Interviewer:

John Duffy

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Transcriber:

Larry Grubbs

Synopsis:

[Interview Begins]

**Duffy:** Senator, would you tell us something about your background, your parents, your education?

**Waddell:** I'd be glad to. I'm not a native South Carolinian. I kind of feel like it. My great-grandmother left Cheraw in 1864 with my grandfather, who was fourteen, to keep him out of the Confederate army, and went to Arkansas. I was born in Arkansas. She got a land patent from Abraham Lincoln and had six hundred-and-sixty acres. They were real successful cotton farmers. My father served in World War I. He came back and had to start farming all over again, and then he went broke in 1923, when cotton was supposed to be a dollar a pound and it sold for a nickel. He had borrowed fifteen cents a pound from the bank to make it, and so you can imagine. I was one year old. He traveled around and had to find another career besides cotton planting. That's all he had known and been raised in. He went in the insurance business. We lived in Memphis, we lived in Omaha, Nebraska; we lived back in Memphis, and finally ended up in Greensboro, where he was Executive Vice President of Pilot Life Insurance Company, which Jefferson Standard had just bought.

I started school in first grade in Greensboro and went up to the first year in high school. When I was going to school, there weren't letter grades in high school. Nine, ten, and eleven, and that was it. I wasn't a great student at the public high school. It was right in the middle of the depths of the Depression in '36. He [father] gave me a choice. He handed me a list of military schools and said, "Pick out one." I called it 'schools for privileged juvenile delinquents.' [laughter] I picked out Tennessee Military Institute and went there. I learned probably some of the best lessons of my life there. If you worked, you were rewarded. It's kind of like an animal. If you perform, you get a goodie. They taught me that work paid off.

I stayed there for two years and graduated [in 1940]. Senator Robert Reynolds gave me an appointment to West Point. I wasn't old enough, so I came back and spent a year. There were five of us who had appointments from the school to various military academies. They set up a special class for us, and we really got first-year college algebra, English, and things like that, which would help a great deal. I did not have to take the competitive exam. In the process, I flunked out on tendencies of hypertension. I guess I didn't play football or anything like that, so
I didn't get to go. I came back, and by that time we had built a house on Ocean Drive. My roommate at Tennessee Military Institute came down to spend the summer with me. I said, "Where are you going to school?" He said, "The Citadel." I said, "Where is that?" He said, "That's in Charleston." I said, "Oh, it is? You reckon I could get in?" He said, "I don't know." I picked up the phone and called them, and they said, "Yes, if you'll send us a check, we'll be delighted to enroll you in the class of '44." [laughter] In the summer of '40 I went down to The Citadel and started my career there. In '43, we were called to active duty as privates. I had to take basic training and had to go to OCS, Fort Benning. I got to be one of the 'Benning Wonders.'

I went in the Eighty-Fourth Infantry Division as a second lieutenant in the infantry. We went overseas. All of us had been looking forward to being called and we thought we were going to be called in February. Everybody just quit working and just loafed along. We got called May the first, and we said, "Thank God." They brought us up here to Columbia and put us in army uniforms and kept us here three days. They put us back on a train and sent us back to The Citadel, and took us out of the army uniforms, put us back in The Citadel barracks and said, "You will stay here to the end of the semester, May thirtieth, and then you get ten days leave before you go to Fort McClellan for basic training." I had to make up a whole semester in thirty days. I did, with the grace of good and caring professors.

We went to basic training. I guess we were the only people in the army that were not in uniform. They put us back in The Citadel uniform and Citadel discipline. [laughter] We went overseas. I was in the cannon company. I was later wounded. I went through the Battle of the Bulge and was wounded on our drive to the Rhine River. I spent from March first to December fifteenth in hospitals everywhere from Paris to England to Rome, Georgia, and everywhere else.

Duffy: Were you seriously wounded?

Waddell: Well, it was one of those wounds that just wouldn't heal. I draw disability now. I get along all right. It was a wound in the lower left leg. I don't have any muscle up there, nothing but scar tissue. So I can play golf, but by about nine holes, I'm through; I can't stand up.
I came back and went back to The Citadel. I got my degree in civil engineering [graduating in 1947], again with the grace of great professors. I hadn't read anything but the Stars and Stripes and comic books for three years. When I finally got out of The Citadel, I went to work for Thompson Street in Beaufort building the naval hospital. I was a field engineer. I worked for Thompson Street prior to being called to active duty as a rod man building Johnson Air Base. They were friends of the family. I got down there in 1947. We finished the hospital and they wanted me to move to Wheeling, West Virginia, to start another one, and I decided that the construction industry, moving every year to eighteen months, wasn't the life for me. I went into the insurance business, and my father helped, as you can imagine, being Executive Vice President. That started me a career in the insurance business.

