Interview

with

Martha Edens
Interviewer:  
Herbert J. Hartsook

Date:  
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Location:  
Ms. Edens’ home, Columbia, S.C.

Topics:  
Martha Edens has been an important activist in Republican Party affairs at the local, state and national levels since the late 1950s. Her distinguished service includes terms as National Committeewoman.

In this interview, she reflects on her life and long association with Republican Party politics. She also comments on the role played in the rise of the Party by her brother, J. Drake Edens, Jr. (1925-1982), who chaired the South Carolina Republican Party from 1963 to 1965.

Transcriber:  
Kelly Gilbert
Hartsook: Can you tell us a little bit about your background? Where you were born? Something about your parents and your education?

Edens: I was born right here in Richland County, more than seventy-two years ago. My father was from Sumter County and my mother was from Hampton County. She was a Youmans and obviously he was an Edens. Both families were very large and I have many relatives scattered all over the state at this point. I went to the high school, which is now Schneider, on Maple Street.

Hartsook: Which school is that?

Edens: Schneider. It was named after a principal. And we lived on Maple Street, we were at 1204 Maple, so I could easily walk to school. Then, from Schneider, I moved to Hand [Middle School], which is still Hand. And then from Hand I moved to Dreher [High School]. My father thought it was extremely important, since I lived a sheltered life according to him, that I go to a girl's school. I wanted to go to Mary Washington [College, a private school] in [Fredericksburg,] Virginia. But I would have had to have lived off campus because I was an out-of-state student and he had long discussions with my mother that this would just not be acceptable. I needed to be on the campus. So I wound up at Brenau College which is in Gainesville, Georgia, for my first year and a half. I finished in three years; I don't know why I was in a hurry. But anyway, I spent my first year and a half at Brenau. Which I have known and loved all these years. I'm still on their board of trustees and it was a wonderful, traditional girl's school. Of course, now, Title Nine has helped us open it to men also. But we still have the Women’s College that operates in the daytime. Men can attend the evening school and the satellite campuses, but we do not have them enrolled in the Women's College as such still at Brenau.

I was very happy with my sorority and they talked me into transferring to South Carolina. I finally became national president for my sorority. But my father just said that no self-respecting young woman would go to a state university, he was just in a snit. And my mother helped him calm down, thank goodness. But I came home to Carolina. My sorority here was not doing well and I had a good background from a chapter that was very successful, and the national president asked me to come to Carolina. So three of us from South Carolina, Joanne Dellinger from Greenville, and Martha Waldrop from Easley, and I, came home and we helped rebuild that chapter and it's been doing great ever since.

Hartsook: Which sorority is that?
Edens: Zeta. [Zeta Tau Alpha] It was over in [Sims], I can't remember the name of the building now, but it was on the other side of campus before we moved to Wade Hampton, so that was a long, long time ago; it was in '47, I guess. But anyway, I transferred to South Carolina and loved it and was graduated in 1948.

Hartsook: And was the main reason you transferred to build the sorority back up?

Edens: Yes. If I had my life to live over, I probably would have stayed at Brenau. I was the only daughter, I had two brothers, but I was dependent, I think, to a great deal on living in my family environment. And it was good for me to go away and learn that if you put an iron that is too hot on a blouse it is going to burn it, and to identify myself as me. In Columbia I was either Drake Edens's daughter, or I was Bill's sister or Drake's sister, I was never just me. And I think probably I developed my own standards of living at Brenau in that year and a half. I still feel good about that. I liked the University when I got here. I made many new friends. And we worked hard and we accomplished what we came to do. We rebuilt that chapter plus I got a degree in the process. [Ms. Edens served as vice-president of her sorority.] I majored in physical ed, which a lot of people can't imagine, but I did. And also I got a School of Education degree to teach physical ed.

I have a healthy respect for the University. If I didn't, I would not have remembered them in my trust. I think it does a lot of good things. The more involved I became with my sorority, I saw what it was doing for the students that were there, so that was a good thing. That was the end of my formal education. I never had a desire to go back. I guess I was too busy to go back and get a master's degree. I got my education from all the organizations that I worked for and learned really a whole lot more about life than I learned in school.

Hartsook: And you obviously developed or showed a lot of your leadership abilities . . .

Edens: Well, I was president of state Easter Seals, I was on the Salvation Army board, I was on the Richland Memorial Foundation, I was on the Richland Memorial Board, I ran for the school board, my life has been organizations. But I think we learned a lot of that, to a limited degree, from our parents because my daddy was a chairman of the hospital board, my mother worked with the Killingsworth Home, and with the Woman's Society of our church, we just thought we owed something back to our community. All of us have been involved in outside activities.

Hartsook: Can you talk a little bit about the Edens Food Stores and your memory of the merger? [In 1955, Edens Food Stores merged with what has become Winn-Dixie.]

Edens: My father first went into the grocery business when we lived in what was then called Dentsville. Now
it's out here, very close to where Columbia Mall is. And he and Simon Faust went into business together on Assembly Street, where the public library is now located. Mr. Faust had a dry goods store on the second floor and daddy had a grocery store on the first floor. This was during the Depression [when] he started his business. I can't imagine somebody just starting a business in the midst of the Depression, but he did, and stranger than that, it was very successful, so maybe more people should try it. I don't know; I wouldn't be that brave. But very shortly after that, Daddy's business grew, so he moved into a building next to Mr. Faust and Mr. Faust kept the dry goods store. And daddy went into the grocery business at 1415 Assembly Street; that was his first grocery store. And I have wonderful pictures of him when it opened, he was in the front with an apron on and so was my uncle, Joe Edens. It was a great time.

My first memory of the grocery business is the fact that my daddy got up before daylight and he came home after dark. We moved into Columbia when I was five years old from Dentsville. Of course, it wasn't very far, but it was a big move for us. It was sort of like moving from the country to town. We bought the old Elmgren home on Maple Street, at 1204 Maple. And we lived there until we built a home on Heyward Street, which is where the Governor is presently living. [Gov. James Hodges and his family lived in a rented home in the Shandon neighborhood while the Governor's Mansion was being renovated, 1999-2001.] So those were our three moves. I did not move around lots in my life, and I haven't in my life here either, after I left home. I've been here [in her current home] forty-three years, I guess it is.

Then they [the grocery] began to expand and of course he was closer to his business. And he also hired more people that he trusted, that could help him. And he began to have more time at home, but they still worked very hard and the whole family did. When he opened a store, most of us worked the opening. I have some great pictures of opening one of the stores in Charleston. I think eventually we had thirty-three grocery stores in the state. And we were in places like Estill, Hampton, Bamberg, Myrtle Beach, Florence, Walterboro, all around. It really was statewide. Except we never had one in Greenville, because the Eberts and Dixie Home Stores had sort of covered that front. And Mr. Littlejohn had stores in Spartanburg, so we didn't go much to the upper part of the state. Probably because we would not have been successful competing against an established firm like they were. But on Sunday afternoons our biggest thrill as children was to go to ride [in their automobile]. Everybody went to ride on Sunday afternoon and we got to stop at the store. And we were allowed to get one thing, scot free, out of the store. And we used to try to bargain for a Coca-Cola and ice cream, but Daddy held to one thing. That was part of our Sunday afternoon ride.

And as we grew older, I worked in the summertime, when I was not away at college, in the office down on Greene Street. My brother Bill preferred to, which was beyond me, but he worked in the meat division, and Drake worked in the grocery division. My daddy thought it was foolish for them to want to play football rather than go to work in the afternoons. He couldn't understand that. But he did go to their games and support it. But as they grew older, they remained in the business, and they were there until the time of our merger.
Hartsook: Now, was the merger a happy time, or was it . . . ?

Edens: It turned out to be the smartest thing my daddy ever did, financially. It was in 1955. And, we did not merge with Winn-Dixie; we merged with Winn and Lovett, out of Jacksonville, Florida. And all the attorneys wanted us to take cash money and my daddy's lawyer was John Edens, who was his cousin. And all these New York lawyers were just pushing all this and daddy said, "Let me explain this to you again. The only way that we are going to do business is that we exchange stock, and if we don't exchange stock, you can forget about my stores. They are doing all right and they'll just keep doing like they're doing. But I'm not going to take cash."

And as it turned out, of course, Winn-Dixie, through the years, has split umpteen times. It has been wonderful for me, I never had to work.

I did work for eight years, because I think everybody should know how to earn their own living. But I could not have done all the things outside that I did in my life with my organizations and things that I really cared about if I had to work. I would not have had the time to do that. Nor could I have pursued what I liked in politics, because everybody has to earn a living. But he made it very comfortable for all of us, including his grandchildren. And he had many charities that he cared a great deal about. But he was not a public person. Very few of them that he gave [to, provided] any recognition for [his contributions], and I followed the same thing. I think you don't build monuments to yourself. I just have a problem with that. I do believe in sharing what we have, I think we have a moral obligation to that. I just have a problem with that. I do believe in sharing what we have, I think we have a moral obligation to that. My mother used to preach to me. I'd say, "Why do we have to do this?" And she said, "In the Bible it says, unto whom much is given, of much shall be required. Do you not understand that?" And I said, "Today I don't but I hope I live long enough to." [laughter] And I certainly did; I think it was a good philosophy to live by.

Hartsook: And you give much more than just financial resources.

Edens: I think you have to give of yourself. Writing a check is the easiest thing anybody can do. But I think you need to go and see that child take its first step if it's been a crippled child. How can you appreciate what you have helped do if you are not emotionally involved? I loved it. I loved every one of them. Now, I did set a time at seventy, I said, "You all have had fifty years of my life, from here on out, whatever there is, it's going to be Martha's time. I just can't keep doing this." And besides, we need to train young people to do this. I'm real proud that my daughter, when I left Easter Seals, she went on the board and my son is involved in several things. Dinah is teaching a computer class at Hand as a volunteer, she's doing reading at Forest Lake, she does the Children's Hospital, she has a lot of the same interests that I guess she saw me interested in, and I think that's good.
Hartsook: Now you said you worked for eight years. What did you do?

