

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

SYDNEY REED, 10,
TALKS WITH HER GRANDFATHER
JIM CLYBURN, 66,
A CONGRESSMAN.

Sydney Reed: In your lifetime, have you ever wanted to do any other job than politics?

Jim Clyburn: No, never wanted to do anything else. I enjoy the give-and-take of politics. I love to campaign, and I love meeting people. Going around the country, you learn a lot. I was always involved in politics. I was very active in the sit-ins. In fact, I met your grandmother in 1957, when we were students at South Carolina State and we were demonstrating against segregation.

The first time I was arrested, I was in jail pretty much all day. In the early evening, all of us were gathered in this big courtroom, waiting on bail to be posted. Your grandmother came in with some of her friends, and I started talking about

how hungry I was. A little while later, she disappeared. And she came back holding a hamburger. And when she presented me with the hamburger, I reached for it—but she pulled it back. Then she broke the hamburger in half, gave me a half, and she ate the other half. And that's how we met. About a year and a half later, we got married.

Sydney: So, have you ever felt you wanted to quit?

Jim: Oh, absolutely. I'll tell you a story. When I won the primary of the South Carolina house of representatives in June of 1970, there was this big party after the votes came in, and everybody was jumping up and down and very happy that we won. But the next morning, I went into the bathroom, and there on my sink was a little note from your grandmother: "When you win, brag gently. When you lose, weep softly." And I just took it and I stuck it up on the mirror.

We got into the general election in November, and when the polls closed that evening, all the news media announced that I had gotten elected. But then somebody rang my doorbell at about three thirty in the morning and told me that something had gone wrong down at the courthouse. I went down there and they told me, "Rather than winning by five hundred votes, we have determined that you have lost by five hundred votes."

So the next morning when I went to my bathroom, I looked up at the mirror and I wept softly. I thought that this

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was the worst thing that could possibly happen. But I gathered my wits, and I determined that I was going to go forward.

I ran for secretary of state in 1978, and lost. Eight years later, in 1986, I ran for secretary of state *again*—and lost. And more than one person said to me, "Well, that's your third strike. What are you going to do next?" And I always said to people, "Three strikes may be an out in baseball, but life is not baseball." And I just never gave up. And so in 1992, six years after I lost the second secretary of state race, I ran for the United States Congress. And this time I won.

There was just something that kept telling me, *You can't throw in the towel. You've got to stick this out.* You know, on our state seal in South Carolina we have a Latin phrase that says, *Dum Spiro Spero*—"While I breathe, I hope." And I've always felt that wherever there's life, there's hope. I never gave up. I kept running for office until I got it right.

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