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Introduction of the Honorable Jim Marshall on Law Day 2008, Macon, Georgia

by Professor Dave Oedel*

You all know that Jim Marshall, who has graciously agreed to be our speaker today, is Middle Georgia's member of the United States House of Representatives.

Jim has lots of personal history in the heart of Georgia, having clerked for Judge Owens and Judge Bootle in the 1970s, having been a professor at Mercer Law School throughout the 1980s, having served as mayor of Macon in the 1990s, and having now faithfully represented Middle Georgia in Congress for most of this decade.

During his six years in Congress, Jim has made a big impression. Not all of it has been positive. Some Washington strategists have personally and repeatedly targeted Jim for defeat, sending President Bush down to this district twice in the last election alone just to try to oust Jim from a district that voted for President Bush. Jim prevailed anyway.

The Washington strategists apparently did not know what many of us know—that Jim is as tough and resilient a leader as you can find anywhere in this country, somebody who does not count on help from the politically powerful to prop him up. Jim listens carefully to the people of this district and to his native judgment about how to act and vote in Congress.

Nobody I know likes every position Jim has taken. On the other hand, everybody I know respects Jim's intelligence, his industry, his honesty, and his independence. Here's how the *Macon Telegraph* described Jim's work as mayor when he stepped down in 1999: "[N]o predecessor in

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office has ever outworked Jim Marshall, nor have any set a higher standard for honesty, integrity and sheer intellect."¹

The *Telegraph* might have added that no predecessor in office ever ran down a robber at the Health Club, as Jim did. Nor has any other of Macon's mayors been inducted into the Army Ranger Hall of Fame. Nor did any other mayor, when introducing a new physical fitness requirement for police and firefighters, challenge them to compete with him in achieving those requirements and beat him if they could. Although only a handful did beat Jim, incidentally, by the end everyone had to admit that the new expectation of physical fitness was not such a bad idea. Jim put himself on the line to make a good change palatable and even fun.

As to Jim's independence and self-reliance, let me give you a rough example. Jim once locked himself out of his own office on the third floor of the law school—proving that although he may be intelligent, he is no genius. Rather than bother a locksmith, Jim roped up, kind of like a rock-climbing Spiderman, and then went out the window of an adjacent office, ooched along the nearly blank exterior of the building, and went in through the window of his own office. If you were to see just how high up that is, you would understand why I wouldn't recommend that you try it. Still, it goes to show that Jim is a self-helper par excellence. It is in Jim's nature to rely on his own devices—to be part of the solution even if, at least in that particular case, he also created the problem.

Jim is also special in another way too—in his quiet generosity. I watched him serve many people as a lawyer for free over the years that we shared adjacent offices. In fact, I think that Jim served more people for free than people he billed. I would needle him to get bills out, but Jim resisted, not wanting to be another financial burden for many of his clients who were debtors in bankruptcy. When Jim sees a need, he just pitches in to help.

That's what got him into public service in the first place. When he took a pay cut and boatload of trouble to become mayor of Macon, one of his colleagues at the law school asked what he could have been thinking of. His answer was simple. "I owe it to my city." That's Jim for you.

Jim Marshall is unique, truly one of a kind. It is almost amazing that we in Middle Georgia have such a powerful and fresh voice in Washington. You are in for a treat today. Welcome, Jim, and thank you for being with us today.

1. R.L. Day, Editorial, *Taking Stock of a One-Term Mayor*, MACON TELEGRAPH, Dec. 15, 1999.