My career evolved from there to a degree that, frankly, if I hadn't been in the insurance business, I don't think I could have stayed in politics. I did build an agency where my personal production was not the whole thing, because you just didn't have time to do it. I was living in Beaufort, and Beaufort was a very slow place. Between World War II and the Korean War, we had an office uptown, and I would stand in the window after lunch, and maybe ten cars would come down the main street of town. That was it. We spent a good many afternoons fishing and hunting. Thank goodness one of my agents' parents owned a theater, and we got to go to the one theater free. But, they didn't change movies but twice a week, so we had to find something else to do. [laughter]

Brantley Harvey's father was a senator then. He appointed me to the Hospital Board. Beaufort had acquired this hospital from the government. They had built it on account of it being an impacted area. It was a forty-room hospital. The war ended, and there was the hospital, and they had no use for it then. The county bought the hospital for fifty or sixty thousand dollars. Back in those days, there wasn't any Medicare or Medicaid. The county had to provide the charity care. Brantley, Sr., just wouldn't give us enough money to operate on. I tried to work with him and tried to work with him. Finally, in 1954, a couple of my friends and I decided, "Well, hell, if he won't give us any money, let's run for the House and get some money." [laughter] That's what inspired me. I had spent that long time in the hospital, and I knew how important hospitals were, in particular in a small community. We didn't have but three doctors, but it was still a very important thing. We were isolated, so to speak, fifty miles from Savannah, seventy miles from Charleston, and they were the nearest hospitals. That's how I got in politics,
and that was the reason that I ran. It was basically to see that we got funded.

I ran against Wilton Graves and Ben Carter, who were both incumbents, and Miles McSweeney, whose father, at one time, had been governor. Those were the days when the primary was the election, so to speak. I won on the first ballot. Ben and Wilton had a run-off, and Wilton beat Ben Carter. That was my start in politics. I didn't know a dang thing about it. In fact, I spent part of the time in the wrong county. You couldn't tell where Jasper County began and Beaufort County stopped. They'd look at me like I was crazy when I would tell them I was running for the House. [laughter] I spent several days in the wrong county politicking. But, that's how naive I was. We had no organization, just my friends. We really had absolutely nothing, no organization. I got Joab Dowling's brother, G.G., to write me a speech. We tried to figure out something that would be outlandish that the other two hadn't thought about. We were going to build bridges all the way across all of the islands from Savannah to Charleston, which was the dream of the Chicago bridge people back during the Depression. They bought all those islands and went bankrupt, and they were sold. The next two years, I ran unopposed.

I did not offer for election in 1958 because Senator Burton Rodgers was going to retire. His term was up. He was in his eighties. I decided I would just lay out two years and I wouldn't have anybody gripping at me. I wouldn't be in the firing line. It was practically a walk-in. Calhoun Thomas retired from the legislature. At one time, Brantley, Sr. was Chairman of the Judiciary Committee in the Senate, and Calhoun was chairman of it in the House, and Beaufort was in a right strong position. The filing date time was up at twelve o'clock. Calhoun was party chairman, and I was in his office. At five minutes to twelve, this fellow that had worked for me once came in and filed for the Senate. Calhoun said, "You mean you're going to run for County Council, aren't you?" He had never been in politics before. [laughter] He said, "No, I'm running for the Senate." Well, we handled that.

That's how I got into Fritz [Hollings]'s campaign in 1958. Fritz knew I wasn't going to run. We had a great organization. We had me, Fritz, Betty Bargmann, Muller Kreps, and John Gramm [Altman], and that was the campaign, believe it or not. Bradley, Graham & Hamby was our advertising agency. The only media then was the newspaper. We had to have the money on Friday afternoon to run our Sunday ads, or they wouldn't run it. It was a question of every Friday getting enough cash together to run the campaign ad. [laughter] My pay that year was a
very nice silver serving set from Fritz and his wife. That was all that we had. That was the whole campaign.

**Duffy:** Fritz had been lieutenant governor.

**Waddell:** Yes, Fritz had been lieutenant governor. Fritz had served in the House and been lieutenant governor. He was a class ahead of me at The Citadel. He and John West were in the same class, and I was a class behind them. How we got Fritz elected that year was The Citadel alumni. We used them in every county as our county organization, and really built, believe it or not, a good, solid county organization. Fritz and I would go upstate. Back in those days, you met the mill shifts. The eleven o'clock shift was the one you usually wanted to hit. We'd pass out the brochures to the ones going in to work and the ones coming out. We'd go back after everybody had left and see how many were on the ground. That would tell us how many were for us or against us. [laughter] I was just as naive as anybody, but I guess that's what won the campaign. We weren't hidebound to any traditions or anything else, and we just worked like the devil.

