andrew Young, Congressman John Lewis, and then representative Tyron Brooks and we did one mail piece with Andrew Young and then Congressmen Lewis and representative Brooks made auto calls to the most—all Democratic voters but we were targeting African American voters. And in three weeks, we were able to change from a fifty-two/forty eight loser to a one-seventy five/twenty five and it totally took that issue off the table in the state of Georgia forever. So I went from the worst thing I ever felt that I had done in politics to the thing that I am probably the proudest of; that we were able to take that issue totally out of Georgia politics as an issue. So there is redemption.

SHORT: Rusty, as the Republican Party gained strength in Georgia, there were several Democrats who changed parties.

PAUL: Yeah

SHORT: What effect did that have on the party?

PAUL: Tremendous. We had—and it was not an easy thing for the Republican Party to go through. I mean we had Sonny Perdue switch par—when I was chairman, Sonny switched and I'll tell you that is a fascinating story when Sonny switched. We had Nathan deal switch, we had Mike Bowers switch, all these major political figures. We actually had a couple of Republicans switch to Democrats; Kathy Ashe switched from Rep—so this realignment of politics in Georgia shifted as people felt they needed to get on one side of the other based on what their philosophies were. The grass root activists in the Republican Party were somewhat reluctant to take some of these people. I knew Sonny Perdue really well; when I was party chairman, I knew we were going to be facing him down the road. I knew that after Barnes, it was probably going to be Perdue who would be the next Democratic governor nominee. I had already started building a file on him, I actually went out to Tucker, he spoke to Oglethorpe Power and I heard he was coming out, I literally drove out to listen to him speak so I could start getting a feel for him because I didn't know.

And one day, my phone rang and it was Eric Johnson who was the Republican leader of the Senate and said “are you sitting down?” I said “yeah”. He said “is your door closed?” I said “no” he said “stand up, go close your door and come back and sit right down” and he said—I came back and he said “is the door closed? Are you sitting?” I said “yes” he said “What would the party's reaction be if Sonny Perdue switched parties?” I said—I never hesitated, I said “we'll take him in a heartbeat”. But the grass roots Republicans were somewhat—they weren't sure. They worked really hard, they put all the pieces in place, and they say “oh now so this old line Democratic political figure is coming over to kind of capture their harvest of all their hard work and so there was a little bit of reluctance. And I'd go around the state and I'd say again look, using biblical analogies; sometimes you have to come across as a good bible preacher to be a good politician. I said in the Bible, it says “Judge not, that you be not judged”. I can't tell where these folks have had a real conversion or not but I have to accept the fact that they are genuine and sincere in their switch. The Bible also says “by their fruits, you shall know them”. And I guarantee you, we are going to be very good fruit inspectors; we'll check their fruits and if they don't measure up, then we'll take care of it in our own primaries. Well it turned out it was very helpful. Sonny Perdue, Nathan Deal, Mike Bowers, all these folks brought an understanding. The Republicans had everything we needed to govern except for the knowledge about the inside operation of state government and these folks brought that to us. And gave us the insides; the last little bits we needed to kind of pushover top on how to structure the government at the state level and they brought it and they—all of them have become you know well accepted in the Republican Party and it was the last push of the battling ram that allowed us to knock the barriers down and take control.

But it was hard sell in some cases. Some people—we had one guy who switched out in Gwinnett County a state legislator and the legislature when I was party chairman, the legislators kept griping about him. And then I said “well let's just take him out”. And they said “you can't do that you are chairman of the Republican Party, it is going to be a Republican primary”. And I said “you show me in the rules where it says I can't get involved in a primary. If he is not measuring up to our standards, then let's take him out. You find me a candidate that you can't live with and we'll take him out”. And we did. We managed the campaign and we went after him. You know if the parties aren't willing to clean up their own candidates, then who is going to do it? I believe that is one of the responsibilities that parties have and they are always reluctant to do it but we did it. We took a guy out. He was a bad member of the House and we replaced him

with a young guy, Mike Cowan who's still there and a very good legislator. And so we had a few scalps. We had a few people who did switch parties that we had to throw back or go to feed in our own primaries. By and large, those people were tremendous additions that got us over the hump.

SHORT: But Johnny Isakson ran a tremendous race for governor against Governor Miller and Guy Millner ran an even closer race so the Republican Party was moving right along without the switchers.

