

INTERVIEW with ARTHUR RAVENEL Jr.

U.S. Representative from South Carolina's 1st district, 1987 thru '94

Biographical Background, mostly from www.wikipedia.org --

The Charleston-born Ravenel served in the United States Marine Corps from 1945 to '46. In 1950, he received a Bachelor of Science degree from the College of Charleston. He became a Realtor and general contractor, and was a Democratic member of the South Carolina House of Representatives from 1954 to '59.

In the early 1960s, Ravenel switched to a Republican affiliation and kept running for office. He lost three elections for the South Carolina Senate (1962, '74, and '76), one for the U.S. House of Representatives (in a 1971 special election), and one for Mayor of Charleston (also 1971). In November 1980, Ravenel finally made the breakthrough by being elected -- as a Republican -- to the State Senate. He served until late 1986, when he was elected to the U.S. Congress from the Charleston-based 1st District. He was reelected three times without serious opposition.

He did not run for reelection in 1994, but instead ran for Governor. He finished second in the Republican primary to then-State Representative David Beasley, and lost in the runoff. Beasley, considered more conservative than Ravenel, went on to serve one term as Governor.

In 1996, Ravenel was elected to his old seat in the State Senate, where he served until 2005. In 2006, he was elected at the age of 79 to a seat on the school board of Charleston County. Only a year earlier, he survived a rare disease. In the same election, his son [Thomas Ravenel](#), also a Republican, was elected state treasurer. Thomas served for only six months before he was suspended after having been indicted for buying and distributing cocaine.

Technically retired, Arthur Ravenel is an active private investor. And **The Arthur Ravenel Jr. Company** remains an active real-estate firm in the Charleston area. It is headed today by son Arthur Ravenel III.

(1) EARLY DAYS and RELIGIOUS HERITAGE

ARTHUR RAVENEL Jr.: I'm 83 years old [as of March 29, 2010]. I was born right here in Charleston, in 1927. My father was a farmer, and farmed over in what they now call West Ashley (this was before all that area become suburbanized). Mostly it was large truck farms. And the reason they called 'em truck farms was they grew vegetables, mainly. And the vegetables were either trucked north, or trucked to the downtown markets.

When I was born, it wasn't called West Ashley. It went by the name of the Episcopal Church Parish -- over there was known as St. Andrews Parish. Some of us who are older still refer to it that way. The old parish church there was built in 1706.

FRANK GREGORSKY: You weren't --- were you raised a Catholic?

RAVENEL: No. No. I'm French Huguenot! You ever heard of them?

FG: Absolutely.

RAVENEL: I was the only one in the Congress [laughter].

FG: And weren't they the victims of the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre [in 1572]? -- we're talking about the Protestants of France, right?

RAVENEL: Right -- suffering persecution from the Catholics. Several hundred thousand of 'em left. Most went down to South Africa -- to Cape Town. At that time the Dutch ruled the Cape. Those Huguenots had crossed the border into the Netherlands, Holland; and because [the Dutch] were settlin' the Cape, it was natural to go down there. The Cape is a very fertile area, and the Huguenots got into the wine business. If you go down to Cape Town, South Africa, the place is loaded with French names. And around here you got many Huguenot names -- Ravenel, Porcher, Huger, Manigault (that family owns the newspaper).

FG: Your father was also named Arthur?

RAVENEL: Yeah. I'm Arthur Jr. And my son is Arthur III.

FG: What kind of a guy was your father?

RAVENEL: He and my uncle were what we call "old people's children." My grandfather was in the Confederate Army, and he did not marry until he was 54 years old. So he was 58 when Daddy was born, see? The family was pretty affluent -- up until the War. And of course they lost everything.

One of my great-grandfathers -- Alexander Hamilton Boykin -- was a large cotton planter. When the war broke out, he was a big plantation owner up near Camden. And he was a friend of Wade Hampton. So Hampton rode over to Camden on his horse. And he said: "Hamilton, we're goin' to war. And I want you to -- at your expense -- raise, recruit, arm and mount a company of cavalry, and take it to Virginia with me as part of the Hampton legion." And he did!

(2) FROM AGE 17 to 27

FG: So you were in high school during most of World War Two?