**Duffy:** Who was Fritz running against?

**Waddell:** Donald Russell. Donald ran a very good campaign. We had a run-off, and we had three in the race. Olin Johnston's brother [William Johnston], the Mayor of Anderson, was in there. We led, but we didn't get a clear majority, so we had to have a run-off. We did have a lot of help from Citadel graduates like Jim Severs[?], who was a tremendous help. He was one of the ones who really helped us through that campaign.

**Duffy:** What about the Barnwell group, Senator [Edgar] Brown and Mr. [Sol] Blatt?

**Waddell:** Well, I think Edgar was strong for Fritz, but I think Sol was kind of cool. We just took our licks. We had a tough time in Charleston, believe it or not, because Fritz was an outsider to Charleston. He didn't live below Broad. In fact, I never will forget the Carolina Yacht Club wouldn't let him in the club even after he was elected governor. [laughter] I think that got under his skin worse than anything. Fritz and I had been friends.
He decided to run against Olin [Johnston]. That was something. Television had just come in by then. The first station in Columbia, WIS, was on the air. If you could have seen some of the ads that we made. Again, we used Bradley, Graham & Hamby to do our work. I knew that we were beat because you can tell when the phone stops ringing at your headquarters, and you're having to call instead of people calling you; you know you've got a problem. [laughter] The night of the election, about nine o'clock, we knew it was over, even though the paper ballots were being counted. Fritz said, "Let's walk over to Wade Hampton and congratulate him." We walked over, and I'll never forget Olin, when I shook hands with him. He said, "Jimmy, I'll never forget you for this." I thought, "I hope it's the right way." [laughter] And it was. He was a very gracious person. We had several big projects in Beaufort after that, and Olin really responded well and helped us to the nth degree. He was not one that kept it as a diehard, "You're on the wrong side of the fence." I appreciated that.

I think you asked this question, and it's very important. "What are your memories of Sol Blatt and Inez Watson?" Well, they ran the House. They had leadership. It was not just wandering aimlessly about. Sol ran it, and he ran it with a very benevolent or velvet glove; softly. He did it in ways that weren't offensive to the people involved. Inez was a great help to him. She was a great friend of mine. Apparently I was a great friend of Sol's, because as a second-term House member, he put me on the House Ways and Means Committee. We had a delightful time, Walter Brown and I, and Bill Rhodes was chairman back then. That was a great learning experience. It was kind of like going to prep school. We had our first roll call vote, I've forgotten the issue now, it wasn't important. It was two equal sides. I had been in military prep schools, The Citadel, the Army, and everywhere I had been, you had a book. It was either black or white. There weren't any grays, there weren't any tones. It was solid black and white. I had to sit there and make a decision between two really very fine arguments. I think that was the first decision I ever had to make, a public vote on something like that. It taught me that there was two sides to every question.

I think Fritz did a great job as governor. Fritz had enough courage, enough guts, to call for the sales tax to help bring us out of the school problem. We have everybody taking credit for the tech schools, but Fritz and John West were really the ones that started the technical colleges. I think Fritz was the one that started the real recruitment of industry jobs for the state. I think those things should go down as things he really did well for the state.
Duffy: In terms of your own activity, were you in the Senate at that point in time?

Waddell: In two years of his administration [1959-1960] I wasn't in office. Then I got elected to the Senate. Back then, the Senate was a real interesting place. I was on three committees, State House Grounds, Social Security, and Retrenchment. Now, whatever they were, I don't know. We never met in the whole time I was on them up to ‘64. [laughter] The Senate was strictly seniority. In fact, freshmen members could not even attend the night-before organization meeting. You were assigned committees when you got there the next day. It was a very interesting thing. The only reason I wasn't forty-sixth was Henry Walker was there. He was forty-sixth and I was forty-fifth in rank. [laughter]

Duffy: About this time, African-Americans began to enter the political process. How did that change the dynamics?

Waddell: Where I first ran, I had the African-American thing in my campaigns from the very first because of the high percentage of votes in that area. I had learned to talk and work with them, and I think that was one of the reasons that we got along so well. I think that's one of the things that we developed with Fritz's campaign and John West's campaign, the fact that I was not an alien to the process of dealing with different ethnic groups. I think that had a lot to do with it. The dean of students down at South Carolina State, Oscar Butler was a great help to us over the years. We were on some committee together. We were invited to Montgomery for a meeting, and we were going to have dinner at the Governor's Mansion, and George Wallace was Governor. [laughter] I said, "Oscar, I want you to understand that when we get to Montgomery, it's all right for us to ride together to the hotel in a cab, but I don't know if, after dark, I want to walk down the street in Montgomery with you by me. But, we'll try it. Why in the world did you want to come to Montgomery?" He said, "I just want to have my picture made with George Wallace." He did, he got a beautiful picture. [laughter] Oscar was a very fine man. He was a great fellow. We had some great black leaders back then, and we still do.

