All right. I'm Mel Steely. Today we're with Speaker Tom Murphy at his office in Bremen, Georgia, interviewing him on his political career for the Georgia Political Heritage Project. Today is July 14, 1997. Okay, let's get back over here. All right.

This will be the second tape in the Speaker Murphy's political recollections and we'll cover the period from 1962 when he was given his first chairmanship until December of '76 when he turned back a challenge by Representative Al Burris for the speakership. It'll focus on his rise to power in the Georgia House. Mr. Speaker, you began your rise in the leadership at the House very early in your career, when, in your second term, you were made chairman of a committee. Was your selection as chairman the work of Speaker George T. Smith or of Governor Sanders himself?

Well, back in those days, the governor anointed a speaker, we had no choice in who to elect. He said he was going to be speaker and the governor made every appointment, so there was no question that Governor Sanders is the one that made me a chairman.

Why do you think he did that?

Oh, it was obvious. This county was solid. Every elected official in this county was for former Governor Marvin Griffin for governor but me, and I had supported Carl Sanders and I worked hard for him, and they only beat us seventy-eight votes as I recall it, and he rewarded me by making me a chairman of a committee.

Which was pretty nice that... What committee did you chair?

He made me chairman of what was then the Hygiene and Sanitation, which is now the Health and Ecology Committee, and handled all health issues. Anything related to health or anything related to really, mostly back in them days, the environment.

Was leadership what you had expected?
Tom Murphy: 00:03:00 No, not really. Because you didn't have much chance to be a leader when the governor ran everything. He wanted to tell you what to do on every issue and how you was supposed to handle everything. That wasn't my idea of leadership at all.

Mel Steely: 00:03:19 How active were you within the House itself, as a chairman, for instance in decision making, that sort of thing?

Tom Murphy: 00:03:25 Well, the only thing that I really did was we passed the first optometrist bill and the governor had no position on that and so he sort of left it up to me. And we passed the first optometrist bill, which required registration and all of those things, which was the first time that we really got into optometry in Georgia. But any issue that he had a position is you were just supposed to take his position, which is, if you know me, that's a little difficult for me.

Mel Steely: 00:04:03 Yeah. This next question will lead us to that one. Your chairmanship was short lived.

Tom Murphy: 00:04:08 Yes sir, in the middle of his term, I had not agreed with him on many things, and matter of fact, I had fought him right heavily on several things. And of course I admit we didn't win because he was the governor, and everybody was going to do what he wanted. But because I wouldn't agree with him on everything he busted me from my chairmanship in the middle of his term. That really didn't bother me of course I read about it in the newspaper. That's the only thing-

Mel Steely: 00:04:36 You mean he didn't even call you and tell you?

Tom Murphy: 00:04:38 They didn't call me and tell me I read a-

Mel Steely: 00:04:39 The speaker didn't either?

Tom Murphy: 00:04:40 No. George T. didn't call me and neither did Governor Sanders. I read about it in the newspaper. He busted three of us. He busted Frank Branson and Don Ballard and myself in the middle of his term. And of course Ballard took to the halls and Carter's talking about him and Frank took to the newspapers.

Of course, I just kept my mouth shut because I knew I didn't need to be a chairman in my second term anyhow. I just barely knew where everything was, but that didn't really make me as mad. But when I went there and found they'd moved my seat from a good seat down in front, back up on the gallery and now that did agitate me a little bit.
Mel Steely: 00:05:23 Wasn't a lot you could do though was there?

Tom Murphy: 00:05:24Wasn't a thing I could do.

Mel Steely: 00:05:24 Did you-

Tom Murphy: 00:05:27 But I paid him back before it was over with.

Mel Steely: 00:05:29 How did you do that too?

Tom Murphy: 00:05:31 Well, he had a special session for the Constitution and the election law, and me and Frank and two or three others didn't like some of the provisions. So we made a motion that they explain it section by section, paragraph by paragraph and let us vote on it and it carried of all things. And at lunch we had covered a page and a half of that seventy-eight page bill and he sent Moody Daniel, his runner, up and said "The governor wants you to come by and see him at lunch." I say, "Okay."

So I went down there and they told me "Well, he's busy, he can't see you now." I said, "That's fine. I'm gone." I said, "He wants to see me. I don't care anything about seeing him." They said, "Wait a minute, we'll see about it." So they called me back and they got me right on in his office and he told me, he said, "You've made your point." I said, "What are you talking about?" What he had done, he had really, the day before, he had treated us real bad. The day before he had sent up instructions that we were not allowed to ask questions, that we just couldn't do anything so he adjourned us when we was trying to make motions, he'd just adjourned us.

Of course, he knew what I was doing and I told him that we're just trying to be sure we understood that Constitution. We wanted to know exactly what each paragraph meant. He said, "No, I know you've made your point now. I said I apologize to you what we did to you yesterday, and it won't happen again." I said, "Well, I'll go back and tell the fellows what you said. We'll see." And so we went back and we let it go on then, but we never had that problem again.

Mel Steely: 00:07:13 So he kept his word to you on that?

Tom Murphy: 00:07:15 He kept his word from that. But it was interesting. I always have loved a good fight. That's what makes the world go round.

Mel Steely: 00:07:24 Well, wasn't it pretty unusual for you to break with him in the beginning?
Tom Murphy: 00:07:28 No, not really.

Mel Steely: 00:07:30 I don't mean for you, but for a chairman to do that?

Tom Murphy: 00:07:33 Oh, well, I guess it was unusual, because truth of the business is when you got appointed to chairman most of them wanted keep it, and they do whatever the governor said. It didn't mean that much to me. I was going to do what I thought was right myself. That didn't sit well with him.

Mel Steely: 00:07:51 Well now the clash with Sanders, whom you had supported as you said, rather strongly the first time, that clash spilled over into the election and got involved in your politics at home.

Tom Murphy: 00:08:06 Oh yes.

Mel Steely: 00:08:06 As I remember in... you had a strong race that year. Your third race with Hardy McCalman ran against you.

Tom Murphy: 00:08:14 That's correct. Yes sir. I sure did.

Mel Steely: 00:08:17 Tell us about that.

Tom Murphy: 00:08:18 He had a fellow who was his, a driver who was a state patrolman, and I think he was a captain at the time named Porter Sanders, who has later turned out to be a good friend of mine. But he was Governor Sanders's bodyguard and driver, and he sent him out there, campaigning for my opponent. And of course he campaigned, and he went to see my next door neighbor, who was his uncle, wanting him to vote against me. And Herbert, bless his heart, says "No, Tom's my friend and I'm going to vote for him." He couldn't even get his uncle to vote against me.

Mel Steely: 00:08:55 He was in the governor's car, someone said.

Tom Murphy: 00:08:57 Yeah, I think he was in the governor's car. That's right. He campaigned for him in the governor's car. That's how he did. Hardy, is a good man and was a good man and if he had worked as hard as I did, he would have beaten me too. He just didn't work as hard as I did.

Mel Steely: 00:09:14 Why do you think he ran against you?

Tom Murphy: 00:09:15 Hardy had always wanted to be in the General Assembly. He had always wanted to go, and he decided... that was after the big Plantation pipeline fuss, when I refused to take it into the
city limits of Bremen. And I guess he figured out a good time, but he's fine fellow. He was a gentleman, he was a gentleman in the race and I think the world of Hardy McCalman.

Mel Steely: 00:09:41 He came closer to beating you than anybody else.

Tom Murphy: 00:09:43 Yes, he did.

Mel Steely: 00:09:44 With the exception of George Busbee who actually did beat you on one little race.

Tom Murphy: 00:09:48 He beat me by six votes for majority leader. Yes, that's true.

Mel Steely: 00:09:51 I guess Busbee was the only person ever to beat you isn't he? On anything?

Tom Murphy: 00:09:55 That's the only race I've ever lost. But I knew I didn't have much chance for that, but it turned out to be one of the best things that ever happened to me. Because if I'd been elected majority leader, I would not have run for speaker pro tem. When Matt Hill ran, I would've stayed majority leader because the speaker pro tem job wasn't near as active as majority leader. It wasn't therefore, I would not have been in position to be elected speaker when George L. died, if George hadn't have beaten me.

Mel Steely: 00:10:27 Funny how one thing leads to another and-

Tom Murphy: 00:10:29 Yeah, sure is.

Mel Steely: 00:10:30 Now was there any particular issue during the race between you and Mr. McCalman aside from the pipeline, or did he even bring that up?

Tom Murphy: 00:10:40 No, he didn't bring it up, it's just he wanted the job and I wanted to keep the job. It was a very clean race, a very good race. There wasn't any animosity at all between us. It's the way a race ought to be run. Just two people trying to be gentlemen saying I want the job and I think I can do a good job at it. That's just all it was. It was a very clean race.

Mel Steely: 00:11:06 Some of those races in those days were pretty rough, though a lot of mudslinging and all of that stuff.

Tom Murphy: 00:11:10 Yes, sir. It's gotten worse now than it was back in them days. But they could get rough sometimes, but I've never really had a dirty race out here. It's just never been one. It's always been a
issue oriented out here. We've just never had a dirty race in anything that I've been involved in personally.

Mel Steely: 00:11:34 Okay. In 1966, you supported Jimmy Carter for governor, but voted for Maddox when the legislature had to decide the issue. Why did you decide to support Carter in the primary?

Tom Murphy: 00:11:47 Well, Governor Carter and I had been pretty good friends after he got beat the first time he and I-

Mel Steely: 00:11:56 No, this is the first time in '66.

Tom Murphy: 00:11:59 Well, I liked Jimmy Carter. He was, I thought the best candidate to tell you the truth, and then after... I mean, that's all I can say. I thought he was the best candidate. I didn't know Governor Maddox at the time. I had never met him. I had been to his restaurant and ate, but I'd never met him personally and so I supported Jimmy because I thought he was the best candidate.

Mel Steely: 00:12:25 Do you remember if he carried this county?

Tom Murphy: 00:12:26 I do not.

Mel Steely: 00:12:27 Okay, at the majority caucus meeting there in December following the '66 election, you ran for majority leader against Busbee, and you noted you were beaten by five or six votes. What was that process like? Did it-

Tom Murphy: 00:12:48 It was the first time we ever had a Caucus meeting to elect any Caucus officers, and of course George had been Sanders's floor leader, and he had all the constitutional officers campaigning for him. And all I had was myself and Carlton Caldwell and Marcus Collins, was about all I had was those three campaigning for me. And of course he had constitutional officers from the public service commission. Commissioner of Agriculture, everybody was working with him. I was amazed that I came that close, to tell you the truth. All I did was go to reception the night before and asked them to vote for me. And I was really amazed. I came that close under the circumstances.

Mel Steely: 00:13:30 Just the reception that they gave for you to...

Tom Murphy: 00:13:32 For the Democrats. The Democrat caucus had a reception the night before. We've always had a reception the night before caucus, the speaker's always done that for the fellow who's a nominee. I've done it ever since I've been speaker, had a
reception for Democrat candidates and members the night before the caucus. That was all I could do was go to that.

Mel Steely: 00:13:55 And the speaker at this time was George L.

Tom Murphy: 00:13:58 That's correct.

Mel Steely: 00:13:59 Did he take a side on this?

Tom Murphy: 00:14:01 No, I don't think he did. If he did, I didn't know it. I would be reasonably sure he voted for George, because he and Phil and all the public service commission and all those folks were really close. I would be reasonably sure he voted for Busbee.

Mel Steely: 00:14:22 Then you had a small core of friends that you had met in the legislature that thought like you did.

Tom Murphy: 00:14:30 They were independent caucuses like me.

Mel Steely: 00:14:33 Was Bill Lee, one of those guys?

Tom Murphy: 00:14:35 No, he was on the other side.

Mel Steely: 00:14:36 He hadn't come in yet?

Tom Murphy: 00:14:37 No. He was there, but he was going to go-

Mel Steely: 00:14:39 I mean he hadn't come into your group.

Tom Murphy: 00:14:40 No, no,

Mel Steely: 00:14:41 At this point.

Tom Murphy: 00:14:41 He was for George. There wasn't any question about that, and I understood that.

Mel Steely: 00:14:47 Well, how did that work when somebody was against you and they were honest with you, you could deal with that and move on?