RAVENEL: Yeah -- St. Andrews High School over there.

FG: What was that like?

RAVENEL: It was great! I got a good basic education, graduating in 1944; then I volunteered for the Marine Corps. Five or six of us did. But they would not take you, if you were under age, unless you got your parents' permission. My parents wouldn't sign for me.

So the Marines took me on my 18th birthday -- March the 29th, 1945. They came and got me and took me to Parris Island. At that time they were runnin' people thru as rapidly as they could. Boot Camp had been reduced from 10 weeks to eight weeks, and then we went to combat infantry school -- that was supposed to be 12 weeks; they had reduced it to 10 weeks. They were buildin' up, to invade Japan.

FG: Okay.

RAVENEL: They crammed us on a troop train and we were headed to the west coast. Fifteen hundred Marines were on this train. Crossed the Mississippi at Vicksburg; and pulled over on a siding -- to let a fast freight go thru; probably ammunition, or something [urgent] like that. It was a beautiful morning.

These little black fellows were runnin' up and down the train: **EXTRA! EXTRA! -- ATOM BOMB.** We did not know what that was! It was a brand new concept. The paper said it was some kind of a super bomb that we had developed. And by the time we got to the west coast, they dropped [the second one] on Nagasaki, and the war was over. I got out in the middle of August '46.

FG: But you did get to Japan and see the beginning of the occupation?

RAVENEL: No, I never went there. I went to Bainbridge, Maryland, and we discharged the First Marine Division. I worked in the kitchen -- cookin'. Crackin' eggs; servin' in the chow line -- stuff like that. That was a real experience -- with those "old salts," you know -- veterans coming back. A lot of 'em had terrible problems -- emotional problems. They came back to find their wives had run off and got married to somebody else.

There were some suicides. I was walking to the kitchen early one morning and there was a clothesline running between a couple of the barracks -- and a guy had hung himself on the clothesline. He was twistin' in the wind. Came back and couldn't face whatever the hell problems he found when he got home. Terrible.

They sent us to Quantico, and put together something called the First Special Marine Brigade -- a rapid deployment brigade in case they had problems anywhere. And somethin' happened down there in the Caribbean. We took a troop ship to Norfolk, went down there off Haiti, and hung around -- did some training on making beach landings. Then we spent some time in Puerto Rico, just kind of killing time.

And then, all of a sudden, got back on the troop ships, came back, hit the beach -- in landing craft -- at Camp Lejeune, and they said: "The funding has run out for the Reserves. We got to discharge you by nightfall."

All these months I'd been taking beautiful care of my rifle. So I asked: "Where do I put this rifle?" "Throw it in that pile!" *Rummmmm, clatter, clatter, clatter.* I went from early in the morning, gettin' ready to hit the beach, to hitchhiking back to South Carolina -- DISCHARGED -- by 6:30 or 7 o'clock that evening.

FG: But you had the G.I. Bill.

RAVENEL: Yeah. But, because of the time I put in, I only had enough [points] to do 18 months. So I went to the College of Charleston, and doubled up on my subjects. In addition to what was required, I took every "crip course" -- the easy ones, you know? -- that I could find. I took botany, mammology, geology, ornithology, and [pause] --

FG: Almost anything to accumulate the credits.

RAVENEL: Yeah, to get the credits I needed to graduate. I graduated in '50.

FG: Were you a full-time student -- actually, you'd have to be, with that extra load.

RAVENEL: Well, I was helpin' Daddy on the farm, see?

FG: Where did you live?

RAVENEL: I lived at home. Right across the Bridge. I met a lady there at college -- Louise Rodgers -- and we got married. Fine lady. We were married for 25 years, and then got divorced. Never had a cross word; no problems. My fault -- generally, it's the man's fault.

FG: What did you think you wanted to do?

RAVENEL: I didn't know. After graduating, I started job-huntin'. Went to the Navy Yard, made an application. They said they'd let me know.

FG: What was your degree in? What major?

RAVENEL: B.A. in History.

FG: You didn't want to be a teacher, though.