Duffy: Who did you work with most in the black leadership in Beaufort?

Waddell: On the island, it was Tom Barnwell. In town, we had a half a dozen.
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ministers were my main guide in local areas like Beaufort. Black ministers were very influential. They helped tremendously in the elections. They used to have a meeting the Friday before the election on Tuesday. They all had meetings in church and passed out their ballots and what they wanted supported. The church was a big influence back then.

Duffy: In terms of your goals as a legislator, what were your most important achievements?

Waddell: Edgar [Brown] was my mentor, so to speak. The senator took a liking to me. In fact, he was the one that got me on with Clemson as a Life Trustee. He was going to resign because he was getting old and didn't want to mess with it. I got a good grounding from him in the financial end of the state government. One of the big projects that I took on was the Equalization of Taxation, when we were rewriting the Constitution, if you remember, under Senator [Marion] Gressette. I had that section, and I got some help from Clemson. We were getting ready to pass the Education Finance Act, which I think was the start, no matter what people say, of the reform of education in this state. The whole philosophy of the Education Finance Act was based on the assessed value of a county vs. total assessed value of the state, in other words, your ability to pay. The assessed value is a measure, if everything is assessed on the same level. When we started looking into it, we found, for example, in Anderson County, private residences were only two percent and manufacturers were thirty or forty percent. The state Chamber had been fighting this thing of unequal assessment and taxation. When we came up, it finally got that through. That gave us a firm basis for passing the Education Finance Act, because the Education Finance Act was based purely and simply on the counties that couldn't pay got eighty percent. . . .

[Tape 1, Side 2 begins]

Waddell: For example, Beaufort County would get twenty percent from the state, and Jasper County would get eighty percent. Well, Jasper County didn't have the ability to pay. We figured what the cost of the basic program was, and that's the way it went. That started equalizing of schools throughout the state. Of course, it wasn't perfect, but it the big start. I think writing into the Constitution has done more than anything else. It kept every legislature
from coming in there. It would take a constitutional amendment to change these percentages. To me, that was important.

The second thing was the environment. I think that that was one of my big issues, the coastal environment. Over the years, I put in a new bill every year to do something about the management of the wetlands and the tidelands. Finally, with the federal government coming through, that gave us more impetus. The first Coastal Zone Management Act that passed the General Assembly just barely squeaked through the House. My good friend Jim Edwards was Governor, and he vetoed it. I missed overriding his veto by one vote in the House. My whole staff was just devastated, and I said, "No, we're just getting started. We'll go this fall around to every county, and we're going to meet with every delegation and explain what we are talking about." We put a dog-and-pony show together, and we went around and spent the fall visiting the whole state. When we came back in January, we introduced a new bill, and it passed the Senate forty-two to two, and passed the House one-hundred and ten to fifteen. I went down to Jim's office, and I said, "Now Jimmy, you thinking about vetoing this one?" He said, "No, I think this one will pass." [laughter] It was the same bill.

I think that was a big, big step forward. We were just in absolute disarray in the coastal zone. For example, the tidal benchmarks had been established in 1930. That was the only way you could judge what the state owned and what an individual owned. That was why I got so interested in mariculture. For example, right now, over sixty percent of the shrimp you eat are pond-raised as far away as Saudi Arabia, Ecuador, all over the world. When you look at it, our fisherman are fishing, except for sonar and a little GPS [Global Positioning System] now, just like they did in the Phoenician times. They go out there and drop a net overboard, and hope and pray that they'll get them. The cost of boats and the cost of fuel is going to eventually put them in a very precarious position. If we don't learn how to farm shrimp. . . . For example, down at the Mariculture Center, in some of their ponds they are raising something like five thousand pounds of shrimp to the acre. The best they do in South America is about fifteen hundred. So, we are learning. That's a transfer center (I call it) taking that knowledge and putting it out. Those are some of the things that really interested me.

I worked very close on the Higher Education thing. I think I was fair to everybody, even though I was a Life Trustee of Clemson. I think the University [of South Carolina] got its share along
with everybody else. When you think back, the governors ran in this state and were elected on a platform against public education. What are you going to do?

**Duffy:** One of the things they say about the Senate is that it was a private club, a "Gentleman's Club." What is your reaction to that?