Edens: I taught preschool for about two [years] and then I worked for eight years for the Department of the Army as a management analyst. And Drake thought it was terrible that I was working for the government. My husband at the time was called during the Korean Conflict and we were stationed at Camp Gordon, over in Augusta. And everybody's wife got up and went to work. And I thought, "Well, I can't probably teach school here, and that's what I'm equipped to do. But I'm going to do something." So I went out to the Fort and applied for a job and I met a Captain Thompson. He said, "I noticed you have a college degree," and I said, "Yes sir." He said, "Would you be interested in learning about management? About tables of organization and time and motion studies and budgets." And I said, "Well, yes sir." He said, "I think I can teach you." So I started to work for him. And at the end of our Truman year or whatever they called it, we came home and I was making more working for the Department of the Army than I could teaching school. We didn't have children, so I went out to the Fort and worked at the reception center for Colonel Hinson, who was from North, South Carolina. And I worked out there eight years until we adopted our first child and then I didn't go back.

But it's bad not to have something to do because once you're not working everybody says, "You don't work, you do things." I got more and more involved. But I got a great deal more out of the things that I did than I gave, I'm quite sure. But I just really love and believe that this community has some wonderful, wonderful people that have given themselves over and over again to very worthwhile causes. And I think it makes our city a stronger city.

Hartsook: How did you first get active in the Republican Party and in politics in general?

Edens: Well, we heard a great deal about it as children. I remember my daddy, he could not stand Franklin Roosevelt and that's probably a terrible thing to say, but it is the way that it was. They had a different philosophy, I should have said. I remember daddy talking about him slaughtering all the hogs. Now, I do not know why he did that or what it had to do with life, but I heard more and more about that. And then when he established the WPA, my daddy used to call it the ‘We Poke Along.’ His whole thrust of life was that people did for themselves what they could do, that government should not do it for other people. That whatever hand you were dealt with, you worked and you improved it. Which is what he did. He didn't finish high school. He was one of ten children and his father died, he had to stop school and take care of the whole family. So it was incomprehensible to him that people had to have handouts. He believed that the people that were ill or handicapped, or [had] some physical reason [that] they couldn't work, that it was the obligation of individuals to help those people.
He believed that we should help our fellow man but he did not believe that the government should teach people to lean on them for everything they had. In other words, the welfare system to him had a lot wrong with it. He was almost intolerant of it. I'm not sure that he shouldn't have had a little softer approach because I do believe there are people who are not equipped to do for themselves. But his whole thrust was that.

He voted for Wendell Willkie [against Roosevelt]. I will never forget, we had a huge dinner party at the house. Mother had hams and all of this stuff. And his close friends that thought like he thought, we just had a celebration, when the Willkie didn't even win the election. But it was just exciting to him to be a part of that. And he just really was a Republican. And, what amazed me is he had the gall to tell people that he disagreed. I thought, "Well, daddy, you'll lose every store you've got, you're not going to make a living." He said, "If you believe in something you don't apologize for it." That's the way we started.

Then my oldest brother Drake became involved. And, of course, if he was involved he expected everybody in the family to be involved. I started out by going with him to lots of the counties. We'd be riding down the highway and he'd say, "Well, we've got to stop over here at Jalapa, at this little gas station. This fellow here is a good Republican." And I said, "But you don't need gas." "Well, then we'll have a Coke with him. We just have to go and speak to our friend." He took his pickup truck, for which he was known, and his khakis and he went all over this state. We went down to Lynchburg to see Bob and Rosemary Vassey in Bishopville and all around. But I started with him and whatever he thought we should do, I was trying to learn how to do it. So that's how I got involved, first by listening to my father and second by helping my brother.

Hartsook: People give your brother just immense credit for creating the structure for the party. Who else do you think helped him in those really key early years? Whom do you think were his equals?


Hartsook: It was interesting hearing about your worries about your father's business when he promoted Willkie. When I met with Gayle Averyt, he talked about his [similar] worries. When he came back from school and wanted to get active, he worried that it might impact on his father's business, and that that was just a really courageous decision [on Averyt’s part to openly promote the Republican Party in the solidly Democratic Midlands region]. Did you feel that that was an act of courage to become politically active for a party that was . . .?

Edens: I didn't know whether it was insanity or courageous. I mean, you're living in a hotbed of Democrats and
you're going to go out and talk against everything they believe, and a lot of those people that were leaving their dollars in our cash register were Democrats. I just thought that there were so many people, and there are today, who will not run for office and who will not actively participate because they don't want people to identify them as belonging to either party. They are the independent people. But there are a lot of independents that feel very strongly and I respect their right as long as you believe in something and you do something to promote a better state and nation, then I don't have an argument with you. But just do something. Don't just sit in the middle and say I'll ride the fence. I don't like fence riders.

**Hartsook:** Charlie Boineau is one of our donors. We have his papers. Your brother served as co-chair of his 1961 campaign. [In 1961, Richland County’s Charles E. Boineau, Jr. won election as a Republican in a special election for the S.C. House, becoming the first Republican elected to the General Assembly since Reconstruction.]

**Edens:** He did, and we worked. Charlie really gave us. . . . Did Charlie come after Bill Workman or before?

**Hartsook:** Before.

**Edens:** I didn't exactly understand the lines of his House district. All that stuff came later. We did not look at the total number of voters in there and what their leanings were, and their sympathies. I didn't know how you did all that. But I began to learn then. And I had never done a phone bank. And the thought of knocking on a total stranger's door was abhorrent to me, I thought they had lost their minds. But Drake said we have to do this to win. So gradually we did, and it was a good learning experience for us. It was also a tremendous shock. I mean, I could not believe that we had won a House seat. But Charlie was a wonderful candidate. He knew what he believed. And, I think it took a lot of courage for him to run. But we had to start somewhere.

Of course, we lost so much at first that we ought to be the best losers in the world. We recruited poor Bill Turberville, E.D. Phillips, all sorts of people to run, when we knew they had no chance to win before they ran. And they knew it too, but they were willing. If you don't start somewhere, you never get there. Charlie was our star. We just thought that was wonderful. We thought we had conquered the world. It didn't register with us that we had one seat in the House. But it was a beginning, and it was good. And it got this area organized. I don't think that it did a lot to organize the state. I believe that Bill Workman's campaign was the campaign that caused us to put somebody in all forty-six counties. Even in Jasper. Irving Floyd was down there. I remember going to see him with Drake. We had somebody everywhere that was working for Bill Workman. [In 1962, journalist William D. Workman, Jr. ran as a Republican, opposing incumbent U.S. Senator Olin Johnston.]

Now, Bill had name recognition, which was a tremendous help to us. Because he had written for *The
State newspaper. And he was well-known throughout the state. So that did help us. But then he came to take on an institution, he took on Olin Johnston, who the whole world knew. Down here, I didn't think we had a chance, but he sure came close. If Bill had been more dynamic, we might have won. Bill was just so smart and everything was matter-of-fact to him, and he didn't get any fire in anything he had to say, he would just tell you, this is the way it is and this is what I believe. But if he had a little oomph, I believe we could have picked off Olin Johnston, which would have really been a coup. But that was our first shot at organizing the whole state.

Hartsook: Do you think Governor Hollings' attempt to unseat Johnston in the primary, do you think that softened Johnston up? Or do you think that was immaterial?

Edens: That made Johnston more vulnerable. Yes, I do. I don't think we accomplished forty-three percent, or whatever we got, without a little help. And I think Fritz, unbeknownst to him I'm sure, helped us to a degree by taking him on in the primary.

Hartsook: I think Floyd Spence's change of party is really one of the more courageous acts in our recent history, because he gave up certain reelection to the South Carolina House . . .

Edens: But he's had certain reelection ever since. [laughter] All the way down. I did not know Floyd that well. Of course, he was from Lexington, and somehow we don't get across that river as often as we probably should. But I didn't know him. I know he'd been at the University, but I had finished . . . [During his academic career at the University of South Carolina, Floyd Spence was the quintessential "big man on campus." During his final two years alone, he was elected President of his Junior class, President of the Student Body, and President of the South Carolina Association of Student Governments. He also served as an officer for various campus groups, including the Navy ROTC, the Omicron Delta honorary leadership fraternity, the Young Men's Christian Association, and Kappa Alpha. Spence was also named to the Dean's List, the Honor Council, and the Honor Board. An outstanding athlete, he was captain of the track team and a member of both the football and basketball teams. In light of his many accomplishments, Spence was selected "Outstanding Senior" and was the recipient of the Algernon-Sydney Sullivan Award as the outstanding male student at U.S.C. for 1952. After receiving his B.A. in 1952, Spence served two years in the U.S. Navy, and then returned to U.S.C. for his law degree, which he earned in 1956.]

I just didn't know him. And he switched and then when Drake said he was going to run, I didn't work in his House campaign when he ran again for the House. But when he decided to run for Congress, I got a good lesson from my brother. Drake said, "Okay, we've got to crank up." And I said, "Well now, wait a minute." He was running against Heyward McDonald and Heyward and I had worked at Easter Seals together. And I said,
"You understand I can't vote for this fellow that you want me to vote for. I have to work for Heyward McDonald." He said, "And why, might I ask?" And I said, "Heyward is my friend." He said, "And Heyward would expect you to work for Floyd." And I said, "Oh, I don't think so." He said, "He never said you're not going to work here. You can't be a Republican and work for Heyward." Drake was a great believer in the straight vote. And he finally explained it to me, he said, "We have to have a base. And you realize that unfortunately, in our state, the minorities are the base for the Democrat Party. You know, if there's a Second Coming, they're still going to vote Democrat. We have to build a base to offset their base so we can elect some people through help from the independent faction in the state." But I said, "Well, what do you expect me to do?"

And he said, "I expect you to go down to Sunshine Cleaners on Gervais Street, where Floyd's headquarters is, in the morning, and I expect you to make phone calls, help raise money, [and] do whatever is needed. Because we need to elect this man to Congress. We don't have a Congressman." I said, "Well, do I have to explain it to Heyward?" He said, "No, I'm telling you, Heyward knows it. Heyward's been in politics a long time." So I did. And that's when I met Floyd. And we've been great friends ever since. He is a politician, but he is also a friend in the sense of the word.

When I ran for national committeewoman, I asked more people whom I had helped elect to nominate me or endorse my candidacy. I asked Floyd Spence and he said, "Certainly I will." That's all he said. And he did. He nominated me. And I will never forget that because so many politicians worry about being reelected, they don't want to offend either faction. At the time, I ran against someone from the far right, the Christian Coalition. And it was a close, close race. And pragmatically speaking, all of them needed the votes from the Coalition. The Coalition gave us the majority to win a number of elections. They also gave us a lot of problems because their philosophy and the traditional Republican philosophy was not the same. And it was hard to put the two together, but Carroll Campbell probably did it better than anybody else. And Carroll and I talked about it once. He said, "You know, you don't have to think like they think, but you've got to be pragmatic. We cannot win like we've been winning if we don't keep them in the fold."

