

Harold Paulk (Hal) Henderson, Sr. Oral History Collection  
Series I: Ellis Arnall  
OH ARN 03  
Garland T. Byrd Interviewed by Harold Paulk (Hal) Henderson, Sr.  
Date: May 5, 1981  
Cassette: OH ARN 03, 0:34:14 minutes, Sides 1 and 2

[Cassette: Side 1]

HENDERSON: Mr. Byrd, could you tell me when you decided to run for governor in '66 [1966] and why?

BYRD: I guess it was a carry over from the race I did not make in 1962. On May the eighth, 1962, I had a heart attack. [I was] involved in the middle of a gubernatorial campaign in that way, set up along with [Samuel] Marvin Griffin [Sr.] and Carl [Edward] Sanders. The poll that we had available to us at that time indicated that I had about seventy-four [percent?], maybe in excess of that. And so, I guess, not having been able to complete that race, the other one was just a natural reaction.

HENDERSON: Now Mr. [Samuel Ernest] Vandiver [Jr.], who's a former governor, was announcing or was in the campaign—he was considered the favorite candidate at the time by most press reports. Were you still going to enter the campaign regardless of Mr. Vandiver being in [the race]?

BYRD: I don't think that Vandiver in there would have been the controlling factor whether I would have run or not have run. I personally don't recall his being that serious about it. It could have been that the press was reporting that [unintelligible].

HENDERSON: Well, if you remember on May the eighteenth, he dropped out because he said he had the heart condition and that he would not be a candidate. At that time, Senator [Herman Eugene] Talmadge announced his possibility of entering the campaign as a candidate. If Senator Talmadge had entered, would you have been a candidate?

BYRD: I doubt if I wouldn't have.

HENDERSON: But—

BYRD: I wouldn't have.



HENDERSON: If Mr. Vandiver had continued to stay in the campaign, would you still have been a candidate?

BYRD: Yes, I would have.

HENDERSON: Do you think that Mr. Talmadge was seriously considered entering the campaign? He makes a statement on May the eighteenth that he's considering it. Do you think this is a serious effort on his part, or why do you think he made that announcement?

BYRD: I think that the whole time that Senator Talmadge was in the [United States] Senate that he was frustrated to some extent by not being able to accomplish things that he wanted to

accomplish. As governor, he could give an order and have it carried out. In the United States Senate, he was one of a hundred and no doubt that he longed for the political forum that he could be more effective in, that he could get things done in, that he could see immediate results of his thoughts and to translate at a moment into action what his political thoughts were.

HENDERSON: On May the twenty-third he announced that he would not, indeed, be a candidate. Why do you think he decided not to make a [candidacy?]?

BYRD: Well, the only evidence of real serious thought, I guess, he was reflecting, it turns out, that perhaps that there would be some risk in stepping out of a safe, secure Senate seat into a campaign where there was a lot of unknown risk involved. He was safe in the United States Senate at that time, and maybe that those others that were expressing a desire to run and that were running for governor in 1966, [it] could be that [the right thing was?] to step aside, give [registration?] for Talmadge. I've never stepped, really; I don't know. I would have to surmise.

HENDERSON: Now the period from May the eighteenth to May the twenty-third when he [was] still considering—he has not withdrawn—behind the scenes Talmadge and Mr. Vandiver are looking for a candidate to run as a Talmadge candidate. Did they ever approach you about the possibility of running the race with them?

BYRD: No.

HENDERSON: They did not?

BYRD: No.

HENDERSON: So when you entered the campaign, I believe, on May the twenty-fourth, they had not discussed with you at all about the possibility of getting in, nor offering their support?

BYRD: No.

HENDERSON: If I could just ask you to assess the candidates—there were five candidates, five major candidates in the primary—and if I could just go down the line and ask you to assess the candidates then, what you thought were the weak points of them? Mr. [Ellis Gibbs] Arnall.

