

Sarah Craig: November 1, 1991

- #6 Old Ivy Square Condos. Entrance on Old Ivy Road. 404/488-5385 or 404/237-4507
- She was on Weltner's staff when he was in Congress, and she met Wyche there, in the office.
- "When he was in law school at Emory he came to me one day with a creative idea. He said 'I'd like to talk to Ivan (Allen, Mayor of Atlanta) about going down to City Hall at night. The city ought to be responsive to people at night.' He talked them into it and assigned to himself the title, 'Night Mayor.' It awed Ivan Allen. It was a smart political move, because he learned about people and people learned about him." (His first political success?)
- "He was still in law school when he decided to run for the Board of Alderman. And he ran as the Night Mayor. He came out of no where. He had no money. Races did cost money then, and people on the take had money. He did a good job of campaigning on a shoe string. It was a non-partisan election." He was elected from "a north side district." (He showed me his house and his grammar school.)
- She then talked about his desire to run for President of City Council after the reorganization of city government. I should check whether he had a hand in creating the new position - for which he then ran. I wouldn't doubt it!
- "Wyche and I made a TV commercial. It was very amateurish, but it was effective. We did it in the city council chambers with him sitting on a desk saying, 'Here is where the decisions are made.' He was running against a young banker who had the support of the business community, Wade Mitchell, and Hosea Williams, a black minister who was colorful and wild. Wyche was the outside candidate. He couldn't capture blocs like Mitchell. Besides, the mayor's race had the front seat and the City Council seat got second place. He got into a run-off with Mitchell and won, again, on a shoe string. He was just fresh out of law school without any moneyed support."
- "He won his races on shoe leather, going door-to-door. He had no money for advertising; but he had innovative ideas like three cornered signs to put on tops of cars that were parked in shopping centers." (And the TV ad, too, I guess.)
- When he became President of City Council, he asked Sarah to come help him. She got a temporary duty assignment from federal government (she works at Center for Disease Control now) and became Staff Director of City Council and organized a committee system. She called that period "hectic, controversial, tense with the council divided half-whites, half-blacks."
- WF held his seat in Congress ok, but she says that "he had doubts as to how long it would last. Those doubts propelled him into the Senate race even though many of his friends thought it was premature." (CW spoke of

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his worries that Lewis might run.)

- Re his support among blacks, "They know him historically, as a member of Weltner's staff. He's good friends with his peers in the black community--people like Julian Bond."
- Among whites, "He has an eclectic following. He has eaten into the country club vote because he moves socially in those circles and because he comes from the right side of the tracks for snobs. He's a pragmatist. Mattingly did not take him seriously, but he immediately went out and made friends with the farmers and they trusted him. He said he'd ask for the Agriculture Committee and he did--even though he never even grew anything in a window pot. It's the greatest waste of talent in the world, but those are the people who helped elect him."
- She contrasts WF with CW at several points, saying that CW "could not sustain the camaraderie that politics demands, while WF thrives on it. He's a cloakroom politician as CW could not be. Wyche never thought he wouldn't win."
- Wyche "has never had a kitchen cabinet. He reaches out here and there."
- It's hard to be intellectual in a state-wide race, she says.
- In the Jordan/Fowler race, she said Jordan was "categorized" by his association with Jimmy Carter and that did not help him. She said that WF helped Ham pay back his debt.
- I asked her what she thought his greatest accomplishment was. "He tried to bring the city of Atlanta and the state of Georgia into a situation of political unity. You recall how the county unit system favored the rural vote and the system ~~was~~ run by the old boy network. Wyche didn't accept the idea that an Atlanta person couldn't hold things together. It was an idea about governing. He really understands what it means to govern."

"His pragmatism guides him on every vote. He's as far ahead of the electorate as you can get. His vote against the war was very unpopular. His vote for Thomas was extremely unpopular with people like me. Some people were terribly angry with him. But the great majority wanted him to support Thomas. I felt he had to do it, that he had no choice. I felt he did it holding his nose. And I think he thinks that he couldn't survive this and the vote on the war. I haven't spoken to him about it. I called Bill Johnstone the day of the vote and Bill asked if I wanted to talk with him. I said, no, that I didn't want to add to his burdens. I'm comfortable with the idea that he represents the majority of his constituents. He took the path of political expediency and voted with the majority. But he'll have some fence-mending to do with ~~this~~ friends."

- "He has made his place in the establishment of Georgia politics. Atlanta and Georgia have been warring camps; and he has done a fantastic job of being accepted as part of the network. And he cannot survive without making costly concessions sometimes. He seems to be able to snake charm liberals and conservatives. He runs as a centrist and gets enough votes

from both camps to win."

- This was spoken as something of an outsider who is content to have her man inside the circle and recognizes that there's a price in purity that must be paid.
- She was Southern Regional Director of the HHS Department under Jimmy Carter.
- She used the Gambrell-Nunn races as proof that a good Atlanta candidate couldn't win a Senate seat. She thought Gambrell was a good liberal candidate. It's like Howard Mead or someone who used the Bo Ginn example to generalize that a congressman couldn't win a Senate seat. Well, WF broke both "rules." And that's why Sarah stresses the Atlanta-Georgia blending as his accomplishment - a career accomplishment really.