Tom Murphy: 00:14:54 Oh, I've always dealt with that. I've got a whole lot more respect for a fellow who's against me and will tell me he's against me then one who's against me and tells me he's for me. Because you will find out eventually whether they were or not. I have absolutely no respect for a liar. I just have none whatever for them, and most folks know that. They know they're better off if
they're against me to tell me they are, then they would be to
tell me they are for me and then vote against me.

Mel Steely: 00:15:23 After you've lost this race to George Busbee, you were selected
by Governor Maddox as his floor leader. How did that come
about, since you didn't support him in the primary?

Tom Murphy: 00:15:35 That's a funny story.

Mel Steely: 00:15:37 You ask for the job or?

Tom Murphy: 00:15:38 No, sir. Me and my family were sitting in my den on Sunday
afternoon and the telephone rang, and I answered.

Mel Steely: 00:15:46 This was in December or I guess it'd be January wouldn't it?

Tom Murphy: 00:15:46 No, it was in December.

Mel Steely: 00:15:49 December, okay.

Tom Murphy: 00:15:49 I think it was in December. Might've been January. I don't
remember exactly when, but I answered the phone and "This is
Lester Maddox." And I thought it was a joke. I thought
someone's playing jokes and made some stupid, silly remark
and it finally got through to me, it was Governor Maddox. He
says, "I want to talk to you." I said, "About what?" He says, "I'm
going to vote for you. No question about that. I'm a Democrat
and I'm going to vote for you on the floor."

And I'm sure he took my county too, now that I come to think of
it. You asked me that a while ago and I didn't remember, but I
think that was one thing I said. He took my county and I'm going
vote what my people want me to and he said, "I need to talk to
you." I said, "Well, does he want to know if I come over there
this afternoon?" He said, "How about one o'clock?" And I said,
"Yeah." So me and mama got in the car and went over there
and got into see him, and he said, "I want you to be my floor
leader." I know, I really don't have any ambition to be
administration floor leader because I'm a pretty independent
sort of fellow. He said, "That's what they tell me about you and
that's the reason I want you."

We talked a few minutes. I said, "Well, if you want me, I'll do it,
but you need to understand this. I will never support anything
I'm not personally for and if I disagree with you, I'm going to tell
you I disagree with you and I just won't go along with you
because you want me to. I just refused to do it." He said, "That's
what Tommy Erwin told me about you, and that's the reason I want you. Somebody to tell me if I'm wrong," I said, "Well, I'll sure give you my opinion." And that's the way it worked out. He and I disagreed on a lot of things, but we managed to come to middle ground that we could agree to.

Mel Steely: 00:17:36 How did you do that? If he would tell you, "Okay, Tom, Representative Murphy," whatever he called you, "This is the position I want to take," and you disagreed with him. How did you deal with him in that regard?

Tom Murphy: 00:17:49 It was right funny. We used to have floor leaders’ meetings in my office every morning before we'd go down and talk to the governor. And Frank Coggins was a Senate floor leader, and we'd all agree on what we was going to say. Then we'd get in the governor's office, and they'd all line up around the wall and it was me and Lester and go at it. Then they'd all sit back and watch me and him go at it, and finally we'd just would work something out we could agree to. But he turned out, I think history is going to record he's one of our greatest governors. The public has no conception of what the man did. First of all, he gave more blacks, good jobs than anybody in the history of the state. That's the first thing he did. He passed a work release program. You know which one. The first in the United States of America, which has been one of the finest things in the world. He was a very progressive governor. He did some foolish things and I tried very hard to get him to quit trying to ride the bicycle backwards and all that stuff. I told him it was beneath the dignity of the chief executive of this state, but I never could get him to quit. He'd do a lot of things that shouldn't have done, but it was just his nature, really. It was just his nature to be outgoing and... But history is going to record he made a good governor.

Mel Steely: 00:19:06 Did you talk with him about his reaction to Dr. King's death and the funeral here in '68?

Tom Murphy: 00:19:13 He and I talked about it, but there wasn't no talking to him about it. I remember he said that nobody was going to break the Capitol doors down and live to walk through them. And as I recall it, they had soldiers inside, the National Guard inside the Capitol with machine pistols or whatever you call them and all that sort of stuff. And I assume they thought he meant it when he said that nobody would walk across those doors. They'd have to be carried across.

Mel Steely: 00:19:48 So there was no attempt at all to-
Tom Murphy: 00:19:49 None, whatever.

Mel Steely: 00:19:51 Do you think had he not taken that stand that there might’ve been an attempt?

Tom Murphy: 00:19:54 I don’t know. I doubt it. Most of those folks are fairly reasonable folks when you get down to it. You just have to wait and see what happens, but I doubt anything would have happened.

Mel Steely: 00:20:05 Well, that ’66 session, following the ’66 election, was one of the most historic and most important sessions for the legislature, because it’s a period when the legislature became independent and asserted its own power. When you guys got together there in December, and began to decide to form your own leadership groups and have people run for various positions, I know, that’s the first time that had been done in Georgia history, wasn’t it?

Tom Murphy: 00:20:32 That was the first time the General Assembly of Georgia ever really came in as a third division of state government. It always had been a rubber stamp for the governor. You only had the executive and the judicial, but Governor Maddox stood aside and led to General Assembly. I think we wouldn’t have done it and had he fought us, but he stood aside and Lester said he felt like it ought to be. And we declared our independence and from that time forward we have been independent, we have really been a third division of state government. But up until that time, you only had two because the governor ran the legislature.

Mel Steely: 00:21:08 Well now, he didn’t propose that you do this to begin with, I mean it was already in the works and then he just didn’t stop it.

Tom Murphy: 00:21:15 Oh no. Well, it really started two years before during Governor Sanders’s administration, when we passed the budget act him and George L. fell out about that George L. was laying the groundwork or really... And we passed the budget act. That’s when it really started the independence of the Georgia House of Representatives.

Mel Steely: 00:21:37 Okay. Did Maddox ever talk to you about trying to limit legislative power once he got in and-

Tom Murphy: 00:21:43 No, never.

Mel Steely: 00:21:45 Never did.

Tom Murphy: 00:21:45 Never did.
Mel Steely: 00:21:48 I knew some of his strong supporters had hoped that once he got in, he would be the kind of strong governor that Sanders had and could push through his programs and that sort of thing. How did Speaker Smith run the first really independent House, and how did you relate to him as floor leader? George L. Smith?

Tom Murphy: 00:22:07 Of course, he ran it like he wanted it. He didn't do as I have done, he didn't take his chairmen and he just told them what he wanted done, and back in them days he was strong enough to do it, and he got most everything. George L. got most everything he ever wanted. But he wanted his finger on everything. He wanted to say what came out of committee and what didn't come out. I did it altogether different from that. When I appointed chairmen, I expected them to run their committee, and I started having chairmen's breakfasts pretty short on every Monday morning, and we would thrash our differences out. When we came out of there we'd be united – or unified, I guess, is a better word. And that's the way I've tried to operate throughout my twenty-four years as speaker to let the chairman and myself work together.

Mel Steely: 00:23:14 Did your experience with Maddox reinforce your belief this was the way to do it?

Tom Murphy: 00:23:17 Oh yes, sir. Yes and no question in my mind that when the Georgia House of Representatives declared its independence, that's when Georgia really started making progress, because every one of the members of the General Assembly decided it had just as much chance of becoming law as the governors did then. Back in them days, back in the days before that, once the governor decided he didn't like it, it wasn't going to become law and didn't have a chance. But after we declared our independence, anybody decided, it could become law and that's when Georgia really started growing. You look back at the figures and look at the dynamics and you'll see that, that's right.

Mel Steely: 00:23:58 You were floor leader for the governor. Speaker Smith wanted to run it his way. Did the two of you ever clash?

Tom Murphy: 00:24:04 Oh yes, we have clashed but he won every time.

Mel Steely: 00:24:08 What was that like?

Tom Murphy: 00:24:09 There wasn't any question about it. He won every time. The only thing I ever really remember that he fought hard and then finally he had to back off and sort of capitulate, was that property tax thing we passed, because the governor told me
that if it didn't pass in the form he introduced it, he was going to veto it and that's what I told him. If you want the folks to have property tax relief, you've got to pass this bill in this form because the governor's going to veto anything other than this form. And they passed it. But George L. won most, there wasn't any question about that.

Mel Steely: 00:24:50 This was because he had the power within the-

Tom Murphy: 00:24:52 He was a very dynamic fellow and he wanted to run it his way and he did.

Mel Steely: 00:24:56 To have that kind of power, you have to have the acquiescence.

Tom Murphy: 00:25:01 He had something I didn't have though, Dr. Steely. He met with the Atlanta news media's editorial staff once a week and they thought it helped shape his thinking. Well, I met with them the first Monday after I was elected speaker, and we disagreed on ninety percent of the things we talked about, and I never met with them again, and they've hated me ever since. They couldn't shape my thinking. George L. was a skilled master politician. He'd meet with them, and he'd get them on his side on some things, and he'd make concessions to them, and he always had great press, if you recall.

Mel Steely: 00:25:41 Well, the only fight that I can remember him losing was one he lost before he had a chance to fight. When Sanders first came in and Sanders made George T. the speaker, and it's my understanding that George L. had been telling everybody he was going to be the speaker. Was that accurate?

Tom Murphy: 00:25:58 All I know about it is, is that they never told me who was going to be speaker, but I had heard that George Smith, it didn't say whether George L. or George T., but George Smith was going to be speaker. And we all assumed it was going to be George L. but it was George T. instead of George L. Oh, the funny thing about that, after that, they busted me from my chairmanship. As I told you, Frank Branson and Don Ballard, they took out after him and I didn't say anything. If you remember back in those days, we had a heart fund basketball game between the House and the Senate, and I was the coach of the House and I had to make an announcement one day, and they had moved me back up under the gallery back there, and I stood up back there.

I told them that as the speaker, I'd like to throw on a point of personal privilege when you have a time, and he said that, well, now's as good a time as any. And so I got up and started walking
down there and it became getting quieter and everybody figured that I was going to have my say coming and getting quieter and quieter. As I took the podium, I said, "Mr. Speaker," I made him recognize me again. I was just being awful mean. I made him recognize me again. He said "The gentleman from Haralson," you could've heard a pin hit that carpet and bounce in, it was so quiet in there.

Because if you remember, I had a pretty vitriolic tongue back in those days and I said, "Mr. Speaker, there comes a time and a place in every man's life when he has to say and do things he doesn't want to say and do." But man, you could have heard that pin bounce twice then. It was so quiet because they knew I was fixing to lay it on. Then I sort of grinned, and I said, “But this is neither that time nor place in my life.” George T’s told me many times if he'd had a gun he'd would have shot me, but I made my announcements and sit down. But I knew I didn't need to be a chairman in his second term, I didn't have the knowledge or the ability. I think I did a fairly good job with what I had to deal with, but I didn't... Somebody else should have been chairman of that committee, but it was all politics back in them days. That's the way you got ahead and that's bad.

Mel Steely: 00:28:27 Well now, when Governor Maddox came in as governor, George T. Smith had moved over to the Senate and was now lieutenant governor with George L. as speaker. How did George T. Smith as lieutenant governor get along with the people in the House and with the speakers' men?

Tom Murphy: 00:28:49 We got along with George T. fine because the House is what elected lieutenant governor, and they worked hard for George T. George T. had been a pretty good speaker when he was over there. He did what Carl told him to, but he tried to help those of us he could, and George T. and I are very close friends, very, very close friends. He tried to help us and he’d been a good speaker in the House, elected him lieutenant governor and we got along with him fine. Of course, George L. sent him what he wanted from our business and he changed whatever George T. sent and George T. knew he had to get along with George L. so that was basically the way it worked. George T. and George L. trying to work things out.

Mel Steely: 00:29:36 Did they, at that time, get together periodically and go over things?

Tom Murphy: 00:29:39 I have no idea about that. I was not in the inner circle. I do not know.
Mel Steely: 00:29:44 Okay. How did George T. get along with Governor Maddox?

Tom Murphy: 00:29:48 I think they got along pretty well. They had their differences of course, but they got along pretty well. I never heard of anything vicious between them.

Mel Steely: 00:30:00 I don't remember coming across anything in the press where they had major fights or anything of that sort.

Tom Murphy: 00:30:07 I don't remember any big falling outs between them at all.

