

Harold Paulk (Hal) Henderson, Sr. Oral History Collection

Series I: Ellis Arnall

OH ARN 02

S. Ernest Vandiver, Jr. Interviewed by Harold Paulk (Hal) Henderson, Sr.

Date: May 23, 1981

CD: OH ARN 02, Tracks 1-6; 0:53:23 minutes

Cassette: OH ARN 02, 0:53:23 minutes (Sides 1 and 2)

[CD: Track 1]

[Cassette: Side 1]

HENDERSON: Governor, let me begin by asking you: when did you decide to enter the 1966 gubernatorial campaign?

VANDIVER: When did I decide to end it?

HENDERSON: Enter it. Get into it.

VANDIVER: Oh, enter it.

HENDERSON: Yes.

VANDIVER: Oh, well, I left office in 1963, and I think I left office in good political shape.

We endured some pretty hard times—it was during the period of the first integration of the schools. But I think there was general approval of the way that we handled the situation. I still had a lot of strong political ties, and I felt like that I'd have a real good chance of winning the gubernatorial race in 1966. At that time, of course, we were limited to one term. And it later changed to two terms by constitutional amendment. I kept up on political associations during

this period. I had suffered a heart attack during my term in office, in 1960. I had some residual angina, but as long as I was able to set my own pace, I pretty well got along all right. As the gubernatorial campaign concourse[?] grew closer, I got into a position where I was not able to control my diet. Going to barbeques and things that politicians put on: catfish suppers and ... of course, I was eating things that I didn't—shouldn't have been eating. I was losing sleep. There was increased stress. But I still felt like that I could continue the race and win it. I know we had a poll that was made approximately a week to ten days prior to the time that I did have to withdrawal, and it indicated that better than seventy percent of the electorate was in favor of my candidacy. At that time, there were two or three other candidates that were talking about running. There was Governor [Ellis Gibbs] Arnall. There was Lester [Garfield] Maddox, and several others who were thinking about it.

HENDERSON: OK. In the context of the 1960s, how would you consider your political philosophy? Were you conservative, moderate, liberal...or how would you describe yourself?

VANDIVER: Well, I hesitate to categorize political philosophy. You do things on an individual basis; you make your decisions on an individual basis. I would have to say that fiscally, I have always been very conservative with my own affairs and with my own property. And certainly I think that carries over into your tenure of office as governor. I think I was, if you've got to categorize a man's philosophy, you'd have to consider him--consider me--a conservative. Very conservative--maybe too conservative for the time. Of course, a terrible time for a conservative to be governor, [HENDERSON chuckles] with the court-ordered integration that we had.

HENDERSON: All right. There was some press reports in 1965 that Senator [Herman Eugene] Talmadge wanted to come back to the state and run for governor. According to the press reports, he had contacted you. You had already announced that you were already campaigning, and he had contacted you in '65 [1965] asking you to withdraw where he would have, so to speak, a clear shot at the governorship. Did he ever contact you prior to your dropping out on May the eighteenth about withdrawing from the race?

VANDIVER: No, Senator Talmadge did not contact me personally about me dropping out of the race.

HENDERSON: Did any emissaries of Senator Talmadge contact you with that in mind?

VANDIVER: Well, you don't know whether a man is an emissary or not. Whether it was his own idea or whether it came from the senator himself. It was discussed that he was likely to be a candidate. It was discussed that he was sick and tired of Washington [D.C.], that he just felt like that he couldn't keep up with that rat race anymore and that he would look favorable towards running—

HENDERSON: Thank you. [to someone else]

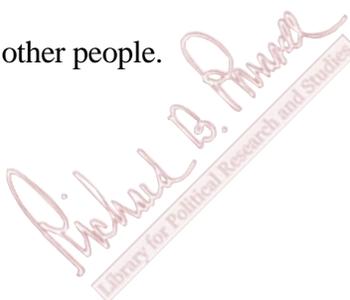
VANDIVER: --running for governor again. Thank you. [to someone else]

HENDERSON: And your response to when these gentlemen, or whoever whom it was, approached you about this that you were going to remain a candidate for governor.