RAVENEL: No. From the Navy Yard, I went to the paper mill -- big paper mill here in Charleston. At that time it was called the West Virginia Pulp & Paper Company. I walked in there and the first person I saw was a guy I had been in the Boy Scouts with -- his name was Edward Moorner. He was the assistant employment manager. I went to work there as a laborer -- the pay was \$1.37 an hour. Worked there for about a year. Really enjoyed it.

FG: Why?

RAVENEL: It was swing-shift work, and [during the day] I was speculating in hogs and cattle. I drove around the country in a pickup lookin' for people who had a couple of cows or a few hogs, and I'd buy the hogs from 'em, or buy the cows. My working capital was maybe \$500. They had an auction market for livestock on Thursdays in Walterboro, and I'd work my days just right. Early on the morning of auction day, I would go pick up the hogs and cows, take 'em to the market and sell 'em. I was good enough at buying that in most instances I would sell for more than I'd bought for. So I made a good bit of money that way.

I also joined the National Guard -- because the pay was \$50 a month, or somethin' like that. I was in Company B 118th Infantry Regiment, I think it was the 53rd Division. We were ready to be called -- we thought we'd be going to Korea. But we were never called.

FG: What happened after the paper mill?

RAVENEL: I went to work for a home-improvement company. After about a year there, I started a little home-improvement company of my own. It was growing and doing pretty well. We

manufactured aluminum awnings and aluminum screens. We'd install gutters, paint the trim on your house, do little repairs, add a porch or add a room -- and the next thing you know I was buildin' houses.

(3) A YOUNG DEMOCRAT

RAVENEL: Back then, everyone was a Democrat. There were no Republicans. We had a few people around we called "patronage Republicans."

FG: [Laughter]

RAVENEL: And somebody said to me: "Why don't you run for the House of Representatives?" We had eight members of the House from Charleston County. Well, if 15 people ran, the eight who got the most votes -- they'd be elected. Or they were nominated, but [in practice] they were elected because the Republicans had nobody.

So I ran. Went all around and talked to people -- and I almost won. But I lost. This was 1952.

FG: This campaign was your first political experience?

RAVENEL: No. When I was in college, a friend of mine ran for student body president. He's from McClellanville -- Jack Leland. And I enjoyed helpin' him. He got beat. But I liked the politics that went on there. I'm somebody that likes people -- I just get on good with people. So I turned around and ran [for the House] again, and got elected.

FG: But you didn't have a district -- all eight of you represented --

RAVENEL: The whole county. All of that's changed now.

FG: Boy, that would [pause] -- if I have a problem, who do I call?

RAVENEL: You call the one you know best!

FG: [laughter] Yeah.

RAVENEL: So I went to Columbia in '55. The session began on the second Tuesday in January and I think we got out the first Tuesday in June. The pay was a thousand dollars. A room in Columbia would cost maybe seven or eight dollars, and we would double up. I loved it, but I couldn't stand it time-wise -- because it took time away from the business.

FG: I can guess the answer, but I'm asking a neutral question: What was the reaction in South Carolina to the 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision?

RAVENEL: [Pause] Well, there'd been so much hype about it, thru the years: "It's comin' down, it's gonna happen," and what have ya --

FG: So by '54 it was not a surprise?

RAVENEL: No -- and there was a lot of opposition to it. Most people thought it would not be good for the public schools. Those who thought that way -- they were active in the formation of private schools. So a great many private schools were started. Most of 'em are still operatin' -- and doin' well!

FG: But integrated now.

RAVENEL: Well, because of the level of tuition, you don't have much integration. But the schools try their best to get young black people to go, you know? Because of the charges, black people would rather go to the free school. But those few blacks who are affluent enough, and really want their children to have a really good education, they send their children to these private schools. Take Ashley Hall -- Mrs. Bush went there; the first Mrs. Bush, she graduated there.

FG: Hmmph. Never knew that.

RAVENEL: Porter Gaud is another one -- great big local private school. There are a lot of 'em; they're all over the state. In Charleston County, 15,000 students go to private schools. The Catholics have a superb educational system -- I reckon you got a larger percentage of blacks in the Catholic [K-12] system than any of the other [private] ones.

(4) HE WENT REPUBLICAN BEFORE THURMOND DID

FG: Now something tremendous happened in 1961, at least for Republicans. When Senator Lyndon Johnson got elected vice-president, they had a special election in Texas, and a Republican won: John Tower. And my research says that it was at about this time that you switched parties.