Mel Steely: 00:30:09 Well now, you were fairly close to Maddox, since you were a floor leader with him. Did he have an agenda when he came in or he just took things as they went or what?

Tom Murphy: 00:30:19 Well, he had an agenda. He had some things he wanted to do. He wanted property tax release, and he wanted that work release and I don't remember all of them, but he had an agenda and he did very well with that agenda. He did very well with it.

Mel Steely: 00:30:32 Well, did you sit down with him early on and look over the things he wanted to accomplish and-

Tom Murphy: 00:30:37 We'd all sit down, all the floor leaders would sit together and talk with him and we worked out most of the issues between all of us.

Mel Steely: 00:30:45 Well, he had not had any experience at all.

Tom Murphy: 00:30:48 No, never.

Mel Steely: 00:30:49 Was he deferential in, in listening to you guys and saying, you know, can this be done?

Tom Murphy: 00:30:54 He would listen to us on technical things, and things of that nature. He was a very reasonable fellow to deal with as far as issues were concerned. I never really had but two or three big fusses with him, where we'd have to just work together to come up with something we could both agree on. And as I've said before, history's going to record he was a good governor.

Mel Steely: 00:31:20 Okay. What do you count as your greatest success, during your term as floor leader?

Tom Murphy: 00:31:31 Oh Lord, I don't remember that far back. I don't know. I haven't looked at all those records. I think that the work release program that I handled for him was a tremendous success and I
think the property tax relief bail was a good success. So we did a lot of things for a lot of people in Georgia, back in them days with extra money. We put extra money in the budget for projects throughout the state. That's where that started, during his administration. And you know, I was always on the conference committee on the budget. That was the one concession that George L. made. He let me and budget being Sloppy.

Mel Steely: 00:32:12 Sloppy Floyd.

Tom Murphy: 00:32:13 Yeah, we were the conferees, you know, on the budget during Maddox's administration. And of course, as you know, during the next administration, Jimmy Carter, I was on the conference committee on that lane for three years; well, all four years. And of course Maddox died, you know, and I was elected speaker pro tem, and I was still only those three years or so, I was still on the conference committee.

Mel Steely: 00:32:52 And then you became speaker.

Tom Murphy: 00:32:53 And then I became speaker. I've either, ever since we declared our independence, I've either been on the budget conference committee or appointed, one or the other. Thirty-one years, I've either been on it or appointed it.

Mel Steely: 00:33:09 During the 1970 gubernatorial campaign, you again supported Governor Carter, Jimmy Carter, and this time in his race against Carl Sanders. Did you get active in the governor's race that year?

Tom Murphy: 00:33:25 Oh yes. Yes. I was very active in his-

Mel Steely: 00:33:28 This a little more payback?

Tom Murphy: 00:33:30 There's little payback in it. But then on top of that, after President Carter got beat, he and I met quite frequently and we met one night just he and I and had dinner at some restaurant. Just he and I. We talked for two hours about the campaign over the meal and after the meal. And-

Mel Steely: 00:33:53 Do you have him come to the Murphy barbecue?

Tom Murphy: 00:33:54 No, I never had him come to that. I don't think I ever had him come to that. But he and I were pretty good friends. But then when he got in office, he was different from what he was before when he was campaigning. Man, he was-
Mel Steely: 00:34:12 How do you mean?

Tom Murphy: 00:34:12 Oh man, he was way more liberal than I was during the time he was governor. You know, he’d run as a conservative and turned out to be a very liberal governor, you know. And of course, you know me, I’m, I’m, I’m just what I am and that’s all. Popeye, you say, I am what I am. That's all that I am. And I'm a conservative and fiscal conservative, I'm an ultra fiscal conservative. Everybody knows that. And he and I disagreed on a lot of things after he got to be governor.

Mel Steely: 00:34:47 You've been, listen, as good a time as any to bring this in, but people have said that you have been a great reformer in the House, and they've stuck the liberal label on you because of reform concepts and all. How do you react to that?

Tom Murphy: 00:35:05 All the answer I have to that question, three years ago I guess he was, I was speaking to the Atlanta Rotary Club, I believe it was, and they always want a question and answer session everywhere I go, and this gentleman with his diamond stick pin and his thousand dollar suit stood up and he says, “What do you consider yourself, a conservative or liberal?” I didn't hesitate a second. I said, I know what I am. I said, everybody knows I'm an ultra fiscal conservative. Nobody questions that. I said, but when it comes to old folks, little children, mentally ill folk and sick folks, I'm a bleeding heart liberal and don't care who knows it. That's just my philosophy. Old folks and mentally ill folks, we need to look after them. No question about that in my mind and we need to do whatever it takes to look after them. And I tried my best to see that we did that, through the twenty-four years I've been speaker, but when it comes to the fiscal affairs of the state of Georgia, we need to get a dollar’s worth of value for every dollar we spend. That's what we need to do.

Of course, I took the position several years ago that I was tired of everything going to Atlanta. We had spent all that money on the World Congress Center and everything.

Mel Steely: 00:36:14 But you were a big part of making that happen.

Tom Murphy: 00:36:16 Oh yes, But then I decided that we needed to do something for the rest of the state. Since then, we built the Agricenter down at Perry, you know, which has been a tremendous investment and a tremendous success for us. We've built a carpet market, a center in Dalton, which has been a tremendous success. It's booked way into the year of 1999 already, and it's been a tremendous success. We built a trade center down in Savannah, which has been a tremendous... we've just done things in the
rest of the state that needed to be done. And that's when the Atlanta newspapers that you will recall really got on me.

You know when I quit saying, when I said everything is time, some of this stuff went to the rest of the state, it's time Atlanta quit getting everything. And that's when the Atlanta newspapers really went after me, and that's alright. I'm a tough old bird. But we've spread the benefits out over Georgia. You know, I've fought hard for US-27 to be four lanes and it's going to be done. It should be complete within three years from the Florida line to the Tennessee line. That's going to send thirty percent of the traffic that goes down 75 through Atlanta right down the west side of the state now. And maybe the west side of our state and southwest Georgia can develop. They needed it worse than any other section of our state. And I've insisted that we're going to do that for them, too.

Mel Steely: 00:37:42 That's the first time I've heard you define yourself as a fiscal conservative and bleeding heart liberal on social issues. In the past, to my own experience, you've defined yourself as a Baptist and a Democrat in that order and you didn't want any other labels.

Tom Murphy: 00:37:58 Well, that's about what I am, but I have really have absolutely no use for the so-called Christian Coalition, because first of all, ninety-nine percent of the people who are members of the Christian Coalition are good, honest, decent God fearing law abiding citizens. But the problem is those folks who run the thing and get all the money, they'd take half-truths, fabrications and total outright laws and outright lies and send it out under the guise of Christianity and those good, honest, decent God fearing folks believe it. And that's wrong. And you know me, I don't campaign on Sunday. I won't even let my radio spots run on Sunday. And those Christian Coalition folks go into churches and politic on Sunday. If that's Christianity, I don't want any part of it myself. They are just a Republican organization. That's all they are.

Mel Steely: 00:38:53 Did you know that you were going to run for speaker pro tem before you were reelected in '70 or was that just that Hale died and Maddox, they all died, and you had a chance at it, or what?

Tom Murphy: 00:39:04 Well, I knew when Maddox died I was going to run. No question about that, that I was going to run. They were five of us, I believe. Me and Billy, Quimby Melton, and Bill Williams and Elliot Levitas. How many ever that is, ran and I was the top vote getter. I got fifty something votes, Ellie'd got forty something and the rest of them just got a few votes. It was a runoff
between me and Elliot Levitas for speaker pro tem. In the runoff, he picked up two votes and I got the rest of them. It was, after the first election it was over with. I knew that he wasn't going to get those other folks that Billy, that those folks from Hall County and Paulding County and Clayton County. I knew he wasn't going to get those votes. I knew I had won when I got into runoff. I knew that was over with then.

Mel Steely: **00:40:06** He was a bright man, wasn't he? Oh, he is a bright and steady one.

Tom Murphy: **00:40:12** Elliot and I are very good friends and what was amazing to me is how conservative he turned when he got to Congress. He was just as different as day from night and when he was in the House and when he got to Congress, he turned him to a conservative in the Congress.

Mel Steely: **00:40:27** I remember when he first got up there, Gingrich I think came the year, or the term after that. And his comment on Levitas was that he was, without question, the brightest man in the Georgia delegation. And I asked him, I said, he's brighter than you are? And his answer was yeah. [crosstalk 00:40:47] He's a whole lot brighter than I am. Very bright man.

Tom Murphy: **00:40:48** Elliot's very smart. And he's a good fellow too.

Mel Steely: **00:40:51** That doesn't always mean you win election.

Tom Murphy: **00:40:53** It sure doesn't.

Mel Steely: **00:40:59** Why did you decide to run for pro tem?

Tom Murphy: **00:41:03** Well, of course I wanted to be in the leadership, and I thought I could do the job. And my friends sort of encouraged me too, the close friends who had voted for me for majority leader. I knew that I wasn't going to, wasn't ever going to do much with the governor because I was too independent. I just felt like it was time for me to try to move up in the organization.

Mel Steely: **00:41:38** Did you have a feeling that... no, first, did you talk to George L. about this before you made the decision?

Tom Murphy: **00:41:42** No.

Mel Steely: **00:41:42** Not at all?

Tom Murphy: **00:41:43** No sir.
Mel Steely: 00:41:44 Did he support you or did he stay out of it?

Tom Murphy: 00:41:45 I would suspect he supported Elliot Levitas. I would suspect I had nobody. He never said that. He and I always adopted the same philosophy in caucus elections. I never get involved in other caucus elections and he never did, but he voted just like that's all I do is vote. I never tell anybody who I'm going to vote for, for speaker pro tem, or majority leader, or caucus secretary, caucus chairman. I never do that because I'm sure he felt like, as I do, that the members would resent us trying to tell them who to elect for the other caucus officers. That's their prerogative. And I'll tell them, I'll vote now. Normally I tell the person I'm going to vote for between me and he or she. That's who I'm going to vote for. Normally I do that, but I don't tell the others what I'm going to do. I just tell the one between me and you. I'm going to vote for you, but that's all I'm going to do.

Mel Steely: 00:42:42 Hmm. And if they want to repeat it, that's their business.

Tom Murphy: 00:42:45 No, they cannot repeat it.

Mel Steely: 00:42:46 Oh, okay.

Tom Murphy: 00:42:46 No, it's between me and them.

Mel Steely: 00:42:48 And you tell them that?

Tom Murphy: 00:42:49 Yes, sir. I tell them that.

Mel Steely: 00:42:51 Okay. You think there was ever any doubt that anyone thought you might vote for somebody other than Bill Lee for his position?

Tom Murphy: 00:43:00 No, I don't. Well, he's never had any opposition.

Mel Steely: 00:43:03 No.

Tom Murphy: 00:43:03 Not the first time, but the chairman of the caucus, and I of course did not have to make him chairman of the Rules Committee, but I adopted that theory when I was elected speaker, that the chairman of the caucus, whoever he or she was, would be chairman of the Rules Committee. When Roy Lambert was chairman of the caucus, I was going to make him chairman of the Rules Committee and then Busbee made him his floor leader. Roy comes down I said, Roy, you're a fool, you're going to be chairman of the Rules Committee! You're a fool to take it but he said, Busbee and I have been through law
school together, we're close, and all that sort of stuff. Said, I'm all happy. I said, all right, you know, I'm not going to make you chairman of the Rules Committee. You won't be a chairman of any kind. He said, I understand that. And then after he got out of that job, I made him chairman of the Industry Committee, you know, I picked him back up because Roy's top drawer people. He's top drawer folks.

Mel Steely: 00:44:09 Carter came in, as you say, was somewhat different than he had been before.

Tom Murphy: 00:44:18 About a hundred and eighty degrees.

Mel Steely: 00:44:20 He clearly had an agenda, didn't he?

Tom Murphy: 00:44:23 He did.

Mel Steely: 00:44:23 Now, You were pro tem in the house. Did that give you much leverage to, to fight with, or was it a lot like Vice President Garner said about the Vice President not worth a bucket of warm spit?