PAUL: It would have happened. It was inevitable. That coalition—there was only one thing that was holding that coalition of the Democrats in place and that was power. That was the control of the general assembly and the governor's office and you saw when that—and there were people who were smart enough to see it coming and knew that. And they were a lot. There were people who reacted viscerally to how the Democrats were managing, holding on to that power. One of them was Sonny Perdue. Sonny just was not comfortable with the way that the democratic leadership operated in the general assembly. They were trying to hold that coalition together and that is why he switched; and same way with Mike Bowers. But it was inevitable. The Republicans—the forces that were in play in Georgia politics and in the south and the nation were inevitable that what happened, happened. It just happened sooner and it added depths to our bench when they came across and gave us some other things but the John Isaksons of the world, those other folks—they were going to win and we were going to get across the finish line, we had too many things going in our favor at that point. And realistically, many of them are out of control; it is like going down a flooded stream. In an election sometimes, all you are trying to do is to keep the boat in the middle of the river, not turn over. Well that was—the forces were propelling the Republican Party forward. For those of us in leadership positions we were just trying not to capsize the boat and let the current just carry us to where we needed to go.

SHORT: 2002.

PAUL: That was when it all came together. It all came together—when I was in the Senate, I only served one term. They took my district.

SHORT: You didn't run again.

PAUL: I didn't run again. They took my district and they blew it up. I went to the well of the Senate to tell them I was the only person I knew that had a double-wide trailer in Buckhead and they looked at me and said, "What is he talking about?" I said, "I am prepared to follow my district no matter where it goes". But I walked on the floor on the first day of the redistricting session—

SHORT: Reapportionment

PAUL: Reapportionment—

SHORT: I want to talk to you about that later.

PAUL: Okay. We had walked in and James Salzer of the AJC came—walked on the floor and said “how does it feel to have a target on your back?” I said “James, I knew the rules of engagement when I got in this business.” I said, “If they are coming after me, there is nothing I can do about it.” And they were. I have been too much of a thorn in their side for too many years and they weren’t going to let me have a free pass--particularly after the flag vote. So you know in 2002, with the redistricting they took—I went around the state when I was party chairman. I said “I don’t care, in 2002, I don’t care how they are slicing dice us”--these were my words--“I don’t care how they slice and dice this state, we are going to take control.” Well they had a slicer and dicer I didn’t know existed. They had a computer program that could slice this state up in the most—it gave gerrymandering a bad name. And it was just the most bizarre looking map and they took me and Tom Price and put us in the same district and the reason I know I was targeted was because just north of where I lived there was an empty district with no incumbent there. It would have been very easy to have drawn me into that district. So I was a targeted casualty of redistricting.

It was an amazing process how they—it was all about—and they were obsessed with how we maintain control and that was the queen essence of—that map was the queen essence of how—we don’t care how we have to break this state up to hold on but we are going to hold on at all costs. I mean truthfully it was the flag, the reason Roy Barnes and Sonny Perdue got elected was the combination of the flag, some really dumb things that Roy Barnes said to teachers and some other folks, and then that map was kind of the coup de grace, the last nail on the coffin when people realized these people will do anything to hold on to power and to control the state. They don’t care about the natural constituencies that exist in Georgia, the communities, the county lines, all that stuff just went out the window. It is how you can draw lines to incorporate the right kinds of demographics to make sure we hold on. Fortunately the courts threw it out and that allowed the—first of all, they had not yet hit their target. Me and redistricting, they targeted Sonny Perdue because he switched parties and they gave Sonny a very difficult district and so I went to Sonny but the guy who really got to help push Sonny into the race was Garland Pinholster. Garland was our chief recruiter in the House. The guy was phenomenal. He was born a basketball coach and he’ll go anywhere, talk to anybody and recruit them. He recruited the candidates who are over there right now, most of them. So he decided that Sonny needed to be the Republican candidate for governor and he came to see me. We are wonderful friends and he said “we need to get Sonny in the race” and I said “I agree with you”. So Garland got a petition to get people in the House, the Republicans to support him.