I like Floyd Spence. He is a very low key congressman. He's not going to be the one that will propose bills and speak a great deal. But he's quiet and he's steady and if you look at his vote, he votes exactly like you would vote, I mean I would vote, if I was sitting in his chair. I'd be punching that button the same way he does.

Hartsook: He gets a lot of criticism in the media and yet if you look at our current military situation, everyone swung around to his argument that he's been making for about five or six years.

Edens: He has done an excellent job on the Armed Services Committee. He has. And I sure hate that he's going to have to step down, but those are the rules and he plays by the rules. He also has marvelous constituent service. I needed a flag that had been flown on the Capitol for my nephew. And I called Craig Metz [Mr. Spence's
Administrative Assistant in the Washington office] and, of course, I got it right away. He does wonderful things for his constituents. Plus, I think he is a good man. And he has to be tough to undergo the health problems he's been through. But he's a good friend. And I was glad then that I worked for him and I didn't worry about not working for Heyward anymore after we elected Floyd. But Heyward and I remained friends until he died.

**Hartsook:** When we [Modern Political Collections] got started we wrote all the members of Congress, in our delegation, and said that we were going to collect legislative papers and hoped they might consider placing their papers with us and asked them to contact us if we could be of any service. We got a few letters back over the next few weeks. But literally within about three days, we got a call from Mr. Spence and he said, "What can I do to help?"

**Edens:** Well, you know, Floyd was president of student government, he's big Carolina.

**Hartsook:** I was real tickled with that.

*Tape 1, Side 2 begins with a discussion of former governor Carroll Campbell*

**Hartsook:** What do you think makes him so good at building coalitions and putting his legislative agenda through the General Assembly? Because he was an unusually effective governor.

**Edens:** He is a good mediator. And he's also very pragmatic. He doesn't have to like some of the things that have to take place, but he's willing to do them. He can see his overall goal and he works out a plan to get there. And I just think he's very good at working with people. He understands people.

**Hartsook:** When I meet people from outside of South Carolina, it's surprising how many of them still remember [Hurricane] Hugo, the news coverage, and seeing him that next morning in his shirt sleeves, directing the . . .

**Edens:** Yes. His handling of Hugo was probably one of his finest moments. He really did a good job with that. I think it made it difficult for [Gov. Jim] Hodges when they evacuated before because people go back to the way that Carroll handled the disaster. It could be that he had better people beneath him working or . . . He started earlier, though, I think. It was obvious to him that Hugo was going to . . . he and [television weather man] Jim Gandy both were convinced it was going to hit Charleston rather severely. I think he handled the evacuation and the whole thing very well. He came out looking very good from that. And that isn't why he did it; it was just his
nature to do it that way. But I think it was a good accomplishment for him.

Hartsook: And it just intrigues me that people still remember that. Non-South Carolinians, that's one of the memories that they have about how strong he was . . .

Edens: Carroll is a very attractive individual, and that helps when you start [in politics]. But then he is an excellent speaker. And he says what he thinks and if he's angry about something he raises his voice. He's somebody that you can't turn off when he starts. I think he's an intense person; it's very hard for Carroll to relax. We all used to tease him about his hair spray and his hair. We were at a convention when they were promoting the stadium for pro football between Charlotte and Rock Hill. And somebody sent us a whole bunch of hats and we were all supposed to put them on. And I was sitting between Carroll and Senator Thurmond and Senator Thurmond put his on. I said, "Carroll, you're not going to put your hat on? You're not afraid you'll muss your hair?" He actually looked angry. He just didn't want to talk about it. He never put that hat on.

Hartsook: Let me read something that your brother wrote. We don't have very much of his papers . . .

Edens: He's like me, probably didn't write a lot of them. I don't have any papers, I just talk.

Hartsook: Well, let me read you something he wrote and then when I'm done ask you if that's a good synopsis of the motivation behind his commitment to the party. He wrote, "The major concern that caused me to become active in the Republican Party years ago was the question of deficit spending by the federal government. I'm still deeply concerned that deficit spending will be the cause of the eventual downfall of our country."

Edens: No, I don't think that's why Drake started with the Republican Party. Drake told me that he started the Republican Party because he did not think that one party domination of any state was healthy. Not that he was not appreciative of the Sol Blatts and the Edgar Browns and the Marion Gressettes. But nobody ever challenged anything they said. And I think it's healthy to have both sides of an issue presented and then work out consensus. I think the people benefit from that more. And also, when you have one party domination, I think there is room for, shall we say hanky panky, is that what they're calling it in Florida? [This interview took place while the Bush/Gore presidential ballot in Florida was being contested.] But I think there is a possibility that you could have corruption in state government if there were no system of checks and balances and I heard Drake talk about checks and balances a thousand times. So I think that's why he started it. Plus, his philosophy of life was really different from the Democrat approach to life. He did not believe that big government was in the best interest of the people. He believed that people should be allowed to govern themselves and determine what their interests
So, I think that the Republican Party was built on appreciation of the individual. The individual had rights but the individual also had responsibilities if they were privileged to have the right. And I think that the Republican Party believed in teaching people to do for themselves rather than putting them on a welfare system and doing it for them. So I think his main concern was that we needed to have a healthy political climate, we needed a place where people could go that had a different point of view from the one which the Democrat Party held at that time. And he had to be right because it wasn't long before Democrats, prominent ones such as Strom Thurmond, were leaving the Democrat Party because they moved further to the left and the Republican Party was on the right.

I think a lot of us have come closer to the center now. I think I'm a moderate. To people on the far right, I'm a liberal. But I'm not a liberal, but I am a moderate. And I am a traditional Republican. I believe in the philosophy this party was founded on.

Lee Atwater was a very dear, close friend of mine. Lee and I worked the Westmoreland campaign together, which was a fiasco. [General William C. Westmoreland was recruited by the Party in 1974 to run for governor. It was assumed that the popular military leader would be a formidable candidate in the general election. Instead, he was defeated by James B. Edwards in the state’s first Republican gubernatorial primary. Edwards went on to win the general election, becoming South Carolina's first Republican governor since Reconstruction.] We had many good times. He called me his political godmother. And it was great [that] when I went on the national committee, Lee was the chairman. He was inaugurated as chairman and I was sworn in as committeewoman. So we had some good times together before he got so very sick.

Now, what was I talking about? I forgot.

**Hartsook:** You were clarifying what you thought motivated your brother's strong commitment to the Party.

**Edens:** I believe that his strongest motivation was that there ought to be a system of checks and balances and there ought to be. . . . It was obvious we were developing two philosophies. We might have been a traditional Democrat state and there are some wonderful Democrats and I have some dear friends like Madge Major. And Heyward was a close friend. And I love Earle Morris. He's one of my favorite people in the world. But there needed to be a home for those people. And there needed to be both sides of an issue discussed rather than one group deciding what was good for everybody. So I think it was healthy. I think it was good for South Carolina. I think the fact that we built a strong party has brought a lot of notoriety and attention to South Carolina. On the National Committee, they almost bow -- they did when I was there -- to South Carolina. They think it's wonderful. We were the first Southern state. . . . Probably South Carolina and Mississippi were the two that moved first to become strong Republican strongholds.
Hartsook: And do all those comments you just made about your brother and his philosophy, do those pretty much reflect your philosophy as well?

Edens: Yes. Because he was my teacher.

Hartsook: Do you think you've pretty much stayed true to your original thinking or have you developed and has that changed over the years?

Edens: No, we differed a couple times on candidates.

Hartsook: I mean just you personally, your personal development.

Edens: No, my philosophy is that we have the big tent philosophy. Drake was not living when that came into being. And he didn't live through. . . . He was here when I was elected county chairman, I think, from Richland County, twice. And someone from the far right ran against me. But he didn't really get involved with that. He died in 1982, so he didn't have to deal with that philosophy. But if he had been here, he would have said, ‘The name of this game is win and we have to combine these people without giving up what you believe. It's okay for you to feel one way and somebody else to feel another. But as long as we all have the same goal. . . .’ And it has worked out.

There are people who think that you are going to get a disease if you talk to a far right person. But the far right has mellowed a great deal. They came in wanting to take over the Republican Party. And if they had gotten it, they had no idea what you do with it. They didn't know how you do precinct meetings, they didn't know about conventions, they didn't know about candidate recruitment, they never gave any money, and they didn't know about raising money. And you can't operate in the political arena [without that knowledge]. They say that money is the milk of politics. It is. You have to have it. So there was so much they didn't know. But that was not any reason to shove them around. I think the more we talked about the real issues. . . . They came in as a group that had a single issue, abortion was their issue. Then they moved from there to home schooling and they moved from there to being against homosexuals. They have a whole lot of social issues. But they weren't looking at things like, other than home schooling, education, all the things that we believe in. They weren't looking at that. Balanced budgets, nothing about that registered with them. But some of them have stayed active and they have learned a great deal and while we may be different, we're not so different that we can't come together. And if we don't do that, we don't win elections. That's the only way we can do it.
Hartsook: You come across as very focused and pragmatic. Is that a good characterization?

Edens: I'm a preacher. Drake was a worse preacher than me. Yes, I am.

Hartsook: Can we talk a few minutes about women in politics? Because I think people, especially back when you first became prominent and active, people thought of politics as a men's arena, the smoke-filled rooms . . .

Edens: They did, and that's another reason that I like the Republican Party. Because the Republican Party looks for people with ability and the gender doesn't bother them at all. I was never denied an opportunity to do anything that I wanted to do in the Republican Party because I was a woman.

Hartsook: And that's been true for a long time. You're probably the most prominent [woman in South Carolina Republican politics], but you're not the only prominent woman . . .

Edens: I don't know about being prominent, but I just know that when I ran for county chairman, I ran against a man. When I ran for school board, I was the only woman on the ticket, and I led the ticket. I think it has a lot more to do with what you believe, how you say what you say, and how you go about doing it.

Hartsook: Do you think the South Carolina Republican Party is particularly open to women, or do you think the Republican Party as a whole, nationwide, is open to women?

