

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS FOR BENNETT BROWN
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Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I could not be more delighted than to be here tonight for this auspicious occasion honoring Bennett Brown, who over the years has been one of the country's outstanding bankers. In fact, it is an honor to have been selected to present him the prestigious annual Business Statesman Award of the Harvard Business School Club of Atlanta.

Bennett likes to note that he was born in the low country town of Kingstree, South Carolina. His friends--and I include myself among them--like to note he rose to become chairman of the nation's fourth largest banking company.

Along the way, the trials and triumphs of Bennett Brown's career in many ways illustrate the extraordinary changes that have occurred in the banking industry since the 1950s. It was during that relatively tranquil decade when Bennett's career as a commercial banker began--after, I might add, he had an illustrious stint as a Federal Reserve examiner.

He joined Citizens & Southern National Bank in 1955 and 10 years later he headed the bank's operation in Augusta, Georgia. It was obvious that he was a young man on the way up.

Indeed, in the early 1970s Bennett became assistant president of C&S National Bank in Atlanta and president of the bank's holding company. Not a bad way to start the decade, or so it seemed. But the 1970s turned out to be a decade of economic turbulence, and it was no easy time to be a banker. Later in the decade Bennett Brown became chief executive of C&S at a particularly tumultuous time for the bank.

I'm not going to go into detail about what the economy of the '70s was like; if you don't remember those years, take my word for it, they were not fun, particularly for bankers.

Many wondered how C&S was going to weather the economic storm around us. But once Bennett took the C&S helm, he proved that he was more than equal to the tough task he faced.

He did so first by organizing a top-flight management team, the most important sign of being a true leader. Then he set C&S on a steady course of prudent, conservative banking practices that enabled the institution to reach a high level of performance. This dramatic turnaround under Bennett's leadership undoubtedly was a crowning achievement of his brilliant career, something he should be proud of and something that deserves the gratitude of the Atlanta community.

Under his leadership, C&S evolved into one of the South's strongest banks. Bennett's team positioned the institution to be a big player in the new banking environment of the 1980s.

This new environment allowed southern bank holding companies to expand across state borders, a far cry from when Bennett started out. Back in the '50s, holding companies under Georgia law could not cross county lines, let alone state lines. Banking was a relatively simple business in those days.

But after the regulations prohibiting geographic expansion were relaxed, banking became a far more complex business. Through acquisitions and mergers engineered under Bennett's guidance, including three large combinations, C&S became a major interstate bank in the Southeast. Bennett was its chairman and chief executive.

Then came C&S's merger with NCNB Corporation in 1991, resulting in the creation of NationsBank, the country's fourth largest banking company with operations stretching from Florida to Maryland and west to Texas. Bennett served as chairman of NationsBank until he retired last December. As chairman, he helped orchestrate the smooth transition of one of the largest mergers in U.S. banking history.

During his career, Bennett did not limit his boundless energies just to banking. He has been an outstanding citizen by generously giving of his time to many worthy organizations. They are far too numerous to cite all of them here tonight, but let me mention a few, just to give you an insight into the breadth of the man. Bennett is a member of the Advisory Board, Georgia Council on Child Abuse. He is a trustee of his alma mater, Presbyterian College in Clinton,

South Carolina, and he is an elder of the Peachtree Presbyterian Church.

Previously, Bennett spearheaded the growth of Atlanta by serving as president of both the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and Central Atlanta Progress, two organizations that have played vital roles in furthering the city's development. He has also been a director of both the Metro Atlanta and National Advisory Boards of the Salvation Army.

Truly, Bennett Brown has had a full career as both a banker and a good citizen. Therefore the Harvard Business School Club of Atlanta could not have acted more appropriately than to bestow on him its Business Statesman's Award. The award goes annually to a person who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in the public or private sector and has made a lasting contribution to the community. Bennett, I cannot think of a more fitting recipient than you.