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Zell Miller

## *Farewell Address to the U.S. Senate*



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**AUTHENTICITY CERTIFIED: Text version below transcribed directly from audio**

Mr. President:

I have listened with a grateful heart to the generous words of my colleagues, the Senators from Kentucky and Alabama and -- earlier this morning the Senator from Alabama -- and I will remember and cherish those words as long as I am on this earth. I thank each of them for their friendship. I see my good friend from Montana on the floor -- I thank him, a fellow marine, for his friendship. This means more to me than I have words to express.

I did not come to this Senate expecting events to unfold quite like they have. I guess I'm living proof that politics is not an exact science.

In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, his friend Laertes is going off to college, and his father, Polonius, is giving him some usual advice that you give when your sons go off to college. And after all the words of caution that I hope fathers still give their sons Polonius ended with these words:

*This above all: to thine own self be true. And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false [to] any man.*

I've always believed that and I've tried to live that.



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I have had a most blessed life, personal and political. Since 1959, voters in Georgia have been putting me in one office or another, and I am deeply grateful to them. God has richly blessed my personal life. My wife, Shirley, has been the perfect partner for over 50 years. She has been my companion, my critic, my crutch. We have two wonderful sons, Murphy and Matthew; and our daughters-in-law, and our grandchildren, and our great grandchildren. We are very, very blessed.

If he had lived, Paul Coverdale would be ending his second six-year term. As I told some of my colleagues last night, not a day has gone by since I've been here that I have not thought of this good man, who left us so suddenly and so tragically. My most fervent hope during these four and a half years has been that Paul be pleased with the way that I have served and finished out his term. I know Paul is pleased, as I am, that our mutual friend, Johnny Isakson, one of the finest public servants I've ever known, will soon be our successor in this great body. I also want to say what an honor it has been to serve the last two years with my colleague from Georgia, Senator Saxby Chambliss.

So, now as this page turns on the final chapter of my career as a public servant, I cannot help but remember how it was in that first chapter of my life. Growing up in a remote Appalachian valley, we lived in a house made of rocks my mother gathered from a nearby creek, with only an open fireplace for heat, no indoor plumbing, no car, no phone, no father.

On summer nights before the TVA damned up the Hiwassee River and brought electricity to that Appalachian valley, after the moon had come up over the mountain, and the lightening bugs were blinking, while the frogs croaked down at the creek and the katydids sang; and every once in awhile a whippoorwill's lonesome cry could be heard.

I remember after my mother had finally quit working and was getting us quiet and ready to go to bed -- I remember we'd play a game. The game would start when the headlights of that rare car would penetrate the darkness, maybe once every half hour or so, on that narrow strip of asphalt across a big ditch in front of our house. We'd stare at the headlights of the car as it made its way around the steep curves and finally over Brasstown Mountain. We'd count and see how long it took from the time it went by our house until its tail lights would disappear through that distant gap and it was no longer part of the one and only world I knew.

It was often at this time my mother would laugh, and she would say, "You know what's so great about this place? You can get anywhere in the world from here." That world has turned many times since I first traveled that narrow road, through that gap, out of that valley. It has been a long road with many twists and turns, ups and downs, bumps, and, yes, a few wrecks; a road that twice carried me to the highest office of the ninth largest State in this nation, to all the continents and famous cities of the world; and finally to the United States Senate.

And so I leave this Senate knowing that once again my mother has been proved right: One could get anywhere in the world from that little mountain valley and back again. Everywhere I've ever been really was on my way back home.



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I thank all of you. I thank my family. I thank my very, very special staff who has stayed with me through thick and thin. I thank my friends and especially my God. It has been one heck of a ride.

Thank you, Mr. President.