**Waddell:** I know Holly Cork said something about that. Arnold Goodstein came over from the House, and he was going to reform the Senate seniority system. The next term, when Arnie got re-elected, he got up and said, "The seniority system is one of the best things I've ever seen." [laughter] It was not necessarily a club, but I'll tell you what, you had some strong advocates. You take "Spot" Mozingo, when he showed up. He was as strong as could be. We had some that would debate an issue, but it was left at the door. This is the difference between now and then. We were still friends. Jim Stevens and I battled and battled over the coastal zone management plan. He was saying it was just too restrictive. But, Jim and I were great friends. We fought on the floor, but at the end of it, when it was done, it was done. We didn't have the combativeness that's over there now, because there were no two parties. For example, I think Warren Giese was the first Republican senator elected to the Senate. We treated him just like he was a Democrat. He got on the seniority list. There was no such thing as your party keeping you off the seniority list. That has carried through in the Senate, up until recently.

Now I don't know what this election in 2000 is going to do because I tell you, I don't believe I could serve today. I could serve, but I would not be happy. I was proud of my service back in those days. We respected each other. If you told Senator Gressette or Senator Brown or any of the leaders, "This is where I am," they would say, "Fine." But, if you changed, then friend, you had better watch out, because that was the end of your credibility in the Senate. I don't know if it was a "Gentleman's Club," but it was a pleasure serving there.

**Duffy:** Would you give us an assessment of the governors that you served under?

**Waddell:** I'd rather not. [laughter] I just want to stay off that subject. I think that really, you've got to look at the time. I came in under George Bell Timmerman. George Bell, I think, had six people in the Governor's Office. When I came to the House, the total state budget was two hundred and fifty-four million dollars. That was the budget. Edgar could call you and tell...
you the head of every department in the state government, because we had the University, Clemson, The Citadel, Winthrop, and South Carolina State, and that was it, as far as post-high school education. We had two little trade schools down at Denmark. So, the government was smaller. It's gotten more complicated.

**Duffy:** How much of a staff did you have as a senator when you started out?

**Waddell:** I had none. My office was my desk. You had no staff. Then I finally got a little room upstairs where they have the first aid station now, and I had Mary Nell Creps[?], who was the first person I had with me. When I finished as Chairman of the Finance Committee, I must have had at least ten or twelve people in the office. It was different then. It used to be the old Sinking Fund, and that evolved into the Budget and Control Board. The government got to the point that you couldn't go home in June or July and wait until January to come back to make decisions. That's when we created the Budget and Control Board to be the interim operating arm of the government. The Budget and Control Board is a very powerful group. It's got a lot of influence in what happens, even while you're in session. They handle many, many things legislatively. I was for a governor having not two terms but having six years. He wouldn't be fighting all the time the first four years to get ready to run for the next four years. I don't know if that's good, bad, or indifferent. I don't know whether the governmental reform has come out to all that everybody predicted it would. [laughter] I've seen a lot of things that have come about that I doubt have accomplished what their authors wanted them to.

**Duffy:** Let's talk a little bit about John West, and his accomplishments as governor, and your relationship with him.

**Waddell:** That was a peculiar campaign, because John had started out as lieutenant governor, and then he won the primary. That was the first real Republican-Democratic race for governor. Albert Watson was running on the Republican ticket. To my knowledge, that's the first governor who had any real Republican opposition in a gubernatorial race. It was a new experience. Don Fowler was a big help to me. What happened was Allan Legare came to me in August or September. They hadn't had a Democratic primary for governor because John had no opposition. He just went on through the summer doing nothing, while Albert started working. A group of them led by Allan came and asked me if I'd run John's campaign. It was
an off-year. I didn't have to run, and so I said, "Yes." John had been a friend of mine, both as senator and lieutenant governor, and as a classmate at The Citadel. We used practically the same formula that we used with Fritz. It was a different world, though, because it took a lot more money to run a campaign then. We basically used the same tactics of bringing The Citadel groups in. By then, John had built some different constituencies and I had built some in the state. That's how it started out. Marvin Chernoff had just come to the state then. I don't know who handled Albert's campaign. That was the first time that we really had, in my opinion, political experts to guide the campaign.

**Duffy:** What about your relationships with [Dick] Riley?

**Waddell:** Mine were friendly, but Dick was an entirely different kind of governor than any of the others. He was very effective, but I found it sometimes very difficult to get a solid answer out of him on a question. I had been in such a position, I had worked with Fritz and with John West from the Senate side, and so the Governor's office was kind of an open door if I needed help. Carroll Campbell was one who was a realist. He was a Republican Governor with a Democratic House and Senate, so he called on those of us to assist him. I found him very easy to work with.