VANDIVER: Yes, I was in this situation: I had been accumulating campaign funds. My friends had started contributing rather substantially. I felt with these contributions, they expected you to be a candidate, and I expected to be a candidate. And I didn't feel like it would be proper to pull out of the race after these people had already gone to work and were helping me politically and financially. And so, I indicated to the people who talked to me that I felt like I could stay in because of these other people.

[Tape stops and starts]

[CD: Track 2]



HENDERSON: OK. Is it fair to say that shortly after leaving your first term of office, you had thoughts about running again? I mean...

VANDIVER: Yes. I felt like I had a good program. [I] felt like we had a good four years. We had pretty well reformed the government. We had put the purchasing department on a bid basis, on an actual bid basis rather than bids that were phony bids and that sort of thing. We were buying goods cheaper than they'd been bought previously. We had a good revenue department. We had the liquor business under control, and we were making them abide by the law as it was. [We] had a good revenue commission. [James Lester] Jim Gillis [Sr.] was chairman of the highway department. We had a fine road program. We'd been able to raise the schoolteachers'

pay substantially. We had not introduced any legislation in the [Georgia] General Assembly to raise taxes a dime. We lived frugally. When I came into office, we had enough funds in surplus, I think, to operate the state about three days. [HENDERSON chuckles quietly] And we had less than two million dollars. And without raising taxes, we were able to leave my successor [clock chimes in background]--after making all of the improvements that we were able to make--better than sixty million dollars in separate funds, which in those days was almost unheard of to have that kind of surplus when you left office. But we felt like we had a good administration, and I was comparatively young, even though I had had some illness. I was just forty-four years old. And I felt like that at age forty-eight I'd be able to serve another term and complete the programs [that] we had started.

HENDERSON: You were considered in '65, "the leading candidate" by the press, the media. Mr. Arnall finally comes out and announces that he will indeed be a candidate. And he undertakes a very vigorous campaign against you in '65 and '66.

VANDIVER: Very bitter campaign.

HENDERSON: Yes. Why do you think he did?

VANDIVER: I don't know. I had, I think, I think I had the image of being honest. I know that we ran the state for four years without any shenanigans going on. I think he thought that in order to run a credible race or to have a chance at beating me that he had to destroy that image. And so he took some things that were absolutely nothing that anybody could say, really, about it

and twisted them around and ran a very bitter campaign against me in an effort to destroy the image that I had in Georgia at that time. That was difficult on me. I had never had my integrity attacked before. And I'm sure it created some stress. Particularly, all of my political advisors told me, they said Don't answer him. Just don't answer the fellow. Well, that's easy to say if he's not attacking you, [HENDERSON chuckles] but if they attacking your character and your honesty, it builds up inside, and it's a difficult situation if you make the determination not to answer, to ignore those things. And I'm sure that was part of the stress that I had to endure during that period, because if you could have gotten it off your chest, really, then it'd come back and been able to strike back at that sort of accusation...it would have at least made you feel better. I don't know whether it would have been wise politically to do it or not. Had it been somebody of less stature than a former governor, somebody like Ellis Arnall, who had generally [what was] considered to be a good record, making those accusations, I could have ignored them. In fact during the campaign in 1958, I had bitter accusations thrown at me by a Reverend [William Turner] Bodenhamer [Sr.]—

HENDERSON: From Tifton [Georgia], yes. [chuckles]

VANDIVER: Tifton—knew everything. He was not a person of stature, and I never did answer him. I just ignored him. It was easier to do from somebody like that than a man who had served as governor and was supposedly a man of good character. And it made it tough and, although Governor Arnall and I [laughs] have since become very good friends. And he's apologized to me [unintelligible]. He knew it was politics. And his wife said to him, [she] said How can you be such a good friend of Vandiver after you said all those horrible things about

him? And he said Oh, it's just politics. Nobody means what they're saying. But I had the image of saying what I meant and doing what I said, and it was hard to take the, I guess, wise political course and fail to answer these charges. I mean, he charged me with complete dishonesty and charged me with all sorts of things that he dreamed up that were absolutely untrue. And he knew they were untrue. And he just considered it politics. But it's tough when somebody who's tried to live a life, politically and personally, above reproach...it's pretty tough to keep it so. And I'm sure that [unintelligible]. And I know that.

