Rolling?

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All right. I'm Mel Steely, director of the Georgia Political Heritage Program at the University of West Georgia. Today is Wednesday, the thirteenth of September, 2000. And today we're interviewing former lieutenant governor Pierre Howard on his political career.

Governor Howard, would you start off by telling us a little bit about where you were born and your family background and so forth?

Well, I was born in Emory Hospital in DeKalb County on February 3, 1943. My parents were both from Decatur. They went to Oakhurst Elementary School together. My mother was Caroline Ridley and she lived on the same street that the school was on, Mead Road. And near the train tracks in Decatur, near where the town grew up around the railroad. And my father, Pierre Howard, lived about two or three blocks away from there on up, right across from the train tracks. And his father, William Schley Howard, was a lawyer and-

A former congressman, I believe.

Yeah, he was from Atlanta. He served as solicitor of the Stone Mountain Superior Court, and then he was elected to Congress. He served there for eight years and then ran for the United States Senate and ran second in that race. But-

He ran against a man named Young, who was the incumbent. And Woodrow Wilson's wife was his cousin. You know, Woodrow Wilson had remarried a woman from Georgia who was kin to him. And so when he went to Congress, he was one of Wilson's assistants on the floor of the House, I guess assistant floor leader or something like that. So he had expected to get Wilson's support for the Senate. But Wilson was in Paris at the peace talks, and he got word that my grandfather was going to
run for the Senate and he got angry, because he felt that he should stay in the House. He needed him there. And so he sent a telegram to every Democratic chairman in the state asking them to support the opponent.

Mel Steely: 00:02:56 Wilson did?

Pierre Howard: 00:02:56 Wilson, stabbed him in the back.

Mel Steely: 00:02:58 Oh!

Pierre Howard: 00:03:00 Anyway, he came home then and practiced law until his death in the Fifties. But my mother's grandfather was Ben Hill who was a United States senator from Georgia. And he, of course, was from LaGrange, but in his later years, he lived in DeKalb County.

Mel Steely: 00:03:18 Mh-hmm.

Pierre Howard: 00:03:19 So, my parents knew each other in grammar school and then got married later.

Mel Steely: 00:03:27 There's a little area called Ben Hill in Douglas County.

Pierre Howard: 00:03:30 That's right. Ben Hill County in Georgia.

Mel Steely: 00:03:32 Ben Hill County.

Pierre Howard: 00:03:33 He was a fairly well known man. He was in the Confederate Congress and then he was captured by the Union troops and he was imprisoned in New York right after the war. And then he came back here and ran for the Senate and got elected.

Mel Steely: 00:03:51 What do you remember about your school days? Before you went off to college?

Pierre Howard: 00:03:56 Well, I remember that Decatur was a pretty sleepy little town back in those days. I remember that even at a fairly young age I could walk to school because, I lived on Lamont Drive in Decatur, which was kind of like an “Ozzie and Harriet” town, you know? All the little families were mostly intact families and most of them had children and we all played together in the yards. And there were no fences, it was just a great place to grow up. There was a little creek behind our house and I could walk up Lamont Drive and if you have a car about every twenty minutes. And then when you got up on Clairmont there was sidewalk, you could walk right up to where the policeman would
let you across. Then you could walk right up to Clairmont School. So it was all sidewalk, very safe, no fear of anything happening and I had a wonderful time there at Clairmont School.

Then I went on to Decatur High School, which was a little further from my house, but not too much. It was about a mile and a half. So, I stayed right there in Decatur the whole time, went to school in Decatur until I left for the University of Georgia.

Mel Steely: 00:05:13 Were you a pretty good student?

Pierre Howard: 00:05:15 Well, yeah I think so. I made high grades. I don't think it was all natural. I think I worked pretty hard, especially in math. But I was able to make A's and I made the National Honor Society, you know in high school and all that. I did well in school.

Mel Steely: 00:05:36 Were you involved in extracurricular: football, band, anything of that nature?

Pierre Howard: 00:05:41 Well, I tried football and I wasn't very good at it. I played gray-white football. I played little league baseball and so forth. But my father had gone to Emory University, and he had gone there on a tennis scholarship. And he put a tennis racket in my hand when I was about twelve years old and I really got into that. And we had a garage that had two tin doors and then it had a cement post in the middle, about that wide. And there was a paved area there out in front of the garage and so I started learning to take the tennis ball and keep it in play by hitting that column. It sounds pretty easy, but it's not. And-

Mel Steely: 00:06:22 Yeah, I've tried to play tennis, I know-

Pierre Howard: 00:06:24 I learned some accuracy there and made the team at Decatur High School and won the region championship and I got a scholarship to the University of Georgia to play tennis. And that's, I played tennis for four years at the University of Georgia. But, I concentrated all of my athletic efforts on tennis.

Mel Steely: 00:06:42 You were an athlete, then, but in tennis instead of one of the-

Pierre Howard: 00:06:45 Right.

Mel Steely: 00:06:46 Right, okay. You graduated in, what '61?
Pierre Howard: 00:06:53 From high school, ‘61. And then I went to the University of Georgia. Actually, I had gotten a tennis scholarship offered to Davidson College, and Coach Fogelman had seen me play at some tournaments up there, and had offered me a scholarship. And I had accepted it. And then I played Dan McGill's son in a tournament, and he had been national champion, or maybe he was going to win the national championship the next year, but he was a good young player. And later went on to play at Princeton. He was a little younger than I was. And I beat him in a long three-set match over the Bitsy Grant Tennis Center. And coach McGill was there and saw the match and he called and offered me a scholarship to play for him at the University of Georgia. So I called Davidson and told him to give my scholarship to somebody else. I was going to be a bulldog.

Mel Steely: 00:07:46 Okay.

Pierre Howard: 00:07:47 And that was the end of that.

Mel Steely: 00:07:48 Good decision.

Pierre Howard: 00:07:49 I went to Georgia, that's right.

Mel Steely: 00:07:53 What were activities like in Decatur then? Did you do much dating? Church activities or anything?

Pierre Howard: 00:08:00 Yeah, I remember there was a man named Henry Cobb who was a clerk in the Supreme Court. He had a daughter that was in my class that I liked a lot, and when I was in the fourth grade I asked her to go to the picture show. I came home and told my mother I had a date and she almost fainted, you know. So she called Mrs. Cobb, whom she didn't know, and said I understand my son's asked your daughter to go the picture show, what are we going to do?

So they let us go and they took us up and let us out. We saw The African Queen, that was my first date.

Mel Steely: 00:08:35 Mh-hmm.

Pierre Howard: 00:08:36 I still remember that.

Mel Steely: 00:08:38 Good movie for a first date.

Pierre Howard: 00:08:38 Yeah, it was. And I remained good friends with her, the young lady, you know all the way through. I guess still friends with her
today. She married a boy from Arkansas and lives up in Tennessee now.

Mel Steely: 00:08:53  Mh-hmm.

Pierre Howard: 00:08:53  But I think, that was kind of an anomaly, because we really didn’t started dating very seriously until we were in about the eighth grade. We had a lot of stuff that would be considered corny today. We had square dances and a lot of group things that put us together. And we had a close knit group of people. I was in the Boy Scouts. We had a group at the Methodist church in Decatur, and it was Troop 175 and I joined that and earned my Eagle Scout.

Mel Steely: 00:09:30  Good.

Pierre Howard: 00:09:31  There, and enjoyed that a lot. I was a member of the Episcopal church in Decatur and was an acolyte or altar boy. So we had I guess a fairly normal, I don't know if it’s so normal today, but back then it seemed to be.

Mel Steely: 00:09:51  Yeah, back then it was Ozzie and Harriet, like you said. It was what the kids were supposed to grow up and do.

Pierre Howard: 00:09:52  Kind of a normal life. My dad and I used to go hunting every Saturday in the winter. We would go down to Rockdale County. We had some pointers, bird dogs that we kept in the backyard and one of my jobs was to feed them every night and clean the pen out and we would take them down and we would hunt in Rockdale County, or Newton County, or somewhere close around here. And now you couldn’t do that because it’s nothing but houses. But back in those days, it was a pretty good place to hunt.

Mel Steely: 00:10:19  Mh-hmm.

Pierre Howard: 00:10:20  And I learned a love of the outdoors and the woods, and natural things, you know early in my life.

Mel Steely: 00:10:27  So the strain of environmentalism came natural to you?

Pierre Howard: 00:10:30  I think it really started with that, and my family owned a home up at Lake Burton. My granddaddy had some kind of lung trouble, I don't know if it was emphysema or something, but the doctors told him that he needed to get out of Atlanta in the real hot weather. So he was one of the first owners of a lot at Lake Burton. He bought it in 1929. And we had a house there and we
would spend a lot of time up there in the summer. And I just really loved the mountains and everything about it. I've always liked the outdoors.

And then when I went to the University of Georgia I got kind of introduced to South Georgia. I never had really spent any time in South Georgia. But I had a good friend who later became a state senator, Paul Trulock, from Climax, which is in Decatur County.

Mel Steely: 00:10:30 Mh-hmm.

Pierre Howard: 00:11:25 And I started going down there and spending a good bit of time in that area and got to know South Georgia.

Mel Steely: 00:11:30 He was part of the Gang of Five, I believe.

Pierre Howard: 00:11:33 That's right!

Mel Steely: 00:11:33 A little later on.

Pierre Howard: 00:11:34 We'll talk about that one.

Mel Steely: 00:11:35 We'll get to that a little later. When you went to the university, you got very involved in typical stuff. Fraternities especially.

Pierre Howard: 00:11:47 Yeah.

Mel Steely: 00:11:47 Like you were SA?

Pierre Howard: 00:11:48 Yes I was. I joined the SA fraternity even though my father had been a Sigma Chi. And he really wanted me to join the Sigma Chi fraternity and I liked them a lot. But there was a guy named Sam Wellborn who just recently was chairman of the DOT board here in Georgia, and Sam had... well, Sam was dating one of my best friends, who was Dusty Reid, his current wife, Dusty Wellborn. And so I had met him through that and had liked him a lot. Well, he was a member of that fraternity, the SA fraternity. And so there was another boy named Jimmy Fluker, whose mother was my godmother. And he's now with a big real estate firm here in town. But anyway, they put the rush on me, and I liked the fraternity and joined it.

And it was one of the best things I ever did because I met so many people from all over the state who later became the nucleus of my political network. And a lot of them ran for office, Jim Blanchard, who is the CEO of Synovus, was one of them.
Sam Wellborn, who as I said later became chairman of the DOT board. Alex Crumbly was my roommate. He was senator from McDonough, Georgia. And Paul Trulock, who was the senator from his district down in southwest Georgia. I can name a lot more, Johnny Isakson, who was...

Mel Steely: 00:13:16 That's Skin Edge, was SA, I don't think he was there with you, but he was there a little later.

Pierre Howard: 00:13:19 Skin Edge, he was there with my brother. But Johnny was an officer in the fraternity. When I was president he was, I think, the treasurer. So he and I were very close, and have remained good friends. In fact, when he ran for Congress I gave him the maximum amount I could give him. Because I don't look at parties, sometimes when friends are involved. I look at the person. And I think he's a good man.

Mel Steely: 00:13:42 Got you in a little trouble later on, with the lieutenant governor, didn't it? We'll get to that later on. But did you find the fraternity life in the '60s to be pretty satisfying, or was it a rough period?

Pierre Howard: 00:13:54 Well...

Mel Steely: 00:13:54 The country was going through a turmoil at that time.

Pierre Howard: 00:13:58 I'll tell you something, I'm going to be brutally honest, because I guess we're trying to do this for posterity, but I was greatly influenced at that time in my life by John F. Kennedy. And I need to tell you a little bit about that.