BYRD: I think that I would have to assess Arnall and [Lester Garfield] Maddox somewhat together. They're miles--a million light miles--apart in their political philosophy, but Governor Arnall represented one extreme of thinking in that campaign, and Governor Maddox represented the other extreme. Governor Arnall, the more liberal and more moderate view; Governor Maddox, an extreme right view. They both were able to capture the majority of their respective fringes of the campaign, that is Maddox had a sizeable portion of the conservatives, and Arnall with a sizeable portion of the liberals and more extreme moderates. I would think that Governor Arnall is perhaps the most able individual involved in the campaign that would offer themselves by virtues of experience. Governor Arnall wasn't a liberal as a lot of people thought he was, he was liberal in the terms of a political philosopher in the late '40s, maybe the early '50s, but he had pretty well stayed where he was. The times had caught up with him and moved him by—in

my idea, my viewpoint, knowing Governor Arnall as I do. He was almost as much of a conservative as I was.

HENDERSON: A point he tried to make at the time, too.

BYRD: Yes.

HENDERSON: How about Mr. [James Harrison (Jimmy)] Gray [Sr.]?

BYRD: Jim Gray's a very able individual. He had been the chairman of the Democratic Party, and I believe that was under Vandiver. Gray was a—at that time—it wasn't exactly politically wise to be from up North trying to run for a state wide office in this state, and I don't think Jimmy ever was able to shake that image. But he had [unintelligible], a good businessman, and he had enough ability to be governor of this state.

HENDERSON: And Mr. [James Earl (Jimmy)] Carter [Jr.]?

BYRD: Carter started out running for the [United States] Congress in the third district and I think, perhaps, met with some degree of encouragement and the enthusiasm from that race. [It] encouraged him to move out of it on over into the gubernatorial race. Carter tried--I believe it was in this campaign, I believe it was May the eighth, 1966, that Carter had a speech in Rome, Georgia, in his campaign--came out to abolish neighborhood schools and for busing. I think if you'll go research the old newspapers that he that was the first time I'd ever known of him to go

that extreme. I think that Jimmy was making an effort to either capture a liberal position or even maybe to stabilize his political beliefs at that time.

HENDERSON: Now you said we have Mr. Maddox on one extreme, [and] Mr. Arnall on the other extreme. Where did you fit in? What was your political philosophy?

BYRD: I didn't go on through--being lieutenant governor during, I guess, it was roughly a time politically in this state. Vandiver and I were in office. Going to my mail, I was a stark liberal; [?] I was a stark conservative. I always like to think of myself as having an open mind, respect to both political philosophies. I considered myself to be a moderate, and obviously too moderate. I could have staked out a position on either extreme and perhaps got in the runoff. And so to get in the runoff with a six-man race is half the race. But I think that Jim Gray and me and Jimmy Carter were, now in retrospect, were lost from the very beginning, because none of us were willing to venture that far to the right or that far to the left. And I did not want to be governor bad enough at that time to espouse an extreme political philosophy and still don't. And it was a calculated position, a philosophy that I embraced. I question the wisdom of getting out on the stump on a speaking platform and just because they should happen to have some emotion into it at the time, utilize it to propel myself in any particular—toward any political objective.

HENDERSON: So are you disagreeing with a great deal of the press that lumped you and Maddox and Gray in the same category pulling from the same votes, the conservative segregationist vote?

BYRD: Well, no, no—

HENDERSON: Is that too simplistic?

BYRD: They lumped us. They lumped us, and I couldn't do anything about it. I disagree with that basic premise, because I don't think that I ever appealed to the folks Lester Maddox appealed to, basically. I tried not to. But no matter how hard I tried, they put me and Jimmy Gray and Lester in the same box. I guess my geography had a lot to do with it, being from sort of a mid-South Georgia town, small community that always enjoyed the [farmers' support?]. This area—it is a conservative area. I guess that they had every right to believe that I was cut out of that mold. But I thought that I had conducted myself in such a way, politically, in the past, that I didn't fit that image. But they put us around it.