Edens: From what I observed on the National Committee for eight years, nationwide, it is. And in our Party rules, they make it that way. We have to have a co-chairman. There's a chairman and a co-chairman. If the chairman of the Party is a woman, then the co-chairman has to be a man. If the chairman is a man, the co-chairman is a woman. And we have four regional groups, because we were in the Southern region. Drake was vice-chairman of the Southern region which put him on the executive committee of the chairman. And later on, I ran for it. And I was vice-chairman for the Southern region and National Committee. There's a man and a woman, there are two vice-chairs in each region. Everything you do in the Republican Party, if there is a man, there is a space for a woman. And I think Reagan's trickle down [philosophy], it trickled all the way down to the states.

I ran for Party treasurer and they didn't have a problem, went in for two years. Of course, there's a committeewoman and a committeeman. I had no problem of course being elected. Well, I can't say that, the far right was there. I really had a close election. But no, I was running against another woman. Joyce Hearn is one
of my very closest friends. Joyce was in the [South Carolina] House for sixteen years. And she was there early on, when there just were no Republicans, hardly. And she never had a problem being heard. No, I think the Republican Party is very fair. I don't think gender plays a role. I think they look for people with ability. Look at Christie Todd Whitman, a Republican governor. Jennifer Dunn, that I was on the Committee with in Washington, is in the House now. [Jennifer Blackburn Dunn {b.1941} R-Washington, 1993-present]

I think women really are better for politics because they have the time. Most men that are really sharp and good leaders have very powerful jobs and they only have limited time to do this. And with the women who have the wherewithal not to be employed, who can get out there and do this eight hours a day, we have made the difference. The men that run come back and thank the Republican women time and time again. They wouldn't get elected without them. The men don't organize phone banks. The men don't raise money. They don't have time to do that. Their lives are different. So I think women should be involved in [political] parties and I think sometimes women know more what's happening in a lot of arenas. If they debate child care, all these things that come up, women know, intuitively know, more about a lot of the stuff that comes up. Education, who's more involved generally speaking in a child's education, the mother or the father? The mother knows what's happening. The mother's the one that should be on the school board. No, I think women should be involved and they miss a golden opportunity.

I just thought of something, going back to what you said Drake said [about his motivation for becoming involved in politics]. How did Drake think he was going to affect the national deficit in South Carolina? I can't even believe he said that. I am distraught with him. We don't believe in deficit spending and we don't believe in it in South Carolina. But you can't change the national debt by forming a Republican Party. We only send eight votes up there. We send six congressmen and two senators and that's it. Anyway, that just struck me. I saw it written down [among the questions] and it just irritated me that he would say something like that because that isn't really why he did it. Isn't it great that we both are the same way? We never wanted to run for public office. All we wanted to do was create a situation wherein other people that were qualified, we could help them run for office. They begged him, the Party did, to run for governor. He wouldn't have done it for all the gold in China; he didn't want to do that.

I was asked to run for several. . . . I did run for school board. They sent me on a guilt trip because I had two children in the school system. And so I finally agreed. And I'm glad, I served seven years and I learned more about the good things and the bad things about education than I would ever have known. Plus, I served with Leon Cooper and Dave Rauscher, a lot of really neat people. We did a lot for that school district at the time.

Hartsook: A lot of people talk about the Goldwater [presidential] campaign [of 1964] as having been one of the great milestones, not just of politics in South Carolina, but of their own lives. What are your memories of the Goldwater campaign?
Edens: I think that's when our party began to grow. We added a whole ton of people. In 1960 we started in the Nixon campaign. That was our first campaign. I didn't know you could lose. I walked around this lake [adjacent to her home in Columbia] for three days and didn't speak to anybody after we lost. You just get so emotionally wound up. You just know that you have to be right, and then for people not to think you're right, it just gets you.

Goldwater campaign. . . . We picked up a lot of support. And Goldwater and Drake were friends, and he spent time here. In fact, he spent the last night before he went home for the election, we had a rally at the Township Auditorium, it was just great. He came down to Charleston and we visited there. But he expressed himself. And he was not wrong. I don't think he'll ever be given credit for a lot of his ideas that were right. And it was an emotional campaign. But we also picked up so many good people from those days that stayed with us, that started with the Goldwater campaign. And then it's the first time that I can remember that we carried the state for a Republican candidate.

Hartsook: What did you do during the campaign?

Edens: Oh, mercy, everything. I helped raise money. And I wrote scripts for phone banks and conducted a lot of large phone banks.

Hartsook: Is that phone bank work, isn't that kind of an art?

Edens: You have to be careful what you say and you have to say it and get off the phone. I wrote a lot of scripts and I think I probably did the scripts for the phone banks statewide. But money was not as hard to raise as I thought it would be for that particular candidate. And we had so many good people involved that had contacts with people that had money, which was good. But, I did everything. I helped run the headquarters and wrote whatever I needed to write. I've written two or three organizational manuals for the state and gone to the counties and, I think I probably would say I am one of the few committeewomen that ever saw this job as a working job and not a coronation or something.

I went to every county in this state when I was committeewoman. And did training sessions on what parties were supposed to do, taught them how to do phone banks, taught them how to raise money, all that stuff. But the Goldwater campaign was great and then I helped train poll watchers. That was the first time I trained poll watchers. And then I worked at a poll. I had Hyatt Park [Elementary] School. I went with my badge and I knew exactly what I was supposed to do and I walked in and introduced myself and then I said, "Would you please open the machine so I can read it?" And then this man walked up, Chief Campbell, Chief of Police, he was running the poll. He said, "There ain't nothing on there yet Miss Martha, we haven't voted." I said, "Could I
just see that please, this paper says I'm supposed to do that." "Where did you get your paper?" I said, "Would you please open the machine?" I started off bad. They were mad, but they finally opened it and I read it and it was zeroed out right. By the end of the day, I went and got them hot dogs and then I sat and helped them do the work they were being paid to do, I helped them count all the votes and all. And we were having a party at the old Jefferson Hotel. And I rode, just flew. I figured we owned the state, we had won. I parked my car in the street, right in the middle. And Drake said, "You can't do that." I said, "We own the state. We won." [laughter] He said, "No, no, no, go park your car somewhere else." And then, I couldn't believe we were only one of six [states that went for Goldwater]. Boy, did that deflate us. But we did it. So we were proud to be one of the six, anyway. That was probably our best hour.

And then Strom Thurmond joined. [Senator Strom Thurmond switched to the Republican Party with great fanfare on September 16, 1964, noting, “I am not leaving the Democratic Party. The Democratic Party has left me.”] And that brought in lots more votes. Because Gayle Averyt and I raised Senator Thurmond's money many times after that and half of the Senator's funds come from Democrats. He was not dyed in the wool like us, he just thought that he could identify with . . .

[Hartsook: When you did your work as a poll watcher, is that a time when it's a positive to be a woman? Because I would think that it would be very difficult to get angry with a Southern lady . . .]

Edens: That is the one place in which we tried to send as many men first and send them to the Eastovers and Ward Nine down on Millwood, the roughest places. The Rusty DePasses and the George Shissias and all the men got the hard ones. But they weren't as active at the time we started out. There was nobody else to go, so I went. But fortunately Chief Campbell and I were friends and we worked it out. But they had never had anybody come in. See, that's another advantage to having two parties, nobody ever checked the election system. And we were just new, we were going to do it right by the book. My poor daughter, Rusty DePass sent her down to Eastover and the child was twenty-two. She had a horrible time. She finally called, said she had been reading everything they were supposed to do and they weren't doing it. So she called Rusty and he went down and rescued her. He came to her wedding this spring and I said, "The only reason you got asked is because you rescued her." [laughter] And he looked at me and he said, "I can't believe that." I said, "That's the way it is."

But it was a good experience and there was a need for it. I don't think they were willfully violating laws, I think it was the way they'd always done it and so they just kept doing it that way and they had the same poll managers who had to recruit Republicans to go in and take Mike Cinnamon's [Director of the Richland County Election Commission] course in poll managing and he was good. When I was county chairman, I would give
him a list and he would take nearly every one of them. It wasn't always that way when we started out, but it was better when we left.

**Hartsook:** Have you played much of a role over the years in candidate recruitment, and I'm thinking particularly about recruiting some of these Democratic office holders like Senator Thurmond.

**Edens:** I never recruited a Democrat. But I worked with people like Mark Sanford, I talked to Steve Morris. I didn't recruit him. I told him don't run against Joel Lourie, but he didn't listen. But yes, as County Chairman we really had to recruit. I had a recruitment committee. I went down to poor E.D. Phillips. He had an open air market on Two Notch Road. And Hamilton Lott, rest his soul, and I went together. And we said, "E.D., you've got to do this." And he said, "Aw, do I have to?" I said, "Yes. We've got to have somebody to run for this. And filing ends at noon." We were sitting on some kind of barrel that he had apples or something in, we just sat right down in the produce place and talked him into it. We talked Phil Chappell into running. We visited with a lot of people.

**Hartsook:** What do you look for in an attractive candidate, and what attracted you to Mark Sanford? You know we're getting his papers.

**Edens:** Great. I've got my eye on him for something else. He has a home down at the beach too and we visit. I said, "Mark, you've just got to go." But I think we'll see Mark again. What really attracted me to Mark Sanford is I didn't think Van Hipp should be the candidate. [Mark Sanford won election to represent South Carolina’s 1st District in Congress in 1994. Van Hipp, Jr., was a former state Republican Party chairman and the favorite in a crowded primary battle. Sanford ultimately defeated Hipp in a runoff. The seat was open as incumbent Arthur Ravenel chose to run for governor that year.] And, as it turned out, I was right; Van Hipp had problems afterwards with things that were unsavory. But I didn't dislike Van, but he was so far right. And I don't think that he would have been good for that district. And he was sort of preachy. Mark Sanford is laid back.