And I went in, sat down with Sonny on a Friday afternoon before we left and I said “hey you need to really think about this”. So he went home and he said “let me talk to Mary” and he called me on Sunday night and said “we’ve talked about it and we think we are going to get involved”. And that started the whole process of—we needed a good quality candidate. I mean Mike Bowers would have been a good quality candidate but he had run into some issues. Guy Millner, you mentioned him; he ran three times. Twice while I was party chairman and people always asked me if Guy Millner a net positive or a net negative. I said “Definitely a net positive”. He was able to bring resources that we would have never been able to raise funds on parties. Came close, and then allowed me to put the money that I raised and put it in the legislative races so we can leverage all his resources as well as the money that we had. So, 2002 was when all the pieces really kind of came together. When the courts threw out the map, we got Sonny into the race. My mind—I didn’t know that Sonny could win that election but we would set him up to run four years from then. And it was just—the walls had fallen by that point and we were able to go in,

I'll never forget I was—they asked me to do the TV interviews down on the floor of the campaign. And I was sitting there, I was doing an interview and I looked up on—they had a board with all the results and I saw Ware County come in and Sonny had won Ware county, this was at about nine thirty and I didn't say on TV but I said to myself "it's over". When Sonny Perdue took Ware County two to one, I said "it's over, Roy Barnes can't win" and I got off TV and I went upstairs. My daughter who is now a sophomore at Georgia Southern was just a little kid. I said "you go find a Sonny Perdue sign and you get a sharpie and you go up and ask Sonny Perdue for his autograph because you will get the first autograph of the first Republican elected governor in the state in over hundred years". And she did and we still have it at the house; the very first signature on his campaign—he signed it, dated it and even put the time; it was ten something. But I went up to him and said "Sonny, election is over; you've won" he said "are you sure?" "There is no way he can win".

About twenty minutes later, President Bush called. And then about another fifteen minutes later, Roy Barnes called and conceded. And to be in that room when the very first Republican governor was elected—I had been in the room one time when another Republican governor—I was in Virginia when Gilmore was elected governor because one of my former executive directors was his campaign managers and he invited me up. To be in that room, when we all realized that a lifetime of work had finally come to fruition, was one of the most emotional times. You know you get the president call, you being there, a part of that, and then be in the room when Roy Barnes called to concede, and you realize that all the work, all the heartache, all the indignities, everything that you had done in lifetime had finally come together, and you were there to be part of it. It was just an amazing, amazing time.

SHORT: One of the mileposts we missed was 1980, the Mattingly Race.

PAUL: The Mattingly Race. That was the Reagan race. That was the other thing that really kind of pushed Georgia over the top in—nationally. You had Goldwater in '64, Reagan—and I was—as I told you I was a press aid to Reagan. I was—our headquarters was here in Atlanta during that race and go home to winning the governor's—the president—be involved in that was just an absolute thrill. And I'll never forget, I was listening to WSB radio and I lived in Stone Mountain and I had a long driveway that went up like this and then there was a carport. I pulled up on the carport when WSB projected, it was like two o'clock in the morning I think, projected Mark Mattingly was going to win. None of us, none of us felt that was possible. So that just showed—you had Mattingly, one, we picked up a lot of legislative seats; Reagan was president. That was really kind of the culmination where Georgia from '64 to '80, in '80, Georgia started voting nationally Republican on a consistent basis.

We still weren't electing local officials, we still had a long way to go in the House but you could kind of see that we had broken another major barrier. So '80 with Mattingly winning, picking up some legislative seats, winning a few—my very first—to go back just a little bit, my very first Georgia Municipal Association meeting after I was elected to Stone Mountain city council, there was a sign up that they posted, that they wanted all the Republican elected officials to meet in a little meeting room. So I said "Okay, let's meet." I went. There were five of us. In the whole state of Georgia, there were five local officials who admit to being Republican. Lillian Webb who was the mayor at that time of Norcross, George Israel who was mayor of Macon, me, there was a guy here in Atlanta, Guthman, Richard Guthman, and then the mayor of Bowdon, Georgia. There were five of us that showed up for that and then when I was first elected the Sandy Springs

city council, they asked all the local city officials to come up to the front of the state convention. We filled up the whole area. So you go from five elected officials in the state who'll acknowledge and then '80 really kind of pulled everything together with Reagan, Mattingly, you know we weren't able to hold it all together. Mattingly was only able to serve a term but it was still an important milestone where Georgians were electing Republicans at the statewide level. You can argue that Herman Talmadge lost that race instead of Mack Mattingly winning it didn't matter; it gave us another talking point. We can elect people statewide; we have a Republican senator from this state so when we were going to recruit candidates, it was an amazing milestone that allowed us to go out and help build that bench and get people, the people that we wanted and needed to run—running for these county commission, legislative and other races that helped get us to the top about twelve years later.

SHORT: How long will this last?