Tom Murphy: 00:44:37 No, no, that's not really true. George L. put me on the conference committee on the budget and I had my say there. It was George L. who tried to pacify Carter. He wanted to get along with him. Of course me and Sloppy, we were pretty independent. So Joey-

Mel Steely: 00:45:00 Sloppy Floyd was the appropriations chairman that time?

Tom Murphy: 00:45:02 Yeah, and George L., he just wouldn't break with me and Sloppy. Me and Sloppy, we tried our best to keep things under control as far as the budget was concerned. And of course we blocked several of Governor Carter's things in the budget, you know, because we'd just outvote Busbee in the conference committee.

Mel Steely: 00:45:26 Well one of the biggest things that Carter has talked about since leaving office as governor was his, well, when he came in and when he left, was this desire to reorganize state government.

Tom Murphy: 00:45:36 Zero base budget.

Mel Steely: 00:45:37 Yeah.

Tom Murphy: 00:45:37 Zero base budget, which is, frankly a figment of everybody's imagination, really. Because it just-
Mel Steely: 00:45:47 That's not really possible, is it?

Tom Murphy: 00:45:49 No, what you'd do is you'd take the continuation that you've got, you look at it and see if anything you can take out of it and redirect it. And then you do what you have to do. Actually it takes about a five percent increase of your revenue to keep the continuation up to where it ought to be.

Mel Steely: 00:46:11 Well, how did his desire to reorganize things go over with the legislature?

Tom Murphy: 00:46:17 Well, it was tough. Well, George L. helped him a great deal. George L. sort of helped him a great deal, but he got most of his reorganization. The worst thing was creating the department of human resources, which is so large that the right hand doesn't know what the left hand's doing and the left hand doesn't know what the right hand's doing. It's so large. And if some of these days it will be broke down, certainly health should be taken out of the department of human resources. It has no business being there. It ought to be a separate division of state government. No question in my mind about that.

Mel Steely: 00:46:56 You hadn't been able to convince the governor of that yet?

Tom Murphy: 00:46:58 Well-

Mel Steely: 00:46:59 Obviously not, because they haven't done it yet.

Tom Murphy: 00:47:01 It's going to be a tough, tough job. I would not be surprised to see it not become an issue in the next governor's race. It is too big. Way too big.

Mel Steely: 00:47:18 I can remember watching Hamilton Jordan sit on that little church pew right outside the door of the House chamber they used to have back in the '70's up there. And just chew out one of the state reps about, the governor wants this and you're going to do this and you're going to do that and wave his finger at him. That sort of thing. And I was appalled. I understood that things like that happening to governors, chewed people out, but to have a staff person do it in public was just appalling to me. And I was fairly young and didn't understand a lot of stuff at that time, but I understood enough that, that's not the way you do things. Was this typical of the way Carter treated the legislature?

Tom Murphy: 00:48:02 Yeah, that was typical. He never did it to me because they knew it wouldn't work with me, that I wouldn't take it at all. What the
governors always had done up to then, is they had somebody like Moody Daniel who would come up there and he had a floor pass and he would say the governor wants to see you in his office. He never let staff people do it. But Governor Carter was bad about that from my understanding. As I say, they never did it to me because they knew it wouldn't work with me, and that I wouldn't take it at all.

Mel Steely: 00:48:31 But you've had members come to you and-

Tom Murphy: 00:48:32 yeah.

Mel Steely: 00:48:33 After having had it happened and just be very furious about it, haven't you?

Tom Murphy: 00:48:36 Yeah. I've had many of them tell me that and I would tell him where I'd tell him to go if they'd come to see me, but they never came to see me.

Mel Steely: 00:48:48 Did this help or hurt his relationship with the house? I don't see-

Tom Murphy: 00:48:51 Yeah, it hurt badly. And when he went out as governor, he could not have been reelected anything in Georgia. But then he got elected president, and he did a great job as president, which is amazing to me. He did a good job as president.

Mel Steely: 00:49:07 Well, I remember right as he was going out of office in-

Tom Murphy: 00:49:11 He did a much better job as president than he did as governor. No question in my mind about that.

Mel Steely: 00:49:18 Sloppy died right at the end of Carter's term.

Tom Murphy: 00:49:22 That's correct.

Mel Steely: 00:49:22 I can remember going with my dad and another old friend of yours, Max Kimble, some of us went up to, I think maybe Nathan Dean might've been with us, drove up to the funeral. When we got there, it was a church set up on top of a hill and we couldn't get in. It was full. We had to stand outside and stood there by the doors. And I remember just as a service was beginning, Governor Carter walked out. They walked down the stairs as long steps coming down to the street and he walked a block and a half to where his car was parked, and not a single person spoke to him. I'd been around governors a good while. And when a governor does anything, everybody's slapping him on the back and wanting to shake his hand and all this kind of
stuff. Even former governors. But I was astounded to see that not anyone spoke to Carter. He went back, trooper opened the door, he sat in the back seat of his car and just sat there.

I knew at that point he was going to run for president cause he’d said he was, I remember going up and tapping on the window and he rolled the window down and I told him who I was and he had some vague memory of that, of my father anyway, and I told him I wished him luck in his race for the presidency. And he thanked me and rolled the window back up and that was it. But I couldn’t imagine a sitting governor, even if he’s at the end of his term, who’s announced for the presidency, being treated like he was there.

Tom Murphy: 00:50:50 Did he leave right before the funeral started, or what?

Mel Steely: 00:50:54 I believe he left just as it was beginning because everybody else was still there. Nobody, I mean there things were going on inside. I don't remember precisely-

Tom Murphy: 00:51:02 Of course I was a pallbearer, you know, and I was inside. Me and George Busbee.

Mel Steely: 00:51:06 I think it was just as it was starting. I think it was, they were beginning to sing or if I remember correctly, it was during the singing early part of it.

Tom Murphy: 00:51:16 I don't know about that.

Mel Steely: 00:51:18 But it was long enough for me to follow him down and get to his car and him not leave. The trooper did not get in the car to drive him away. He just sat there, and it was just the strangest kind of thing. And I remember thinking at the time, well this guy's got real problems running for president, because he can't even get folks in his own state to speak to him. He fooled a lot of folks.

Tom Murphy: 00:51:41 You know, Sloppy was on his case, all the time while he was governor. So he was in Sloppy's territory and I imagine that had something to do with that.

Mel Steely: 00:51:48 Probably, probably. Maddox. Lester Maddox was Carter's lieutenant governor and they seldom agreed.

Tom Murphy: 00:51:58 Never agreed on anything.

Mel Steely: 00:52:00 Whether it was policy or method or whatever. What do you remember about that? I mean you, you had been, you'd
supported Carter when he ran, you had been Maddox's floor leader and were considered generally a friend of Lester Maddox. How did you deal with all of that?

Tom Murphy: 00:52:17 I was right in the middle of all of it and I'd try my best to get them together, but I never could do it. I'd finally tell Governor Maddox, I'd say, "Now Lester, you guys settle down here. You're off on a tangent here." And he'd always back off, let's get this thing over with. And sometimes I'd be on his side and I could convince George L. we need to go with him. I was right in the middle getting beat on every way I turned. But that's not unusual for me.

Mel Steely: 00:52:48 Was Culver Kidd an ally of yours in this? I know he was close to Maddox.

Tom Murphy: 00:52:54 Well, Culver was with me sometimes and against me sometimes, and I was with him and against him. You never knew where Culver was coming from. He'd come out of left field or center field or right field or behind the backstop for that matter. But that man, you never knew where he was coming from. There was no telling what position he was going to take.

Mel Steely: 00:53:11 I can't remember another character like him ever.

Tom Murphy: 00:53:14 Never. Never.

Mel Steely: 00:53:16 Your state senator, Nathan Dean, has been there since before you became speaker. How did you get along with him?

Tom Murphy: 00:53:24 No, I think you're wrong. I think you're wrong.

Mel Steely: 00:53:28 He was in the legislature in the early fifties.

Tom Murphy: 00:53:29 He was in the House with me and after I became speaker, he ran for the Senate.

Mel Steely: 00:53:34 Oh, okay. I was thinking he went to the Senate right before he became-

Tom Murphy: 00:53:37 I think he determined his future wasn't too good with me that time. He and I were at each other's. We didn't agree on much of anything, but since then, we've gotten to where we get along pretty well. Get along real well now, but he left after I became speaker.
Mel Steely: 00:53:54 Were you able, since he was, representing your district? Were you able generally, to consider him an ally in the Senate?

Tom Murphy: 00:53:59 Not, not on some things. He would do whatever the lieutenant governor wanted. But we've gotten along real well the last few years. Nathan's done a good job.

Mel Steely: 00:54:11 On local bills and things? You all worked together?

Tom Murphy: 00:54:14 Never had any problem with local legislation. Nathan's done a good job for us. Nathan and I's biggest problem through the years was that he always was with Moreland, whatever Moreland wanted. He is for, you know, and of course you know he and Moreland and I had our problems. Big problems over the years about things. Of course, Moreland whipped us on the fourteen foot mobile home bill, you know, that one year. But he'd darn near drove the mobile home industry out of Georgia, into South Carolina and Florida. And then the next year they were all wanting to get in line to sign the bill because man, they were losing employees everywhere. You know what's funny about it, there's only been two or three wrecks involving fourteen foot mobile homes in all these years and it sure gives a lot of folks jobs.

Mel Steely: 00:55:10 The press got with him on that issue.

Tom Murphy: 00:55:12 Yeah.

Mel Steely: 00:55:13 Very much, as I remember. You have had some fights, rather historic ones, with the constitutional officers from time to time. I remember there was an attorney general you didn't care much for?

Tom Murphy: 00:55:27 No, I didn't have much use for Mr. Bowers, and still don't have much use for him. He's a hypocrite of the first order, as far as I'm concerned. I don't know.

Mel Steely: 00:55:39 Mr. Speaker, you have made no secret of your feelings about Mike Bowers as attorney general for years. You knew about this business with his girlfriend.

Tom Murphy: 00:55:53 I knew-

Mel Steely: 00:55:53 Many years ago and you never said anything publicly or made any accusation.
Tom Murphy: 00:55:56  I'm not a gossip monger. I don't do that, but I knew about it within weeks of after it happened, because those ladies who worked over there and one or two of the males would come to me. The ladies would say, hey, she's getting paid more than we do. She's got her own desk, her own place. She don't do anything but sit there. We know he's sleeping with her. That's the only reason that she's got that job. I said, well, go the press. There's nothing I can do about that. I'm not going to get out and talk about that. I'm just not going to do that. You need to go to the press if you want to do something about that. I'm in the legislature, I'm not into public relations business, and I never opened my mouth about it. If you recall when he came out, the press called me. I said, oh heck, I knew about that ten years ago. That isn't news to me.

Of course, you see, I've got a, and I know this may sound egotistical, but I've got sort of a network, so you know, you've watched me. When I go in to the Capitol, I speak to the people on the door, I speak to the porters, I speak to the janitors, I shake hand with them and they're all my friends. Most of them, if they need to borrow a hundred dollars or so, they don't hesitate to come see me, and I loan them money. I've flown just about all of them money over there and they all, I've never lost a penny. They've always paid me back.

Mel Steely: 00:57:19  You've given a lot of money away, too, haven't you?

Tom Murphy: 00:57:22  But they report to me and the thing that goes on. If something happened around the Capitol, I'll know it in thirty minutes, because I treat people like I'd like to be treated, if they'll let me. I'm not one that ignores the little people because I'm a little folk myself. I've been amazed as I've watched through the years that the governors and lieutenant governors walk into the Capitol and never speak to the door people and never speak to the maids and never speak to the janitor. Never speak to them. I just don't understand that, because I speak to all of them, you know, and they're all my friends.

Mel Steely: 00:57:58  That's one of the things you and Governor Maddox had in common.

Tom Murphy: 00:58:01  That's right.

Mel Steely: 00:58:02  Your basic concept of what being a little person is and how you treat people.
Tom Murphy: 00:58:07 I'm one of those folks you've never heard me refer to the middle-class. You've never heard me say. I say the middle income, they ain't no classes as far as I'm concerned. We're all the same. There isn't no big, little, in the middle. It's middle income, big income and low income. To me it isn't class. I don’t believe in that at all. I never referred to them as a middle class. I say the middle income folks.

Mel Steely: 00:58:29 Well. Then you took that position in running your law office too, don't you?