**Duffy:** You worked with the state Tax Study Commission.

**Waddell:** I was Chairman of the state Tax Study Commission.

**Duffy:** Who appointed you to that?

**Waddell:** John did. Actually, that was formed, and then it was dropped. When John came in, we were having problems, so he reinstated it. The Senate elected the members. He appointed the civilian members. The House and Senate members were chosen by their own bodies. The Tax Study Commission got into a rut. It got to be the voice of the Tax Commission. In other words, legislation that they felt they needed, it kind of got to be their sounding board. When I finished my last year there, I was ready to do away with it, because we weren't accomplishing what we had set out to do. They've regenerated it now, and I hope that they don't get bogged down in the routine of what housekeeping the Revenue Department needs. That
bothered me, because that's the way we got through a lot of the changes in property taxes. Property taxes is one of the biggest problems in the state, and it is not going to be solved by what people are talking about. I was responsible for the percentages and the car tax and all of that, personal property taxes. But, back then, we were desperate, and industries today wouldn't go for ten and a half percent. But, they were willing to do most anything to get out from under no rules. I worked very closely with the Chamber [of Commerce] and all of them.

There is no solution to property taxes. There is no such thing as equitable property taxes. [laughter] It's impossible. But, they could be improved tremendously. Where you get your big complaints on property taxes is where they don't reassess. In other words, when we pass the law, we ---- if you got out of balance a certain amount, that you had to reassess. Well, we were too broad in that. What we found out is that if you take a county, let's just take Beaufort County. If you reassess a third of it each year, then you could keep a competent staff, whereas now, you wait ten years, and you come in there and reassess, and of course, in ten years, as fast at this state's grown, property taxes are up out of the roof, whereas if you did it every three years, just on a rotating basis, it would be more accurate and reflect the true value, and not hit everybody in the head with a sledgehammer every ten years.

Property taxes, as I say, there is no real answer to them, but they can be improved over what we are doing now. A lot of states have something called a circuit breaker. It acts just like an electrical circuit breaker. Now they are picking up on it. What you do there is you take the ability to pay. The sad thing about property taxes is, let's take a person that's lived in a house for fifty years. What really brought about some of the changes were out of Greenville, where a farmer had been there with his father, and one of those big plants came in and bought a hundred acres next to him at [a] bonus price. Then the assessor comes out, and assesses his at the same rate as [the plant’s property] over there, yet [his] use is farming. Now, if you change farming use, then yes. So, those are the kind of things that take a little common sense. Take the income tax. If you file the income tax return, then you judge what the person's income is in relation to the property tax and their ability to pay. You don't ever exceed the four percent, but you take the same block of money that we take now, they get a block of money from homestead exemption. Now, I have no business with a homestead exemption, if you want to be honest. Hell, I make more money now than I have made in a long time. Yet I get a homestead exemption if I own it.
Duffy: In Beaufort, is this an acute problem, with depreciation?

Waddell: Yes. I use this a lot. Going back to Fritz, that hunger thing, that was a real problem. Dr. Gatch was the most unpopular fellow in Beaufort County that ever lived, but Dr. Gatch was right. [Dr. Donald Gatch {c.1930-1980} publicized the issue of malnutrition and related disease in the Beaufort area in 1968] I stuck with him. That [ascaris] worm problem was real, it was bad, and it could be cured easily. What cured it was having water so you could wash your hands. But, if you had to carry a bucket with two and a half gallons a half a mile from somebody's pump to your house, how much are you going to use to wash your hands? Fritz stole my testimony for the committee in Washington. [laughter] [In February, 1969, Hollings was the lead witness describing hunger and poverty in Beaufort and Jasper counties before a congressional Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs chaired by Senator George McGovern. His dramatic testimony of what he had witnessed in his “Hunger Tours” across the state made headlines across South Carolina-- “There is hunger in South Carolina....In the five areas I visited; there are literally hundreds of hungry families who never heard of food stamps.... Bleak, hunger and hovel-housing amidst disease and ignorance. Again and again, no running water--hot or cold--no lights, no toilet facilities amidst filth and too little to eat. In many instances there is awareness of the problem. In most cases local and state public officials traveled with me, and they have tried. But there is a greater blight perhaps than poverty. That is the red tape worm of federal government....This committee should set as a national goal the elimination of hunger and slum conditions in America...] I let him read it the night before. Don Fowler had worked it up for me, and it was really good.