My father was president of an insurance company in Atlanta called United American Life Insurance Company. And one of our cousins was a guy named Bobby Troutman. Bobby Troutman's father was Mr. Bob Troutman, Sr., who was one of the founders of King & Spalding law firm. And Bobby, his son, had gone to Harvard. And when he got to Harvard they put him in the room with someone he had never met before, Joe Kennedy, that was his roommate. So he got to know the brothers. And he got to know John F. Kennedy and Bobby Kennedy, and all of them.

So, when John Kennedy started to run for president, Bobby Troutman brought him to Atlanta, and my father met him and liked him. And as you probably remember, John Kennedy carried Georgia getting 61% of the vote. He was considered at that time to be a conservative Democrat. He had criticized
organized labor. He was for tax cuts. I mean, it was a little bit of a different scenario-

Mel Steely: 00:15:19 Anti-crime.

Pierre Howard: 00:15:20 Than we have today. So, he did very well in Georgia. Ernie Vandiver supported him. But anyway, my dad liked him a lot and so I was influenced by him. I was young, impressionable, and I was convinced, Mel, that segregation was wrong. And that was an uncomfortable position for a young person in 1960. And I caught a little bit of flack about that when I was at the University of Georgia. I mean, it was not the most popular position.

In the fraternity we had some pretty sharp divisions, in the fraternity. And we had rules that had to be enforced and I was the president of the fraternity. I had to enforce the rules against drinking. You know, now I think it's different. But back in those days you couldn't drink in certain places. And you couldn't take girls upstairs. The president of the fraternity is sort of became like a policeman. It was not a very comfortable thing to do, frankly. And I was a little bit relieved when my term was over and I was able to just be one of the guys again.

But overall, it was a good experience. And I learned a lot about building coalitions and how to get along with people you disagree with and people you liked, but may not agree with.

Mel Steely: 00:16:45 Yeah.

Pierre Howard: 00:16:45 Or someone you don't like and don't agree with. You know? I learned some leadership qualities, I think, going through that experience.

Mel Steely: 00:16:55 You didn't seem to let your studies suffer any. You got into various honor societies and fraternities and that sort of thing.

Pierre Howard: 00:17:04 I had some real encouragement. I'll tell you what happened. I didn't know when I got there whether I could do well academically. And the first quarter I took math and English and political science, and something else, I can't remember. But I had some really good teachers, and I worked really hard and I made two A's and an A+ the first quarter. And there was a professor whose son played on the team with me. Henry Field. Henry Field was killed in an automobile accident and the stadium at the university is named for him, Henry Field Stadium.
But he was a great young player, and had been a big competitor of mine when he was at Athens High School and I was Decatur. And one time he would beat me, and the next time I would beat him. And Henry's father was at practice one day. Professor Field of the law school. Well known, D. Mead Field was his name. And everybody who is a lawyer in Georgia today has heard of him, I'm sure. But he asked me what I'd made in school, and I told him. And said well, son, you can make Phi Beta Kappa if you tried. I said well, what do you have to have to make Phi Beta Kappa? He said you have to have an A average, and you can do it.

Well that never had occurred to me. So I began to work toward that goal. And I made it. I made Phi Beta Kappa. But I don't think I would have made it if I hadn't had that word of encouragement from him. I never will forget that.

And it was a little bit of a tricky thing, because I had to practice tennis every day, for at least about four hours. And then, you know, I had the evening to study, or get up early and study. So I had to try to learn to, you know, good use of time.

Mel Steely: 00:18:50 Yeah.

Pierre Howard: 00:18:51 And that was, I think, a good lesson for me.

Mel Steely: 00:18:55 What did you major in?

Pierre Howard: 00:18:55 I majored in something that's going to bowl you over. French!

Mel Steely: 00:19:00 Huh!

Pierre Howard: 00:19:00 And the reason I did is that I have a French name. And a lot of people don't know why, why would he have a French name? Well, my grandmother was from a family of people who had come over from France. They landed in New Orleans, and they started west. They were going to California to make their fortune. They had been run out of France a couple generations earlier because they were French Huguenots. They then went to Prussia. And when they got here they were speaking German, but they had a French name.

So her father got as far as Victoria, Texas. And he met a young woman who, he stayed in a boarding house there and the proprietor's daughter and he fell in love with each other and he married her and stayed in Texas. And he founded a chain of
German language newspapers in central Texas. There were a lot of Germans in Texas, there are still a lot of Germans in Texas.

Mel Steely: 00:20:03 Yeah.

Pierre Howard: 00:20:03 Like around Austin and San Antonio and that area. And he later became the mayor of Austin. And so her maiden name was DuVinage, which is my middle name. And her father had been Pierre DuVinage, and I was named for him. Except our family has always pronounced it "pier." Like Pierre, South Dakota. But that's where it came from. It was not just something that they got out of a dictionary somewhere.

Mel Steely: 00:20:34 And it really didn't mean “Bubba.”

Pierre Howard: 00:20:38 It does mean rock. It means rock. So I don't know, maybe that would have been a better thing for me to say.

Mel Steely: 00:20:44 Yeah, could have been. Well, I had no idea what the background was. I figured there had to be something in the French in your family.

Pierre Howard: 00:20:52 Yeah.

Mel Steely: 00:20:53 To get that name coming out of Decatur, Georgia. It wouldn't be normal.

Pierre Howard: 00:20:55 Yeah, you know growing up with that name was not too hard in Decatur because people knew my dad and it didn't seem like a strange name.

Mel Steely: 00:21:03 Yeah.

Pierre Howard: 00:21:03 You know, most people have grown up in towns where there were people that had a strange sounding name, but to the local people it didn't sound strange just because they've heard it. But when I started campaigning, you know people would look at me like I was an alien with a name like that. And that's the reason that I came up with this thing. Nancy and I were driving to the announcement, and she said what are you going to do about the name? I know people are saying it's going to be a problem. I said, well, I don't know, I guess I'll just make a joke out of it and say it's French for “Bubba.” Well, I came out with that.

Mel Steely: 00:21:37 Still remembered by everyone.
Pierre Howard: 00:21:38 People started laughing at it.

Mel Steely: 00:21:39 They did.

Pierre Howard: 00:21:40 And the more I repeated it, the more they laughed. So I kept saying it over and over, and-

Mel Steely: 00:21:44 It's a good stroke.

Pierre Howard: 00:21:45 I'll tell you this, Bill Clinton copied it when he ran for president. He did. He didn't say Pierre is French for “Bubba.” But he used that same structure a couple times, making jokes. And I think that it kind of made the rounds a little bit.

But you were going back to why did I major in French, and the reason I did is because I had this French background. I just wanted to learn to speak another language. And I thought that it would make sense for me to try to learn to speak the language of my ancestors. So, I started studying French and it was easy for me, so I just majored in it.

Mel Steely: 00:22:25 In the process you learned a lot of French history, too, didn't you?

Pierre Howard: 00:22:27 Yeah. I did. But when I was lieutenant governor, I conducted the first transatlantic teleconference ever held and it was done in the French language with the major of Metz, France. And that was a real honor for me to be able to do that. Southern Bell set it up.

Mel Steely: 00:22:49 Now, you graduated in ’65?

Pierre Howard: 00:22:52 Yeah.

Mel Steely: 00:22:52 Got your A and B degree in French.

Pierre Howard: 00:22:52 Right.

Mel Steely: 00:22:54 And did you know at the time that you were going to get into politics? You’d been involved with politics within the fraternity and that sort of thing. Was it in your blood yet?

Pierre Howard: 00:23:04 Well, politics was in my blood because I was involved in campaigns, you know?

Mel Steely: 00:23:10 Yeah, the Kennedy campaign. Was the Kennedy one your first big one?
Pierre Howard: 00:23:13 Yeah, the John Kennedy campaign.

Mel Steely: 00:23:14 Yeah, your grandfather was gone by then? And your daddy wasn't running for anything?

Pierre Howard: 00:23:18 Oh, yeah. My dad ran, I'll tell you what. The first campaign I worked in was for my dad. But he ran for the general assembly in 1960... I think it was 1960.

Mel Steely: 00:23:30 The same year Kennedy ran for president.

Pierre Howard: 00:23:32 I think that's right. And I handed out cards for him. And the reason he ran, he had been in the general assembly in the '40s, during the Talmadge... during the Ellis Arnall years. When they had the “three-governor” fight.

Mel Steely: 00:23:45 Yeah.

Pierre Howard: 00:23:45 He was involved in-

Mel Steely: 00:23:46 The war years.

Pierre Howard: 00:23:46 Yeah, he was involved in that, right after the war. Because he had been in the navy, he came out and he got elected to the general assembly from DeKalb County. And was involved. And then he went into the insurance business. But he was so concerned that they were going to close the schools because of integration. And he was against that. He thought they should keep the public schools open. So he ran for the general assembly so he could get down there and fight to keep the schools open. And he got elected and he served one term and then he had a heart attack and it almost killed him. He made a recovery, but he didn't run anymore for anything.

But that was my first campaign.

Mel Steely: 00:24:27 He was there in a crucial period, though. Turning event of his last two years when they were integrating the university and that sort of thing.

Pierre Howard: 00:24:33 Yup, and he made a lot of speeches about that, and got involved in that.

Mel Steely: 00:24:37 Mh-hmm.

Pierre Howard: 00:24:39 So I'm proud of that.
Yeah.

But anyway, you asked me if I was aiming towards a career in politics. You know, I don't think you can ever really know. But I had an interest, and it was something that occupied a lot of my thought processes.

Okay. You went on to law school, because of your father, your grandfather, you decided you wanted to be a lawyer?

You know, I talk to young people today who tell me they're going to be a lawyer, and I say, well, why? And a lot of times they don't have a very good reason. I'm not sure I had a great reason, either, frankly. I mean, I guess I did it because I had always thought I wanted to be a lawyer because my dad was a lawyer, my grandfather was a lawyer. I don't recommend law school for people who don't burn with the desire to practice law, because the law practice has changed a lot since those days.

But I guess that's the reason I did it. I think that's probably right. I had thought maybe I would try to go out of state, maybe to Virginia or somewhere like that, but with a little bit of an eye toward a public career, I decided to stay in Georgia. And I liked Athens so much, I hated to leave it. After it was all over, after the seven years, I hated to leave Athens. Because I had had such a great experience there. But I was over there for three years in law school. So a total of seven years that I lived in Athens.

So you came out of law school right at the, almost the peak of the Vietnam War?

That's right.

The year of the Tet Offensive in ‘68.

Right.

All of that. You were able to get in the National Guard in ‘68 as you came out.

That's right.

And stayed in through ‘71. What made you decide to go the Guard instead of going into active duty or something? Do you remember?
Well, to be frank with you, I think that I got into the Guard before I got out of law school. I think. I don't know if you have the years there.

Same year, ‘68 and ‘68. But you could have been in January, February, March, before you graduated in June. So...

Yeah, I think we start, it was in Winder, Georgia. And I frankly, I had a roommate who was killed in Vietnam. A very close friend of mine, Jack Cox. And I had some real problems, Mel, with that war. I had philosophically at that time.

Mh-hmm.

I think there were a lot of people who felt that way. If I had been called to fight, I would have gone. But I did not want to interrupt my education. I wanted to go ahead and finish law school, and there was a lot of pressure right at that time to do something. I had to either join the military or I had to get in a Guard unit or something, as I recall. So I think that all happened during my senior year. And I wanted to be able to take the bar. A lot of kids didn't have that alternative, and I realize that. But I'm just telling you the truth. That's the way it was.