**Hartsook:** And yet very principled. Just an interesting guy.

**Edens:** Oh, yes. He came over to see me in his khakis and his loafers and we sat down at the beach house and he said, "I'm told that if you don't anoint me, I can't go." And I said, "I don't believe that, but I'm glad you came to see me." So we sat down and we talked about people in the different counties he'd be confronted with. He had never run for anything and his wife Jenny was his campaign manager. The mother of his four sons. If you want to go in a wild house, go in there. Oh, those children are everywhere. But they adore him and they spend a lot of
time with him. But he's just, firstly, he looks good. People say that shouldn't matter. It does matter. You know, John Kennedy looked good. He's attractive. He has definite ideas, and he doesn't waver. He'll express his opinion and he'll be glad to listen to yours, but very seldom does he change what he believed to begin with. And he's not afraid of work. He worked endless hours to win that time. He went in there with, what was it, eight other people?

Hartsook: Yes, it was a huge slew.

Edens: And he had no prior experience, really, working with the Party. I have no idea what motivated him. He just said some people asked him to do it. And he wanted to know if I thought he could do it. And when he got to Washington, he was wonderful. The poor thing, he slept in that office for six years. That was one of his theories, that people shouldn't get too comfortable in Washington. They [should] get their business done and get out. But he was interesting.

Hartsook: I thought he was an eloquent spokesman for McCain. I thought he just gave wonderful stump speeches on his behalf and really showed the kind of promise that I think you're talking about.

Edens: He did, he did. We talked about it because I was a George [W.] Bush supporter and he was a McCain supporter and I said, "Go for it." And he said, "I'm going." And Lindsey Graham was a McCain person too. But he's on the [Bush] bandwagon now, though. I think Lindsey's very bright; I see lots of future for both of them. Lindsey could be a senator; he's very good on his feet.

Hartsook: He's one of the best campaigners I've ever seen.

Edens: Yes. He works very hard. I thought he was great during the impeachment trial. I thought he presented himself very well. I thought they all did. But anyway, he's around, and he and Mark Sanford both are going to do something else. I've talked to both of them. I know that down the road they're going to jump someplace.

Hartsook: It was interesting; ETV televised all the debates, one debate for each of the House districts. And they showed Andy Brack debating Henry Brown. [Democrat Brack and Republican Brown sought the open seat being vacated by Sanford.] And there was a third party candidate as well, so there were three of them. And they all tried to identify with Mark Sanford. The clear winner of the debate was the man leaving office. All three of them tried to identify themselves with Sanford or his philosophy.

Edens: I wish Mark would have stayed, but he really believes in term limits, and I happen to also. And we had
talked about it. And I said, "Are you sure you want to do that?" And he said, "Yep, I do." He said, "How can I say I believe it if I'm not willing to do it?" I said, "Well, it may come a time we may not have . . ."

[Tape 2 begins]

Hartsook: Talking about candidate recruitment, [in] 1974, you all have what you think is the ideal candidate for governor in recently retired General William Childs Westmoreland. Why was that campaign a fiasco?

Edens: In the first place, all the people that wanted Westmoreland walked off and left him; left he and Lee Atwater sitting last. Jim Henderson, Harry Dent, I think they were the two people that called me and said, "We want to talk to you about doing something," and I went to talk to them and they wanted me to help run the campaign. We were down on Millwood Avenue, the police department is there now, I believe. In the McCrory building. The general was a great general, but he was not a good politician. He was very uptight. He had no idea how to speak to people. He was very stiff. It just wasn't going to work. And what is so funny, Drake was working for Jim Edwards and I was working for Westmoreland. I just thought that name recognition would do it. It didn't do it at all.

Hartsook: When did you realize that you had an ineffective candidate?

Edens: When I took him around trying to get everyone down, I could never find Jim Henderson; I realized we had just been left. The scheduling was bad, the fundraising was difficult; it wouldn't work. He radiates no warmth. I mean, he's up here and everybody reveres him as being a great general, but he wasn't comfortable greeting people. He didn't like speaking. Now, if Kitsy, his wife, had run, she's very down to earth. But he just wasn't that way; he was so used to being respected and waited on and catered to that he didn't understand getting down and doing this. And it's not something you can teach somebody, we tried. It wasn't his nature.

I have a wonderful picture. He wrote me a sweet note after the campaign and all. But the people that really wanted him to run, the business community and all, just plain wasn't there. I don't know why they would promote somebody and then turn around and walk off, but they did. And we were in shock that Jim Edwards won.

Hartsook: Did you work on his [Edwards'] campaign after the primary?

Edens: Yes, I did. But I wasn't there at first, and Jim tells me about it all the time. We're great friends now; he's
one of my favorite people. If I was him, I wouldn't like me, but he's just really neat, he and Anne both are. And he made a great governor. I remember just being stunned when I found out that we had won. Of course, if Pug Ravenel had not been pulled out of the race, quite frankly I don't think we would have won. [Democratic nominee, Charles P. “Pug” Ravenel was forced to withdraw late in the general campaign when the court ruled he failed to meet the state’s residency requirement. He was replaced by primary runner-up William Jennings Bryan Dorn.] But I think we won because we got a break. And while we were all wondering, "What do we do?" Jim was just busy getting everything set up. It just came as a natural to him. I thought, "How are we going to take a dentist and make a governor out of him?" He made a governor of himself. He got along with the Democrats and the Republicans. He was into the Education Finance Act, he did a lot of stuff that I had no idea. . . . He surrounded himself with good people, which was good too.

And Anne is a natural, she is very relaxed. She helped us with Easter Seals. In fact, I asked her to come on the board and I said, "You don't have to come to the meetings." She said, "I don't go on things I don't do." She came to every meeting. One time we were having a reception for the crippled children, disabled we should say now, at the Mansion. And this little boy came through and he was telling Anne about his dog. And she said, "Did you know I have a dog?" And she stopped the whole receiving line and sent her aide out to get the dog out of the yard [and] bring him in, and she and that child sat on the floor and played with that dog while all these people were waiting in line. But that little boy, that made his day. He probably will never, ever, if he's a grown man, he probably will always remember that. But she was a tremendous asset.

**Hartsook:** We're going to be getting Governor Edwards’ papers as well. Our meeting with him was just fascinating. He talked about his conservative philosophy for about twenty minutes. And it was the most compelling presentation. You could tell it was all from the heart. It was just fascinating. Now, I never saw him campaign, was he a very effective campaigner?

**Edens:** Yes. Obviously. And he had lots of good Republicans working for him. Rusty DePass ran Jim's campaign. They had a lot of fun, but they worked hard. They were like me; they were sort of in shock when we won. When you lose for so long, I guess maybe you just don't think you're supposed to win, I don't know.

**Hartsook:** Can we talk a little bit about the conventions? I know now the national conventions only have a shadow of their former drama and importance, but what are your favorite convention memories?

**Edens:** 1972, when it was a real convention. Rockefeller was running against Nixon. And, of course, we had been Nixon supporters a long time. My younger brother, Bill, was the advance man for Julie and Tricia Nixon during that campaign. He brought them to Columbia and I gave a nonpartisan luncheon at the Palmetto Club,
which was really hard, but I drummed up some people who were of other political persuasions and we had a good
time. But I got to sit with them and do things with them. I don't know if I should say this, well, I'll say it
anyway. It was the First Lady luncheon. They have one at every convention. They have a big to-do for whoever
the First Lady candidate is. About fifteen minutes after we were all seated, Happy Rockefeller arrived. And, of
course, everybody stood up and clapped. And Julie Nixon said, "Martha, at least my mother is a lady. She
knows to arrive on time." And I said, "Julie, just calm down." [laughter]

I don't think there were any Rockefeller votes in our delegation; I believe it was all Nixon. But it was a
contested race and it was interesting to watch the backdoor maneuverings. They'd go around and have meetings
with all the delegations and just to watch the way that it all comes together eventually... And the roll call was
not solid and then talking someone into getting up and moving that it become unanimous and all, it was just...
And Drake was [state Party] chairman then and my brother was an advance man, so I got to go to a lot of things
and do a lot of things that I probably would not have gotten to do otherwise. And at that convention, Jim
Henderson of Greenville, who died a couple of years ago... Jim should have been governor of this state if his
wife would have let him, he was wonderful. Jim and I were co-chairmen for the Nixon campaign, so we got to
go talk to all the bigwigs, and it was just like the child in the candy store, to meet all these people I'd heard about,
but it was a fun convention. It was lots of fun. In fact, I have a picture over in my office of that convention, on
the floor I think.

And then the one I really loved was the San Diego convention [in 1996]. The National Committee runs
the convention and one of the choice positions on the committee is to be on the site selection committee, and I
ran. There were two [members] from the North, South, East, and West. Alec Poitevint from Georgia, who is
now treasurer of the national party, and I were elected from the Southern Region. And we got to visit all the
sites. And of course, Haley [Barbour] was the chairman, and I loved Haley. He traveled with us to all these
places and so did our attorney. But we chose San Diego. And it was a perfect convention site. And being on the
inside and doing all that stuff with people that I really cared about... We're still close. We write notes all the
time and we always exchange Christmas cards, it's sort of like a family after you've spent a whole summer
traveling with these eight people, and you're family.

But that was a wonderful convention. It worked. It was in a beautiful city, and we were proud of the
convention that we put on. And it was just great for TV. The backdrop of the marina and the boats and the
whole... San Diego is just a beautiful place. And we had Susan Golden, who is a Republican, was a woman
mayor of San Diego, to work with. Herb Kline from the Nixon administration was there. Jack Ford, President
Ford's son, worked with us. It was a congenial group and it was a good convention. And we didn't have
demonstrations, we just did our business and left. But I didn't go the last time. Actually, conventions are more
like a big party when there's no contest. I gave up my vote once when I was committeewoman. I gave it and let
somebody else go as a delegate and I went as an alternate. Because they thought they were going to change the
course of America by going to vote in a convention. I didn't have the heart to tell them, you know, they just rap the gavel and go on. The whole thing is already set up when there's not any opposition, they just do their thing and go ahead. They don't even hear your vote. They wouldn't know whether you voted or didn't vote in a mob of people. But they were so excited about going. They, at least, got their credentials and what have you, and they went. But it [San Diego] was a good convention, I liked that one.

**Hartsook:** It surprised me how many people have saved good things from the San Francisco/Goldwater convention. We've just got wonderful [Goldwater and San Francisco convention] memorabilia from donors over the last three or four years.

**Edens:** Drake loved that one. That was the one in which he nominated Goldwater for president. Goldwater had them skip South Carolina [as each state cast its vote] and come around and give it back to Drake to do the nomination and I think Thruston Morton, who was the senator from Kentucky, was presiding. And he acted like he couldn't hear Drake the first time and so Drake got to say it twice. [laughter] The next morning it was on Good Morning America. We were all up seeing it again. But that was a good convention. Drake and Arthur Ravenel and I've forgotten who else flew out of here, but a whole crowd of them did. I took his children out to meet him when he came home, I didn't go that time.