RAVENEL: Right. I had become involved with the Republican Party. The initial problem we had was the patronage people, who were in charge. How do you ease them out? Well, you had to do it at the precinct meetings. But they were in pretty good control. So I formed a Young Republican club, in Charleston County -- and thru that we were able to take over, without any screamin' and yellin'. Because we just had the numbers, and the enthusiasm. Young people -- twenties and early thirties; people my age -- and we didn't piss anybody off.

FG: But you skipped the whole issue of why you switched parties. Your affiliation with the GOP took place three years ahead of [Strom] Thurmond [leaving the Democrats in September '64] -- which means it was a truly pioneering action.

RAVENEL: [Pause] Well, it seemed to us that the Democrat Party was getting more and more liberal. If you were to the right, the Republican Party became the natural choice. The sentiment was shifting. And I've got a story about John Tower.

FG: By all means.

RAVENEL: Tower hadn't been elected long, and we had our Republican Club, so we decided to [bring him to town]. We had a national committeeman who was a general contractor by the name of W.W. Wanamaker, from Orangeburg. He had a lot of Republican friends in Washington. His nickname was "Duck" -- Duck Wanamaker.

So we asked if he could get John Tower to come down here to Charleston and make a talk for us. He said he could; and he got a commitment from Tower. We sold five or six hundred tickets. We all worked like beavers -- getting ready for this dinner, at the Francis Marion Hotel. Sold out! Gracious goodness, man, people wanted to come hear Tower.

Well, a hurricane hit the Texas coast! And Tower cancelled. He cancelled the same day he was supposed to be here -- that night. He had to go to Texas.

So we got a hold of Duck. He says: "Don't worry. I'm chartering a plane, and I'm flyin' to Washington. I'll get you a Senator off the Senate floor, and fly him down."

[Two-way laughter]

The situation was dramatic, and traumatic. Wanamaker calls from Washington. Penny Walker was our vice-chairman: "Who have they got, Arthur? Who've they got?" I tell her: "He's bringin' Senator Roman Hruska." You remember him?

FG: Sure. From Nebraska!

RAVENEL: Penny Walker says: *It sounds like breakfast food to me!*

[More laughter]

RAVENEL: In Charleston, South Carolina, nobody had ever heard of Roman Hruska. But Duck had gotten him to agree to come down here. And I'm telling you -- never in my life have I heard such a great talk as that man made. It was unbelievable! He got standing ovation after standing ovation. Of course, he left and we never saw him or heard from him again. But God -- I get emotional when I think about it. Man, that guy was somethin'. Greatest talk I've ever heard. And he did it completely unrehearsed and off the cuff.

It was a conservative talk, which appealed to the people who were there. So we started running for office [on the Republican ticket]. I ran for the Senate three times; got beat every time.

(5) "DEFEAT PARTIES" and PERSISTENCE

I learned early on: If you wanna be effective, don't talk too long. Go past 20 minutes and you're startin' to get in trouble. You go past 30 minutes -- and you're working against yourself.

I was on the state committee and did a lot of organizing down here, responsible for a number of counties in this district. The problem was that we were still nominating in conventions. And I kept telling that to the party.

FG: Hold on; we'll come back to that in a minute. It says here you ran for the State Senate in 1962, '74, and '76.

RAVENEL: Yeah.

FG: While making a living in the homebuilding, home-improvements business.

RAVENEL: I was a general contractor. We did everything. We were pretty successful. I was successful enough to quit when I was 50. I'd been almost broke several times but by then had enough money. I had remarried, and my wife "Rick" told me: "We made it. So quit, Arthur. Don't go through all this again" -- because the construction business is a roller coaster.

So I quit. Went into politics full time. And I kept telling our party: Until you nominate by primary, you're not gonna make much progress. So finally they did. And I forget which convention it was that made the change.

The Congressman from Columbia -- Albert Watson -- had switched parties and ran for Governor.