That's pretty much the way Lindsay did it, too. Except Lindsay had to go searching all over to find him a slot, and he said I'll just be frank with you, I didn't want to go there and get shot. I didn't have any interest in that. And I wanted to run my life. Although he did say that, like your roommate was killed, he had a roommate that was killed, and others. And he says it's always bothered me ever since then. I think about it a lot. About those boys that did go and died. And I didn't go.

And he said it hangs on you.

Yeah, I think about that, too, to be honest with you. Especially when I look at Max Cleland.

Mh-hmm.

And realize... I mean, I have the greatest respect for those who went. I think they were ill served by the policy makers.

Yup.
Pierre Howard: 00:28:53 But we’re not here to really discuss that in any detail. But, you know, I look back on it sometimes and wonder if I handled it right.

Mel Steely: 00:29:05 Well, now when you did come out, of course you stayed in the Guard through ’71, you got your obligation out of the way. You got your JD in ’68. I assume at that point you had a choice of what you’d do, or where you would go.

Pierre Howard: 00:29:24 Yup.

Mel Steely: 00:29:24 And you must have had a good offer to have gone where you did. Being Pierre Howard’s son didn’t hurt any, I would assume. You just went with one firm your whole career, didn’t you?

Pierre Howard: 00:29:38 Nope, I’ll tell you what happened. My dad had had a heart attack. And he had left the insurance company and then started his own firm.

Mel Steely: 00:29:46 Oh.

Pierre Howard: 00:29:47 Indicator. And I wanted to give something back to him, because he had paid my way through school.

Mel Steely: 00:29:55 Yeah.

Pierre Howard: 00:29:55 Law school. And so he needed a little bit of assistance at that time. And he had one other lawyer with him, and I went there and practiced with him. And it was a great experience to work with my dad. I practiced with him from ’68 until his death in ’76. So I was there with him for eight years.

Mel Steely: 00:30:17 Oh, okay.

Pierre Howard: 00:30:18 And that was quite an experience, because we tried a lot of cases together. He taught me to try cases. He was really a very accomplished trial lawyer, and gave me a practical lesson on how to try cases, and how to prepare, and how to select the jury, and how to question witnesses, and all that sort of thing. You don’t learn that in law school.

Mel Steely: 00:30:40 Mh-hmm.

Pierre Howard: 00:30:41 So I had a teacher that really got me ready to do it. And then when he died, I was able to do it on my own.

Mel Steely: 00:30:51 It became your firm, in a sense.
Pierre Howard: Yeah. A fellow named Tom Gilliland, whose grandfather was Tom Candler, was on the Supreme Court. From Union County up in the mountains. Tom had been with Smythe Gambrell’s firm. And Tom and I formed a firm, Indicator, and we started to represent Fidelity National Bank, which at that time was a small Decatur bank. It is now a billion dollar bank, but it was our client. And that's, we sort of built our firm on that. And we practiced for about ten years, built the firm up. And then in the mid ‘80s, we merged our firm with Hurt Richardson, which was the ninth largest firm in Atlanta.

And we joined that firm, and that's the firm I was practicing with when I ran for lieutenant governor.

Mel Steely: Okay. But that wasn't the first time you'd run. ‘72 you ran for the Senate.

Pierre Howard: Yeah.

Mel Steely: What got you in that first time? What made you want to run for office?

Pierre Howard: Well, we had a senator out there by the name of Bob Walling. He was a very fine man and a good friend of mine. And I had supported him and helped him. And when Jimmy Carter got elected, he appointed Bob to the superior court. And I had heard about it, and I think the next day I was walking into my office, in the First National Bank building, and the sheriff of our county was a fellow named Bob Broome. And Bob stopped me and he said, “Pierre have you heard that Bob Walling's going to be a judge?“ I said yeah, I've heard that. He said, well you ought to run for his seat. He said, I think you could win it. I said, well I think you could. You ought to talk to your daddy about it.

So I went upstairs and told my dad what he had said and he said, well if you want to run for it I'll support you. I'll let you do it and give you the time if that's what you want.

So I started thinking about it through the day and by the end of the week I decided to do it.

Mel Steely: Were you married to Nancy by then?

Pierre Howard: No. I married her the next year.
Mel Steely: 00:33:12 Okay. She didn't have to worry about that part of it. At that point.

Pierre Howard: 00:33:16 No. She had to worry about a lot of it later. Anyway, I ran. And the Baptist preacher in Decatur was a guy named Bill Lancaster, and he had a son named Bill who worked for my campaign. And he and I went door to door for three months in the district. Knocked on every door that we could find. And I had several opponents. Fred Orr, who was on the county commission of DeKalb County, was very popular. And he was the favorite. There was a guy named Joe Cahoon, who had been administrative assistant to Congressman Jim Mackey. And there was an African American fellow named Morris Finley who later served on the city council, who was well known in his part of the district. And then me.

And so, we didn't think that there would be any way that we could get through without a runoff. I was just trying to get into the runoff. And when election time came, I got 51% of the vote and avoided a runoff. So I was really lucky. And then I ran against a guy named Fred Jones in the general election and won that pretty easily because the district was a Democratic district.

Mel Steely: 00:34:37 When you got to the legislature, was it what you thought it was going to be?

Pierre Howard: 00:34:44 Well, parts of it were and parts of it weren't. I didn't realize, I don't think anybody can realize exactly what it's like until you get there and serve. You know, you have these idealized thoughts of serving. But I got down there and met people like Culver Kidd and Roscoe Dean and Maven London, and you know I could go on and on. And it was... the Senate in 1973, when I was sworn in, was not a very pleasant place. And the reason for it was that Jimmy Carter had been elected governor, and I was a Jimmy Carter man. Never made any bones about it. Never was ashamed of it.

And Lester Maddox was the lieutenant governor. And I was not a Lester Maddox man. I always respected him as lieutenant governor, but I did not support his policies. I did not support his view of life. I did not support him. And so one of the first votes that we had to cast in the Senate was whether to take away the power of the lieutenant governor to appoint committees. And Carter had lobbied me very hard, had even had me out to the mansion for dinner with some of the senators who were spearheading that effort to get my vote to do it. And I agreed to do it, and I voted that way.
Well, we lost by one vote. So I was immediately consigned to the basement, and I didn't come out of the basement for two years until Lieutenant Governor Maddox left.

Mel Steely: 00:36:21 Mh-hmm.

Pierre Howard: 00:36:23 And we never had any harsh words, I mean I was just in the doghouse, and deserved to be in the doghouse. I mean, in politics, if you win there's certain things that accrue to you. And if you get beat there's certain things that accrue to you. And I always understood that. I was never bitter about it. But I was just on the wrong side of something there from his point of view.

But the benefit to me was that I certainly was close to the governor and could get just about anything I wanted within reason from the governor. In the way of grants, and you know, help. And he would take me places and I would go play tennis with him out at the mansion and he took me down, when we bought Ossabaw Island, he took me down there with him. And so, I was always really glad that I had stuck with him, because I believed in him then and I still do. I think he's a great man. And I'm glad I did my little bitty part to support him along the way.

Mel Steely: 00:37:27 This was Governor Carter?

Pierre Howard: 00:37:27 Governor Jimmy Carter, yeah. Mh-hmm. So that was my introduction. There were some good things about it. I met Max Cleland, whom I had known a little bit, because he was from DeKalb County. But he pinned my pin on me the first day I came into the Senate. And we became very good friends and served in the DeKalb delegation together.

I met Paul Coverdell, who became one of my very dearest friends all the way through until his tragic death recently. And Paul and I, Paul had been there for two years before I got that, nobody expected him to win. He beat a longtime Atlanta senator, whose name has slipped my mind. His name was Jack something. But, anyway, Paul had won much the same way I had, just by going out knocking on doors and shaking hands.

Back in those days, the divisions in the Senate were really not along party lines, because, to begin with, there were not very many Republican senators. I think probably four, five, or six, something like that. Not very many. And so the divisions were more along the lines of rural and urban. And Atlanta was part of my district. Even though I lived in DeKalb County, I had part of
the city. And Atlanta was always getting the short end of the stick.

For example, the state would pay for juvenile courts for every county outside of the metro area, but not for DeKalb, Fulton, and Cobb, let's say. They were making, there was just a lot of discriminatory things that were happening to the tax payers of our counties. Where we were expected to pay for services that the state paid for everywhere else.

So Paul and I found ourselves on the same side of almost every issue even though he was a Republican and I was a Democrat. Paul was from Iowa. And he had grown up in a Republican household and was Republican. I was from Decatur and my family had been Democratic for many generations and I was a Democrat. But we found out that we shared so many of the same views. And that was a very enlightening experience for me, because I hadn't been too warm toward Republicans prior to that. I had never really known too many Republicans. But that's one of the great things about serving in public life is that you get to experience what it really is like to deal with other types of people. Of people who come from a different point of view. And you find that you have an awful lot of common ground.

I wish we had more of that in this country, because I think that's what we need. But anyway, Coverdell and I became close. There was a guy named Bob Bell, from DeKalb County, who later ran for governor as a Republican. And he and I became very close friends. So, I had a lot of friends in the Senate. I had Bob Smalley from Griffin, who was a close friend. And a guy named Al Holloway, from Albany, befriended me. And when George Busbee was elected two years later, Holloway was his floor leader in the Senate. Al Holloway. And Holloway convinced Busbee that I should be one of his floor leaders. So Busbee called me and asked me to serve, and I agreed to do it, and served as one of his floor leaders the entire time he was governor. Eight years.

Mel Steely: 00:41:00 Yeah.

Pierre Howard: 00:41:01 And I really enjoyed that. And I had a lot of respect for him.

Mel Steely: 00:41:05 What kind of committees did you get on to begin with? Do you remember?
Well, the first two years I had pretty... I didn't have the greatest assignments the first two years under Governor Maddox because, as I told you, I had voted against him.

But when Zell Miller was elected, I didn't know Zell Miller very well. He was executive director of the party and I had met him, but I certainly didn't know him very well. And he's not the easiest guy to know. But I think today he would tell you that I know him very well. After twenty-six years of working with him.

But anyway, he gave me some good assignments. He appointed me chairman of the Human Resources Committee. And I went into him, I said governor, he was lieutenant governor, but we all called him governor. I said governor, why have you given me this assignment? I'm a lawyer. I would have thought you would have appointed me chairman of the Judiciary Committee.

He said, no. He said Roy Barns asked for that before you did, and he said, I need somebody to take this Human Resources Committee, you know Jimmy Carter had combined all these different agencies under one big department called Human Resources. He said, I need somebody who'll dig into that thing and try to straighten it out. And I said well I don't know much about it. And he said, well you'll learn. That's all he said.

So I started working on it, and I had a very fortunate thing happen to me along the way. I was sitting in my office one day and I got a phone call from a guy named Russ Toal. T-O-A-L. And I never had met him. He said I want to come see you. So he came out to Decatur and he said I want to come to work for you. And I said, well I don't have any money to pay you. He said, well I work for HEW, which was a federal agency. And there's a program that permits federal agencies to lend employees to state governments for a short period of time. And he said Sarah Craig has agreed to let me work for you if you will let me.

So he came and worked for me, he ran my committee. And Russ Toal, today, runs the Community Health Department of the state of Georgia. Governor Barnes put him there. He's one of the most competent men that we've ever had in state government. And under Governor Harris he ran Medicaid. But, you know, I was just so lucky to meet him and to be associated with him for about five years. Because he helped me understand human resources, to understand healthcare, to understand hospital problems, to understand the needs of doctors and all the subgroups and just the whole range of stuff.
Welfare, reform, and things that to me were a little bit foreign in the beginning, he gave me a good understanding of, and that helped me a lot.