Fritz got a lot of yowling from people. You don't want to admit that poverty exists. The fellows up here on Main Street in those big buildings, those corporate executives, don't want to admit that there is poverty. They think you are giving away something. The thing that bothers me is, I told them in our church when they were talking about doing something in Africa, "Why go to Africa? Come on, let's go out on -----, and I'll show you something. You don't have to go to Africa. We can do something right here." I learned more on that hunger tour than you will ever learn in your life. If you could see some of the things that I saw. We found a kid who had been chained to his bed for twelve years, and people that were invalids living in houses [in which you] could see through the floor. Anybody with any sense at all would be shocked. I hoped it shocked people. I brought that bottle of worms up to the Senate and put it on the table. Those
suckers were that long, and they were terrible looking things [laughter]. That was one of my driving things. We don't like to admit that those things exist right under our nose. I hate to say it, but I find that awful true.

**Duffy:** You are well known as a Democrat, and the state has changed radically since your day. What was your involvement in the national races; say the Kennedy race in ‘60?

**Waddell:** I went to Chicago [the 1968 Democratic National Convention] where we had the big riot. That thing was staged just like a Hollywood production. There were lights, cameras. I was sitting in the hotel in Senator [Edgar] Brown's suite looking down, and I watched the whole thing, and it was just orchestrated the same as if we were running a Hollywood movie. [laughter] I hate to admit it, and probably they don't like for me to, but I was never a dyed-in-the-wool, yellow-dog Democrat type. I think as close as I ever came to upsetting anybody in Beaufort was when I wouldn't go for [George] McGovern, because I just didn't want him to be president. I was a committeeman, and I resigned. It's just like the Republicans that came to me a couple of times that wanted me to change parties. I said, "I can't do it. Not the way y'all run things. I'm not going to have you to tell me that I've got to vote this way because I'm a Republican and the party needs a vote. The party is not my object. The people are my object, and I'm sorry, I can't do it." I was never really a strong national Democrat or otherwise. I liked Jack Kennedy. I supported him, and I supported [Jimmy] Carter. But, some of them I was rather lukewarm to. I didn't come out against them, but I did not take a big role in the national Democratic Party. Never have.

**Duffy:** Let me ask you about a governor that we haven't mentioned, Bob McNair.

**Waddell:** He was a good governor. Bob was a very fine governor, and he was the kind of governor that you could communicate with. That's important for the role of a governor. I was a member of the Senate for most of my career, and I didn't communicate with the governor for the four years that I was in the House. Hell, I had just found the bathroom when I quit. [laughter] I think that's the important thing for a governor, really to be able to do that.

*Tape 2, Side 1 begins*
Waddell: I quit for several reasons. I quit, I felt, at the peak of my career. I really did. ’92 would have been a tough year to get re-elected because Hilton Head had grown to the point that it was a tough nut to crack, because the Republicans voted the party line. I had some very fine Republican friends over there, don't misunderstand me. I wouldn't have made it the last two elections without them, because they crossed party lines and voted for me. It got to be that attitude, Republican vs. Democrat, not Jim Waddell vs. somebody else individually. I'll be very frank with you. I had to get out. When Carroll [Campbell] offered me the opportunity to go to the Revenue Department, the Tax Commission, I needed that financially to get myself straight. I was getting up in age and really had nothing. It's hard for people to believe it, but I left in ’92 in debt to the banks for ninety thousand dollars, and I had spent over what I made while I was working. People say you get rich from serving in politics. You look back and see what Rembert Dennis' estate was when he died, what Marion Gressette's was. If I had died back then, we'd all three be right in the same boat. People don't realize that, and that's a cold, hard economic fact of the game.

The government has grown to the point that it's got to be practiced full time. I couldn't go home without constituent service there. There's nothing without constituent service, that's where you get elected. You've got to admit that. If you don't perform some constituent service, then you can just forget it. That was Olin Johnston's long suit, or one of them, that Post Office department. [U.S. Senator Olin Johnston became chair of the Senate Post Office and Civil Service Committee in 1950 and gained the nickname Mr. Civil Service for his leadership on that committee and dedication to the needs and interests of postal and other federal employees.] I quit, I think, at the right time. I left feeling good. I left having accomplished something. I don't think I could serve today, under the circumstances.

Duffy: Do you think that the two-party system has had a negative effect?

Waddell: Yes, I don't think there's any doubt. After serving where there was bipartisanship, I don't think it serves. Some people may think it's great, but as far as accomplishments, if you could see the hard line that both sides are taking. You build yourself into this combative situation.
Duffy: We've got a list of people here we just wanted you to react to. What was your opinion of these various people, like Bryan Dorn?

Waddell: Again, that was on the national level. Bryan and I were good friends. Gressette and I got along very well. Senator Gressette was hard-headed. We differed, like on Winthrop. I thought he was going to bite my neck off. I was for letting the boys in Winthrop. Usually the fights were over some damn foolish thing like that. [laughter] Marion was a solid person, and he was tough.