**Hartsook:** I think most people have very little concept of what being a national committeewoman entails. Can you talk a little bit about how you saw that job and what you felt you . . . ?

**Edens:** I saw it differently from anybody else that's ever served as committeewoman, I think. I saw it as a working office and most people see it as a position. And our Party rules don't. They say that you are to be the liaison between the state Party and the national Party. And that doesn't say a lot. I thought maybe they'd have a big notebook that would tell me all these things I was supposed to do. There isn't one. And I think there ought to be a job description. But I took it as I was representing all forty-six counties and I went through all of them. And every time we had a seminar at the National Committee on fundraising or poll watching or something, I would take all that material, bring it back, and get a group together and work with them. And I also did bulletins. Plus, I went to every state committee meeting and I carried a report on what we were doing and what we were working on, and what the potential was for elections all over the country. Because you really become as interested in who's going to be the governor of Virginia as you do in South Carolina, when you're looking at the whole picture.

I went to the state Republican Women's meetings, which were dull sometimes, but I went. And I did a seminar for them. They had the worst parliamentary procedure in the history of the world and it just drove me
crazy. So I ordered some booklets on parliamentary procedure, and I went, and each meeting I covered one section of it as part of the program, so they could learn how to at least conduct a meeting and get out of someplace instead of dilly-dallying around all day long. So that was fun. But it was work.

I drove up and down this highway sometimes at night when my family was screaming and hollering because I was going places. Like Seneca. There were a lot of places. This is a small state, but the good thing about being in Columbia, you can get most places in two hours from the center of the state, so it isn't as bad as it could be. But I worked and if there was a candidate that needed help in learning how to do fundraising or looking at the demographics in his area, I'd put it down and say, "All right, this is how they voted last time, this is what you need, this is a weak precinct," to analyze the election. The nuts and bolts, most people don't get exposed to [that], and that's the way you win elections. And we're getting away from a lot of that and I think it's scary. Right here, in Richland County, we have work to do. I just think we don't work as hard as we used to work and you can't do that. You're going to have to work. Anytime you decide to run for office, it's no cakewalk.

So I did those kind of things. And I finally wrote a manual for the state and trained the chairmen and the executive committeemen in all the things it takes to make a solid county party. And my experience as a county chairman was very helpful to me in that. Because I knew what county chairmen were supposed to do. So that was my role. And then I spoke to the Charleston Women's Club, to the Beaufort Club, to the Seneca Club. And then as I went around, I informed them of what was happening at the national level. They needed to know.

Hartsook: Do you like to speak to groups? Do you like to get that immediate feedback?

Edens: Yes. I don't write speeches, I just make notes on the things I think. And I would talk about things that I knew of in their county. I always wove that into whatever I had to say, so they'd know that I wasn't coming out of the field, I did know what was happening where I was standing. And I'd usually try to direct my remarks toward things that I thought would be helpful to that particular situation.

Hartsook: How important is it that South Carolina have a strong voice on the National Committee?

Edens: Oh, I think it's very important.

Hartsook: In what ways?

Edens: Well, number one, we raise an awful lot of money at the national level, and they provide part of it to assist state parties. And they also target candidates. And I would always get my figures and go in there and beat
on the desk and holler for candidates that I thought had a really good chance. I'd take the demographics and the recent votes and say, "This fellow right here is going to need help." You have to get your share of the pot. And if you've been sitting on the back row, not opening your mouth, you don't get it. Because you've got to speak up for your state. And I did many times. And I loved being the co-chair, I did it twice. I ran two times and that puts you on the Chairman's Executive Committee. So you know everything, you have a voice in everything that's going on in the nation. And you really become very close to an awful lot of those people from different areas.

My most rewarding experience in politics came under Haley Barbour's leadership when we captured the House and the Senate. We hadn't done that in forty years. It was in 1992. I didn't think we had a prayer. Haley got us a room, sat down, got his book out, analyzed each state, told us which races we would take. And when we started out, I said, "Haley, that's a good talk." He said, "You don't believe it, do you?" I said, "No." He said, "How much do you want to bet?" And I said, "I don't know if I want to waste my money." And he said, "You'll see. We're going to work." But we worked. I went to a lot of the counties. Helped a lot of the candidates that were running for the targeted races. And when we won, I could not believe it. I'll show you a collage back here; I've got a lot of pictures in my hall of different political things. Haley put a collage of all the newspaper headlines the day we took the House and the Senate together and then he wrote a note across the bottom, it's one of my favorite things, I couldn't believe he did that. But to those of us that worked hard, he sent it with a little note. But that was a great day. Now, we lost the presidency, but . . . . And I couldn't believe Haley took that job after we had just lost the presidency. Haley came here when Drake was chairman. Haley was at the University of Mississippi as a student. And he and Icooked hamburgers out for a Young Republican something or other, and we have been friends ever since. After Lee [Atwater] died, we were going to elect a new chairman. Haley decided to run. We had five candidates. And nobody would say who they were for. Well, I got one of these big Haley buttons. He said, "Martha, are you sure you want to do that? You're the vice-chair of the Southern Region." I said, "They might as well know where I stand." And so at the opening meeting, he asked me to do the pledge of allegiance on national TV. I'm up there with this big Haley button. He said, "The whole world knows where you stand now." [laughter]

But we won. Oh, that politics was exciting. If somebody lost, our Haley group had the names of the people we had to contact before the next vote because you wanted to get the votes of the people whose candidate just got eliminated for Haley. But I think it was probably the third ballot we got it. But we looked like bees, all over that floor, contacting our people. But he was the best thing that ever happened to the National Committee. Just a master politician. And very laid back. His favorite expression, you'd ask him something that you thought might work, he'd say, "That dog won't hunt." [laughter] That's all he'd say. But he really is a wonderful person. I wish he would do nothing but politics, but I guess he's gone back to making a living. He is a consultant, though, I believe. I know he was in George Bush's kitchen cabinet, as we call it, during this race. I was glad to know that he was there. Because he is smart.
Hartsook: Well, he surely drove the Democrats crazy.

Edens: Oh, he loved it, he loved it. He thrived on it. But he is a great friend and a good fellow.

Hartsook: You've talked a lot about grassroots organization.

Edens: I believe it's the only way.

Hartsook: Talked a lot about phone banks. What other areas do you think you've become expert in?

Edens: Oh, I don't know that I'm an expert. I think if you're going to run, I think studying the demographics and the past votes and analyzing what your chances are. . . . Some people just jump in and they don't have a prayer but they haven't sat down to really analyze whether or not you have a prayer. Then I think you have to determine whether or not you have the ability to raise money or if you have a friend who has the ability to raise money. Because you can't win without money in this day and age, it just doesn't work. But I think assisting people; I guess maybe it would be in recruiting candidates. If you recruit a candidate, you have to figure out if that person. . . . But if I was recruiting one, I would figure out before I recruited that person if they had a chance. And if they came to me, and they had not told me before, then I would sit down with them to analyze whether or not [they could win]. And I've told some people point blank, you know, it just isn't here. If it isn't, now, I think it's a waste of time and money.

Hartsook: What do you think are some of the key issues that the committee faced while you were a member?

Edens: Well, I think dealing with the far right was a key issue. And there were always members who put resolutions, we had a way of weeding them out, but before the resolutions committee, they would put very controversial things on the floor, and that's when you really had to work for what you believed so that some statement didn't . . . , because the press is always sitting outside the door waiting on us, so it doesn't come out that the National Committee has done so and so. Because if you pass a resolution, then they speak for everybody, whether you voted for it or not. It doesn't make any difference. The press will print it as an endorsement of certain positions. And I don't think that was healthy, that was hard.

I think education. . . . Evelyn McPhail [d.1998], who was the co-chairman and was from Mississippi, was one of the greatest things we did. We sent field directors all over the country educating people on the same
things I've been talking about, about grass roots things to do to elect people. They would give seminars on
candidate recruitment or fundraising or the importance of poll watching. And issues, we did, we'd single out
maybe four issues that we all could agree on, that are traditionally, you know, tax cuts and education and the
environment and issues that had appeal to the cross-section of the country, that we believed in. And, we would
put out documents and brochures. We usually abbreviated them. If you write thick things, people don't read
them. But we educated the different states and these are the issues you should go for. Some people talk about so
many things that they confuse people. You have to repeat over and over again the four things you believe in and
that will get you elected, if you have everything else in place. So we discussed the issues.

We just discussed tons of things. And then we had speakers every time we met. Either the president, if it
was our president, and the vice president, or Bob Dole from the Senate when he was Majority Leader of the
Senate. The Speaker, Newt Gingrich, used to bless us frequently with his presence. But he was a Speaker. Oh,
talk about fired up. He could get fired up. I'm real sorry he got off the beaten track, because he was an asset.
Although he was more or less of the right wing vintage, he could express it very well. And he was a worker. But
we learned a lot from other people. And we had things where we had what we call the Southern Leadership
Conferences, thirteen states. And we rotated. Each state that wants to have it can make an appeal to the Southern
Region and we vote on where it goes. And we do nothing but educational seminars there.

I had the one for South Carolina in '90-something, I can't remember what year now. But we used the
Omni at Charleston. And we had thirteen hundred people. And I had six cabinet members and the President
came that time. Boy, that was the most exciting thing I think I did as committeewoman. It also almost kills you
to prepare for that many people. I had Charleston baskets for all the national committee members and all the
visiting dignitaries, and we put rice and all sorts of local South Carolina products in them. And then to have to
work with the President's Secret Service and then with the campaign people, they'll make you pull your hair out.
You'll get everything all set up and they say, no, no, and they argue among themselves. I think they're trying to
argue for position, to get the security and all this stuff for all those people, it was something. But it worked
beautifully. Thirteen or fourteen Charleston restaurants did a Taste of Charleston for me the opening night down
at the tourist center. And I got them to give me all the carriages to use, it was just. . . . We had things going
everywhere. We had fundraisers going over in some of the old homes on the Battery. It was like a mad house,
but it worked. I don't even know why it worked, but it did. That was great.