PAUL: I think a long time and I'll tell you, as successful, as proud as I am of where we have come with my party, I'm a little disappointed. The goal at least for me was never to destroy the Democratic Party; it was to create a competitive two party system. Because I believed that the self-policing that a two party system creates is important to maintaining a good healthy political environment. It makes the people in office stay on their toes because they know that person over there is watching. If you don't have that, that is when you have problems with corruption and self-dealing and all kinds of—the problems with politics come from monopoly. In the absence of competition and I am hopeful that—I want my party to win, I want us to stay on top, the worst thing that can happen to Georgia politics is we go back to being a one party state. We need a good healthy Democratic Party that we can beat every two years but that we can—you know be the police force.

We need a good strong minority. That was our role when we were in the minority. We were always watching and if they got out of line, we would hold press conferences, we'd snap press releases, we'd go to the well of the Senate, of the House, we'll do mail pieces and it kept the majority on their toes. To have an effective majority, you have to have a good, aggressive, smart minority. I think that's the role we played when we were in the minority; I hope that is what we did; that is what I would hope. We can't lose that part, we need—you know the goal is not to destroy the other party; it is to win and have better ideas because the competition forces you to think. The hardest thing you do in politics is think. You know come in with new ideas, new solutions; it's very hard. I tell everybody I said "you know when the last original idea in politics in Georgia politics was?" they scratched their heads because they can't think of it. I said it was the lottery. Zell Miller's lottery was the last original idea in Georgia politics. I said and it was reverse Robin Hood. You taking money from poor people so that people like me can send their kids to Georgia on the HOPE scholarship. I make a big deal out of it but the hardest thing in politics is thinking and coming up with ideas. New policies that really work and then giving them—I mean Ronald Reagan did it with tax cuts and Jack Kemp was the guy who got him to do that before the Republican Party. When the Democrats would spend, the Republicans would say "well we have to balance the budget" so have to raise taxes. Reagan came and said "no there's another way, we just cut taxes, generate more economic incentives for people and then they can't keep spending the way they have done because deficit at some point even shocks them.

So those things are rare; you know good ideas but the thing that forces parties to think is the competitive environment. And that is why we need a competitive two party system in this state

and across the country to keep the party in power honest and force both parties to approach the electorate with new ideas, new innovations, new solutions.

SHORT: You mentioned Zell Miller, what was your reaction when he was appointed by Governor Barnes to replace Senator Coverdell?

PAUL: I thought it was a sm—it really was, it was a slick move. I mean Zell is a magnificent politician from the point of view of—you know he started out as a liberal, he ran as a liberal against Phil Landrum up in North Georgia, ran against Herman Talmadge who was left of center, transformed himself into kind of a moderate and then ended up being, off all things, a Republican. But I thought it was probably one of Roy Barnes's shrewdest moves politically, pulling him in there because he was a respected figure by both parties at that point and it was going to be very difficult for the Republicans to be—there was probably any other Democrat that he would put in there, would have been a pretty good target for us. Zell was not. But then I think within just few months after he had appointed him, Roy began to wonder if it was a very smooth move for the Democrats because Zell has always been a maverick and he became the quintessential maverick when he hit the Senate floor. He was liberated; he was free to be whatever he wanted to be. He was not going to run for re-election, there were no constraints; he made no commitments or pledges. He just went up there to be Zell and just have the time of his life being the maverick that he always has been and wanted to be and he had the national stage. He was able to give the Keynote address for Clinton in the '92 campaign and then came and gave the Keynote at the Republican convention.

SHORT: The spitball speech.

PAUL: oh yeah. So Zell is a towering figure in Georgia Politics and kind of transcended both parties at the end of his career but he was one of the few people that Roy could have appointed to that position that we couldn't beat at that point.

SHORT: Well back to Rusty Paul. Life after public office.