HENDERSON: Up until the time that you retired, which is May the eighteenth, what or who were some of the statewide officers, politicians, who were supporting your candidacy? Was Mr. Gillis supporting your candidacy?

VANDIVER: Oh, very vigorously. Very vigorously. Mr. Gillis was one of my great friends and [there's] probably never been a man of greater popularity that's been chairman of the highway board. A man, because of his integrity and honesty, that was considered a great man and is still considered a great man. He was very vigorous in support, and I know. And I had to call him and tell him that I had to withdrawal on my doctor's suggestion. He just broke down and cried. He'd worked so hard for me. And that was one of the hardest phone calls I ever had to make. [Curtis] Dixon Oxford of the internal revenue commission in my administration was one of my strongest supporters. [James Harrison (Jimmy)] Jim Gray [Sr.] from Albany, editor of the paper down there. And I had great support from the financial community, and I had all the major Atlanta banks supporting me and most of the independent banks in Georgia who were supporters[?]. I had such great support that it made extremely difficult for me to have to say

Well, I can't run. It's just one of those things where—Jim Gillis says you can sit on your front porch and get elected. And I said Mr. Jim, people don't get elected in Georgia sitting on the front porch. You've got to get out; you got to get out and see the people and be an active participant in campaigning or you're just [unintelligible] [Tape stops and starts].

[CD: Track 3]

VANDIVER: People don't get elected sitting on the front porch. That's about what I would have had to do in that case.

HENDERSON: The press, up until you withdrew, was characterizing you as the candidate of the Talmadge organization. You think that's a fair assessment?

VANDIVER: Yes, I think that's a very fair assessment. I've been a friend of the Talmadges' all my life. My father [Samuel Ernest Vandiver, Sr.] was a very close friend of [Eugene] Gene Talmadge. He was one of his staff every time he was elected governor. And he served on the state highway board together in 1940, under Eugene Talmadge. He'd always been a Talmadge supporter for his whole life. I'd grown up at age sixteen tacking up Talmadge posters all over north Georgia. I've been a Talmadge supporter all of my life, I guess, because of my father. When Talmadge was elected governor at the end of Arnall's term and then subsequently died—I had been extremely active in his campaign. And I was just back from service, but I'd been active working for Talmadge and when—then Governor Talmadge died and the legislature elected Herman, Herman asked me to be his chief administrative aide in the governor's office.

And I there with him during that period of time, sixty-seven days, [when] we served the governor until[?] there was an election in the legislature. I had been very active after he went out of office; I supported Talmadge. In 1948, I was his campaign manager. In his first race for governor, he asked me to manage [it]. And after the election, he named me adjutant general, military chief of staff. And I served for six years as his military chief of staff until I resigned to run for lieutenant governor. And so, there [is] no way anybody could say that [I'm not a?] long-time, life-long friend, and we still are.

HENDERSON: OK. On May the eighteenth, you hold a news conference and you say that you will withdrawal from the race because of health conditions. Two days earlier, you had flown to Washington to confer with Senator Talmadge. What was the purpose of that meeting with the Senator?