Mel Steely: 00:44:12 You had a basic interest in healthcare issues, human service issues. In one interview you gave, I remember you commented that that you thought the source of it was your grandmother, who lived to be in her late nineties, I think. And you'd watched her with her problems and people taking care of her and that had sparked your interest in it. Is that accurate?

Pierre Howard: 00:44:34 Yeah, my grandmother was one of the greatest influences on my life because when dad was in the navy, my mother and I lived with my grandparents in Decatur. And-

Mel Steely: 00:44:46 And this is your maternal grandparents?

Pierre Howard: 00:44:47 My maternal grandparents, the Ridleys. Mr. John and Nellie Ridley. And her family had come to Atlanta in a wagon from Columbus, after being burned out down there during the Civil War. And they settled down near St. Luke’s Church in Atlanta and started going to that church where we still belong.

But she was a Latin teacher, and they had lost everything during the war, and had to build back from nothing. And so she had to work her way through school. She went to Peabody up in Nashville.

Mel Steely: 00:45:21 Mh-hmm.

Pierre Howard: 00:45:21 And she knew what hard work was. She had become a Latin teacher at Atlanta Girls High School. I, of course she was my grandmother, I thought she was wonderful. But she lived to be 97. And we had one of these families where we saw her almost every day. My mother literally went somewhere, did something with her, every day. Unless she was sick in bed or something like that. So she was really a big part of our life. And I think seeing her cope with the aging process is what gave me this big interest that I developed in trying to help older people.

A lot of the legislative initiatives that we put a lot of time into had to do with helping the elderly.

Mel Steely: 00:46:11 Yeah.

Pierre Howard: 00:46:12 And that's probably the reason for it.
Mel Steely: 00:46:15 But looking back over your career, in the ‘70s you were very active in healthcare stuff, nursing home reform. You got involved in, gosh, ‘82 public hospital aid, fussing because they were giving more money to Augusta than they were to your hospitals. ‘83 reforming HSAs. I mean you just go right down the line, there's a whole series of these. Neonatal care in ‘85, but you also were tied up in environmental things and education. Less environmental than education and health care.

Pierre Howard: 00:46:54 Yeah, I had a shift. I had a real shift toward the end of my career. But it started out, when I first got into politics and I first became a senator, my orientation was more toward things that had to do with the courts. Trials, judiciary, that's what I knew.

Then when Zell Miller gave me this committee, and I was forced to learn about the issues of welfare, Medicaid, hospital reimbursement, doctors, all health care. How much money we were spending on health care. How we could save money by using prevention dollars, to prevent people from getting ill. And how to save lives and all that.

So I got really interested in that and began to shift away from the Judiciary Committee types of issues, more toward the health care. Because in the senate, one thing I found was that if you become somewhat of an expert in an area, other senators will come to you for advice on how to vote. So you can have a lot more influence and a lot more power as a senator if you pick an area and really, really spend a lot of time with it.

Paul Coverdell did it with retirement. He was our preeminent expert on retirement. And he had a lot of expertise. But that was one thing that he carved out for himself.

While I carved out for myself the health care area. And so I was able to get things done in the senate because of that. And I think my colleagues recognized that I had spent a lot of time with it. They would ask me what I thought, and they would a lot of times would follow my advice.

I had some strong opposition. I mean, Culver Kidd, frankly, you know a lot of times he and I would cross swords because he represented Milledgeville and the Central State Hospital, and if, let's say for example, I believed in trying provide community mental health services, so that patients could be taken care of closer to their families. Well, his interest was having as many patients as possible at Central State. So that would set up a natural adversarial situation between the two of us. He and I
fought a lot about things. And I think some degree of animosity
developed between him and me. But-

Mel Steely: 00:49:35 Considerable, as I remember.

Pierre Howard: 00:49:38 Yeah. But anyway, we were able to deal with it.

Mel Steely: 00:49:42 Now, later on I believe you used Garner, Senator Wayne Garner,
both of you did, as a kind of a go between to talk to one another
when you weren't talking to each other.

Pierre Howard: 00:49:50 Yes. Wayne Garner, from Carrollton, Georgia, is one of the most
unusual and talented people that I've met in politics. He's got a
way of making anybody like him. And he's got a great sense of
humor. And when I was in the Senate, Wayne helped me to be a
bridge between certain people in the Senate that I was having a
hard time with and myself. And then when I got to be lieutenant
governor, Wayne was a bridge because I asked him to be my
majority leader. He was, then later became my pro tem. If I was
having problems with the speaker, which I often did, and I think
the lieutenant governor and the speaker are just going to have
problems. I think that's fairly natural.

But Wayne could go over and he could put some oil on the
water. I think a few times he caused me a few problems just
because of his sense of humor. He would go and tell the speaker
things that I hadn't said about him and then not tell me, and
then I wouldn't understand why the speaker was so mad with
me. Some of this I can't repeat on this taping, but he played a
few jokes on me.

Mel Steely: 00:49:50 Sounds like a-

Pierre Howard: 00:51:10 But generally he was a great go-between. Especially when the
budget negotiations came around. He was always on the
Commerce Committee, and I would send him over to cut a deal
with the House, and then we would come back and he would
come back to me, and we would get it worked out. But he's a
great negotiator. And I used him a lot.

Mel Steely: 00:51:32 Were there other people like him? That were close to you?
Trulock, I know you were very close to Trulock.

Pierre Howard: 00:51:40 Well, Trulock had been to my wedding. So he's been a close
friend of mine since 1961. His father said that I ought to start
paying taxes in Decatur County, I was down there so much.
Because I used to go hunting and fishing down there a lot.
But yeah, I was close to him and Alex Trumbley, who had been another roommate of mine and was in my wedding. He was in the Senate. So I had two guys who were in my wedding were in the Senate at the same time, and I had urged both of them, sort of gotten them to run for the Senate. I think they would tell you that I was part of the reason they ran for the Senate to begin with.

Mel Steely: 00:52:18 We were urging Trumbley to run for the Senate, too, when I was working for Gingrich, because we didn't want him running against Newt.

Pierre Howard: 00:52:23 He never really thought he would do that. That was not something that he, I know that people thought he was going to, but that wasn't in his mind.

Mel Steely: 00:52:32 I went down, like you I'm kind of direct, I just went down and knocked on his door one day said, I want to talk to you. And I asked him, and he told me, I don't think I'm going to do that. He said I don't want to live in Washington. I don't want to do that.

Pierre Howard: 00:52:44 Yeah, he and I used to discuss it, but that was just not part of his plan.

Mel Steely: 00:52:48 Yeah. Very talented man, though.

Pierre Howard: 00:52:50 Yeah, he's smart. And a good guy.

Mel Steely: 00:52:52 I was shocked when he lost the election after only two terms. Or was it one term? Two terms.

Pierre Howard: 00:52:57 Well, he was up against a tough campaigner. You know, people underestimated Mac Collins.

Mel Steely: 00:53:02 Oh, I know.

Pierre Howard: 00:53:02 But Mac is a very good campaigner. And that district changed. A lot of new people moved in, there were a lot more Republicans who moved in.

Mel Steely: 00:53:12 Mh-hmm.

Pierre Howard: 00:53:13 But Collins is formidable, very formidable.

Mel Steely: 00:53:17 Yes he is. He's, of course, in Congress today.
Yes, and a good friend of mine. And I'll tell you something surprising. Even though I had campaigned against him, when Alex ran, when I ran for lieutenant governor the second time, he supported me and came to fund raisers for me.

And I really have a pretty high opinion of Mac Collins. I think he's a good guy.

Mel Steely: 00:53:40 Mac Collins liked you better than he liked the speaker.

Pierre Howard: 00:53:42 Yup.

Mel Steely: 00:53:43 And that went a long way.

Pierre Howard: 00:53:45 Yeah.

Mel Steely: 00:53:47 I like Mac and worked with him because I was with Gingrich, Randy Evans and I spent a lot of time with Mac and Sally, knew Bill. And he spoke highly of you.

Pierre Howard: 00:53:57 Well, I'm glad.

Mel Steely: 00:53:57 He said he knows what he believes in. Said, I don't always agree with him but I know, like you said at the beginning of the tape, that you're for somebody once you know where they stand. There is something they stand for. And he could work with you.

Pierre Howard: 00:54:08 Exactly. And Mac had a philosophy, he had a philosophy.

Mel Steely: 00:54:11 Yeah?

Pierre Howard: 00:54:12 And he would tell you exactly what he thought. You never had any doubt about it. He was very direct. And so I liked him.

Mel Steely: 00:54:22 There were a few like him that were around that you could count on. I don't think he was quite as idealistic as you are.

Pierre Howard: 00:54:29 Maybe not.

Mel Steely: 00:54:30 But in some ways he was. He was convicted, he knew what he believed and he thought it was possible to get there. And worked very hard at it.

But there were others like him. In fact, there were people like him on both sides of the isle.
Pierre Howard: 00:54:47 Well, you know Mel, through the years, and I served in the Senate for twenty-six years in all, which is a long time.

Mel Steely: 00:54:55 Yeah.

Pierre Howard: 00:54:56 And I saw an awful lot of good people come through there. I mean, we've had some great public servants in the Senate. And we have some there now that I could name. We've got some great people on both sides of the aisle down there. And I don't think the public realizes, I know they don't, how lucky they are to have some of the really great people who are willing to give the time and go through everything that they have to go through to serve.

You know, you have some rotten apples in the barrel, but we just have a lot of dedicated people.

Mel Steely: 00:55:29 When you go back and you look at the old days and you had some really top notch folks, some that were more colorful than you. Carter, I'm thinking about.

Pierre Howard: 00:55:37 Yeah.

Mel Steely: 00:55:39 Your opponent, the first time you ran for lieutenant governor, Joe Kennedy. That's one breed of politician. Then you had another, Julian Bond, on the other side. Julian did kind of had a leg in each camp, more or less. Old and new. But certainly a unique politician, and somebody, my impression was that once he gave you his word you could work with him. Unlike many of them that are there today. Mary Margaret Oliver. I think she was pretty straight.

Pierre Howard: 00:56:05 She was my law partner.

Mel Steely: 00:56:07 Oh, was she?

Pierre Howard: 00:56:08 Yeah, I practiced law with her for a number of years and really had a high opinion of her. In fact, I appointed her chairman of the Judiciary Committee.

Mel Steely: 00:56:15 Mh-hmm.

Pierre Howard: 00:56:16 Which prompted Roy Allen to switch parties. Because Roy had supported me and thought that I should have put him into the chairmanship of the Judiciary Committee, and I was committed to put Mary Margaret in there.
For one reason, I wanted to put a woman in a very important committee. And I knew her, I had practiced law with her, and I trusted her. And I thought she would be good.

And Mary Margaret, she was a great chairman. She was sometimes not as diplomatic as some people I've met, but she, again, she is a person who believes strongly in what she believes in. And I could deal with that. Sometimes we would disagree on things and we would talk it out, but she's a very dedicated public servant.

And there's still, there are a lot of them. I wrote a letter to one last night, a guy named Jack Hill, from Reidsville, Georgia. Jack Hill is one of the finest people I've ever met and he's still on the Senate. And so we're lucky to have people like him who will serve.

Mel Steely: 00:57:21 There were some good people, I always thought Nathan Deal was a pretty solid guy.

Pierre Howard: 00:57:27 Nathan Deal supported me for lieutenant governor when I first ran. He wanted to be present pro tem. This is the first election after I got the lieutenant governorship. I went and met him between Gainesville and Decatur in a restaurant. And I committed to him that if he would run, I would support him.