PAUL: Well I'm not sure that I am done. My wife hopes I am. You know I've spent—I was first elected 1977 and was twenty four years old and here we are, I just left office in January. Full circle, I have started city council, went to Washington, state party chairman, state senate, then ended up back at that local level and was able to take all that and help my community get off to an amazing good start. I am very proud of what they are doing out there right now. I have gone from kind of the boy wonder of Georgia politics, a Republican politics, the kid, the little whiz kid who can—"Rusty will take care of that", "Rusty will do this", "Rusty will figure this out", "Rusty go do this, go do that, take care of that". Till now I guess on of the—I hate to say it but senior statesmen—and I get more fun today, I mean I owe a lot of people. I've had a marvelous life for a farm kid from Alabama. I have been able to go places, do things—when I was in Washington, I'll tell myself, "I'm going to the White House and be back later". That was always exciting; I was a thrill. I never got tired of saying "I am going to the While House". I was a little kid from Georgia and North Alabama; to be able to be in positions, meet the people I met, do the things I've done, it has just been an amazing career. And I wouldn't have been able to do that if it had not being for the Randolph Medlocks, the Matt Pattons, the Bob Shaws, the Bob Bell, who

took me under his wings when he ran for governor. He was a senator over here when I worked there. The number of mentors I have had I couldn't count on both hands and feet and now I am trying to do that.

There is a generation of leaders that are coming along that hopefully I can share and do for some of them what my mentors did for me and it's about—I have always—for me it has always been about trying to do the right thing. I mean I've made the same stupid mistakes as anybody in politics; I'm human but I think my motivations have always been in the right place. And I want to now kind of pass that on. I don't have a single child—I've got five kids, it'll shock me if any of them ever got involved in politics. They've grown up around it. My daughter's—one of my daughter's life long college friends just googled me a few weeks. She saw me on television and had no clue that I had been any of these things that I had done. She googled me and then she was just going on and on to my daughter “You didn't ask about your daddy, he was a senator”—and Lauren was just so embarrassed. My kids don't even want to acknowledge that I have done any of this stuff or been involved, but it is giving them some amazing opportunities but none of them are going to do that. So to pay those people back who helped me get to where I am, I have to work with the next generation, and help them, and pass it on, and that is what I am trying to do.

SHORT: So you have ruled out becoming a candidate?

PAUL: Don't know if I have ruled that out, I can not imagine running for governor. I made a pact with my wife who's got two kids still in college and she says after we get the last one out of college, then I can go do in politics anything I want to. But by that point, the fire in your belly it kind of banks a little bit, they go down the embers, never totally goes away, you are like the old fire house dog, whenever they ring the bell you want to go charging out but your legs just don't carry you nearly as fast as they used to. The fire that propelled me into politics in my twenties and in thirties and even into my forties is kind of—I'm not going to say no that I will not ever going to be a candidate again but if there is something that I like, that I think that my talents and skills could be used for, then I would. But there is no towering ambition left for me to go be president of the United States or governor of Georgia or whatever. If there is an opportunity that I think I could have some fun, do some good, then if it was something that interested me, then I might do it but—

SHORT: I noticed you have not lost your interest in issues; transportation

PAUL: Yeah, I grew up in transportation. In fact you are talking about issues in politics; my boss Jack, we used to argue. He didn't believe that the electoral politics could be successful in governing politics; he saw them as two different things. And I kept telling him “no the skills that get you elected are also the skills you need to govern”. And so policies is the only thing that motivates me. I mean if you are not trying to affect positive change with the power that you get in politics, then what is the use of it. And going back to my initial motivation, I saw what bad political leadership could do to the state and community and the city, so if you are not trying to make good things happen, whether it is figure out transportation and I wrote an op-ed piece a few weeks ago—a couple months ago--in the AJC talking about how I thought transportation policy in Georgia was missing, you know we want to build all this stuff. We got an infrastructure out there that we are just not figuring out how to optimize the efficiency of it. You know the red lights aren't coordinated, and all this—that is something I learned when I was in city council Stone Mountain, we had a—I mean Sandy Springs. We had 116 red lights and they weren't

talking to each other and traffic was a mess. Once we got the traffic lights actually working, and in sync, and figured out the timing on them all and was able to hold them, traffic got significantly better in Sandy Springs. It is not perfect.