VANDIVER: I had been on the road campaigning. I'd flown to Albany--Albany, Georgia, and made my opening take, my opening for the campaign--[a] forty-minute speech. [I] didn't get through until, I guess, one o'clock in the morning. [I] flew to Atlanta. I had to be at a Rotary [Club of Marietta, Georgia] meeting or Kiwanis [Club of Marietta, Georgia] meeting in Marietta at seven. [I] got about three hours sleep, and I had a meeting with some supporters up in Rome, Georgia, in the afternoon. And then I had the afternoon and night, and I had to leave Rome at about ten or eleven o'clock to go to Fayette [County], Georgia, and had to speak the following morning at a seven o'clock breakfast. [I] was under a period of *great* stress. I was having angina six or seven times a day. I was using nitroglycerin like it was going out of style. [Laughter] And really, going home and coming back from Fayetteville [Georgia], I tell you, I

just said to myself, I don't know whether I'll get[?] through this. So, I went to my doctor who had been my doctor during my heart attack, and he took—like a cardio thing [unintelligible]—my heart had noticeable changes. After he noticed that, he said Well, you've got to make a choice. You're going to kill yourself in this campaign or you're just going to have to get out of it. At that time, I had three children who hadn't started the college. I wanted to get through school. My family—I had been away from them for almost fifteen years and that was a problem. And so, I made the judgment that I had to get out. Having been a friend of Herman Talmadge all these years and having some indication from friends of his, not from him, but from friends of his that he might be interested, I called him and told him that I'd like to see him. So, I flew to Washington early in the morning the day after I talked to the doctor. And went to his home. We fixed up some ham and eggs, and we ate a breakfast. I just laid out the story to him, and I said Senator, I'm not going to be able to run. You made a great governor when you were here, and I'd like to see you come back and run. We certainly don't want Ellis Arnall asking about it, somebody like that being governor. [His] philosophy is entirely different from my own. And I would like for you to run. He said Well, I would like to run. [He] said I need to talk to my family, and I need to talk to my friends and supporters. But he said—I said Well, I think that if [clock chiming in background] when I make my announcement there's going to be a vacuum there, and if you can't announce—if you hope to run for governor you ought to announce immediately. And he agreed with that. And so, we talked back and forth on the phone a couple of times. He asked me, [he] said Don't you think you can run? I said Not likely. I made my decision I just—it was a question of whether I'd live through it or not. And I just—[I was] still a relatively a young man, I would have had a few years in front of me, and I've got some children that I want to see grow up. I just don't think it's worth killing myself

over. And so he agreed that he would make his statement immediately after I made mine. And so I made my statement, told them why; we prayed together[?]. And immediately he made a statement from Washington. [Unintelligible] said he indicated he'd like to run, [unintelligible] option. There was tremendous outpouring. And his supporters, they wanted him to stay in Washington. He had earned some seniority. Senator [Richard Brevard] Russell [Jr.] was getting older and sick. If something happened to him, we'd be left without a senior senator up there to [tend to?] Georgia's affairs. I think he was contacted—I know he was—by people like John [Adams] Sibley. A lot of Georgia people who had always supported him in the campaign, urging him not to run for governor. And after a period of consideration and talking with his family and his strongest supporters in Georgia, he decided not to run. That, of course, left a vacuum. So, my friend Jimmy Gray from Albany who had been my strongest supporter—in fact, he was going to pay for my first television opening statement [unintelligible]—said he wanted to—he jumped in the race. So did Lester Maddox—jumping around like a live fish on a hot skillet there [HENDERSON chuckles] for a few days, condemning [Herman] Talmadge. And Ellis Arnall did the same thing, although he and Talmadge had been fairly good friends, boy, he jumped on him with both feet. And so, it left a vacuum there.

[CD: Track 4]

[Cassette: Side 2]