It was a little bit ticklish because a good friend of mine, Terrell Starr, already had the votes committed to be the pro tem. But Terrell had not supported me. And Nathan had. And I feel that when you get elected, that you owe a duty of loyalty to those who supported you. And sometimes it's a little uncomfortable. Because sometimes you have to go against friends who might have been on the other side, but I think that in politics if you don't do something to recognize those who supported you, then the next time people are going to say well why support him? He won't do anything to help you. So I wanted somebody in there who had supported me. And somebody who, like Nathan, I thought, and he's a very bright guy, so I supported him and he won.

He got elected without too much trouble. And I have always-

Mel Steely: 00:58:55 Even though Terrell thought he had the votes.

Pierre Howard: 00:58:56 He did have the votes.

Mel Steely: 00:59:00 He obviously didn't, because he didn't win.
I mean, he had them until I designated Nathan as my man, and then the vote switched.

Is this when you begin to get steel in your spine, as they said?

Yeah.

I love that, I got a hold of a lot of old newspaper clippings and on one of them, "Howard Sheds Meek Image."

Yeah, this thing about image is always interesting, because I never thought of myself as particularly meek. But, you know, people never really know you. People who only know you at the general assembly really don't know you.

They see you come down there with a suit on every day and they see you for forty days and then you go home. The people at home know you, but the people down there think they do. They have certain images. And so, because I'm a little soft spoken, and maybe don't handle myself in maybe the same way that Tom Murphy does, which is a little bit of a different style, people thought that I was meek. But I don't think they thought that as much after I'd been in office for four years as lieutenant governor. I think that-

First term, I mean first session, I think began to change that. You took a strong stand on a number of things. And had they gone back through, as I did, and looked at the others, when you were pushing in the mid-80s for ethics reform and a whole series of things. If I had had to write a book on you at that point, I would have referred to you as the ultimate do-gooder.

Everything you were, the “three E's”. Education, the environment, and the elderly. You got into reform. I mean, you look at all the stuff and it's the traditional “little old lady in tennis shoes” kind of stuff. So given that, I would have said, yeah, okay, kind of meek and-

Let me tell you the problem with that. The problem that I had, is that my agenda was not the agenda of a lot of the people who fund politics. And one of the problems that I always had in politics, even in my own community, was that I was not one of these guys who would go along with the program if I didn't believe that the program was the right one. And, you know, in every community, you've got the people, the power structure, typically the president of the banks, and the owners of
construction companies, and people like that who put a lot of money into politics.

They may not expect specific things at the time they give it, but they do expect you, when they tell you that they think something needs to be done, they want you to be for it.

Mel Steely: 01:01:51 Mh-hmm.

Pierre Howard: 01:01:52 And what happened to me very early in my career was that they wanted to build a highway right through the middle of Decatur. They were calling it the Stone Mountain Expressway. And it was going to link-

Mel Steely: 01:02:04 Is that the Presidential Parkway?

Pierre Howard: 01:02:05 It later became the Presidential Parkway. But in the beginning it was called the Stone Mountain Expressway, because some of the big people in Decatur had warehouse interests out in the Stone Mountain area, and they wanted to link that expressway up with downtown. So they could get their goods back and forth. So they wanted to build a road right through our community.

Well, the people in our community went berserk. They didn't want that. And I could tell you all the reasons, but they were dead set against it. It was going to go right by Druid Hills Golf Course, right by Fernbank, right by the observatory. It would have ruined all of that. Gone down our main street and ruined the homes and it was just going to be awful.

And so I opposed it. Well, the business interests were for it. And they got really mad with me about that. And then later on, when I came back, it was resurrected as the Jimmy Carter Expressway, then Jimmy Carter got mad with me. Because I still was against it.

Mel Steely: 01:03:02 Mh-hmm. You and Jimmy had been friends.

Pierre Howard: 01:03:04 The man that I had been so close to, he got very upset with me because I went to Plains and told him, when he called me up and he said, Pierre, I want you to bring Todd Evans and Sid Marcus down here, I've got something to show you.

So we flew down, we went to his house, and he brought out this rendering showing the road. I said, well, governor, Mr. President, that road is the same one you stopped when you
were governor. See, Jimmy Carter stopped the Stone Mountain Expressway. He had a commission that Robin Harris chaired, and he put a stop to it. But then later he had agreed to support it in exchange for getting some free land for the library.

So I said, that's not going to fly. He said, now I said we can build a, I think we can build a road from the expressway out to the Carter Center, and that'll fly, which is what finally happened, you know. But I said linking it up with Stone Mountain is not going to work and I can't be for it. And he looked like ice had just been poured on him. He said, well that's what we're going to do. The meeting was over, then.

Mel Steely: 01:04:12 That isn't what we're going to do, is it?

Pierre Howard: 01:04:13 It was time for me to go. What then ensued about a five or six year battle, which was never settled until Zell Miller and I got elected and we put a new person in in charge of the DOT, Shackleford, and one of the first things we wanted him to do was get that settled. And we did settle it. We built the road out to the Carter Center, gave him the access that he wanted.

He was not really interested in the rest of it, but he had agreed to that because that was part of the deal.

Mel Steely: 01:04:40 Yeah.

Pierre Howard: 01:04:41 But yeah, being of the persuasion that I was, and having those priorities, a lot of times put me at odds with the very people that I was going to have to go back to and try to ask for money when I ran. And that was a big conflict in my political life.

Mel Steely: 01:05:00 Well, people who gave money were doctors, and nursing homes, and people like that. And you ended up opposing them on many issues. Poor people didn't give you a lot of money, did they?

Pierre Howard: 01:05:08 Yeah, the doctors supported me by and large.

Mel Steely: 01:05:14 Did you get money?

Pierre Howard: 01:05:15 Yeah. I had seen the doctors defeat Jim Mackey when he was congressman. They put him out because he voted for Medicaid. Medicare, it was Medicare. And he was defeated by Ben Blackburn on account of that vote. And so DeKalb Medical Society was very strong. I generally sided with them, and the more I learned about medicine, the more I felt that the best
medicine, and I still feel this today, is between the patient and the doctor.

I think that we've taken far too much authority away from doctors. And it worries me that insurance people up in some place way up the country there can tell you what procedure you're going to have done on you when your doctor might not agree with it.

And so I supported the doctors and got a lot of support. In fact, when I first ran for lieutenant governor, MAG supported me. And Zell Miller. And they gave me a lot of money.

Mel Steely: 01:06:21 You two ran almost as a team.

Pierre Howard: 01:06:24 Yeah, well you know, Zell really wasn’t for me. He was for Joe Kennedy, and then when George Berry got in the race, I think he was really conflicted at that point, because Berry was one of his best friends. But Zell didn’t dislike me, but I think that Kennedy had been so close to him because he had served as his president pro tem, that I think he quietly thought well, I can really, I've always worked well with Joe Kennedy, I know I can get along with him.

Maybe Zell thought I would be nipping at his heels a little bit. I don’t know. Anyway, when I got elected and Zell got elected, we worked well together. And I think if you'll go back and check the records you'll find that the Senate and Pierre Howard supported Zell Miller on almost everything he ever did for eight years. He did not have problems with me. The problems he had were trying to get the speaker to go along. And many is the time when Zell Miller and I have sat in his office and tried to strategize about how we were going to get something done that we needed to convince the speaker to go along.

And I'm not throwing stones at the speaker, I'm just saying that that was kind of the way things were configured. And I think the speaker always felt that I caved into the governor to easily. And that I was weak in that regard. But the truth was that Zell Miller and I were on the same page, philosophically. We might not have always agreed on everything, and maybe our personalities aren't exactly the same, but we had basically the same interests in trying to do things for the state. So that's the reason that I agreed with him, it was not because I was fearful of him. It was just because I agreed with him.
Mel Steely: 01:08:20 The paper says that the two of you: Hill Spunk and City Slicker. With neither one of you particularly taking a lead here, just two different styles.

Pierre Howard: 01:08:32 Yeah.

Mel Steely: 01:08:33 That they saw. The speaker had problems with you, governor, because one of the first things you did when you got elected, even before you were sworn in was to appoint a Republican as a chairman of a committee.

Pierre Howard: 01:08:46 That didn't sit well.

Mel Steely: 01:08:47 That that not only was gutless but it was a betrayal of the Democratic Party.

Pierre Howard: 01:08:52 That's right.

Mel Steely: 01:08:53 And I don't know if you ever could have come back in his good graces after such a thing.

Pierre Howard: 01:08:56 No, that really set the tone for the whole time.

Mel Steely: 01:09:00 It really did.

Pierre Howard: 01:09:01 For the eight years. He never did forgive me for that. And I think it's interesting that today he does it himself. But, back in those days he used to tell me, he says, when Newt Gingrich appoints a Democrat as a chairman of a committee in Washington, I'll appoint one as chairman of a committee. I'll appoint a Republican here.

And I said, well I'm not Newt Gingrich. And I'm not at Washington. All I can do is what I think is right for the Senate. And you do what's right for the House. And you give yourself advice and I'll give myself advice. But you don't give me advice. And he didn't like that either.

But the reason I did it, the reason I appointed a Republican, was number one, Skin Edge, from Newnan, Georgia, had been a friend of mine for a long time. He was very competent. And I felt that there were two things, I felt that we needed to have the Senate work together. And the best way that you can accomplish that is to get everybody at the table. So I wanted to do it as a symbol that I was not going to be strictly partisan. That I was going to work with everybody in the Senate. They had all been elected by the same number of people.
So I wanted to send that signal early. I wanted to pick the best person that I knew, and that was Skin. Arthur Edge, is his name.

Mel Steely: 01:10:30 And he was an old SA brother, so that didn't hurt any.

Pierre Howard: 01:10:34 Yes, he was. And so I had full competence in him. He later became one of the preeminent leaders of the Republican Party and was a great-

Mel Steely: 01:10:42 He was the leader in the Senate, as I remember.

Pierre Howard: 01:10:44 Yeah, he was. But he did a good job.

Mel Steely: 01:10:48 We were all interested in watching that ‘90 race, when we thought you were going to run for governor because Skin was talking about it. We said how are these two guys going to run against each other?

Pierre Howard: 01:10:56 I would not have wanted to run against him.

Mel Steely: 01:10:57 But we figured one of you wouldn't run. We figured one of you would step down. As it turned out, neither of you ran.

Pierre Howard: 01:11:02 He would have been a tough opponent because he has a great way with people and I just wouldn't have wanted to run against him. But anyway, I did that and I put some other Republicans in strategic positions. That did not sit well with the Democrats in the general assembly.

But, Mel, I think that the senators, most of them later saw the wisdom of it. Because it not only was the right thing to do from the standpoint of the Senate, it also was good politics. That's what they didn't catch on to at first. It's good politics to be bipartisan. People do not like all this partisanship that you see. And it may not sit well with a few people at the Capitol, but the voters like it. They like it. They like bipartisan, they like working together. They want that.

So, I always felt that it was good politics and I thought it was good policy. So that's what I did. And that has not been followed since I left.

Mel Steely: 01:12:06 No, it hasn't.

Pierre Howard: 01:12:07 But-

Mel Steely: 01:12:08 No, Mark went just the other way.
I think that was probably due to some things that happened in the next election. And some people that had switched parties and so forth. There were some strong feelings. Maybe that was something that he needed to do in order to secure his power.

But, you know, the only thing you can do when you're in public office is to do what you think is right at the time. And what I did with respect to bipartisanship, I felt was right. And if I went back down there I would try to do the same thing. I have no regrets.

Well, you didn't have any real serious races for the Senate. You had a real serious one, that first race for lieutenant governor. Berry, Kennedy, all of those.

There were nine candidates!

It was huge. The field was huge. But you had the most wonderful TV ads.

Thank you!

They've got to be some of the best, they're up there with Reagan's "Morning in America."

Well, thank you.