That's how I got elected committeewoman, I think, was off of that conference, but it was really good. So
we are busy, the committee runs the business of the Party, but we also organize the convention. And there are
always two sides to any. . . . We never have one thing come up that everybody agreed on, you had to work it out.
Even like running five people for chairman. It was just hairy there for a while. But you really get to see how the
country goes. And I liked it, I really liked it. And I thought that we gave a lot to the Southern region because we
do a lot of things well in South Carolina. And I think our primary brings us tremendous publicity because we do
it before Super Tuesday, and I think it ought to stay that way. I know the Democrats don't think so then, because we get the publicity. They all want to do them on the same day, but I don't think we ought to have to do that.

**Hartsook:** It [2000] was certainly the most exciting primary I've ever experienced.

**Edens:** Oh, mercy. I'm telling you, my man [Bush] came close to... If Carroll Campbell hadn't taken three weeks leave of absence and come home, I don't know that we would have come out. Somehow, something was wrong. We were not moving in the right direction. But he got it in line. He went with them, I think, to nearly every county. And then we began to roll. And I'm not supposed to go to Republican things, but I went the night Bush won. I'm sure nobody saw me in the crowd. It didn't make any difference. I'm on the Election Commission [Ms. Edens began her term on the state Election Commission in 1998] and we can't do anything with a candidate, all we can do is Party things. But the Party gave that party, so I think it was okay that I went.

**Hartsook:** That must be difficult, to be so active in party politics, then to have to stand aside.

**Edens:** Very. Oh, it's so hard.

**Hartsook:** Would you accept that again, in retrospect?

**Edens:** I don't know. I think I would. Just like we're seeing problems in Florida, we have problems in South Carolina, and somebody has to care. We had eighteen hearings after the last election and we start Wednesday with hearings after this one. When you're dealing with human beings, you're going to have errors and problems. But I think we do a relatively good job with the makeup of our state. But somebody needs to do it, and I had already been privileged to do everything else. And [Governor] David Beasley asked me to do it. And I can't contribute [financially] to anything. Rusty DePass said, "That's the stupidest thing you ever did, David. What did you put her over there for? She's no good to us." And David said, "Oh yes, she is. She hears the hearings and she has a good mind." And I thought, "Well, I don't know." But it's an interesting committee. Jim Hendrix [Executive Director James F. Hendrix] does an excellent job. I was on the State Museum Commission for a while and I really like what I'm doing on the Election Commission better than I liked being on the Museum Commission. But Carroll likes me to do that, so I do.

[Tape 2, Side 2 begins]

**Hartsook:** Now, we talked about how open the Party has been to women. But have there been any
obstacles to you as a woman that you've had to overcome?

**Edens:** No. I don't understand it. Of course, I hear other people talking about it. I still think it goes back to ability and to your motive for wanting to do whatever it is you want to do. And if you have the ability, I don't see why any door should be closed to you. Now, I realize in the workplace that's a different thing, and I'm not in the workplace. I'm in the volunteer arena. But I just never had a problem. Maybe I never wanted to do something that's controversial, I don't know. Maybe I did.

**Hartsook:** When you got started in politics, this was a solidly Democratic state. And now it's a solidly Republican state. When you look back, do you see that as an inevitable progression, or do you see certain key incidents or things at work to make that change?

**Edens:** I think that we made a lot of things happen that opened the doors for other people to join the movement, but I think if we had never started in '60 with the Nixon campaign, if we had never done the Bill Workman campaign, if we had never done the Goldwater campaign, or the Charlie Boineau campaign, I don't think. . . . I guess somebody would have thought of it, but I feel like the efforts that we expended brought about what we have today. And that's the only problem I really have. Sometimes people talk about, "Well, Strom Thurmond built the Republican Party." That's not true at all. He may have agreed with us, but I wonder if Strom really ever thinks about. . . . He would have had no place to go. I mean, we were a fledgling party at best when he joined us, but he would have had to start something else if he was upset with the Democratic philosophy if we had not started and kept at it. He would have had nowhere to go. And I think lots of times these people forget that there were a hundred or so of us around the state, the Cord Seabrooks in Anderson, and Bill Hunter and all these people. If they had not been there, and not been willing to take a chance, we'd have been lots later [in developing the Party]. I guess somebody eventually would have built a Republican Party. But we gave them a head start.

**Hartsook:** Now, one of the other early party switchers that we've not talked about is Albert Watson. Were you close to him at all?

**Edens:** I liked Albert. When he ran, I did the canvass, which is the door-to-door. I directed it for the whole district. Because he was running for Congress. He resigned from Congress and ran again as a Republican. [Second District Congressman Albert Watson, a Democrat, endorsed Barry Goldwater for president and led the Democrats for Goldwater organization in the state. The following year, Watson was stripped of his seniority by the House Democratic caucus. He resigned and was reelected as a Republican in a special election.] I always said if you could give Albert the American flag and motherhood and apple pie, that was Albert Watson. When he
did his commercials, he did them very effectively; he was almost like a preacher. But he was a good candidate. He made a very bad mistake, or somebody in his campaign did, with the incident at A.C. Flora High School when he ran for governor. That cost him the election, I think. Because it smelled of racism and you can't do that. But I liked Albert and I knew him. After he became a judge, we sort of lost touch with him, but I did work in his campaign. [After his failed 1972 gubernatorial bid, Watson {d.1994} became an Administrative Law Judge in the Social Security Administration.]

Hartsook: Would you like to see more women as candidates and legislators?

Edens: Yes.

Hartsook: Are you working toward that? Are you actively recruiting and twisting arms?

Edens: I have worked with several women, yes, to run. My friend June Shissias was in the House and I thought she was very effective. I worked with Becky Meacham, who is Becky Richardson now, from the upstate and Fort Mill, Rock Hill. There are a lot of them. You know, I think that women have the time to do that and they have the ability to do it. And I think just because they are a woman is no reason to run. If there is a woman that has ability, I think she should not shy away from doing it. And if she's in an area that the demographics and the background say that she has a chance to win, I think she ought to go. I think women are really effective on the school board because I saw them there. I've seen some in the House that I thought were good. I do not know too many women that are in the Senate, and I think that's probably a place that we ought to put somebody. Because I think it's a place they could serve. And also in Congress. I think after we reach certain ages, people need to decide they've been there long enough and then if they do, then I think there's some women on our side of the fence that could run for some of those places.

Hartsook: Anybody in the back of your mind that you'd like to see in the [state] Senate or Congress?

Edens: I wish Joyce Hearn had run for Congress. I think she's a tiger by the tail, she has ability and she's aggressive and she thinks. She's got political savvy. Joyce will swap a vote with you. If you want her vote for something she doesn't really care that much about, she'll make you think she does and then she'll get your vote for something else. Joyce is just a good representative. And I think that she would have done well. But of course, like me, she's aged some. I'm sure she wouldn't do it now, but she would have been a good person to run for Congress. Her daughters are all grown and married and gone now, so she would have the time.

I think Edie Rodgers from Beaufort has ability. There are a number of them, I can't think of them right
off hand, but I think there are capable women who could do this. If they had the desire to do it.

**Hartsook:** You always hear about the fire in the belly, and that's really true, isn't it?

**Edens:** I think that was one of George Bush's problems the second go round [in his 1992 presidential reelection bid]. I don't think Bush really wanted to do that. And I wish he had told us. It was very frustrating to the [Republican National] Committee because we were all beating our heads out and his campaign committee didn't want to take any of the input we were giving them and we were out here in the field and we could see what was happening. But anyway, I call it enthusiasm, fire in the belly, or something. You've got to have the desire to want to win before you can win. And I think he didn't have that desire. Bush didn't enjoy campaigning. He's very reserved. And to say anything good about himself, he thinks is bragging. Therefore, he can't boast about what he's done. So it just was not a good deal for us that time.

But I think women should run and I think they should start at a lower office to see if they like it. It would be a shame to do something and then be miserable doing it.

**Hartsook:** When you look back over all your years in politics, do you have any disappointments?

**Edens:** Well, I think you can be disillusioned very easily. I saw things happen at the '72 convention and I've seen things since happen. . . . In fact, the most recent thing that distresses me is the fact that we had staunch Republicans who did not support our nominee for governor. That is beyond me. If you stop and think, you're giving Strom Thurmond's seat, your only senatorial seat, you're going to give [it] away. Because I do not believe Strom can live two more years. Just mathematically, I don't think it's going to happen. And when he dies, we now have a Democrat who is going to appoint a Democrat in a seat that we have owned for a long, long time. And it's very hard to unseat an incumbent; I don't care if he's been there two weeks. An incumbent is hard to hit. It's going to make it very hard for us to get that seat back.

And the people that didn't support David Beasley didn't support David Beasley because . . ., well, some of them, he had not supported their candidacy, he had gotten in the midst of some Republican primaries, and I don't think that most politicians would do it. I almost admire him for doing it, he had the guts to say who he thought would be the better person for the office. But that really disillusioned me, to think that we had worked all these years and they would turn around and openly support the nominee of the opposition party. I think you ought to move over to this Party if you don't support that Party's nominee. Don't get out there and tear down what we have built for all these years.

And I don't think it was justifiable cause to oppose David Beasley. And I don't come from the same side of the fence David Beasley does. But we got along very well. I mean, after he was elected, he was our governor.
Now, I may be a more moderate person, and he's probably further right than I am. But he got more people off of welfare than has ever happened in this state and his program was used for a model in the Republican Governors Conference. I think he did a lot of good things. He started the scholarship program that we now have for education. He just had good programs going. And he wasn't so dumb. He wanted the flag down, the flag is down. The things that people got upset with him about came to pass. He was against the machine gambling, they are gone. So, he wasn't as dumb as some people chose to think he was. I think they probably didn't like the manner. I mean, you don't say you've prayed about it and you're going to do so-and-so, I don't think that's necessary. I think the way he presented some of the stuff that he did probably didn't go over, but his ideas were not bad. But I just couldn't believe that anybody would knowingly jeopardize all that we've done by getting out and openly campaigning against the chosen candidate. You know, we have a primary today. If you don't like the incumbent governor, find you a candidate to run in the primary. That's what they're for. I don't have a problem with that. I have a problem with waiting and then attacking the candidate who is running to lead the Party. I didn't like that.

**Hartsook:** Now, flipping the coin and looking at the other side, what gives you the most pleasure? And, what are you most proud of? What accomplishment stands out most in your mind?