VANDIVER: ...Later a friend of mine from Gainesville, [William Barrett] Bill Gunter who subsequently was appointed to the [Georgia] Supreme Court by [James Earl] Jimmy Carter [Jr.], called me and asked me and told me that his friend Jimmy Carter was interested in making the race. And I said Well, Bill, nobody knows Jimmy Carter. [HENDERSON chuckles] And he

said Well, that's right. He said He knows absolutely nothing about politics. And except in join [unintelligible] in the state senate get people to join [unintelligible]. He said Would you, take the time to advise him for a day or two? [He] said I'll ask him to come over there, to your house, ya'll sit down, and you just advise him as best you can about what he ought to do, who he ought to contact, and each candidate and so forth. I said Well, I'm going to tell you this, Bill. I said Jim Gray is my good friend, and although I don't think Gray intends to be governor I feel an obligation to support him since he was so active in my campaign. He said Well, I know that. He said Would you do this as a favor to me? And I said Yes, I will for you, Bill. Bill and I had been classmates in law school so—in a few days when Jimmy Carter came over here and sat out on my porch early in the morning until late at night. And we went over the political situation county by county, who he ought to seat in each county, the way he ought to conduct his campaign strategies and things. He left that night and continued to campaign and ran a fairly critical race using a new face and ...

HENDERSON: Did he follow your suggestions?

VANDIVER: Yes, yes he did. [HENDERSON laughs] He followed them almost to the letter. And so, after that, I guess Jimmy had figured that I would be in support of him, although I never did promise him support. But then, we're getting ahead of ourselves. This is—you're still talking about '66.

HENDERSON: [laughs] Let me go back to your meeting with [Herman] Talmadge in Washington.

VANDIVER: Yes.

HENDERSON: When you leave Washington, do you leave there with the impression that he is going to be a candidate or he was still mulling it over?

VANDIVER: I left there with the impression that he wanted to be a candidate.

HENDERSON: But he had not definitely made a decision?

VANDIVER: He had not definitely made the decision.

HENDERSON: When is it that you learn that he would not be a candidate? Does he call you?

VANDIVER: Yes, he called me and told me. [Unintelligible] and said, [unintelligible] not to run. I understand that his mother and his wife, political friends had all just raised cane about it, and he felt like he just owed it to the people to stay there, [to] use his seniority to help the people.

HENDERSON: I know this has been fifteen years ago and everybody's memory-- [tape stops and starts] I know its been fifteen years ago and the memory may fade out, but was it before May the twenty-third when he comes out and says that he will not be candidate? Did he let you know before then?

VANDIVER: Oh yes. He let me know he was not going to be a candidate.

HENDERSON: Several days before May the twenty-third?

VANDIVER: I'm not sure whether it was several days, one day, two days...

HENDERSON: The reason I'm asking—

VANDIVER: It was before he made the announcement. He called me and told me that he was not going to run before he had his press conference and told the public that he wasn't going to run.

HENDERSON: There was an article in the *Athens Banner Herald* [Athens, Georgia] written by Bob Cohn--

VANDIVER: Oh, boy.

HENDERSON: --of which—and he quotes you rather extensively, and in that article he says that either on the eighteenth or the nineteenth, [Herman] Talmadge had already decided that he would not be a candidate. And he informed you and that you told or asked Mr. Talmadge to *not* say that he's not going to be a candidate--that he would still be a candidate--until you could find a credible candidate. Is there any validity to that story?

VANDIVER: Yes, as I recall, there was some conversation to that effect. I felt like we ought to find a viable candidate who could represent our political philosophy. But I think that was the time he called me, and I had known a day or two before that he made his statement. But I was not sure at that time whether he was going to run or not. He'd indicated that he was not—I didn't know whether he had changed his mind. But I think I did say Well, give us a chance to find somebody that will be of our understanding[?] and represent our political philosophy.

HENDERSON: When you were up there talking to Mr. [Herman]Talmadge about this, does the name of Callaway coming up—Mr. [Howard Hollis] Bo Callaway—he's a Republican candidate now. Is that a factor in your consideration when you talked with him?

VANDIVER: That was not a factor at all.

HENDERSON: Not a factor.

VANDIVER: Not a factor at all. I had no concern about Bo Callaway being elected governor.

HENDERSON: You did not think he would be a strong contender against you?

VANDIVER: Not at that time.

HENDERSON: Was it more, then, a concern that Ellis Arnall might be able to get the nomination?

VANDIVER: If I dropped out, and Ellis Arnall ran, I felt like it would be very strong.