Tom Murphy: 00:58:32 That's correct.

Mel Steely: 00:58:33 People come as they line up outside.

Tom Murphy: 00:58:35 That's right.

Mel Steely: 00:58:36 You don't have appointments and-

Tom Murphy: 00:58:38 Only if I have a deposition or something like that. I don't do that at the Capitol, as you well know.

Mel Steely: 00:58:43 Yes, sir.

Tom Murphy: 00:58:44 I see them as they come. Only thing, I will take House members ahead of other folks. I will do that.

Mel Steely: 00:58:50 That's smart politics though, I think. Did you have anyone in the Senate over the years that you could count on as a pretty good ally, that you could rely on?

Tom Murphy: 00:59:00 Yeah, I've always had somebody over there that I could rely on to keep me informed. Still do.

Mel Steely: 00:59:07 You don't want to talk about who it is-

Tom Murphy: 00:59:08 No, not really. Not really. but I've got some good friends in the Senate.

Mel Steely: 00:59:14 Okay. Speaker Smith, George L. died suddenly in '73.

Tom Murphy: 00:59:26 No, it wasn't '73.

Mel Steely: 00:59:26 '74?
Tom Murphy: 00:59:26 No, it wasn’t suddenly. No, he had a stroke and they moved him to Atlanta and then he stayed unconscious for, oh, it was several weeks.

Mel Steely: 00:59:34 Was it? I didn't realize it was that long.

Tom Murphy: 00:59:36 He was in the hospital unconscious for several weeks and finally died.

Mel Steely: 00:59:42 Well, that would explain, then, a little bit more... This opened the door for his job, obviously. George Busbee, Roy Lambert, Denmark Groover, yourself, were all talked about and have shown interest in the speakership. According to Mr. Groover, some of the members who were interested in the job flew down to the funeral together and on the way down and back were discussing who was going to among themselves, who was going to do this. Were you in that group, did you-

Tom Murphy: 01:00:17 No sir, I was on-

Mel Steely: 01:00:18 ... You didn't fly down?

Tom Murphy: 01:00:19 ... I was on the plane with Busbee. Busbee and I were on the plane together. There were other folks on there, but Busbee and I talked on the... When we got back to Atlanta, he called me aside and he said, Tom, I'm going to continue to run for governor. I'm not going to run for speaker. I said that's fine, George. I'm glad to hear that. Frankly, I refused to ask anybody to vote for me until after the man was buried. I thought that was terrible. If people were out talking about that, I wouldn't have talk to them.

But before the man's body left the Capitol, enough members had come to me and said, I'm going to vote for you for speaker to leave. I knew I had to vote before the man. The body left the Capitol, but I swear to you, I never asked anybody. I never brought it up. I never asked anybody to vote for me. They voluntarily came to me and I'm, I'm honest enough to tell you that I kept a record of who told me they was going to vote for me. I knew that I had the votes to be elected speaker before his body was taken from the Capitol to the funeral home in Swainsboro.

Mel Steely: 01:01:25 Mm-hmm (affirmative) [inaudible 00:01:28].

Tom Murphy: 01:01:25 This voluntary vote, but I refused to ask anybody to vote for me until after the man was buried.
Mel Steely: 01:01:34 According to Mr. Groover, most of the politicking in situations like that is done through, for want of a better word, surrogates, people who are your friends, whoever's friends go out and work for them, quietly. I talking to other people of like mind or trying to convince people, that sort of thing. Has that been your experience, that the principal himself does not get out and do a whole lot of this?

Tom Murphy: 01:02:01 No, that ain't been my experience. That's the only death we've ever had, but in every other race, I've never had but two races for speaker, but I've done the campaigning myself. When Burruss ran against me, I drove my car all over Georgia, seeing members. Just like he flew all over Georgia, I drove my car. Of course. That was an amazing thing. I had 118 commitments to be elected speaker. Just, I'm going to vote for you what and I'll do what I can. I'm going to vote for you and they were ten of us met in my suite over at the hotel. The day before the election. It was me and Joe Frank, Marcus Collins, Tom Buck, Crawford Ware, Henry Reeves.

Mel Steely: 01:02:53 Bill Lee, was he?

Tom Murphy: 01:02:54 Bill Lee, Yeah, and he was with us.

Mel Steely: 01:02:58 Was Vaughn or Larson, either one in your... Clarence Vaughn or Wash Lawson? Any of those.

Tom Murphy: 01:03:04 No, Wash wasn't there then. I don't think Clarence Vaughn's always been my friend and goes, he and James were very close friends in law school, but anyhow, we went through the list of my commitments nonetheless, all ten of us, they were ten of us there unless every one of us agreed he was going to vote for me, we wouldn't count it. And the amazing thing we had, all ten of us agreed on 98, and that's exactly what I got, was 98 votes.

Mel Steely: 01:03:29 And you had a hundred and something commitments?

Tom Murphy: 01:03:31 118, there's twenty of them lied. And I knew who they were. If I had done what my colleagues wanted me to do, Joe Frank, Marcus and Crawford and several of them, I started punishing folks like they want me to. We'd have had chaos in that place. I said, y'all are crazy. We need to get everybody together. You know, we don't need to start tearing the place apart. We need to get them together now. We need to stay together. And that's what I did and that's the way we've been managed to be successful.
This was-

I never understood people who run and people against them. If they start punching those folks, what I'm trying to do, get them on my side, for next time. What I tried to do, that's what makes sense to me.

Senator Talmadge has basically that same philosophy. I don't know. Your enemy today may be your ally and friend tomorrow.

Correct.

What was this first election like? I mean, was it just like a normal caucus meeting where you, you come together and present your position?

I didn't have any opposition. If you recall.

I remember Groover told me he looked at it and, and, and withdrew knowing that you had the votes and it was that simple. You beat him before the race and that was it.

Of course.

And Busbee had already pulled back to run for governor.

I didn't have any opposition the first time or the second time. Then the third time when Burruss ran against me.

What do you remember most about your first year as speaker?

Well, the main thing I remember is, I would get to the Capitol by 7:30 every morning and get in the office, and by 8:15, I would say fifteen or sixteen of the chairmen would have come in there and say, what you want me to get out today? What do you want me to do, you want to do? And I finally got tired of that and I called a meeting to the chairman. I said, look, if you can't run your committee, I'll find somebody who can if it's a good piece of legislation, get it out. It's a bad piece of legislation, kill it. And if I got something I got an interest in, I'll let you know, but I'm tired of all y'all coming in my office every morning wanting to know what to get out. You can't run your committee, just tell me and I'll get somebody that will run it. And that stopped that. And that's the way I've run it ever since. But of course we have that meeting every Monday morning, of all the chairmen and Policy Committee members and we thrash our differences out there.
Mel Steely: 01:06:02 Was that the main reorganization that you did and different from Speaker Smith?

Tom Murphy: 01:06:07 I left... The most useless thing in the world, Dr. Steely, is a yes man. That's the most useless thing in the world. I have no use for a yes man. I need folks who'd got courage enough to tell me I'm wrong. Show me where I'm wrong. If you can show me where I'm wrong, it ain't no problem for me to change my mind. Now the biggest mistake a lot of folks make is they can never admit they made a mistake. Well, that ain't no problem on me. If I make one, I admit it and go back and try to correct it. But some folks just can't do that.

But my folks know they can say what they think to me and I'm not going to get mad at them and we'll discuss it and debate it. And one of us will convince the other one until it's over with. I admit it's easier to convince somebody when you speak rightly at that. But, but, but you got to let folks have their say so. Especially in this day in time. And your, your colleague Doctor Gingrich, is going to find that out before it's over with. I think maybe he's already finding it out.

Mel Steely: 01:07:05 I think he's found that out. When you organized the House on that first day, as speaker, did you change chairmen or did you leave him like he had him?

Tom Murphy: 01:07:20 I couldn't when I was elected because they were appointed for that term, you know, and nothing I could do.

Mel Steely: 01:07:26 You had to wait until the n-

Tom Murphy: 01:07:27 Well I could have, I could have busted any of them I wanted to, but I did not. I did not bust a single chairman. Now the next time some of them didn't run and I made some changes and I switched some around. But basically I didn't bust anybody. When Al Burruss ran against me I did make a couple of changes cause there's two people that were chairmen voted against me and I knew who they were and I took care of business. You just had to do that. There wasn't any way around that.

Mel Steely: 01:08:03 How would you describe your relationship with President or Governor Carter after you became speaker? Two of you all didn't get along and all that? Well, it was first two and a half years or three years.

Tom Murphy: 01:08:13 We didn't get along though. He write me the handwritten notes and send them up to me and I'd wad them up and throw them
into the trash baskets. You know, I wished I'd saved them now, but I didn't. I threw them in the trash basket. We didn't get along until the fourth year. We, if you recall, after he was went out of office, we overrode a ton of his vetoes the next year. We overrode a ton of them that he vetoed and that is, that thread has held, sort of held governors in check about veto since then.

Mel Steely: 01:08:55 And yet when he ran... Excuse me, go ahead.

Tom Murphy: 01:08:57 I suspect we may override some vetoes of Governor Miller's next time.

Mel Steely: 01:09:05 Hmm. Well that'll be interesting. Will be interesting.

Tom Murphy: 01:09:08 It will be interesting. Unless he makes some concession to us. He took all those special projects out, you know, line item vetoed. Unless he makes the concessions entailed as we put them back in their supplemental, he'll sign it and authorize it. We may very well override.

Mel Steely: 01:09:23 Just this morning on the way over here. One of my good friends works at the vo-tech and Carrollton was talking about he'd just lost a $100,000 project. What happened? He said, well is that was ticked off at somebody and he killed everybody's project.

Tom Murphy: 01:09:35 He did.

Mel Steely: 01:09:36 On that.

Tom Murphy: 01:09:37 And worse than that, things that he couldn't get through the line item veto, he's directed to budget department not to disperse the money. That's worse than that so he can do hold the money up still under the budget act.

That's the weakest point in it. As far as we're concerned.

Mel Steely: 01:09:53 When something like that happens do you as speaker, and knowing Zell, the two of you go way back. Do you call him and say we got to talk about this or do you wait for him to call you or you just ignore it or what?

Tom Murphy: 01:10:06 No, I just ignore it. No.

Mel Steely: 01:10:09 Deal with it within the House primarily.

Tom Murphy: 01:10:11 If you ever recall this last session, we put special projects into the supplemental budget and we would not take up the big
budget until he signed the supplemental budget without vetoing our items. That's what we'll have to do next year on the items he line item vetoed this time, but he has admitted to some of us that he made a terrible mistake in vetoing some of those things. He made a terrible mistake. He's admitted it to some people. He won't admit it to me, but I had people tell me he admitted he made a mistake. He hurt a lot of good people.

Mel Steely: 01:10:48 He has certainly had been one of the strongest governors since Sanders without any question. Now whether it's right or wrong, he's been a strong governor.

Tom Murphy: 01:10:57 No question about that.

Mel Steely: 01:11:01 Carter wanted to be a strong governor. He tried to get back some of the powers, I read it, that Maddox had given up. Then according to Governor Maddox, the two of them met out there on the front of the governor's mansion and Carter told him he wouldn't try to do that, wouldn't try to name chairmen and do all that stuff. But then as soon as he got elected he did try to do it. Do you know anything about that?

Tom Murphy: 01:11:24 No, I don't know anything about that. Of course he didn't make any progress in our body. George L. was a strong speaker.

Mel Steely: 01:11:32 Well you felt pretty strongly and negatively, about Governor Carter, yet when he went ran for president, you kept your mouth shut when press and everybody else would ask you about is reorganizing and all of that. You didn't take the opportunity to savage him when you could have.

Tom Murphy: 01:11:48 No, I did not do that because I, he was a Georgian. I'd like to see a Georgian run for president. But I didn't say get him the position one way or the other for him. Of course. I've never voted Republican knowingly in my life. Never will. I still remember ‘29 and the ‘30s.

Mel Steely: 01:12:13 So you did vote for him?

Tom Murphy: 01:12:14 Oh yes sir.

Mel Steely: 01:12:17 But you didn't get out and try to help him or anything?