HENDERSON: [chuckles] If you had to choose which candidate pulled the most votes from you, would it be Mr. Gray or Mr. Carter?

BYRD: I'd say about fifty-fifty.

HENDERSON: About fifty-fifty. I see. But you don't think Mr. Maddox hurt you at all as far as stealing votes from you?

BYRD: It's hard to assess, because the people who were the leaders in Maddox's campaign before the runoff, that is *before* the runoff--I emphasize *before* the runoff--were new people to me and many--that's politically. They were a new breed; they were new faces in the crowd. Now a great number of our friends, after the runoff, supported Lester Maddox. I did not. I voted for Ellis Arnall.

HENDERSON: Well, that's the question later on, but let's go ahead and deal with it while you're mentioning it. Why did you decide to go with Mr. Arnall?

BYRD: I thought Ellis offered more from the standpoint of political knowledge, of stability. He'd been the previous governor and had not made a bad judgment. He knew how to deal with the problems of that particular time. We weren't exactly out of the woods with respect to emotional problems of that day. And I felt that Ellis was better equipped to...had better training [and] had a better background, too.

HENDERSON: I'm beginning to pick up that while you were committed to segregation, you were not abiding the rule of segregationist, and you were willing to change with the time. Is that a fair assessment? Whereas Mr. Maddox would say, "This is it, and we will never, never, never change."

BYRD: Well, I had already had to face political reality in the University of Georgia problem. I knew what the problems were, that a man had to have any dignity with those problems, however, if he was going to govern. And I knew there had to be a better way of dealing with



them than what Maddox was talking about—and that was what [how] he was going to do with them. I knew that an axe handle and a shotgun wouldn't do. But I'd already been that route. And I just felt that Ellis had a better understanding of the sensitive nature, the sensitive nature involved and could better handle it. And to me, that was the difference.

HENDERSON: Mr. Maddox was constantly charging that people were trying to get him out of the primary for one reason or another. Was there any effort to get you out of the primary?

BYRD: Never was. They must not have considered me very serious about it [laughs].

HENDERSON: [laughs] Never offered you a hundred thousand dollars?

BYRD: [laughs] Never offered me a thing.

HENDERSON: Did you make any effort to get either Mr. Gray or Mr. Maddox or anyone else out of the primary?

BYRD: Not a time. Not a penny. No, I did not.

HENDERSON: In 1958, you run for lieutenant governor and you carry all but six counties. In '62 you were considered the leading candidate in the governor's race until you drop out. '64 you run against Mr. [Howard Hollis (Bo)] Callaway, you get 42.5 percent of the vote. In the primary you come up with five percent. What happened?

BYRD: I don't know. The congressional race when I ran against Callaway, [Barry Morris] Goldwater came in and visited three times. Callaway was his fundraiser. Lyndon [Baines] Johnson came in over at Warner Robins [Georgia]. We asked him not to, not to bring him here. I had Mr. [Carl] Vinson call up [unintelligible] delegation going to bat for me, a man who succeeded him from South Carolina, the chairman of the [United States] House [of Representatives] Military Affairs Committee [Armed Services Committee].

HENDERSON: Rivers?

BYRD: Yep. Congressman [Lucius] Mendel Rivers came to the district in my behalf. A great number of other Democrats offered to, but we couldn't turn the Goldwater tide. And this victory had nobody [unintelligible] all the way across the cotton belt, from South Carolina through Mississippi. I think probably I got more switch over votes cast for me when you consider the number of votes Goldwater got and those that Lyndon Johnson got. Goldwater got about eighty percent of the vote. Johnson got about twenty percent of the vote in the district. I got forty some odd percent and Callaway got the other. So, you can see that—obviously I lost the straight Republican vote that year, and there was quite a lot of straight Republican votes. If you wanted to vote for Goldwater, you were blinded by Goldwater appeal.