**Edens:** I guess probably I'm most proud of being part of the group that recaptured both houses of Congress. Because we really worked. We still have it, provided, I haven't heard how the Senate race in Washington came out. But at least we're even. And if we get our people in the next year, to the White House, then we would still have it because the Vice President would vote to carry the majority. That would be the first time since Ronald Reagan's two years that we've had a majority of both houses and a Republican president, should we happen to get one any time in the near future. [At this time the Florida vote was still being disputed.]

And I was proud of the Southern Leadership Conference. I think it showcased this state in a way that it has not been showcased before, politically for the Republican Party. To be able to draw that many prominent Republicans, the Jack Kemps and the Newt Gingriches and Bush and the treasurer came. Everybody came. It was a great, great credit to this state so far as the Republican Party is concerned.

And then, I don't know what else I'm proud of. I'm proud of the organizational skills that I taught so many people, and being the head of the Committee that wrote all that and had it put into practice in all the areas. We did district conferences. I think we've learned a lot. And when you came from nothing to where we are in forty years, it's pretty good. They've had a hundred years or more on theirs, organizing themselves. To start from scratch, it was pretty good. I'm proud we were a part of that because I think South Carolina is a better state because of it. I believe in both sides of the question being debated. Because there's always two sides to everything and there was only one side being heard.
Hartsook: Well, those are the questions I wanted to put to you, but I always like to offer my narrators a chance to answer the question I should have asked but didn't know enough to ask, or to make any kind of closing comments you'd like to have on the record. It's been an excellent interview.

Edens: I guess I'm probably grateful to have had the opportunity to be a part of something that started with so few people that has grown to this proportion, that it has made the impact on our state and our nation that the South Carolina Republican Party has. I loved every minute of it, the good and the bad.

Hartsook: You know, one of the interesting things that you read about, especially with volunteer organizations, is that their leadership core, the people they draw from, is shrinking because they're so used to having people like you, really bright, capable people, that aren't committed to a forty-hour a week or a sixty-hour a week career. So many of those women that used to throw their energies into charities and organizations aren't available now because they're lawyers or professors or doctors or corporate executives.

Edens: Two breadwinners in families has changed the whole picture in volunteerism. As I said, I was national president of my college sorority and we have province officers for each. . . . Well, in this state we have two, because we have eight chapters. But finding people to fill those positions is almost impossible. I've been trying to get them to go to a system of regional directors and pay the directors because people that have full time jobs [and] children and husbands at home, don't have time to give ten hours a week or so to something for a volunteer cause. They don't have it. It's not that they wouldn't like to do it, but . . . And a lot of them that work don't have to work. They have chosen a career because they studied for it, they believe in it, and they want the opportunity to participate in that career, to be a career person. And I admire them for that, that's fine. Were I going all the way back and starting over, I might do something differently, I don't have any way of knowing now. But I don't think I could have done anything that I enjoyed more than I enjoyed my volunteerism.

Hartsook: Well, and you know politics is always fascinating, but I don't know of any state . . .

Edens: It is, but you can put people up on a pedestal and then see them do something that just blows your mind. Now, that's hard. Maybe I'm an idealist, but I mean there were several times I just could not believe some of the back scene shenanigans at conventions and things. I would have thought better of that person. But you know, you just think, "Well, sometimes there's an apple in the barrel and it's not too good." And you just move on. The thing that distresses me most about the candidates that we cultivate, [that] we beat our brains out to get elected, is when they get there, they're not the same people. With rare exception, they're not the same people they were
when we elected them. They forget how they got where they are. And then all these politicians do is, all these noble things I thought they were going to do, their main worry is, "How am I going to get reelected? And what vote can I pass that will get me reelected? And I sure can't take a stand on that because it's going to offend somebody."

Hartsook: And raising that campaign nut for your next. . . . How many thousands of dollars a day [must the average congressman raise to mount a viable reelection campaign]?  

Edens: Really, the money is immaterial, it's the fact that you really believe in this person and you get so wrapped up in this campaign and all of a sudden, they don't remember how they got there nor why they're supposed to be there. The main thing is get me reelected. And I can't understand why they want to be reelected, it can't be the salary, down there in the House.

Bischoff: Do you think that's changed a lot over the years? That forty or fifty years ago, that didn't happen with candidates? Or did it always happen?

Edens: Well, I was really not too involved fifty years ago, but I think being reelected has become more important because now there is competition, there are two parties, and they have to worry about who is going to run against them, "Is he going to file against me if I do so-and-so?" I just think they're consumed with getting reelected. All I want them to do is be consumed with doing the state's business, but in reality, they worry about getting reelected. And I think that's bad. I think they ought to know they are going to get reelected if they've done their job. But that isn't the way it goes. But there are some exceptions. Carroll Campbell is an exception. He never forgot where he came from or how he got there.

Hartsook: Well, looking on the other side of the aisle, I think somebody like a John Spratt also shows a lot of independence and . . .

Edens: Yes, he does.

Hartsook: But you're right, it's a very different . . .

Edens: The name of the game is get reelected. But I think power must be an aphrodisiac. They think they have some kind of power because they are there. And recognition. And they thrive on that. But I want them to be down there doing good. And some of them are. John Courson is a good senator. And I think Warren Giese is a
good senator. I love Joe Wilson. I want Joe to run for Floyd's seat. And I want Floyd to come home.

Hartsook: I think Senator Wilson agrees with you.

Edens: I love Joe, he's one of my favorite. . . . He was my senator. For so long I didn't have a senator. Joe and I worked the Nixon campaign together in 1972, I guess. He worked with Jim Henderson. He was our field man. We have to have a senator come from Lexington in this district because they vote their hearts out. They save every candidate we have, just about, if it's a close race. They saved Carroll Campbell with a 25,000 vote lead the first time he ran. And when Floyd runs, they come out of the boondocks in Lexington. It's like the Savior has walked on the road and they all get out and they vote and he wins. But this time, I believe he carried Richland County. Normally he doesn't, because we have a lot of government employees and we have a number of liberal people at the university, and all these people that vote. And we have the fort [Fort Jackson]. It's hard for us to win an overall county race.

Hartsook: Well I'll tell you, I think she [Spence’s Democratic opponent, Jane Frederick] ran a very ugly campaign and a very poor campaign. And, I think that was painfully obvious, don't you?

Edens: Well, see, Floyd is no politician. I have trouble getting Floyd. . . . He gets up and gives a speech, he says nothing. I tried to write them for him during the early campaigns, give him a card. He'll walk up and pat people on the back and all, but he just is no campaigner. He never even says what he does. I'd give him four issues. He'd put that card in his pocket and he'd get up and say nothing and he'd get elected again. And we'd raise money for him. He doesn't ever raise. . . . He had no money this time. We had to run out, well they had to run out, I couldn't contribute, but they had to run out and start. . . . Gayle [Averyt] and a lot of them. Bill Cassels started raising money for him. I don't even think he understands how you get elected. He used to want to have coffees. And we had coffee after coffee. I said, "Floyd, everybody that comes to my house is going to vote for you already, why do we have to have all these coffees all over the place?" He's just not a politician. The Lord has taken care of him. The Lord and Lexington takes care of Floyd. But he knows the issues and he votes. But he's like George Bush, [Sr.,] he doesn't like campaigning. He'll go for months and not come into Richland County. It's across the river. And then he'd wonder why he didn't carry Richland County.

Hartsook: [To Jean Bischoff] You've never met him, have you? You can't meet him and not like him.

Edens: Oh, he's so lovable. They just did a tribute for him, the state Republican women did, and I live at the beach in the summer. They called me and said, "Would you be one of the people to pay tribute to Floyd?" And I
said, "Oh, y'all, I didn't want to come home [from her home at the beach]." But I came. I drove. I had guests coming in that night on a plane and I came and spoke and flew back to the Charleston airport to get my friends. He looks great. I was surprised, I didn't know how he would look after the kidney transplant. He looks better than he's ever looked.

Hartsook: He looks better, he sure does.

Edens: It's the damnedest thing I've ever heard of. The Lord just really loved Floyd, to admit somebody to go through a double lung transplant. We brought him home after that, here again we had no money, because Floyd doesn't campaign, and we thought he was dying anyway. We brought him home and took him up to the Capitol City Club. We must have raised about $100,000 for him that night. And he was just out of the hospital and he had just gotten married. But he could walk and once they saw him, everything was fine. But we were running a dead candidate for a long time.

Hartsook: I saw him at a public event, two, three months before the operation, and he did not look like himself, I mean you would not have recognized him unless you got right up close to him.

Edens: But he looked much better. He had been in Mississippi for a while and somebody sent a private plane to pick him up, and brought him home, and we had a fund raiser at the Capitol City Club and he said a few words. His favorite line was, "I'm glad to be here, I'm glad to be anywhere." It was like Strom. Strom tells everybody that this person has courage, capacity, and conviction. Everybody has that. So, I don't care who he talks about, those are his three lines and you can know that's what he's going to say. But Strom is a master politician. Oh, is he smart. He doesn't miss a trick. And he's got a great staff and right now it's a really good thing. But I sure hate to think about him not being here because we're going to get a Democrat.

Hartsook: Up until the last year or so we used to joke about this. Many of our graduate students come from out of state and almost all of them, within the first three or four months of being in South Carolina, almost all of them will have met Strom at some point. That's not been true the last year or two.

Edens: He didn't go to the convention this year. The times that I've been, always, they do it by how many votes you get, and I always sat next to Strom. And I was amazed, young people from all over the country. . . . [Senator Thurmond was a wildly popular figure at his last convention] I mean, you could hear that it was going on because they had cameras and mikes and people talking to Strom and I thought, "Well, sitting by a throne is not so good." That was before I learned you didn't have to go to the convention because it had all been decided. But
he really attracts people everywhere, they all talk to him.

**Hartsook:** They all wrote about that at the last convention he attended.

**Edens:** It's just amazing. People from everywhere came to talk to him. And lots of people from South Carolina came and he knows about their great-grandparents. He can remember backwards very well. He does very well. And occasionally he'll have a good day and he really gives a pretty good speech. But now, he does make notes and he does have something to say about what's going on in Washington. I never got Floyd that far, but I did try.

**Hartsook:** Thank you very much.

**Edens:** You're welcome.

*Interview ends*