Tom Murphy: 01:12:20 One way or the other. Of course, some of my strongest supporters in the House did. Terry Coleman went all over the nation, you know, for him.
Mel Steely: 01:12:31 Yeah. A lot of people did. There was the “peanut brigade,” I think they called it, and you had a number of House members that did that sort of thing. One of my old friends, Tom Glanton was one of those. Told me later it was great disappointment that he had worked very hard and spend his own money and as soon as Carter got elected, never heard from him again until right before they started cranking up the ‘80 campaign. At which point they asked him if he wouldn’t join the peanut brigade again, do it all over. He didn’t ever get a letter of thanks. Never got invited to Washington and nothing and he said no, he didn’t want to do it a second time.

Tom Murphy: 01:13:10 The biggest shock I had when he was president, is he sent for all of us speakers to come to Washington, when the Panama Canal thing was coming on. I thought he was wrong about the Panama Canal, but history is going to record he was right. No question in my mind I was wrong and he was right, but he sent for us. I told, I carried Tom Moreland and Joe Frank with me that’s who I carried with me and when we sit down in that big room next to his office and I was way across the table from him and I was dreading it because you know, he and I had some vicious fights when he was governor. I was dreading it because I figured he was going to give me fits.

But I swear when he walked in that door, he looked around and he saw me and he said, "Hey Tom, how are you?" Walked straight over to me and shook hands with me before we did anybody else. I about fell out of the chair because I figured I was fixing to catch fits. I’d been so tough on him, you know, but, but he put me at ease right quick and I kept my mouth shut. I was in his place then. And he was the boss.

Mel Steely: 01:14:29 Denny Groover had a similar experience when he went up to, he was defending Culver in that suit and went up to take a deposition and it was pretty rough on President Carter and the deposition. According to him, I’ve never seen it, but he said he was, and immediately afterwards said Carter invited him over to the White House. Told him to bring his staff with him and just treated him nicely as he could. Said it just a great shock to him that he had done that. He could be charming.

Tom Murphy: 01:14:54 He came to see me in the Capitol right after he was... After whoever who it was that had beat him. I don’t even remember. Tell you the truth. Who was it that beat-

Mel Steely: 01:14:54 Reagan.
Tom Murphy: 01:15:06 Reagan. After Reagan beat him, he was coming back home and he came to the Capitol to see me, stayed with me thirty, forty minutes. We had a long, pleasant conversation and you know, we sat, he sat right in front of during the Democrat convention when we were over there, and he and I talked a great deal there. And that's you remember, you know I told you that my daughter Mary who teaches Georgia history had an hour interview with every living Georgia governor and he gave her an hour at the Carter Center to interview him. For now she's got an hour interview with him about, his term as governor and I've never watched it. I don't know what he said about me, but she's got an hour interview with him.

Mel Steely: 01:15:55 He, um. You having you and Culver on tape, got us an interview with him. The same series that we're doing with you right now. We did with him for governor and he would only give us an hour, but we couldn't get a response from him until I called one day and said that we had interviewed a number of the people who were his, his detractors during his term as governor. And I mentioned Culver in particular and said, we've interviewed Speaker Murphy. And I didn't tell him that the interview didn't go all the way up, but we said we'd interviewed you, which we have and we felt like President Carter probably would not want to let these be the only views that were recorded in this series. And within twenty-four hours they called back and had a meeting set up and set up for us to come on over.

When he walked into the room, that's the first thing he said. He said, "Hello, Dr. Steely. I understand you've interviewed Culver and some of my enemies." I said, "Yes, sir." And we went on from there. So he did want to make his point and get it on the record. But I'm afraid a number the things that he said are at variance with what other people are telling us. So I guess a historian, will have to try to figure out what's the facts and all of that. How did you get along with the press once you became speaker? You said that you met with the Atlanta Constitution board once and that was it. How about the media? The other media?

Tom Murphy: 01:17:21 Well, the old ones, like Sam Hopkins and Prentice Palmer and folk like that. They were good reporters. They'd just tell, put the facts down now. Then these, these young ones they've got now, they're out of this world. They have no regard for the truth whatsoever. They're terrible. I very seldom even to talk them anymore. Very seldom, talk to him, very seldom even return their calls. Because I know I'm not going to get a fair deal. So I just let them write what they want to and ignore it. But the old ones, the good ones, Sam Hopkins, Prentice Palmer, Celestine
Sibley. I liked them and I'd always talk to them. I had one to tell me one time that he recently quit.

Well, I'll tell you, I'll tell you what Milo Dakin, you know, he quit or whatever. He said they had changed his story. He told him if they did it again, he quit, he quit. And then he went to work for Harry Jackson, you know, and then Harry got out of money and I gave him a job making much less than he was making it the newspaper and, well he was my public relations public information officer for several years and then he went to work in Montgomery for Milton McGregor, the dog track. He actually went down there for the small loan folks and Milton, he did such a good job with them, Milton hired him, and of course Milo's become very wealthy in Montgomery.

Mel Steely: 01:19:02 Well they're still doing that in the newspaper business. I had one of them talk to me after I was doing some research for my book on Gingrich and talking to the young lady that was watching his TV series he was doing up at Piedmont College or at Reinhardt College. And she told me afterwards, she had interviewed me about something and it didn't come out that way in the paper the next day and she came to me and said, now here, I want to show you what I submitted and show you what they printed. And it was just total variance. She said, "They switched it all around after it got there." She said, "I apologize. I know you didn't say this," you know, and "I want you to know I didn't do that to you."

Tom Murphy: 01:19:43 But that happens so many times to me that that's the reason I quit talking to them.

Mel Steely: 01:19:48 Yeah. And I have to now. I've learned that lesson. I don't even bother returning calls anymore. How about your relationship with Republicans in the House in those early years?

Tom Murphy: 01:20:03 Well, it wasn't any problem. The early years we had a few. If you'll go back to the record, you find where Mike Egan said I was fair to them at all times. So I've got, I get I guess say eighteen to twenty of the Republicans vote with me more than they do their caucus. Of course they are those, those partisan folks over there, they go and vote partisan lines and that's it and that's what's so sad about the situation. Instead of voting what's good for the state, they vote partisan lines and it's that way in in both parties, so I'm not going to say it's not. But I've always felt like you ought to do what you think is best for the state regardless of partisanship, myself, but unfortunately there are too many on both sides that don't feel that way.
Mel Steely: 01:21:02 In the '74 election, were you for Maddox or for Busbee in that one?

Tom Murphy: 01:21:06 Well, I was for Busbee. There wasn't a question about that. I told Maddox he ought not to run. I was for Busbee tooth and toenail.

Mel Steely: 01:21:15 You and Busbee got along pretty well, didn't you?

Tom Murphy: 01:21:19 Busbee and I are very close friends, we still talk quite a bit. His wife Mary Beth is one of the finest ladies that you will find anywhere, and Mary Beth and I are very close friends.

Mel Steely: 01:21:30 I know some people say that, not just some people. I think it's the fact that for the next sixteen years, the governor's office was pretty well dominated by people right out of the House. Two terms each for-

Tom Murphy: 01:21:45 Wasn't any question about that.

Mel Steely: 01:21:46 Busbee then Harris-

Tom Murphy: 01:21:46 Wasn't any question about that.

Mel Steely: 01:21:50 And then at one point you were viewed pretty much as a King maker. I can remember a photograph or a drawing on the front of the Atlanta magazine that had you as the giant gorilla on top of the Capitol with Joe Frank in one hand. You know, this kind of thing, I don't know whether you remember that photograph or not.

Tom Murphy: 01:22:08 Yeah, it's on my wall.

Mel Steely: 01:22:10 Is it? We'll it's on mine too.

Tom Murphy: 01:22:12 They sent me the original drawing.

Mel Steely: 01:22:14 Did they? And I got one of the prints they got you and Joe Frank to autograph it for me and I keep that one in... That was about as symbolic of the power of a speaker or maybe not of a speaker, but of you personally as anything I've seen in so far as symbolism.

Tom Murphy: 01:22:30 Those days are gone. No, Dr. Steely, they're gone. It's, it's politics has gotten so vicious nowadays that that you just really don't like, what worries me more than anything else is unless something changes, in six, eight years you're not going to get a
decent person to run for public office. They won't take the punishment they have to take from the other party or, and I'm not talking about Democrat, I'm talking both parties. They won't take the punishment that they take from either from the opposition and the press. It worries me.

Mel Steely: 01:23:13 One of my good friends I've done work with since he was a young boy and in college Matt Tyree has gotten out of it.

Tom Murphy: 01:23:22 Yeah, Matt's very close to me.

Mel Steely: 01:23:25 He tells me it's a puzzle to many of his Republican friends, how he can speak so highly of you. But he does.

Tom Murphy: 01:23:32 There ain't a nickel worth of difference in my and Matt's philosophy. We're both moderate conservatives is what we are, and ain't a nickel's worth of difference between us.

Mel Steely: 01:23:45 Well, he said he got out cause he just, and he was treated fairly well by the press. He just said he just got tired of it and wanted to go make some money, and his family figured he could make a lot more money working with the business that he could playing politics. I don't know whether that's what he told you, but that was his view. It just wasn't worth it.

Tom Murphy: 01:24:06 He told me need to go look after his business.

Mel Steely: 01:24:07 Well, same thing. Well not quite the same thing. He added the other part that it was just very rough and he just didn't want to continue that. But business was the main thing. His dad, I think convinced him. It was time. Go look after things.

What, what was your philosophy, but you were reelected, of course, your first full term following the '74 election. Did you have any particular philosophy or way of looking at the speakership?

Tom Murphy: 01:24:42 Well, my philosophy has never changed. I think what you need to do is you need to appoint strong chairmen. You need to meet with them, you need to get input from them. Then you need to get input from the young, younger people and try to come up with something that all of you can agree to that's reasonable and good for the state. That's been my philosophy from the very beginning, and that's all I've ever tried to do. I've never tried to dominate what happened in there. Many times in the chairmen's meeting, what I want doesn't come out of there, but we don't publicize it. We don't get in public fusses, you know.
The Republicans, if you don’t go along with them, whatever, their leadership wants they get mad at you and that's the reason Robin Williams and Matt Tyree and those boys voted with me more than they did them.

Mel Steely: 01:25:41 How do you go about as speaker, convincing, rewarding, punishing, all of that stuff too? Is there any formula for it? You just take it step by step?

Tom Murphy: 01:25:53 I do very little punishing. I don't believe in that. I think. I think the folks over there are elected to represent their people, and I hope that most of them are doing what they think the majority of their people want them to do. I do very little punishing. The only way you punish folks that I would agree to punish folks over there, if they were going against you time after time after time, and they got a special project they want in the budget, you just don't put it in, you know, just let them do without, huh.

Mel Steely: 01:26:21 Well, I remember watching one of your punishments and watching the impact that the long term process, not only punishing but of healing afterwards had, which was over the first big challenge you had from Al Burruss. And as I remember... Just talk about that, if you would.

Tom Murphy: 01:26:49 After he, that's what I said a while ago after he ran against me. If I had done what my closest friend wanted to do, start punishing folks we'd have chaos in that place. We would have divided it up to where it would've been almost impossible to get the House back together. And I said, we just are not going to do that. And so then when he decided he wanted to run for caucus office again, he came to see me and wanted to know if I would work against him. I said, "Al, I'll never get involved in caucus officers. I'm not going to work against you. If that's what the caucus wants of you to be something else, that's fine. I'm not going." I said, "But I will not vote for you now. I'll tell you right up front, I won't vote for it, but I will not become involved in it."

I said, "You think you got a chance?" He says, "Well, some of your closest friends have told me, unless you said no, that they would vote for me." I said, "Well, I'm not going to tell him no, I'm not going to do that. I'm just not going to get involved in a caucus election." And he became one of my closest allies, so I after that, a matter of fact, the last session he served in, he came and he was on the conference committee on the budget. He came in there and my office and his back was hurting terribly and he got down on his knees and leaned against the front of my sofa. And he had shut both doors in my office because the conference committee was meeting in my conference room. He
said, "I just won't tell you something, that you've treated me as fair as anybody could treat me."

He said, "You've been good to me." He said, “You could have blocked me when I ran if you'd wanted to but, you didn't do that. So there's nobody in the world that I got any more respect for than I have you," and said, "Any way I can ever help you, I'm willing to do it." I felt real good about that. Of course he died before the next session.

Mel Steely: 01:28:36 Right.

