Rufus Edmisten to Debut Memoir at NC Museum of History on May 30

Speaker: Rufus Edmisten, Former Deputy Chief Counsel of the United States Senate Watergate Committee, Former North Carolina attorney general from 1976-1984, Former Public Servant, Author

May 17, 2019 (RALEIGH, N.C.) — The North Carolina Museum of History will host the debut of Rufus Edmisten’s memoir, aptly named “That’s Rufus: A Memoir of Tar Heel Politics, Watergate and Public Life” on Thursday, May 30 from 6-9 p.m., including a reception to be held in the museum’s lobby. Admission is free, but the museum asks that attendees register in advance to hear Edmisten speak.

Possibly the most colorful politician in North Carolina’s last 50 years, public servant, and Boone native Rufus Edmisten tells his story in his own words in his memoir, “That’s Rufus.” The title is fittingly informal. He’s never been known to friend or foe or family as anything but “Rufus.” That reflects not just
the rarity of that first name in recent generations, but his mountain upbringing. To introduce himself to anyone as “Rufus Edmisten” would have displeased his strong, plain-spoken parents, Walter and Nell Edmisten.

Tall, burly, round faced, with twinkling eyes, an uncanny memory for names and faces, and a gift for storytelling, Rufus Edmisten was “launched” onto the world stage and into politics by a political rocket called Watergate, and fellow mountaineer Senator Samuel J Ervin, Jr. Just out of college, Edmisten went to Washington and began working during the day for Senator Ervin, who he’d long admired, while he attended George Washington Law School at night. When Senator Ervin, an unlikely political hero with a conservative record, championed integrity with his Watergate hearings, Edmisten was sitting behind him as the committee’s deputy chief counsel. To better serve the senator, Rufus stayed close during the proceedings. That, as it happened, also put him in front of the national TV cameras every day for weeks. Rufus served the subpoena to President Nixon—the first time a sitting president was served a subpoena by a committee of Congress.

Watergate ended, and Rufus came home to be North Carolina’s attorney general, winning his first full term in 1976, a second in 1980. In 1984, he was beaten by Republican Jim Martin for the governor’s office thanks to a fractured Democratic Party and the popular President Ronald Reagan. He was stunned by the setback, but came back to serve as North Carolina’s Secretary of State, possibly believing it would be his launch to a U.S. Senate seat. But then he was, he says, a victim of his own hubris, and he resigned the office under fire. Edmisten has published cookbooks (a campaign strategy) and he’s made thousands of speeches in every county in North Carolina over a political career that turned him to a legal career and forever, a career in the spotlight. Oh, yes, Rufus Edmisten has never been one for false modesty. And so he comes again to that light, launching a final campaign, perhaps, to share his stories with people across North Carolina. Proceeds from his book will go to his Super Kids Foundation, which has helped hundreds of disadvantaged children all over North Carolina in the last 25 years.
About the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
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NCDNCR includes 27 historic sites, seven history museums, two art museums, two science museums, three aquariums and Jennette’s Pier, 39 state parks and recreation areas, the NC Zoo, the nation’s first state-supported Symphony Orchestra, the State Library, the State Archives, the NC Arts Council, State Preservation Office, and the Office of State Archaeology, along with the Division of Land and Water Stewardship. For more information, please call 919-814-6800 or visit www.ncdcr.gov.

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