HENDERSON: Why would-- Excuse me.

VANDIVER: And I didn't want to let Arnall be governor again. His philosophy and mine were absolutely opposed.

HENDERSON: OK, let me pursue that just a little bit. What was the difference between his philosophy and your philosophy?

VANDIVER: Oh, he was a very, very liberal player. He would say it with some pride, although to me it should not be something to be proud of. But he was in the situation trying to utilize the black vote back in 1945. He marshaled the black vote against Gene Talmadge; he marshaled it against Herman. They voted in the block against everybody against named Talmadge, and there were some racial connotations. We're talking about thirty-five years ago, thirty...thirty-five years. There were racial overtones, and he was usually—these black groups really, at that point, most of them were not qualified to vote, as far as educationally. They would block vote them, thinking that some [unintelligible] community, voting them all in a block. And of course that was one of the things we were fighting back in those days was block voting. [Of] course, Talmadge had his block vote, too, on the other side, [HENDERSON

chuckles] but actually difficult for looking at things today to note just how critical that thing seemed thirty-five years ago. The state would be taken over by blacks. And if somebody said that the mayor of Atlanta would be a black, I'm sure a lot of people would have made statements then that they'd leave Georgia if that happened. Because it was a different world.

[Tape stops and starts]

[CD: Track 5]

HENDERSON: All right, so it boils down to basically you think he was too liberal on the race issue?

VANDIVER: On the race issue and on everything else. I—we felt like that he was a big spender, although he was not able to spend because he was governor during the war [World War II]. But had he been able to—he was of the philosophy of [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt that at that time, basically.

HENDERSON: When I was talking with him, he said that on social issues, he was a social democrat, but when it came to monetary matters, he was a fiscal conservative.

VANDIVER: Well, he left office with a surplus in the treasury, but you have to remember that all the money that was being raised by taxes at that time—they couldn't build any roads during wartime. They couldn't spend the money, really, to help the people because of the wartime situation. And it's hard to know whether he's a fiscal conservative or not if he couldn't spend it.

But he still had the philosophy of [Eurith Dickinson] Ed Rivers and Roosevelt ... a big spending philosophy and of course, Talmadge has always been conservative, so have I. We were completely opposite.

HENDERSON: OK. Now after Mr. [Herman] Talmadge informs you that he would not be a candidate and you start looking around for a "viable candidate," [clock chimes in background] as you say, who did you first go to?

VANDIVER: I think I called [James Philander] Phil Campbell [Jr.], if I remember correctly. Phil came over here and had lunch with us. And we talked about it. He had some interest in running for governor at that time. And he thought about it for a period of days, and then he decided he wasn't running. Next man I thought I think was [William Redding] Bill Bowdoin [Sr.]. He's been a good friend of mine. [He] had straightened out the purchasing department while he was in my administration. He'd set it up to operate on a mnemonic[?] basis. And then had resigned and gone back to banking, which was his profession. Bill, at that time, was in business[?], honest, had shared my political philosophy [unintelligible]; he had been a good friend of mine. And he was the next one that I called. [I] called—not sure who the next one was but I think eventually... Peter Zack Geer [Jr.] wanted to run. Peter Zack was my executive secretary, and I'd helped him be elected lieutenant governor, or I could. And he had wanted to run. But the press was just tearing him over, and I was afraid that Peter Zack would get in and get beat, and we wouldn't have anybody to represent our philosophy. And I finally, I think I mentioned, talked to Peter Zack about running, and he said no, he just felt like that he couldn't that he was already obligated to run for reelection.

HENDERSON: And then did you go to Mr. Gray?