With you standing by the stream, you sit there get teared up just watching. You say, oh, what a wonderful guy. All of this stuff. Nobody else could touch it. I would have gone, if I were handicapping with Kennedy, as the odds on favorite. He's the old pro.

He was.

Been around a long time, all that kind of stuff.

He was the favorite.

Until I saw your ads. Then I thought, Joe Kennedy's going to look terrible on TV. And he did!

Well, I'll tell you something. First I want to say, that Senator Joe Kennedy from Claxton, Georgia, is one of the great people that I served with. He was an honorable man, a man of character and integrity, he did not have a mean bone in his body, and he would have made a good lieutenant governor. And I really
thought a lot of him and his whole family. It just so happened that he and I wanted the same position.

So, this was one of those races where I never said anything ugly about him, and he didn't say anything ugly about me.

Mel Steely: 01:14:07 Very boring debates.

Pierre Howard: 01:14:09 We talked about issues, can you imagine? And we had Bud Stumbaugh, who was a good friend of mine from DeKalb County, I had dinner with him this week, and he and I put on a fundraiser for somebody out in DeKalb County and we're very good friends to this day. Jim Pennel, who is a bond lawyer down in Savannah who later supported me financially for things I ran for. And George Berry, who was a wonderful man who had been in charge of our industry and trade and run the airport and would have made a great lieutenant governor. We had a lot of good people in that race.

Mel Steely: 01:14:48 You did, you really did.

Pierre Howard: 01:14:50 And the only way that I won it, was first of all, I really did set up a statewide organization. I started it in 1985, going to every county. And people would laugh at you today for doing that, that's not the way you do it today. But in those days that's what you did. And I got a little organization in every county.

And then we backed that up with TV. And I was lucky to get a guy out of Philadelphia named Sol Shore. I had looked at the TV reels of a lot of different people who create television ads for candidates and his caught my eye. He was kind of a new unknown quantity. He had done a few campaigns, but I liked his enthusiasm, and he told me, he says, “I'll tell you one thing, if you don't hire me, I'm going to work for another candidate and I'll stay up all night trying to figure out how to beat you.” And I knew that was the kind of guy that I wanted working for me. Because I knew that he would give personal attention.

And Sol and I are very different. He's an eastern Yankee and I'm a southerner. But we got to be very close friends because he understood television, and he knew exactly what would sell. He said, Pierre, the only way that you can win this race is to go around the good old boy system. He said, if you work this race the traditional way, you're going to get beat. Because the good old boys are against you. Almost every lobbyist is against you. Most of the legislature is against you. Because Kennedy is their guy. He's one of them. You're not. You're urban. You played
tennis. You're a lawyer. You know, all these things. You've got to go around them directly to the people, and the only way to get to the people is through TV.

So he says, we've got to raise the money to get on TV. And then we've got to have good TV. And it's got to be issues that are cutting issues. It can't just be that Pierre Howard is a good guy. You've got to have sharp-edged issues that people will identify with. So what we used was an environmental ad that referred to cleaning up the rivers and streams, something I still believe in. And I came to this taping from a meeting at the Nature Conservancy where I chair the Land Acquisition Committee and I'm still really committed to that.

And we used a home care ad for a program that I had put into effect, called the Community Care Act that helps elderly people be taken care of at home instead of going to a nursing home. We did one of those.

We did a nursing home abuse ad, where we had an elderly woman with a tear running down her eye, alone in a nursing home that drove home the issue of abuse. And we had some fairly cutting edge-

Mel Steely: 01:17:41 You had wonderful ads.

Pierre Howard: 01:17:42 Stuff that permitted me to communicate with the people.

Mel Steely: 01:17:46 Yeah.

Pierre Howard: 01:17:46 And so we were hoping to get into a runoff and on election night we led the ticket. We had 28.5% and Senator Kennedy had 25%. And by leading, that permitted me to raise the money for the runoff, because we were broke after the runoff.

Mel Steely: 01:18:03 Yeah.

Pierre Howard: 01:18:03 But we raised over six hundred thousand dollars in about ten days, because people then thought I was going to win. So, then it became sort of a self-fulfilling prophecy and we got, I think, 61% of the runoff. But the exit polls in the primary that they took showed me and Kennedy neck and neck.

Mel Steely: 01:18:23 Mh-hmm.

Pierre Howard: 01:18:24 Now, we were tied. I mean, virtually tied in the exit polls. Who would you vote for between these two?
Mel Steely: 01:18:30 Yeah.

Pierre Howard: 01:18:31 And it was in the, we both had it in the thirties, somewhere in the thirties. And so, I knew that I could easily lose, and I would lose unless I could get on TV again.

Mel Steely: 01:18:41 Which you did.

Pierre Howard: 01:18:43 We did.

Mel Steely: 01:18:43 Then got in trouble later for taking, what, three hundred thousand in a loan from one of the banks that you work for and didn't properly report it.

Pierre Howard: 01:18:54 Yeah, that was the worst thing that ever happened to me. I think.

Mel Steely: 01:18:58 I was going to ask later, what's the worst thing. That was it, huh?

Pierre Howard: 01:19:01 Yeah. Yeah, because I had worked so hard all of my life to be ethical. And to be honest. And here we had a situation where it was made to appear that I had not been ethical and honest. And what happened was, I think, easy to explain, but may be a little hard to understand.

When I started running, and I'm not trying to abdicate responsibility, I took full responsibility for it.

Mel Steely: 01:19:01 Yeah, you did.

Pierre Howard: 01:19:33 But to try to explain what happened, I was out campaigning. And out all over the state, and so I turned over the finances to some very good people. And they filled out all the reports and I would sign them. They would be several inches thick and wouldn't read them, I'd just sign them.

What happened that got us into trouble was that there was a time there when we were trying to buy television and we had a line of credit at the bank. And the people who were in charge of that would go and borrow a hundred thousand dollars to pay for TV. And they would borrow it for two days and then pay it back when the money came in.

But it was technically a loan, and the loan should have been reported. And we reported the money being paid back, but we didn't report the loan. The person who was typing the papers
reported every contribution that we had where she could see a check. But nobody ever came to her and said, you got to put this loan on there.

So when we paid the money back to the bank it was reported over here. And that's why the thing was out of kilter. That's why the statement didn't balance.

Mel Steely: 01:20:52 Yeah.

Pierre Howard: 01:20:53 But, it was very embarrassing to me.

Mel Steely: 01:20:56 And you signed it?

Pierre Howard: 01:20:57 I had signed it. And if somebody-

Mel Steely: 01:20:59 And it happened to Gingrich.

Pierre Howard: 01:21:00 If somebody working for my campaign had signed it, they couldn't have gotten me in trouble. But I had signed it myself.

Mel Steely: 01:21:00 Yeah, you trust people that you have working for you.

Pierre Howard: 01:21:08 Yeah, and they were good people.

Mel Steely: 01:21:09 And they were good people.

Pierre Howard: 01:21:10 People make mistakes. And we made some mistakes.

Mel Steely: 01:21:13 Gingrich had a law firm do him in like that. Signed it, did not read through it, just glimpsed through it.

Pierre Howard: 01:21:13 You know-

Mel Steely: 01:21:16 It happens.

Pierre Howard: 01:21:18 This thing has become a very interesting thing. I supported the ethics laws, and I was frankly, Mike Bowers and I were two of the main reasons that the ethics bill got passed.

Mel Steely: 01:21:30 Right.

Pierre Howard: 01:21:30 And I believe in that. But today, as Newt Gingrich has found out and Guy Millner has found out, and just about everybody who's ever run, the ethics laws are used as a weapon of politics. And they try to go through there and find some mistake that you've made, and then they file a complaint against you.
Mh-hmm.

And I guess that's just part of it today.

A lot of them have the attitude, Governor, that you don't even have to do anything wrong. Let's accuse him, let him go around denying it. It's that kind of thing. We'll accuse him of some impropriety and then we'll see if we can find something later. Let's get somebody to investigate him, maybe they'll come up with something.

Right.

Miss Shaffer went after you, and then you responded on her. And y'all did get involved, in almost a name calling. Which is what neither one of you wanted. Both of you eventually said let's just call this off.

Yeah, Miss Shaffer had-

That was in '94, I guess.

Yeah, she had said that I was using my campaign funds to pay for my home. Which was totally false.

Right.

But a lot of things get said in campaigns as any candidate can tell you. That are certainly far from true.

I remember Wendell Willkie being interviewed by Congress after he came back from his world tour in 1941. And they said well you said this and this and this when you were campaigning in '40 against the president. Did you mean all of that? He said, oh lord no, sir. Just campaign talk.

And there's a lot to that. People say things in campaigns they don't really. Jesse Jackson, today, now tell me what Jessie libel said about-

There's a lot of pressure on a candidate to win.

Ernie Vandiver.

There's a lot of pressure on the candidate to win because people nowadays, they put big money behind a candidate. And they expect their candidate to win. And so you get pressured
into doing somethings sometimes that you know you shouldn't do. It's a hard position to be put into.

Mel Steely: 01:23:33 Yeah. Ernie's talking about no not one statement. He said he knew better, it's just he felt like if he didn't do it he wasn't going to win.

Pierre Howard: 01:23:42 Exactly.

Mel Steely: 01:23:42 And immediately regretted it.

Pierre Howard: 01:23:44 That's right.

Mel Steely: 01:23:45 But has to this day, hasn't been able to live it down completely. Now, you never got into that kind of bind.

Pierre Howard: 01:23:51 No, I didn't.

Mel Steely: 01:23:52 Luckily. And you did stay with a party, you worked with party unity. In October 1990, you and Zell, and the others, tried to open the doors to the Atlanta City Council, stressing the Democratic Party worked with Marvin Arrington. You made open appeals to blacks, trying to do what you could to work with them. You went out to Gwinnett County at one point with Zell and Murphy, and tried hard to recruit Democrats out there in the heart of the Republican county.

Pierre Howard: 01:24:28 Didn't work too well!

Mel Steely: 01:24:29 Didn't work too well, but you were showing the flag. You were doing what you had to do for the party, which I think may have helped redeem you a little bit with some Democrats who felt like Murphy did. But it almost looked as if it was against the grain. I thought, and I'm stammering trying to get the right word here, I thought of you more like the speech Zell gave when he became a senator. And said; "I'm for the people of Georgia." And I'm not going to be up there for either party, etc. etc. etc. etc.

It's a great speech, now I don't buy it. Because he's going to go up there and be a Democrat, I know Zell, you know Zell. But the intention, and I think he really meant it when he said it, the intention was really to serve the people. And I think that's kind of a hallmark of your career.

Pierre Howard: 01:25:16 Well, thank you for saying that. I mean, I tried hard to do that. I guess I'm a Democrat for reasons that I can state and explain.
But there are a lot of people under the Democratic Party shield that I wouldn't vote for. And there are people in the Republican Party that I would vote for. I mean, it's just a personal thing with me and-

Mel Steely: 01:25:42 When you gave Johnny money, Johnny Isakson.

Pierre Howard: 01:25:43 Yeah, I did, because I consider him to be the kind of man that you want in politics. And he's someone, I go a lot by friendship and I know him well. For example, the last time Paul Coverdell ran for the Senate, I would not get involved against him, just because of friendship.

And I'll tell you this, as much as I love Paul Coverdell as a friend, I didn't agree with some of the things he was doing. And I told him so. I had some real problems with some of his stands on environmental issues. And we talked it through, and we would never agree, but I mean, we would talk about things like that.

But just because there were things that I didn't agree with, because he was my friend, and I knew that he truly was my friend, I wouldn't oppose him. I did the same thing with Saxby Chambliss, during the reapportionment when the speaker was trying to draw him out of his district. We shut the session down and quit without drawing a reapportionment plan because the last plan that the speaker sent over to me put Saxby out of his district. And I told the speaker that it's not fair for the general assembly to draw lines putting sitting congressmen out of their district. I think that's up to the people in the district. If they don't want him, vote him out. But I just don't believe in that.