So you know, tra—the innovative solution still fascinates me and it's the—that is the hard part of politics, trying to figure out what are the new ways of solving old problems. And that was just one that based on my experience I said—and what happened was that I came in a conversation with a Fulton County traffic engineer one time. We were looking up map of all the projects that weren't on the map and I said "if you can wave a magic wand and put any projects to settle projects into place, to fix the transportation problems in North Fulton County what would it be?" He said "You can't build enough roads to solve the transportation problems in North Fulton". And that was like an eye opener for me because I had grown up in the construct—my dad was in the construction business. He was a photographer for a construction magazine, so I grew up on construction sites. And I thought you can build enough roads wide enough and he said "no you can't build enough roads to solve the transportation problem". And that got me to thinking "how are you going to solve it if you can't build and well you have got to get the maximum efficiency out the existing. You build what you can". And then having served on innumerable zoning hearings in my life, nimby is a real thing. People don't want four lane highways through their neighborhood. When I was in the Senate, short time when they moved my district up and included Forsyth County, you know the northern ark. There was a huge thing up there and I began to realize it, you just can't go in and build freeways, widen roads and do all these stuff. So you have to start thinking "what are the innovative approaches?" Nobody is talking about how you get the maximum efficiency out of the infrastructure you got. That is step one, before you build something, get the maximum efficiency possible out of the existing system and we are not talking about that. And those are the kind of things that have always fascinated me in public life.

What are the things like that, that you can think of, that you can then begin to get people to think differently; and that is how Kemp affected me. You know his whole idea was to plus out economics and tax cuts, revolutionize the Republican Party in this country. It went from being the—what he called the tax collector for the welfare state to totally rethinking the economics of the state so he taught me a lot about innovative thinking in public policy. Don't sit there and accept just conventional wisdom, use the mind that you have got to try and figure out new ways of solving problems. And I get fascinated by that, it is the most exciting part. I love managing campaigns but the most fascinating thing is coming up with a solution that nobody has thought of in the public policy area that is going to solve a real problem. Whether it is the flag, being able to figure out the electoral steps that are needed to change that so that issue is taken off the table or whether you know, how do you fix transportation and thinking outside the box to do it.

SHORT: How do you fix water?

PAUL: Well it's tough you know. We don't lack water. There is one thing Georgia doesn't lack and its we have plenty of water. The problem is geography. Our water goes elsewhere; our water goes to Alabama, I mean Georgia's borders largely are rivers. So you've got the Chattahoochee, the West bank, and you have got the Savannah and all the other tributaries there on the other bank with South Carolina and they feel that they have part of the water iss theirs and it is. But this debate isn't about water. The debate between Georgia and Alabama and Florida is about Atlanta and economic growth. If they can cripple Atlanta by slowing our economic growth and

development down, and water is probably our achilles heel because of the access that they have, then they can make a case—the economic development team can run us “you don’t live in Atlanta”, “You know they are not going to have any water in a few years”, “they are going to be totally dry”. So there are some ulterior motives here that make this much more difficult to solve than just water.

But in the end, it is tougher to do than it was fifty years ago. We built the interstate system—the interstate highway system in this country between 1956 and 1970; 44000 miles of concrete and asphalt in fourteen years. You can’t build a pond in the state of Georgia because of environmental regulations. In other issues, the red tape in fourteen years. So, the dynamic—the world has changed. There was a time we could when we could just say “alright go put a dam across the Oconee River and the pipe the water down I-20 and be done with it”. You can’t do that anymore so it is a much more complex problem but it has less to do with water than the fact that we have been so successful in the economic development and you can’t solve that problem because we don’t want to give up the golden goose here.

SHORT: You’ve had a great career.

PAUL: It’s been phenomenal, it’s been you know, I marvel at the things that I have been able to do and be part of.

SHORT: What do you consider your greatest accomplishment?

PAUL: The flag. I mean truthfully, being able to be a key part of taking—that was such an emotional issue. My grandmother was from Toccoak, Georgia. Her grandfather was one of six brothers who left North Georgia in the early 1860s and only one of them came home. Fortunately he had children before he left because he didn’t come home. And my grandmother grew up with her grandmother telling her all these stories about the civil war and all the lost cause and all the hardship and how awful the Yankees were to their family and all this sort of stuff. And my grandmother was the head of her United Daughters of Confederacy Chapter till the day she died. She had the confederate flag flying in the living room when she died. And she made sure me and my sisters were members of the UDC from the—I probably somewhere still got the certificate from when I was eight years old. So I grew up, my grandmother, this being a very important part of her life, her culture and my dad to help her, my dad being a photographer, we’ll go to the different battle fields of the civil war, he’ll take pictures and do movies so she could show it to all of her UDC chapter friends.