Tom Murphy: 01:28:38 You know, but I understand folks wanting to move up in the world. I understand that, but sometimes, sometimes when you say you want to move up in the world, you'd do bad. You do the wrong things. That sets you back badly. You know, he had, he ought to have been happy as speaker pro tem.

Mel Steely: 01:28:56 Timing is important.

Tom Murphy: 01:28:58 The timing is important and I have had two things to happen to me in my lifetime. That really seemed awful at the time, but it turned out they were two of the best things that could've happened to me.

First of all, when my brother James ran for the solicitor general, and I was going to be the assistant, if he hadn't been elected, I would have either been a solicitor or a judge and never would've gone to the legislature. So that was good that we got beat. And then when if Busbee, if I had have beat Busbee for majority leader, I would have never been speaker cause I would've never run for speaker pro tem and I wouldn't have been in position for the elected speaker when George L. died. So sometimes defeats can absolutely be the best thing that ever happens to you. You never know.

Mel Steely: 01:29:42 Well I remember, even if you're wrong on timing as Burruss was there, there are ways to do everything and it's... I remember Mr. Burruss did not attack you personally. Whereas one of his strong right arms, Representative Glanton, whom you'd been very kind to did attack you. Call-

Tom Murphy: 01:30:01 Two of them attacked me very badly, who I had been very good to, very good to. And they attacked me personally, and they didn't last long after that. They both were gone pretty quick.
Mel Steely: 01:30:18 I can remember coming into your office and talking with you about something, education or something, and your secretary called and said that Representative Glanton wanted to see you. And I can remember you leaning over the edge of your desk pushing it back because you had under that desk his speech against you, if I can remember correctly. And had underlined what he'd had said nasty about you and you took one quick reading of that before you let him come in, to kind of remind you. But you treated him very nicely when he came in. You were just very negative and you weren't going to help him. Did remove him from a vice chairmanship or whatever. And I think he got the message and decided not to run after that.

Tom Murphy: 01:31:04 He's had a tough life since then, hadn't he?

Mel Steely: 01:31:04 He's had a rough time.

Tom Murphy: 01:31:05 He's had a tough life. Bless him.

Mel Steely: 01:31:07 Somebody told me he's getting married again, going to marry some professor up in Kennesaw.

Tom Murphy: 01:31:11 I don't know about that. Well, maybe she can straighten him out.

Mel Steely: 01:31:17 The other thing about Burruss is, while you didn't try to help Burruss in the beginning, and he was out of everything for a while there. Right after the election. He'd given up pro tem. You didn't make him a chairman, obviously. But then he did work his way back. And as you say, you all became very close. I don't know that you had any stronger supporter there towards the end. Interestingly enough, one of the people watching all of this was Gingrich, and did indeed learn from that. I know you think he picks at you sometime when he credits you with teaching him, but he's not really picking at you, he's sincere about that.

Tom Murphy: 01:31:58 I remember him coming to see me, but my version of what I told him and his version are vastly different. I remember what I told him very clearly. He asked me how I'd been so successful. That was his exact question. I said, "Well, Newt, what I have tried to do all my life in the legislature, I've tried to treat people like I'd like to be treated. I have tried my best to vote what I conceived to be the will of the majority of my constituents." I said, "That's what I've tried, unless it's a moral issue, then I have to make that decision myself." But I said, "When somebody calls me wants some help, I don't care whether they're my friends or enemies. If they are one of my constituents and I can help them,
I try to help them. If it's right I try to help them. I don't care whether they're friend or enemy." But I don't know whether he followed that philosophy or not, but that's been my philosophy from the very beginning. I've helped folks here who viciously fought me in local legislation here, but that never enters into it. If he's a constituent, and they need help, I try to help him. That's just my philosophy of life.

Mel Steely:          01:33:06 He did indeed follow that as far as constituent work and all that was concerned. Because I remember one of my greatest satisfactions when I worked for him was having a Presbyterian preacher who called him like crazy. Call and ask for him to appoint a friend's son to West Point and the friend didn't even live in the district. He lived over in Levitas's district. And I took great pleasure in telling him, no, no, we're going to do that. And got chewed out pretty bad about doing it. Said he's a constituent like anybody else and you treat him properly, you don't yell at him, you don't do this kind of thing and you try to help him.

We did indeed refer it over to Levitas, who wouldn't appoint him either. But that was his choice, but he did learn from that. But the other thing was how do you hold your House together once you've had all this turmoil? A specific example was a Rules chairman that he appointed, Solomon, who had opposed him and didn't think he was going to get to be chairman. And I think going back to the Burruss thing. Take people that you think are well-qualified, even if they have been your opponents and bring them in. And he did. And I don't think he's gotten about any more loyal than Solomon now. And I think he did get that from you.

Tom Murphy:         01:34:25 Where do you, take for an example, me. Sonny Watson and Tom Kilgore were very close personal friends of Al Burruss's. And I understood that, and they worked hard for Al against me. But I made Sonny chairman of Industry and made Tom Kilgore chairman of Education, even though they had been my political enemies. That goes back to what I said a while ago. My philosophy, those folks who's against you, you need to try to get them for you. You know?

Mel Steely:          01:34:54 But they never made any pretense of being for you, did they?

Tom Murphy:         01:34:58 No.

Mel Steely:          01:34:58 I mean you knew where they stood and went right up front.
Tom Murphy: 01:34:58 I respected that.

Mel Steely: 01:35:04 And they kept it institutional rather than personal.

Tom Murphy: 01:35:07 That's correct.

Mel Steely: 01:35:08 That really is the secret, isn't it? To a whole lot of success in leadership.

Tom Murphy: 01:35:12 I don't know if it's a secret. It's a fact of success, though.

Mel Steely: 01:35:20 This victory over Burruss, and it was rather not as big as you thought it was going to be, but still substantial.

Tom Murphy: 01:35:27 It was 98 to 58, I think. It was a forty vote difference.

Mel Steely: 01:35:31 You had anticipated something like a twenty-nine or thirty vote difference, and it was a little different than you'd thought. But still, it consolidated your base as speaker for the next sixteen years. I don't think you had any serious opposition, or any opposition, did you?

Tom Murphy: 01:35:47 I didn't have any.

Mel Steely: 01:35:47 It wasn't until the, what, '70s?

Tom Murphy: 01:35:50 Four years ago.

Mel Steely: 01:35:51 Yeah. You had the '77 session up until then. When Dubose ran against you.

Tom Murphy: 01:35:58 I knew he didn't have a prayer. I actually, I thought he'd get 32 votes, and he only got 28. And I knew who every one of them were. And he got egged. And then I made him a chairman two years ago, and now he's as loyal a supporter as I got.

Mel Steely: 01:36:22 Same technique?

Tom Murphy: 01:36:23 Same technique. And he's doing me a great job as chairman too. Doing a great job.

Mel Steely: 01:36:32 Is he received pretty well by the other members of the leadership team?

Tom Murphy: 01:36:35 Oh yeah. When I took him back, they didn't have any problem with it.
Mel Steely: 01:36:39 Okay. Did you think in ’77 that this was going to be the case? That you were going to, I mean there wasn’t going to be any more challenge for a while or you pretty well had it locked up?

Tom Murphy: 01:36:51 No, no, no. I didn't think that though. I always knew there'd be some folks sniping at me. I always figured I’d have some challenges, but I frankly, I never thought I'd last this long. Really. Never dreamed I'd last. First place, I never dreamed I'd be speaker when I went over there. Because that was not my ambition, but things just fell into place. But I never dreamed I’d last this long. Of course, I never dreamed I'd last thirty-eight years in the House either. But I never dreamed I'd last twenty-five years as speaker.

Mel Steely: 01:37:27 And of course, this seat is pretty much a Murphy seat since the forties. Isn't it? I think your brother had it for a brief period there.

Tom Murphy: 01:37:38 My brother had it for four years. Then Charlie Smith was over there for two terms and then Harold was there for eight years and then I was there. I'll be, let's see, eight and thirty-eight would be forty-six, and four would be fifty of the last fifty-four years. There's been a Murphy there.

Mel Steely: 01:38:01 Well, now. What are we going to do with Mike? Is he going to run?

Tom Murphy: 01:38:05 Mike doesn't have much interest in politics. He doesn't like politics. He just doesn't like it. And things have changed. He's so much like me. Mike says what he thinks when he thinks it, and he's like me and that's hard to get by this day and time. You know Mike, very outspoken, very plainspoken. I don't know whether Mike's interested in politics or not. He just really doesn't enjoy it.

Mel Steely: 01:38:33 Well, he's got a choice. He can go into that or he could be a judge or he could stay here and make money. He'd probably rather stay here and make money.

Tom Murphy: 01:38:42 They're trying to get him, the rumor going around, is one of our judges is going to retire this year and all the lawyers all over the circuit want him to try to get the job. But Mike doesn't appear to have much interest even in that. Mike's the best lawyer in the circuit really.

Mel Steely: 01:39:02 Have you had any... Well, I can understand why he might not want to do it just because of the pounding that you took. He's
watched what's happened to you and I don't know of anybody who has a more tender heart for his daddy than Mike does for you. And it hurts him.

Tom Murphy: **01:39:19** I'm extremely lucky. I've been well blessed all my life. I had the best mom and daddy any kid ever had. I was fortunate to go through the war with only one little shrapnel wound. Got a little scar on my shoulder. Came back, met and married a wonderful lady who lived, we had thirty-seven years, three months and a few days together before the Lord took her. Gave me four great children who she raised and who she did a good job of raising. Who've never given me a minute's trouble. So far, five grandchildren, they've never given me a minute's trouble. And my son is not only my son and my law partner, he's my best friend. We hunt and fish and go to the ball game together and go fishing together, get in our pickup truck and ride around and chew tobacco together. We're very, very close. My three daughters are all feeding me pretty well. I still live by myself, but I...

Mel Steely: **01:40:16** They do look after their daddy.

Tom Murphy: **01:40:16** They look after their pop. We are a very close unit. We might fuss among ourselves, but you played the devil when you jump on one of us because you've jumped on all of us when you jump on one of us.

Mel Steely: **01:40:27** Well, how has all of this attack on you, I have in mind the most unfair one, because there have been a number of them over the years that I've run across. A couple of terms ago, the Atlanta press got all upset about you being unkind and unfair to handicapped people.

Tom Murphy: **01:40:46** Good God.

Mel Steely: **01:40:48** You remember that one?

Tom Murphy: **01:40:49** Oh, I remember that very well.

Mel Steely: **01:40:50** And I remember reading that and I thought they haven't talked to him.

Tom Murphy: **01:40:54** That was Mr. Poston.

Mel Steely: **01:40:55** They don't have any idea who this man is. You've got new reporters, because I know going back to your brother, who you
almost worshipped, you have had a strong feeling for the handicap.

Tom Murphy: 01:41:07 They were accusing me of mistreating a handicapped person, is an unmitigated...

Mel Steely: 01:41:11 How did that come up?

Tom Murphy: 01:41:13 Ken Poston did that.

Mel Steely: 01:41:14 Why?

Tom Murphy: 01:41:15 Well, you know, we had that thing about the dog. At first I wouldn't let him bring the dog in because it was a violation of the rules. And then I got the people to agree to let them bring it in, and he made some remarks about it. He apologized publicly about it, said he was wrong, you know. But Lord, I must say anybody in the world that says I would do anything to hurt a handicapped person is crazy. I've spent my life trying to look after them.

Mel Steely: 01:41:43 How do attacks like that impact on your family? Have they gotten to where they just let it roll off?

Tom Murphy: 01:41:50 No, they don't. My girls don't like it. And Mike don't like it. Of course you know when Joe Frank was elected, the press stayed on me more than they did Joe Frank. I got to where I wouldn't take the newspaper home, because I'd take it home and Agnes would read and go to crying. And she'd watch television, hear all the things that's said about me and I told her to quit watching television. My children are still bitter about it. You know, they think the press killed their mother. She died right before Joe Frank was sworn in and they're still bitter about it.

Mel Steely: 01:42:24 Well, they stayed on you pretty good.