VANDIVER: I think Mr. Gray decided at the urging of some of his local friends rather—I never did call him. But he was one who suited our group philosophy. And I did support him; I voted for him, and I did all I could. However, he was under great a disadvantage, being a Yankee, [chuckles] speaking with a Yankee accent, and it was just one of those things. I mean, he was the best [that] we could find to represent our philosophy and of course, Jimmy was a great fellow. I never will forget when I was the governor--he was chairman of the Democratic Party in the '50s--and we went to the convention when [John Fitzgerald] Kennedy was nominated in 1960. And they adopted a strong civil rights plan. And we filed a strong minority report. And he would get most of the states in the south to go along with us. And I was supposed to present him, but that was right after my heart attack, and I didn't feel like I could. So I asked Jimmy to do it. And Jimmy got up and made one of the really great speeches, I think, at the Democratic Convention with a Yankee accent representing Georgia.

[HENDERSON laughs] And you should have seen the looks of consternation on those people out there that here was this man from Georgia [HENDERSON laughs] that was speaking like some southerner... And it was an unusual situation, to say the least. I got a big kick out of it.

HENDERSON: How about the candidacy of Lester Maddox? When he announces, it's considered sort of a joke, it appears...?

VANDIVER: Yeah, it was. It was considered a joke. He was sort of a clown. He made ridiculous statements of all kinds, it seemed to me, and I think for most people in Georgia. Nobody took Lester seriously. He was not a serious candidate at that time.

HENDERSON: How would you—you and Mr. Maddox both were considered conservative. Both were considered segregationists. What's the difference, though, between your attitudes toward government?

VANDIVER: Lester was not a conservative; he was a radical.

HENDERSON: A radical. OK.

VANDIVER: He was an absolute radical.

HENDERSON: Too far to the right.

VANDIVER: Oh, he was so far to the right, he didn't need [unintelligible]. He was just a fool, a political fool, really, he was. Nobody, took him seriously. They didn't. [It was a] freak accident that he became governor.

HENDERSON: How about Garland [Turk] Byrd, former lieutenant governor? He enters and his campaign just fizzles. What happened?

VANDIVER: Well, that was...did he enter that campaign?

HENDERSON: Yes, sir. He entered in '66 [1966]. That was the same reaction that Senator Talmadge had. "Can you remember him running?"

VANDIVER: That's right. [HENDERSON laughs] I think, as well as I can recall, that Garland had some money tied up in a campaign fund that people had given him four years previously to run. And he had to withdrawal, and he hadn't been able to spend that money. I think maybe he just spent that money [HENDERSON laughs]—he got in that race to spend that money.

HENDERSON: But he was not one of the people you contacted about entering?

VANDIVER: No.

HENDERSON: Mr. Callaway—let's suppose that you had gotten the nomination. You had stayed in; you did not have your health problem, and you had stayed in. Now here was Bo Callaway--conservative, segregationist--saying some of the same things that you were saying. And he had been a Talmadge supporter also. How would you have campaigned against Callaway?

VANDIVER: [I would have] campaigned against him at that time as a Republican.

[HENDERSON laughs] That's all you had to say. He was a Republican, and he was a

scalawag. He was [unintelligible] He was a poor little rich boy who'd always contributed to the Talmadge campaign as part of [unintelligible]. They'd give him token appointments, give him something old[?]. He was not on the inside of political strings at that time. [Tape stops and starts]

[CD: Track 6]

HENDERSON: In the runoff between Mr. Maddox and Mr. Arnall, did you support either one of those gentlemen?

VANDIVER: Not publicly. I did vote for Lester . I couldn't vote for Arnall. I didn't publicly support him. I figured that Bo would have an easier time beating a political clown than he would beating Ellis Arnall. So, I was one of those who voted for Lester, the lesser of the evils. The one most likely to be defeated by the other candidate.

HENDERSON: Why do you think Mr. Arnall, who was spending a lot of his money, a former governor, big risk campaigner, why do you think he was clobbered by him?

VANDIVER: He was too liberal for the people of Georgia. [There] wasn't a question about that. He'd been the man, really, that Talmadge was running against all his campaign. Ellis was always in the camp of the other. [Melvin Ernest] M.E. Thompson and Ed Rivers and Arnall and John [Wesley] Greer and that group would always compete with Polk County[?] and they were all considered the ultra liberal. [unintelligible] He was just not electable at that time.