So I grew up with a real understanding and appreciation of southern culture and everything but I also came to the conclusion that the south couldn’t afford to keep looking in the rear view mirror and we had—there were a lot of things that I cherished. I was old enough to remember the centennial of the civil war. I was eight years old; I remember all the marches and the bands and everybody growing beards, putting uniforms on in 1861—excuse me 1961. I was just a kid but I remember all that. But I kept thinking you know we are looking in the rear view mirror and it’s dividing the state, it’s dividing—and it’s making us—the world has changed, we’ve got be to part of the twenty first century. It is something that we can’t put totally behind us but we need to put into proper perspective and I think that putting the flag aside helped us begin to put that conflict and all the aftermath of it more in perspective. And so from that, like I say, it gave me a sense of redemption from having done something that bothered me from the time I did it. But

that is probably the proudest I have been.

And then just a lifelong being just a little bitty cog in a larger effort to try and transform Georgia politics. I mean you know—and to see Sonny Perdue who's a dear friend, I think he's been a good governor. He's operated under very difficult conditions. His five of his eight years have been eaten down economic—there is nobody that I would have trust to manage state finances. He has done a good job of making the state function and operate. We've had some problems with some of our leaders, it is growing pains. I think we've weeded some of that out; I am hoping that now we'll live up to the aspirations that we all had. And it was about creating a better system of government in the state of Georgia. It wasn't about power and control for power and control sake, it was about getting power to try and do something positive to change the system around conservative principles but do good things with government. And I think that—I have lost some of my idealism—no I haven't lost my idealism, it has been tempered by realism. I'm still very idealistic; I still believe that public service is one of the greatest callings that you can get involved in. I am very idealistic still about it but it's been tempered with realism; the realism being that people are flawed. People make mistakes, people do dumb things, people sometimes monovalent but if you get a group of people together and they are focused on a mission and objective and they have the right attitude, they are willing to work right and work hard, and they are willing to put—work for a cause that's greater than themselves, they can do amazing things. And that is what I hope that I have spent my life doing. Focusing on a cause that was greater than myself, putting everything I had into it, being part of a larger team, sometimes a small part, sometimes a larger part, but I am hoping that when I look back, I can say it was all worthwhile. There have been times in the last couple of years when we had problems with some of our leaders, I was ashamed. I was embarrassed. And I felt really badly for people like the Bob Shaws and people that you probably don't even—the Maggie Hollimans and these little ladies and little men who spent their life in the trenches of the Republican Party and who believed in a greater cause and to have that betrayed or disappointed or embarrassed was—broke my heart from time. But I think we got a good leadership team now, I am hopeful that when I look back—hopefully I got a few more decades to be involved in this that I'll be proud. As proud in the end as I am today about what we are able to do.

SHORT: Any regrets?

PAUL: No. I could have—you know there are things that I could have stepped up and done, I might have you know there was a time after I was party chairman, if I decided that I had wanted to run for governor, I don't know that Sonny would have run, We had to talk him into it. I could have stepped right up and said “I am going to run for governor”, I don't know if I could have won, Sonny was better positioned. So from that point of view, there are things that I look at, opportunities that I didn't go out and pursue but I am not disappointed that I didn't do that. I think that I have done the things that I wanted to do mostly in the ways that I wanted to do them and I feel—you know like I said I am never going to be governor, lieutenant governor, I'm not going to be a senator, I am not going to be a congressman. Those were options that may have been available to me at one time, at least to pursue them. Maybe not necessarily get elected, but I could have pursued them. And I don't look back with any regret about not doing it. I've got friends like Tom Price and Phil Gringery and Sonny Perdue and Johnny Isakson and Jack Kingston, people who are contemporaries and colleagues in various—you know Lynn Westmoreland, we all served together. They are in those positions and they are doing a

magnificent job so I feel very good what little I was able to do to get them there.

SHORT: Well I know Rusty that we've forgotten something.

PAUL: It's been four decades now believe it or not so there is—we've covered a lot territory in a short period.

SHORT: Is there anything you'll like to say before we close?

PAUL: No thanks. I think—as I told you before we started the camera. I think the timing of this is magnificent because we have a lot of people who are part of this that we are beginning to lose and I just want to thank you, and the university, the library system for going in and capturing this before it's totally lost. Not just from me but from people who were involved in it at much earlier levels and times than I were. Those people we are losing and you're capturing a part of Georgia history that I think—it was definitely transformational. Historians are going to be looking at the last forty years to understand how we got here, what were the forces that were involved and you are creating a magnificent resource tool for them to be able to do that. So I say thank you to the Vinson Institute and to the library and to everybody else that has been involved.

SHORT: Oh thank you. And I want to thank you on behalf of the Richard B. Russell library and the Young Harris College Library

PAUL: Thank you.