In 1962, Watson won the Democratic nomination for South Carolina's 2nd congressional district. He faced Floyd Spence, a fellow state representative from neighboring Lexington County who had turned Republican a few months earlier. The election was far closer than expected, with Watson winning by only five percentage points largely due to the support of his mentor, Senator Strom Thurmond. The district, based in Columbia, had been under growing Republican influence for some time. Like Thurmond, Watson was an ardent segregationist. He supported [Barry Goldwater's](#) campaign for President in 1964 and headed South Carolina's "Democrats for Goldwater" organization. Partly because of his support for Goldwater, he was reelected without opposition as Goldwater swept the state. However, the Democratic caucus stripped him of his seniority for his support of Goldwater. He resigned on February 1, 1965 and ran as a Republican in a June 15 special election to fill his vacant seat. He won with 69% of the vote, becoming the first Republican to represent South Carolina in the House since 1896, and the first to win an undisputed House election in the state since Reconstruction. He was comfortably reelected in 1966 and 1968.

SOURCE -- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Watson_\(politician\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Watson_(politician))

Watson was a great guy. But he wanted to be nominated by convention -- he did not want to go through a primary. They thought he was strong enough to get elected Governor. Well, he got nominated by convention, and he got beat. Then he dropped out of sight -- something happened to him, and he died.

FG: Let me clarify the logic here. You were saying that, if an underdog party puts its candidates before the public in a primary, and they receive thousands of votes, rather than the few hundred [at a convention] --

RAVENEL: Right, right. You compete. You compete -- [by appealing] to the whole electorate. See, we don't have registration by party down here. The only time you declare a party allegiance is if you want to go around and say "I'm a Republican" or "I'm a Democrat."

We kept running. Kept getting beat. The Democrats would have victory parties. We would have defeat parties. We knew we were gonna get beat. But every time we ran, we came closer.

Glen McConnell is now president pro tem of the State Senate. Brilliant fella. He runs the state of South Carolina. See, it's a legislative state.

FG: Weak Governor, strong legislature?

RAVENEL: Yeah, yeah. McConnell pretty well runs the thing. And, in 1980, he and I ran, and we both got elected. Three of us ran, and one person didn't make it. But Glen and I made it. We tell people that, in 1980, we made the great breakthrough -- elected to the Senate -- and carried Reagan in on our coattails [pause] -- that always gets a chuckle. [Smiling] Of course that's why we got elected!

FG: Right [grinning back], I got it.

[Two-way laughter]

FG: In Tom Hartnett's last [House] race he got 62%, against Ed Pendarvis. That was in 1984.

RAVENEL: Yeah. Ed was a son-in-law of mine. He had been working for me. Then he went into business for himself, and he married my oldest daughter. It didn't work out. But anyhow, he's a nice guy; a great guy. Kind of a dreamer, you know?

FG: Hartnett [by '86] is trying to become Lieutenant Governor. He told me he didn't much like the U.S. House. But at this point you are willing to give it a try.

RAVENEL: And I had a primary -- which is okay.

FG: The 1988 *Almanac of American Politics* says your primary opponent was Steve Jones. He got 33% to your 57%.

RAVENEL: Back then he was working for the Medical University. Steve is a great guy. See, I never get mad at my opponents; I always kinda like 'em.

Had a tough race [in the general]. [Mendel Davis](#) had been the Congressman and he had quit -- now he was running to try to get back in the Congress. But a county councilman [also wanted that Democratic nomination] and boy they had a bitter race. Bitter. Really terrible. Tearin' each other apart.

And this councilman -- Jim Stuckey -- beat Mendel. I went to see Mendel. And he said: "Man, Arthur, I'm gonna help you -- help you beat that son of a bitch. I'm gonna give you all my key people down there," he said. "You go see 'em -- they're all mad as hell about what happened [in the primary]. All of 'em are ready to support you."

And they did too! I went to see every one of 'em. Country people. Of course, I'm country myself. I rapped with those people really good. They all helped me. And I won by four points.

FG: The research also says that you were more effective in getting black votes than either Sanford or Hartnett [in the exact same district].

RAVENEL: Well, because of the way I talk -- you know? They'd hear me on the radio, and think I was black! I believe that [chuckle] -- and a lot of people have said it. The other thing is, I get on with 'em good. I'd ask 'em to vote for me. I've always done better with the blacks than any of the other Republicans running -- I got somewhere around 10 to 15%.