Mel Steely: 01:27:09 You and the speaker have a very different philosophy.

Pierre Howard: 01:27:12 Yeah.

Mel Steely: 01:27:13 No question about it. Because he definitely believes in that and did what he could to his detriment with Gingrich.

Pierre Howard: 01:27:20 Well, now, I'll tell you this. And Newt Gingrich knows this, I guess, I think. If it hadn't been for me-

Mel Steely: 01:27:27 Oh, he knows it, I was just representing him, Brandy and I.

Pierre Howard: 01:27:30 He could have been defeated for reelection, because we could have probably drawn a district for him that would have given him a lot of trouble. But there again, you remember coming to my office and Speaker Gingrich was calling me from airports and
everything else, because, again, I didn't think that it was our prerogative to say who was going to be in Congress.

I mean, I think that you can draw fair districts, but I don't believe in drawing sitting congressmen out of districts. I just never have believed in it.

Mel Steely: 01:28:03 You've been through three reapportionment in the '70s, '80s, and '90s. And any of them stand out in your mind? I guess the one when you were lieutenant governor.

Pierre Howard: 01:28:12 Yeah.

Mel Steely: 01:28:13 Because you were so deeply involved in that.

Pierre Howard: 01:28:15 Well, you know, the governor decided that he was not going to be involved in it. He would not even discuss it.

Mel Steely: 01:28:20 I know.

Pierre Howard: 01:28:21 So he was not involved at all.

Mel Steely: 01:28:29 He told us - Newt, and I went down to talk with him, and he said I have no interest in this except I'm going to help Ed. He said if anybody bothers Ed, I'll protect Ed. Other than that, I'm not going to hurt you, I'm not going to help you.

Mel Steely: 01:28:42 Right.

Pierre Howard: 01:28:42 And that's it.

Mel Steely: 01:28:43 Well, he knew, and he was smart. He knew that he couldn't win in that situation. Ed Jenkins is probably his best friend-

Pierre Howard: 01:28:52 That's right.

Mel Steely: 01:28:53 He's certainly not going to-

Pierre Howard: 01:28:54 Everybody understood that.

Mel Steely: 01:28:55 He would protect Ed, but he knew there was no political gain for him. And I was in a position where I had to be involved, because I was lieutenant governor.

Pierre Howard: 01:29:02 No way around it.
So there's nothing else I could do. The thing that really hurt me about that was that I had tried really hard to work something out. And early on we knew that the eleventh district, which is the one that Cynthia McKinney was sitting in at the time, which was one of these long skinny districts that looked so funny. It went all the way from DeKalb County to Savannah. That the lawsuit was filed to change. And the Supreme Court had ruled that those kinds of districts drawn for those purposes were unconstitutional. And that's why we were back down there. To try and draw maps that would conform with the Supreme Court decision.

And my position was, look, the Supreme Court has ruled. We have the guidelines, and we've got to follow the guidelines. I'm not going to sit here, I'm sworn to uphold the constitution, I'm not going to sit here and purposefully violate a Supreme Court ruling. And it's clear and it's impossible to misunderstand it.

So, I immediately called Cynthia McKinney, whom I knew, and I said, Cynthia I think we've got a district that you can win in. And I think it's a fair district, and it's pretty much what she has today.

Yeah.

And I said I want you to look at it. And if you can go along with it, then I'm going to push it. And that would leave two African American districts.

Mh-hmm.

One John Lewis-

John Lewis and her.

And her. Now, she told me that she already had some districts on the computer, and she would look at it, and she would let me know. And she told me to go forward with it. So we started getting senators coming to sign the map. We had blacks, we had rural Democrats, and we had a lot of buy in.

And then two or three days later she was out in front of the Capitol carrying a sign saying just the very opposite. Opposing the very district that we had agreed on.

And had not said anything to you about it?
Pierre Howard: 01:31:29 No. And I’m sure that she would take exception to that, but that’s my recollection of what happened. And I think the recollection of a lot of people who were there.

So, we just never could get an agreement that made any sense that would have been legal. And so we had to shut down the session after spending all this money of the taxpayers to try to get a map, we had to shut it down without coming to any agreement and the court had to draw it.

Mel Steely: 01:32:04 That’s what Mr. Murphy, on the Saturday before the sessions, what he predicted would happen. He and I sat down and walked through, he said this is what’s going to happen, he told me this and this and this and we’re not going to be able to reach an agreement, it’s going to go to the court and they’re going to make the decision.

I said why are you doing this? He said because you’ve got to do it, you can’t just say well just give it to the court.

Pierre Howard: 01:32:23 Yeah.

Mel Steely: 01:32:23 You have to go through the process.

Pierre Howard: 01:32:25 I had some real hopes that we could work it out, but.

Mel Steely: 01:32:30 I don’t think he had any real hope of that. Unless you would cave in and let him have what he wanted.

Pierre Howard: 01:32:35 Yeah.

Mel Steely: 01:32:35 But that would be challenged as unconstitutional.

Pierre Howard: 01:32:38 Right.

Mel Steely: 01:32:39 And so any way you looked at it, it was going to go to the courts.

Pierre Howard: 01:32:41 Well, you know the speaker was in a little different position. He had to have the black caucus to get re-elected. And he pretty much gave them what they asked for, as you recall.

Mel Steely: 01:32:54 I do. It brings up one other thing, our time is starting to get short, we’ve only got about fifteen minutes left, today when you look at the Georgia legislature, what I see is really four parties. You’ve got the black Democrats and the white Democrats. And you’ve got the, I don’t know what you’d call,
the traditional Republicans and the fundamentalist Christian Republicans. And each one is a separate unit.

Pierre Howard: 01:33:20 Absolutely.

Mel Steely: 01:33:20 And so anyone who's going to be speaker, lieutenant governor, or governor, has got to do a balancing act of all of this.

Would you comment on how that happened? I mean, you were there when it all began to develop. It didn't just show up one day. What was the process?

I mean, for instance, the growth of black representation? The growth of women? The increase of Christian fundamentalists? There's just so many things, and I-

Pierre Howard: 01:33:46 Well, I think reapportionment did a lot of it. A few things happened while I was down there. First of all, we had this tremendous growth in the suburbs. We had a million people move into the Atlanta region between 1990 and 1999. So basically, when Zell and I were in office we had all these people moving in.

And we almost became the victims of our own success, because we had wanted to create more jobs and wanted to create more opportunity, and we did. And most of the people who moved in were Republicans. And they came to work for big companies and they were philosophically Republicans. And they moved into counties like Douglas and Carroll and Cherokee and Coweta and Henry, and so those counties began to change from Democratic to Republican.

And I think that had a lot to do with it. You would have a better idea of that because you were intimately involved with it, but that was just my perception. That's one thing that happened that made the legislature more Republican.

The other thing that made it more Republican was the perception on the part of a lot of conservative Democrats that we were caving in to black demands too often. But in order to have a coalition, as you just pointed out, between conservative Democrats and black Democrats, there has to be some give and take.

You can't govern as a Democrat unless you bring the African American community in. Republicans, on the other hand, don't really have to campaign to the black community very much,
although some have. I know Newt Gingrich did, but not all. And they have more of a tough time, as you said, with the religious conservatives. And the growth of the religious conservatives, I think formed around the Pat Robertson movement, and the Brant Frost movement. And you remember when they had the big schism down in New Orleans, when they tried to-

Mel Steely: 01:35:54 Back in ‘88.

Pierre Howard: 01:35:55 In ‘88, when they threw out Marguerite Williams, who had been one of the delegates and had given a lot of money to the Republican Party. And they put her out.

Mel Steely: 01:36:04 That was ‘92, not ‘88.

Pierre Howard: 01:36:06 It was 92?

Mel Steely: 01:36:06 ‘92.

Pierre Howard: 01:36:07 They put her out of the convention in order to seat one of these far right people. And this division in the Republican Party has caused them, of course, a lot of very serious problems. But both parties have got problems along the lines that you just described. It’s a balancing act for both parties. My view of the way to deal with it is to get everybody at the table. I tried to do that when I was lieutenant governor, and I’ve already said that.

Perry McGuire from west Georgia was a fundamentalist Christian and was a good friend of mine. He was a fraternity brother, I got to know him, I didn’t agree with some of the things that he tried to do, but we at least were friends and he was not trying to hurt me. He was trying to put forward his agenda, but what he was not after me because I was a friend of his.

Pam Glanton was the same way. She was from Clayton County. Very dedicated conservative Christian, but we were friends. And Ed Gochenour, when he got sick I raised money for him to try to help him when he had cancer.

So I think there are things you can do as a leader to put oil on the water. And you’re still going to have disagreement, but the ranker can be taken out of it to some degree, based on the atmosphere that you create. And if you create an atmosphere in the general assembly that people feel, number one they’re going to have their fair chance to be heard, they’re going to get their vote up or down, and they’re going to be treated with
respect, that's about all they want. They know they're not always going to win.

A lot of the time they're not even expecting to win. They just want to make their point.

Mel Steely: 01:36:07 Mh-hmm.

Pierre Howard: 01:37:50 And that's, I tried to do that. I tried to give everybody a fair shot, since they had been elected just the same way I had. I tried to give them a fair shot. And that's, I think, probably the key.

Mel Steely: 01:38:05 If you go back to your race in ‘90, you ended up the Democratic nominee, ran against Matt Towery, who you're now partners with in business.

Pierre Howard: 01:38:17 Right.

Mel Steely: 01:38:17 Which kind of fits into the idea that you do indeed work together. If I remember correctly, Towery at one point was working with Bobby Kahn.

Pierre Howard: 01:38:26 Yeah.

Mel Steely: 01:38:27 On some things.

Pierre Howard: 01:38:28 Well, you know, just let me tell you one quick thing on that. We found out that TV stations had overcharged us for television ads. And Roy Barnes, when he lost the governor's race, went back and he and Bobby Kahn and Matt Towery were in together in a law firm that represented all of us candidates and sued the television stations for us. And I've got checks in my house today that Roy Barnes signed and Bobby Kahn sent to me, you know as a result of the recoveries in those cases. And Matt was involved in that.

Matt and I had a tough race. He was a very formidable opponent. He's very smart, a great debater, and very creative, and a hard worker. But I had a little bit of an advantage because I was a little bit older, he was quite young when he ran. And I think that maybe the voters didn't think he was quite ready for it at the time, but actually as I've worked with him and gotten to know him, I know that he could have made an effective lieutenant governor. He's a very formidable guy, and I really like him a lot and we've had a good time working together.
Mel Steely: 01:39:38

Pierre Howard: 01:39:38

It's been rewarding, and funny, too, to work with somebody that you ran against because he and I have been able to share information and we found out that a lot of people weren't telling us the truth. They were telling him they were for him and me they were for me.

Mel Steely: 01:39:51

I had that experience with Congressman Flynt, Jack Flynt, who ran and defeated Gingrich twice. And we'd sit down over a little scotch and you know, did you get union support? I said no, I thought you got it. No, I didn't get it! Same kind of thing going on there.

Well now, if you had to look back over your eight years as lieutenant governor, what stands out as the most satisfying thing for you?

Pierre Howard: 01:40:20

Well, Mel, I'll tell you, I told Zell Miller this, for me it was the opportunity to save land in Georgia for future generations. We had a program called Preservation 2000 that I got really involved in. And then we had one called River Care. And we were able to use state money to buy land for natural areas and to preserve riparian areas, you know, streams and rivers. And that probably gives me more satisfaction today than anything else. Because programs that you put into effect usually are changed. Almost no government program ever stays the same forever.