Tom Murphy: 01:42:26 I've been the most investigated man. Herman Talmadge supposedly said this said, "Tom Murphy has been the most investigated man in the history of the state. They on him all the time." You know, they used to send somebody out every two or three years and check the deed records and the tax records to see what I had accumulated. Even check your county to see if I had anything down there. And they finally quit doing that. I think they finally realized that I'd been giving my children everything I could every year as fast as I could, trying to get rid of everything where the government wouldn't get it. I think they finally give up on that. If they knew how much money it
cost me to serve in the legislature they would have a fit, wouldn't they?

Mel Steely: 01:43:10 Wouldn't believe it.

Tom Murphy: 01:43:11 I figured conservatively speaking, the last twenty years, twenty-five years, it's costing me $50,000 to $75,000 a year to serve in the legislature. It's actually costing me between $400 and $500 in cash money now. If I go ahead and retire and take full retirement, I'd have between $400 and $500 more cash money coming in than I do with my salary.

Mel Steely: 01:43:37 Well, you never were in it for the money though?

Tom Murphy: 01:43:39 Never. If you are then you're in the wrong business. You're in the wrong business.

Mel Steely: 01:43:42 It's kind of like school teaching.

Tom Murphy: 01:43:43 Yeah, that's about right. But I've been fortunate. I used to be a good lawyer. I don't know what I am now. But we got the best law practice in West Georgia. I wouldn't trade it for anybody's. We all make a good living. That's all what it's all about.

Mel Steely: 01:44:03 There's the Garner that's in your firm, kin to Commissioner Wayne Garner?

Tom Murphy: 01:44:07 No sir. No sir.

Mel Steely: 01:44:07 Different people?

Tom Murphy: 01:44:09 He's a Haralson County boy, too. His mother just retired from teaching school. His daddy worked at Lockheed. He went to Mercer to law school. He married a cousin of mine's granddaughter. And that's the only way he's kin to me.

Mel Steely: 01:44:33 You do believe in patronage though. I mean you've taken pretty good care of Haralson County people over the years.

Tom Murphy: 01:44:37 I've tried my best to do that. I laughed. This reporter had lunch with a friend of mine in Atlanta. He had no idea that this fella even knew me, but the fellow was a much better friend of mine then he was his. He told him, said, "They sent me over to look at Speaker Murphy's campaign disclosure." He says, "I went and looked at it and I went back and told them there wasn't nothing to write about. The said, 'What do you mean he gets lots of money?' He said, Oh yeah, he gets lots of money." He said, "He
gives it to fire departments, churches, softball team, basketball team, baseball team. Said he gives it all away. He says he pays for the radio spots and his newspaper advertisement." Said, "He gives it all away to various charitable organizations when they need help." He said, "He gives the school a bunch of money and says he don't even pay for his gasoline when he campaigns."

When he told me that I said, "Heck, I didn't know I could do that." So I never had. But the last time I kept my tickets, every time I'd buy gasoline, and they did reimburse me $135 for gasoline. They did do that. Of course, I didn't keep all of them at that.

Mel Steely: 01:45:54 But campaigning has changed, hasn't it?

Tom Murphy: 01:45:55 Yeah, I give each one of the volunteer fire departments in my district, usually $500 a year apiece. That's the best money you can give. I give Cubs Scouts, Brownie, Scouts.

Mel Steely: 01:46:08 Out of the campaign money?

Tom Murphy: 01:46:09 Yeah, that's what I do.

Mel Steely: 01:46:09 That's unusual isn't it?

Tom Murphy: 01:46:12 You might remember the story that came out. It didn't write about what I did, but just how much I had.

Mel Steely: 01:46:17 Yep. I do remember. I do remember that, which is the, I think the editorial people taking a direction on that rather than necessarily the writer.

Tom Murphy: 01:46:29 Well, I've been beat on so much I'm sort of used to it now. I don't even look at the newspapers unless somebody calls it to my attention.

Mel Steely: 01:46:39 You served under what, three speakers before you became speaker?

Tom Murphy: 01:46:45 No I served under-

Mel Steely: 01:46:45 Or just two? George L. and George T.

Tom Murphy: 01:46:47 Just George T. and George L. is all I ever served under.

Mel Steely: 01:46:50 Okay. And of the two of them you would judge George L. to be the stronger?
Tom Murphy: Yeah, he was much stronger. George T. had to do what Carl Sanders told him to. George L. started his independence in the last two years of Ernie Vandiver. You know that's when the budget act was passed. That's where really the independence, as I said, started. George T. all he could do, George T. has apologized to me a dozen times about taking my chairmanship with him, but he said, "You know, I didn't have any choice." I said, "I know that, judge, I know you didn't have any choice. I have no ill will towards you at all." And of course George T.'s wife Eloise was one of the sweetest, finest ladies I ever knew. I loved Eloise and I think she loved me and we were just real close friends. She was a real sweet lady. I went to her funeral because I thought the world of her.

Mel Steely: How is he doing now?

Tom Murphy: He's doing fine. I think he's married again, married him a young wife.

Mel Steely: Is that right?

Tom Murphy: That's probably what I need to do, too.

Mel Steely: Yeah, like your daughters may get on you if you tried to do that.

Tom Murphy: No, my daughters, I believe, have loosened up a little bit on me. But folks ask me when I'm going to get married again. I'll say, it won't never happen. I had the best woman in the world for thirty-seven years, three months and a few days and I don't think I can find another to even put up with me. I ain't willing to gamble anyhow.

Mel Steely: I understand that. All right, sir, anything you want to add about this period we've covered so far?

Tom Murphy: No, I think it's been an interesting twenty-five years. It's been right interesting.

Mel Steely: Are you at this point the longest serving speaker in the nation?

Tom Murphy: They say I have served longer than anybody in the history of the nation as a presiding officer. Now I don't know whether that's true or not, but that's what they say.

Mel Steely: Yeah. I don't know of anybody else that's been listed as that.
There was a fellow in Ohio that got close, but then I think he had a break in his time, but I don't know. It doesn't really make a lot of difference to me.

One of the things we didn't touch on was the racial question and the growing size of black or African American representation in the House during your term. Relatively small in the very beginning and slowly grown until '92 and then it kind of leaped.

That's the sad part of the whole history of politics in this state, to me. I have no problem with the black people percentage growing. I have no problem with them. I have no problem with Republicans if it's done on an issue basis. But the sad part of it is it has become a black-white issue between Republicans and the Democrats. It's become a black-white issue. And that's sad. That's sad. It's causing strife and problems. And the Republicans agitate it every way they can. Every way they can. They agitate it.

People have said there's actually three parties in the house with the white Democrats, the black Democrats and the Republicans. And Republicans are working to get a coalition.

That's not really true. The truth of the business is there are many of the Republicans that are nothing. They're just Democrats because again, but the only way they can get elected as a Republican because of that issue, that's facts. I wouldn't get seventeen, eighteen, nineteen Republican votes on every issue if that wasn't the case. I made a speech on the floor of the House, not a speech. I made some remarks on the floor of the House last session. That what's happened to us, to me, is rather sad. Out there in front of me when I get up there every morning, there are thirty-five people out there that I think they're honestly, their first conscious thought every morning is, what can I do to hurt somebody today? And on the other side, there's thirty-five people out there that what is their first conscious thought is, what can I give away today? And us moderate conservatives are in the middle, both Democrat and Republican, just getting beat to death, and that's sad.

What do you see or how do you see this developing now?

I don't know. I really wished I knew. I don't know.

I know I've talked to some of the friends that you've had in the legislature that are real concerned now, and they're saying it's
getting to the point that it's going to be almost impossible for any speaker to try to hold it together to form the kind of alliances and coalitions that are necessary to keep peace and order in the house.

Tom Murphy: 01:51:37 That may be true. Now I can keep the order and I can keep the peace. Whether or not I can get decent legislation passed is another issue.

Mel Steely: 01:51:47 But if you don't stay there, and the next one comes in, two things. Say you do stay and it all falls apart. Then the long reputation gets damaged. If you don't stay and leave, keep your reputation intact. Then who else can pick it up and is strong enough to hold it together?

Tom Murphy: 01:52:07 Well, they have two or three or four over there that can do that, but I'm nearly seventy-four years old. I have got forty years and one month in the employees’ retirement system. As of right now. I bought my service time way back yonder, when $1,800 was a tremendous amount of money to me and mama. I thought I was protecting her, but now she's gone. I'm at the ninety percent of my salary now and never can raise my base.

I don't know what the answer is. As I said a while ago, it worries me that it's getting so vicious. It's going to be harder and harder to get decent people to want to run for public office. They've investigated me in more ways than a country boy can go to town, but all they've ever been able to write about me is that I'm mean, and dictatorial, and a tyrant. That's about all. And that's what I said over at the East Cobb Rotary Club when I spoke to there for a question and answer session. I told them I sort of felt sorry for Speaker Gingrich. They all sort of took a deep breath, you know, and I said, "Well, you're all wondering why I said that." I said, "You know that I've been investigated about as many ways as you could and they've always said that all they've ever said about me that I was mean, dictatorial, and a tyrant, but at least they never accused me of lying and stealing."

Mel Steely: 01:53:45 Well, it is true. Although I'm sure they would've loved to have it at times. But you did receive good press from time to time when you would be doing things for Atlanta. Yeah. On the World Congress.

Tom Murphy: 01:54:01 I was looking at that newspaper the other day. When I made the speech for the rapid MARTA bill. I'd look at that newspaper, the headline, “Rural Legislator Come to Rescue of Atlanta.” I was looking at that the other day.
Mel Steely: 01:54:14 That was a rare headline. But true.

Tom Murphy: 01:54:17 That was back in my second term I think.

Mel Steely: 01:54:19 What reform have you been-

Tom Murphy: 01:54:21 Third term. Third term.

Mel Steely: 01:54:23 Third term. After you...

Tom Murphy: 01:54:26 It was after I got busted. I've got pinned to it is a note that George T. wrote me on the back of an amendment pad. "Tom, if you will speak for the MARTA bill, I'll give you part of the last twenty minutes." When I read it, I looked at him, just shook my head. But they made me mad on the forestry bill, you know, and they started talking ugly and carrying on and they made me mad. And I want up there and told them give me five minutes of the last twenty minutes I'd speak for it. He said, "You can have the whole twenty minutes." I said, "I don't want the whole twenty minutes. Five minutes would be enough." And I took five minutes.

And I remember one thing I said, “We're pouring millions and millions and millions of dollars down these rat holes we call expressways that are obsolete before we complete them. And that's fact.” That was fact. And then I went on and explained what this would do when Jim Parris was my closest friend and he sat on my right. When he called the vote, he took his hand over that machine and he held it there. Finally, he voted for it and it passed. He looked, he turned to me and said, "You SOB. You didn't convince them, you just shamed them into voting for it."

Mel Steely: 01:55:45 And there was something to that.

Tom Murphy: 01:55:47 Oh man. I used to could do it, I guess, but I hadn't...

Mel Steely: 01:55:51 You don't take the well that often anymore do you?

Tom Murphy: 01:55:55 I don't do much speeches anymore. I don't make speeches much anymore. I've made my share of them through the years.

Mel Steely: 01:56:05 All right. So thank you very much for your times. It' been a good interview.

Tom Murphy: 01:56:05 Well, I appreciate y'all doing this.
Mel Steely: 01:56:11 We'd like to tape the last interview, as I said, at your office in the Capitol to get that on tape and I think it's pretty historic. If you don't mind, we'll arrange some time. You want to do that in the near future or...

Tom Murphy: 01:56:22 That'd be fine.

Mel Steely: 01:56:23 All right. When would be a good time or you want me to call you later on?

Tom Murphy: 01:56:27 Call me a little later on. We'll set a time. I got to try a murder case in September.

Mel Steely: 01:56:32 The one they sort of put off this last term?

Tom Murphy: 01:56:35 Yeah. I've got to try it in September and I need to start getting ready for it.

Mel Steely: 01:56:40 All right.

Tom Murphy: 01:56:40 Unless I can dispose of it.

Mel Steely: 01:56:42 Maybe we can get it done before the end of the year. All right. Thank you very much, sir.

Tom Murphy: 01:56:49 All right.

Mel Steely: 01:56:49 That was good.

Speaker 1: 01:56:57 Thank you sir.

Mel Steely: 01:56:57 Now that we've stopped the cameras running, what did we not cover that we should have covered? You know more about what I want to cover than I do.

Tom Murphy: 01:56:57 I think you covered a waterfront. Didn't he sweetheart?