(6) GREEN REPUBLICANS

FG: You are sworn in [to the federal House], a 59-year old freshman. Jim Wright is becoming Speaker. The Republican leader is Bob Michel. Dick Cheney is chairman of the GOP Conference. Comments on any of these guys?

RAVENEL: Cheney used to sit way up in the back, late in the afternoon. He was a very private, very quiet person. I'd go up there and talk with him. Everybody respected him. I used to think about him whenever I heard that saying "still water runs deep." Yeah -- I really liked him.

One thing where I differed from the Republicans up there was, I'm a green Republican. Still am! Big into environmental issues. Active there.

FG: For example -- protection of endangered species?

RAVENEL: Yeah -- and most everything else. ANWR -- I was opposed to drilling in ANWR.

FG: You still feel that way?

RAVENEL: Oh yeah!

FG: What were some other environmental causes you favored?

RAVENEL: It bugged the hell out of me that the damn Japanese were killing the whales. So -- Members get to do the one-minutes? I would get up every week and let their ass have it. I would describe whales, and describe how they were being killed. And I wound up those one-minutes by saying: Shame on you, Japan! -- *shame on you Japan*. Those would be my final words.

Boy, they hated it. I never knew that anybody even watched those one-minutes. But the Japanese came to see me. They brought books about whales, and pictures to show that what they were doing was "scientific" whaling. They're still at it -- but it's been cut down severely, because there's so much opposition.

I'm a big financial supporter of Greenpeace. I earmark my donation for whale-protection -- I don't know about the other projects, but whale-protection is what I'm interested in. Greenpeace has the boats that go out there and get between the whales and the damn Japanese ships. They're very effective.

I also contribute to the [Coastal Conservation League](#) -- I'll give them anywhere from 500 to a thousand dollars a year. Dana Beach runs it -- he worked for me; he was my environmentalist.

FG: Wasn't there an issue down here of protecting the sea turtles?

RAVENEL: Yeah! They came up with what they call TEDS -- turtle-excluder devices. The damn shrimpers with their nets -- they were killin' the turtles. But this device, if you put it into the net, would let the turtles escape. Otherwise, they would drown -- in the net. If the net were left down for an hour, the turtles would be dead by the time they brought the net up.

We had dead turtles all up and down the coast. And the federal legislation said that, by such and such a date, you got to put these excluder devices in your nets. And I supported that -- actively -- and was quoted about it. But the shrimpers claimed it would put them out of business. Man, they were mad as hell. They threatened my wife, twice. You know, they'd go out here every morning, real early, and were nasty about it. They'd call the house and have a lot to say about it, and also raise hell in the newspaper. I just held firm.

(7) NEARLY BACK to the DEMOCRATS

FG: What about offshore drilling? -- Florida, South Carolina.

RAVENEL: I'm not opposed to that. Most people are not opposed to that. Whatever drilling would go on would be out of sight. And that's where I got into a big problem with [longtime Alaska GOP Congressman] Don Young -- this is an interesting story.

FG: Good.

RAVENEL: A Republican Member from Maryland -- Wayne Gilchrest -- we were not in the same class, but he and I got to be friends. Nice guy. And the big environmental committee was Merchant Marine and Fisheries. The chairman was from Greenville, North Carolina -- Walter Jones. He died. Used to smoke, like a chimney. And his son, a Republican, is now representing that district.

But anyway, Jones was the chairman of that committee. Nice guy; I got along good with him.

FG: But you weren't on the committee.

RAVENEL: No. But it came to pass that a vacancy occurred, for a Republican. And nobody wanted it but me! I was the only Republican who wanted [to fill] the vacancy on Merchant Marine and Fisheries. But Don Young went to Bob Michel and said: "I don't want Ravenel to have that slot. Because if he gets on that committee, he'll vote against opening up ANWR; he'll vote to keep it closed..."

So here we are, in the minority, and I doubt that 20 of us were Green Republicans. Amo Houghton from New York was one -- he and I were good friends.

FG: Did Michel go out and recruit another Republican [for the vacancy?].