But if you preserve land, then you've done something for future generations. And I think Georgia's only got eight percent of its land preserved. And so I think starting that, which continues today under Governor Barnes, and I hope will go on into the future, is probably the thing that I look back at with the most satisfaction.

I do feel good about the fact that the governor started the HOPE Scholarship Program, that I was able to help him some with that, because I think that has an enduring legacy.

I met a young lady up at the University of Georgia the other day and she came in and introduced herself and she said I wouldn't be up here if it weren't Governor Miller and you. Really, it was Zell's program. But I mean just being involved in it makes me feel good, because I know there's so many kids like that, who really couldn't have afforded to go to school. And that to me is wonderful.
I can't imagine a greater legacy for any governor than what Zell had for that one thing. It's just, being a professor, and every time when they come to class when I begin the class, I say how many of you are here on HOPE? Now better than half my class in every class.

Sure.

The hands go up.

And I think it's changed higher education in Georgia.

Oh, tremendously.

More of our smart kids are staying here now. And I think that's great. And I enjoyed working on that.

I also enjoyed working on the Community Care Act, because we really started the home health industry. Because the home health industry could not have made it unless they got reimbursement from Medicaid. And when we created the Community Care Act, Russ Toal and I, and started to reimburse families for their parents being taken care of at home instead of in a nursing home, that started the whole home health industry. I don't want to be like Al Gore, saying that I started the internet, but I do think that we had an impact on older people in Georgia.

And we didn't hurt the nursing homes, because they're always going to be full. But we did enable some people to stay at home who otherwise would have been in a nursing home.

How do you assess the four governors that you worked under? You had Carter, and Busbee, and Harris, and Miller.

Well, Miller was the most effective. Because he was more a creature of the general assembly and understood it. And Miller used polls more than the other three. And so his proposals, except for the flag, which he did not poll before he made the proposal to change it, and after that he never would put anything out there as a proposal that he had not polled and knew that the public supported.

He was in touch with what the people wanted. And his philosophy was that if he believed in it and it was going to be good for Georgia and the people supported it, that that was something that could become good public policy.
Mel Steely: 01:44:27 Mh-hmm.

Pierre Howard: 01:44:27 You know, it's hard to get something to really work if people don't like it. So they've either got to like it or you've got to make them like it. Or it's not going to work.

So Miller was the most effective in that regard.

I think that Carter was the most philosophically pure. There were a lot of things that Carter just wouldn't do if he didn't believe in it. He had very strong convictions about things like the environment and poor people and the elderly. And just honesty and a lot of things about government, that I believe in, that Carter was the most philosophical about. Carter was a very strong governor. He had an image of being president of being weak, but he was a very strong governor. Even could be a little bit mean at times.

Mel Steely: 01:45:17 Oh, I remember.

Pierre Howard: 01:45:17 And he had an ongoing fight with the legislature. If he had not had the ongoing fight with the legislature, I think he could have gotten a lot more done. But he was able to reorganize the government and did a lot of good things.

Harris was a good man, but I don't think was particularly effective.

Mel Steely: 01:45:34 Mh-hmm.

Pierre Howard: 01:45:36 I don't mean to be too critical, because some good things happened. But I think probably was the least effective of the four.

Busbee concentrated a lot of his time on economic development, because Georgia really needed jobs. He was the first governor to go to Japan, and as a result of the work that he did during his term, Georgia has got more Japanese companies than every state except for California and New York. So Busbee really started the international investment coming to Georgia and made a very effective governor in that way.

They were all good men, all four of them were good men.

Mel Steely: 01:46:26 Well now, you had a good long career that you seemed to enjoy, and yet you had one bump in the road when you thought
Zell was going to just go for one term, and then he changed his mind and decided to go for two.

Which caused some tension between the two of you. Did he talk to you about that ahead of time, before he announced it? Or did he just come out and announce it or what? How did that work?

Pierre Howard: 01:46:52 Well, as you probably remember, I had geared up to run for governor.

Mel Steely: 01:46:59 We all thought you were going to.

Pierre Howard: 01:47:01 Well, I was. We had done everything and he had told me on numerous occasions that he was not going to run and that I should get ready. So I took him at his word and got ready and had everything in place.

We went to a meeting one day, I don't remember the exact date of it, but I think it was in the early summer. And before the meeting started he said he wanted to see me. And he called me back into a room and we sat down, and I said governor what's up? And he said, Pierre, I just can't walk away from it and I'm going to run again, and I'm sorry.

Mel Steely: 01:47:40 Hm.

Pierre Howard: 01:47:41 He said if you can't support me, I'll understand, but that's what I'm going to do.

Mel Steely: 01:47:45 But he was honest with you.

Pierre Howard: 01:47:47 Yeah, he was. I never... I never did express any anger to him. It did upset me, to be honest with you, because it just threw my whole world into turmoil.

Mel Steely: 01:48:05 If he had never told you to get started in it.

Pierre Howard: 01:48:08 But, you know, I'll tell you this. At the end of my career I sat down with Governor Miller in his office. We had a talk about that, he told me he wanted to talk about it. And he told me that he was sorry that he had done that to me. And that he was going to have to live with that for the rest of his life, and I said governor, I don't want you to feel that way because I don't feel that way. At this point in my life I'm just glad that I was able to serve with a governor as good as you. And I mean that.
I don't think that I could have done in my first term, what Zell Miller did in his second term. And the satisfaction that I've got, looking back on my career, is that I was a part of an administration that brought hope to this state and that did a lot of good things. And I was not the number one man, and I won't be remembered as the guy that did it. But I know in my heart that I was part of the team. And that's enough for me. I mean, I served.

Mel Steely: 01:49:24 That's a lot.

Pierre Howard: 01:49:25 I wanted to serve. I served. And I had a very fulfilling career.

Mel Steely: 01:49:29 Well, I think it probably made Zell the greatest governor of this century. Challenged probably only by Herman Talmadge, I think, in what they did. Each governor has some good things.

Pierre Howard: 01:49:41 Yeah.

Mel Steely: 01:49:41 But overall, I think Talmadge’s changing from rural to urban, and then Zell are probably the two most dynamic governorships that had an impact.

Pierre Howard: 01:49:52 I think that in the second election that I helped him some.

Mel Steely: 01:49:57 Mh-hmm.

Pierre Howard: 01:49:59 I think I ran over a hundred thousand votes ahead of him. I think I helped him some in that election. That was a tough election.

Mel Steely: 01:50:08 Well, he'd sponsored the flag and a whole bunch of things. He'd had some problems in that, no questions about it.

Pierre Howard: 01:50:08 I was-

Mel Steely: 01:50:15 He was lucky in the candidate he had opposing him that time.

Pierre Howard: 01:50:18 Well, as it turned out that's true. I mean-

Mel Steely: 01:50:21 You didn't know that at the time.

Pierre Howard: 01:50:22 No, nobody did.

Mel Steely: 01:50:25 But looking back on it, it was accurate.

Now what, many of us wondered, that was watching your career, and you come to ‘98 and we all thought you were going.
Now everybody assumed you were going. And then you said no. So all the rumors begin. Okay, he was bought out, he was bribed out, he was blackmailed out, or he decided to go home and take care of his family. And I said nah, can't be.

What was it? What made you decide not to go for it?

Pierre Howard: 01:50:55 People are so cynical.

Mel Steely: 01:50:57 They are.

Pierre Howard: 01:50:57 That they can't believe the truth.

I'll tell you what happened. I was in Augusta and I had been going for night after night after night trying to raise money. We had been in Augusta all day long, I went down there with Jocelyn Butler, who was one of my people working for my campaign, and we went to a barbecue, and we were driving home again. It was ten o'clock, I was going to get home after midnight. And I told her on the way back, I said Jocelyn, I'm just not doing my family right. This is not right. And this is not right for us.

Nancy and I then took a two week vacation. We went to Arizona and we talked a lot about it out there. And I told her that I just didn't feel right about the whole thing. I didn't think it was the best thing for our family, I didn't think it was the best thing for us, I thought it was causing some real distance in our family and that it was just not the right thing to do.

We said, well, we've gone so far with it. But then we said, if it's not the right thing for us, the best thing we can do is correct it. And so I decided to do that.

Mel Steely: 01:52:28 Was it impacting that heavily on your marriage? I don't want to get in your personal stuff, but most politicians, it does.

Pierre Howard: 01:52:35 Yeah, I think so. I mean, I want to make sure that I clear this, that I make this clear. Nancy has always supported me, in everything we've done. But I think it was impacting our family in a very negative way.

Mel Steely: 01:52:49 Yeah.

Pierre Howard: 01:52:50 And that was something, I think that the most important thing that you can do is to be successful at home. Maybe I could have won the governorship, maybe I wouldn't have. But I have never
looked back because I honestly thought that that was the best thing for us. And it has been. And a year later I was diagnosed with colon cancer. And I knew then as I was lying up there in the hospital, I knew that I had done the right thing. I mean, I couldn't have...

It would have been hard to deal with that as governor. So, things work out in the best way, I think.

Mel Steely: 01:53:29 And I was probably the only guy in Georgia that bought your explanation. Because I had just gone through that with Gingrich when I decided that I'm going to spend time with my grandchildren and get out of this.

And so when you were talking about family, I believed you. Because you-

Pierre Howard: 01:53:42 Well, to be honest with you, I didn't really care whether anybody bought it or not, because I knew what was best for us. I felt that I had given twenty-six years of my life. And I thought that if we felt that that was the best thing for us to do, that we ought to have the right to do it.

Mel Steely: 01:54:01 Yeah. It's a gutsy decision, though.

Pierre Howard: 01:54:03 So, we gave all the money back.

Mel Steely: 01:54:06 Not many people would have done it and walked away. You probably really would have been the governor.

Pierre Howard: 01:54:10 I could have been, maybe.

Mel Steely: 01:54:12 Roy might've done it, we never know.

Pierre Howard: 01:54:14 You never know who's going to win a race. But, I've never regretted that decision.

Mel Steely: 01:54:20 We've gone over a lot of different stuff here and we're about to run out of time. And you know better than me, because you lived it, what is it that we haven't talked about that you need to? That you want to get on the record?

Pierre Howard: 01:54:33 I think, I mean I think the most important thing that we haven't talked about is my family. I mean, you haven't asked me very much about that, and-

Mel Steely: 01:54:40 Well, we try to keep it on the political boundary.
Pierre Howard: 01:54:42 I know, you said what's important.

Mel Steely: 01:54:44 Yeah.

Pierre Howard: 01:54:45 To me, what's important is that Nancy and I lived a political life for twenty-five years. A political life is a hard life. It's a life that's very demanding on the family and we've raised these two wonderful children that I'm so proud of. Christopher now is in the ninth grade, and Caroline's in the eighth grade, and I think they're very normal, you know, great children. And that's the thing that I'm proudest of. I'm much prouder of that than I am of serving in public office, although I enjoyed that and am proud of it.

But the thing that I'm proudest of is having a family as great as the one I've got. And I think that's the most important thing for people to know about me. I really feel that way.

Mel Steely: 01:55:33 Mh-hmm. Very good. All right, any last comments you wanted to make?

Pierre Howard: 01:55:41 I don't think so.

Mel Steely: 01:55:42 That'll get it?

Pierre Howard: 01:55:42 Yup.

Mel Steely: 01:55:43 Well thank you, sir.

Pierre Howard: 01:55:44 Thank you.

Mel Steely: 01:55:44 We appreciate very much your time.

Pierre Howard: 01:55:45 Thanks.

Mel Steely: 01:55:46 We hit it right on the nose just about, didn't we?