HENDERSON: OK. Do you think there was any effort on the part of the Republicans to cross over in the runoff and pick Mr. Maddox, to support Mr. Maddox, thinking he would be the weaker candidate?

VANDIVER: No question about that. The Republicans—of course, Arnall was out of the main stream of their thinking. There weren't many Republicans in Georgia at that time. You had your conservatives and your liberals. And that thing got thrown into confusion, and it was the most confusing [unintelligible]. And I had to get out [unintelligible]. The conservatives voted for Lester. My friends, a lot of them, voted for Lester because they couldn't vote for Arnall. And a few of them were just boiling mad at Arnall and at the way he had attacked me: a few of those people like Griffin [Boyette] Bell and [Robert Henry] Bob Jordan and boys that I had been real close to all of my life, they voted for Jimmy Carter in that campaign. [Doorbell rings] Think that's the reason I think Jimmy did as well as he did. Just a minute. [Vandiver excuses himself. Tape stops and starts] Georgia couldn't support Arnall, so they just voted for Maddox and figured that Bo Callaway would beat him the general election. We'd suffered four years under the Republicans and then get to give it back.

HENDERSON: All right. In the general election, do you support one of the candidates?

VANDIVER: Yes, I supported Bo. My preference was to vote for [unintelligible].

HENDERSON: How vigorously did you support him?

VANDIVER: I didn't come out and endorse him, but I called friends and family over the state, talked with them about the campaign issues, [unintelligible], and Maddox. I supported him in that race.

HENDERSON: Did he ever contact you about supporting him?

VANDIVER: Sure. When we were—he brought his campaign through here he stopped by at my house, as you do with your friends[?]. Bo and I had always been friends. He always supported me and when he got to be a Republican, I was a little shocked, frankly. And he had supported [Barry Morris] Goldwater. And [he had] run at the time Goldwater ran, in Goldwater territory. And he got elected really on the Goldwater campaign—got elected to Congress.

HENDERSON: During the primary runoff, did Mr. Arnall make any efforts to get you to come in on his side?

VANDIVER: No. He [unintelligible].

HENDERSON: [laughs] Did Mr. Maddox?

VANDIVER: No. Lester knew where my support was. He knew I wasn't going to support him.

HENDERSON: The write-in campaign: do you think that Mr. Arnall was behind that in financing it?

VANDIVER: Oh, no question about it. You don't—those things don't just happen. It was a concerted effort on his part. He and his friends did it, who held the same political views.

HENDERSON: What do you think was the purpose of the write-in effort?

VANDIVER: Well, Ellis Arnall had been probably as liberal as anybody in the state and a person like Bo Callaway, who called himself a Republican, was just anathema; [unintelligible]. There again, as far as he was concerned, [he] had it worse than Talmadge. And he wanted to throw it into confusion.

HENDERSON: Well, let me see, Mr. Vandiver. I think I have—is there something I'm leaving out that maybe I should ask you that I'm overlooking that you can recall?

VANDIVER: I think we've probably pretty well covered it.

HENDERSON: There was a racial flare-up in Atlanta, I believe, right before the primary.

[clock chimes in background] Arnall said that really did him in.

VANDIVER: No question about it.

HENDERSON: Do you agree with him?

VANDIVER: I remember that. That, of course, hurt Lester Maddox more than anything else that could have happened. Of course, racial flare-up is not a little thing, ever, but it's amazing how things do effect the campaign. That was one of those things that just happened to [unintelligible]. I hope Lester Maddox [unintelligible].... Somebody's who's going to get over there in bed with those blacks.

HENDERSON: Governor, I think we've gone through our questions. I certainly do appreciate you granting me this interview.

VANDIVER: Yes, I'm delighted. Are you writing your doctorate?

HENDERSON: Yes, sir. This is—

VANDIVER: The written part?

HENDERSON: Well, I've gotten—I've already done all the research...

[End of Interview]

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