RAVENEL: No. No one else wanted it -- but Michel wouldn't give it to me. I talked to Denny Hastert about it, and asked him to talk to Michel -- they were both from Illinois, and Denny was in my class. But Denny couldn't do anything about it. And I talked to Newt about it -- and Newt wouldn't help me.

So there was a guy up there who had served with me in the [South Carolina] House. Years ago. His name was Robin Tallon. He was a Democrat, but we were friends. If you're southern, it doesn't make any difference whether you're a Democrat or a Republican, you're all tied together. You know?

Robin knew about Don Young shootin' me down for the slot on Merchant Marine and Fisheries. And I explained how I couldn't get any help from any of the [senior] Republicans. Nobody would help me.

FG: And would Young see you and talk about it directly?

RAVENEL: Oh yeah! "I ain't gonna let you on that committee. Uh-uh."

Well -- Robin says: "Damn, Arthur, that's awful." The next day he came to see me. "Look here, would you talk to [Tom] Foley and [Dick] Gephardt about your situation?" He explained to me: "I've talked to them, and we all know how strong you are in your district -- you could get reelected as easily as a Democrat as you could as a Republican." Yeah, I told him, I believed that. One reason is that the environmental sentiment is so strong, see?

FG: Um-hmm.

RAVENEL: So I decided to talk with Foley and Gephardt. I went to Foley's office. Tallon was there. So was Gephardt. And I took my chief of staff, a young lady by the name of Sharon Chellis. I told her what was going on, and said: "I need you to be there as my witness."

And I was told: "If you'll switch parties, we will put you on the Committee. Not only that, but we will leave you on the Armed Services Committee" -- I had to be able to stay there, because of the Navy Yard and the Air Force Base and the installations down in Beaufort.

FG: And you told Foley and Gephardt --

RAVENEL: I said, "Well, thank you very much. I certainly appreciate the offer. But I need to think about it." I didn't say anything to anybody. I had witnesses as to what occurred -- Tallon and Sharon. But I didn't even talk to my wife about it. Well, somebody had seen me leaving Foley's office. I don't know who it was, and it doesn't make any difference [in how the story develops].

Now -- the chairman of the Republican National Committee is Lee Atwater. Lee and I had always been really great friends. See, we had raised Lee in the party, and he knew me well. He calls at one o'clock in the morning. "Arthur! It's Lee Atwater. What the hell is goin' on with you?" What do you mean, Lee? He says: "I hear you're thinking about maybe switching parties!" I said: Well, let me tell you what happened -- and I told him. He said: "God dang man, that would be terrible. Can you meet me and Newt Gingrich in your office tomorrow morning at 7 o'clock?" Yeah, I said, I'd be happy to do that.

So I called Sharon -- got her out of bed. "Can you be there?" That's my witness -- and she said she'd be there. So we met. And Lee says: "What do you want?" I said: "I just want to be on the Committee! There's an open slot and nobody wants it but me -- and I've gone to everybody [on our side], and everybody's turned me down."

FG: And you had talked to Newt in person about it previously?

RAVENEL: Yeah! At that point, he didn't want to get involved.

So Lee says: "And Don Young is the one that's blocking it and Michel won't put you on there?" Yep, and I just want to be on that committee. Newt had come to the office with Lee, but he isn't saying anything. So Lee says: *You'll be on that committee by 11 o'clock*. I assume he's the one who went to Michel: "Put him on, and put him on right away. Because if you don't, he's gonna switch; and if he switches, he'll come back up here as a Democrat."

FG: Great story! But -- would you really have switched?

RAVENEL: I probably would have.

FG: But that would have meant two party switches in one career! The only other person I can think of who did that is Winston Churchill.

RAVENEL: And remember what he said: It takes a rat to switch, and it takes a real rat to re-rat!

[Two-way laughter]

FG: Just thinking about [making a second switch] and going to one meeting was enough to get the desired result. But would you have actually carried it out?

RAVENEL: If they had not put me on the Committee [pause] -- I don't know whether I would or not. I would have consulted with my wife, and with people like McConnell, and with a few other people close to me politically.

FG: Any more run-ins with Don Young after you got on Merchant Marine and Fisheries?