Duffy: [Strom] Thurmond?

Waddell: I got along with ol’ Strom. I'm looking for the book [Ol’ Strom by Jack Bass and Marilyn Thompson]. I have voted on occasion for ol’ Strom. I've had the opportunity, everybody alive since the Civil War has had a chance to vote for him. [laughter]

Duffy: Brantley Harvey?

Waddell: I got along fairly well with Brantley. Brantley was a little different than most. I don't want to say anything bad about anybody, but I felt like Brantley had a chance to win the governorship. I'm so sorry he didn't, and Bryan Dorn was the key there. That's what cost Brantley the race.

Duffy: Wasn't Brantley also unfortunate in that he represented the power companies?

Waddell: Yes. That didn't help.

Duffy: That was unusual, because usually a senator was the person who represented the power companies.

Waddell: That didn't help him a bit. That's one thing I didn't ever have to worry about, because I couldn't represent anybody. [laughter]
Duffy: Who would you say were the most effective leaders that you served with in the Senate?

Waddell: I think Gressette, Rembert [Dennis], [and] Edgar [Brown]. Oh, gosh, there were so many back then that were really good men. We had some that would roll along, but most of the senators in the ‘60s and ‘70s, the ‘70s in particular... the ‘70s and ‘80s were, I thought, a very productive time politically in the Senate, for accomplishing things. I don't know why, but it just seemed like that was on the list.

Duffy: You still deal with the same members of the Senate.

Waddell: Yes.

Duffy: Do you think the leadership is as effective these days as they were then?

Waddell: I'm not going to comment on that. That ought to be an answer for you. [laughter] I don't want to get into trouble. I have to go over there and do business with them. I'll say this. Strong leadership is a necessity in politics. There's no way you can operate without strong leadership and accomplish anything.

Duffy: You ultimately became one of the most senior members of the Senate. You were on the Budget and Control Board.

Waddell: Marshall Williams was a very good man. He got up in age, but during his prime he was. There was Marshall, and then I was number two.

Duffy: When you think back on it, what is the thing that gave you the most satisfaction in your career?

Waddell: The Education Finance Act and the Coastal Zone Management Plans were two of the biggest things I did. They were in opposite fields, but I think those were two of the best accomplishments. They were the hardest, but they were the best. I think they laid the
Duffy: Are there any questions that you would like to answer that we perhaps missed?

Waddell: I'm just going down the list. Matthew Perry was a good, strong person. John Ralph Gasque, hot dog, he was a... I better keep quiet.

Duffy: Let me ask you about Miss Hamby.

Waddell: Dolly?

Duffy: Yes. She was in the firm.

Waddell: Bradley, Graham & Hamby.

Duffy: That was one of the first professional...?

Waddell: That's one of the first that I know of that handled campaign advertising. They wrote all the ads. That was the most professional help we had. The last two or three times I ran, Don [Fowler] helped.

Duffy: What about the impact of lobbyists?

Waddell: When I came up here, the only lobbyist that I knew was John Culson. He represented the textile association. I find that most lobbyists are appreciated, because they did give you some information that you didn't have time to sit down and research and find out, if you trust them. Now, the problem with some lobbyists is that, like Mr. Cobb [of the Lost Trust scandal], you don't need those kind. I felt like the same thing applies to a lobbyist that applies to a member of the Senate, that if they didn't tell you the truth, then that's the end. You don't have to listen to them anymore. It's a question of faith and trust. I have some very good friends who are lobbyists, have been and will continue to be. They are, I think, a necessity. Nobody can study every problem that we have. Nobody can be an expert on banking, government,
transportation, ecology. I think a good lobbyist serves a very definite purpose.

**Duffy:** Anything else that you can think of?

**Waddell:** Not as I know of. I was just looking over the list. We used to have a great time in the House. Sol [Blatt] was a great person. There are people like that that you remember and admire. Sol was tough, but if you were loyal, your loyalty meant a heck of a lot to Sol. The same way with Edgar [Brown]. I think that one of the best things that Edgar told me, he fell out with Jimmy Byrnes when he got beat in the election for the U.S. Senate. They really had a falling out because Jimmy supported Strom. One day, I was over there. I used to eat lunch with him every day. He told me, "Jimmy's sick. I don't know how long he's going to live. I've just got to go out and make peace with him. That's no way to live." So, he went to see him, and asked him, "Let's be friends. Let's don't be at odds. We've been friends too long." I admired that very much. I learned that lesson from him. I can get upset with somebody, but I don't let it linger. It doesn't do anything but eat on you.

[Interview Concludes]