RAVENEL: Let me tell ya! By 11 o'clock that day, I am on the committee. So Young comes up to me and gives me a big hug -- and says, "Man I am so glad to have you on this committee. Good for you, Arthur. You and I are gonna really be able to work good together." He's a great big fella, you know.

FG: And what did you think overall of Bob Michel as a Leader?

RAVENEL: Had a beautiful voice.

[Two-way laughter]

RAVENEL: Oh Lord, I don't want to say anything bad about Michel -- we got along fine. But he was [pause] kinda weak.

(8) TRUMAN and FORD, JACKSON and LEE

FG: Who was your favorite President of the past 40 or 50 years?

RAVENEL: Well, I liked Harry Truman.

FG: Lots of Republicans say that now. But -- did you like him at the time?

RAVENEL: I didn't like him when he fired MacArthur. But afterwards I liked him because he was

so firm and positive. You felt there was a sure hand on the steering wheel. And not only that, but Truman's grandfather was an artillery officer in the Confederate Army -- I liked that.

FG: And what did you think of Gerald Ford?

RAVENEL: I liked Ford. He was just as nice as he could be. He came down and helped us build the party.

FG: Did you by any chance read Newt Gingrich's book on the Civil War, and how if Lee had done some things differently in Pennsylvania -- ?

RAVENEL: Yeah. I bought both books and read 'em.

FG: What did you think?

RAVENEL: [Pause] It's interesting. You know, a number of people have written books like that. If Stonewall Jackson had been at Gettysburg, I think we probably would've had a negotiated settlement of that war. If Lee could have won massively at Gettysburg, I think that would've ended the war.

Down at Loyola University, a number of years ago, they erected a statue of Jackson, and a Catholic priest did the eulogy. He said, "And God in His wisdom, when He decided that the cause of the South must fail, He found it first necessary to remove His servant -- Jackson." I believe that if Jackson had been there --

FG: But you don't believe the other part of that statement.

RAVENEL: What's that?

FG: About God in His wisdom in effect voting against the South.

RAVENEL: No, God didn't vote against the South. When He decided the cause of the South must fail, He pulled Jackson out.

FG: I understand that -- regarding the critical role of Jackson. But the premise leading up to that first statement --

RAVENEL: Well, if God had been pro-Confederacy, we would've won the war.

FG: So you think God was not pro-Confederacy?

RAVENEL: [Pause]. No -- I think human bondage made the difference.

FG: In terms of the rightness of the [winning] cause?

RAVENEL: Uhhh --

FG: See, this is what I don't get. I'm a Yank, I was born in New York. And I respect the South

and I love Charleston. But the thing I never got -- and maybe you can help me understand it now -- [is this]: Do most southern partisans really think the South should have won and our country should've split in two? In their heart of hearts -- do they really think that?

RAVENEL: [Pause] A great many do!

FG: I'm talking about people who are alive today.

RAVENEL: If the South had won -- and a couple of times it came very close -- if the South had won, I doubt that slavery would've lasted more than 10 years. In this hemisphere, the last country where slavery was legal was Brazil, and I think they did away with it in 1898.

FG: You're sayin' that the U.S. economy was modernizing so much that the whole institution of slavery --

RAVENEL: Yeah, it was -- it was a dying institution.

FG: So let's say the South had won its independence, and slavery faded away 10 to 20 years later -- do you then think there would have been a reunification of the two nations?

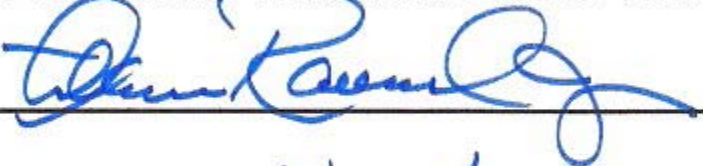
RAVENEL: I don't know. Where the great errors were made -- Lincoln was killed, and then we had Reconstruction, and man, Reconstruction was terrible. Absolutely awful.

And it was not until 1877 that the troops were withdrawn from South Carolina -- part of a deal so that Rutherford B. Hayes could become President. South Carolina has been influential in so many of the great decisions in this country.

FG: Including the rejuvenation of the Republican Party!

RAVENEL: Yeah, right. Right.

APPROVED with amendments & deletions



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