And Callaway himself was never popular. He'd made a good strong campaign which projected in the forefront of Goldwater's movement in the South. [He was] an attractive young man, had no political straws [flaws?] on him, was well financed... I'd gone through the roughest Democratic primary, the most expensive Democratic primary in that congressional

campaign that has been held in Georgia since that time--up until that time and since that time. Erle Cocke [Jr.] who used to be the national commander of the American Legion, the other World Bank [director?]; [Stephen] Steve Pace [Jr.], whose father was a congressman from this district for a great number of years. [It was a] very, very popular destination, two of the people that I had in that campaign. I don't know what happened. I haven't been able to assess it. Frankly, I've never tried to assess it--the results of the 1966 gubernatorial campaign. I do know this, that I was under-financed, and we couldn't do the things on the media that we wanted to do for the lack of finances.

HENDERSON: Would you say that's your major problem? Finances?

BYRD: I think so; I think perhaps that was the major problem. I don't think there's anything that we did strategically or any political, you know, apart from the positions that we took during the campaign. It was just that we had five or six people in there who had their own niche carved out for them in areas of the state and political figures. And I guess you might say at the outset, I probably had a broader base than any of them, but we could see them nipping at me to start with and finally just tore me apart.

HENDERSON: Did you have ill will towards Mr. Talmadge or Mr. Vandiver? You'd been lieutenant governor under Mr. Vandiver; he'd been a strong Talmadge fan. Any ill will because they didn't come out and support you as a candidate?

BYRD: No, no. I didn't, because I'm grown. I'm grown politically; I'm broad-minded. I recognize that often times people do what they have to do or feel like they have to do, politically. I've supported Senator Talmadge since then.

HENDERSON: To your knowledge, was Governor Sanders involved behind the scenes in the primary? Was he supporting Mr. Arnall?

BYRD: I don't know.

HENDERSON: Publicly, he says he's not.

BYRD: Yes. I never saw any signs of that.

HENDERSON: OK. Was Senator Talmadge or Mr. Vandiver involved behind the scenes?

BYRD: We never saw any signs of it.

HENDERSON: Some of the press said that Mr. Garland Byrd has one issue in the campaign, and that's [student guidelines issue?]. How do you respond to that? Were you a one-issue candidate?

BYRD: No. I think I had a very enthusiastic platform to offer. I was overshadowed with the school guidelines problem. They labeled me, and the press gave me that title, and it was one of those things I couldn't shake off [unintelligible].

HENDERSON: Now, did you push that as an issue. Was that your major issue? I want to make sure I understand this, because the press is emphasizing that this was your really rallying cry here. You're saying it's not?

BYRD: No. It wasn't my major issue. It was an issue. It was an issue that the press selected to give me credit for. It was an issue. No doubt about it. But sure, I [didn't like the way things are?].

HENDERSON: Could you just describe the suit where—why did you decide at that particular time to bring this suit? What was the purpose of the suit at that time?

BYRD: I've forgotten when the suit was brought in relationship to the campaign. The suit had the practical effect of keeping these schools segregated in this county for a good number of years. I don't know that the suit--the bringing of the suit--was, at the time, related sufficiently enough to the campaign. To say that they were one and the same, I don't think I intended them to be, to be brought for that purpose. Obviously, once I was in the campaign, the suit became an issue, and I accepted it for whatever value it might give me politically. I certainly didn't go out and disown it.

HENDERSON: Well, was this an effort to appeal, maybe, to the segregationist vote?

BYRD: No, I don't think so. I don't think so.

HENDERSON: Well, then what was its purpose?

BYRD: To keep the schools segregated.

HENDERSON: Mr. Maddox, of course, had never won public office before, and he is able to defeat, in runoff, Mr. Arnall. Why do you think he was able to pull off this political upset?

BYRD: It was an emotional trip that two men take on and [unintelligible, segregation?].

HENDERSON: In the primary itself, there was speculation that a lot of Republicans, or supporters of Bo Callaway, crossed over and voted for Mr. Maddox thinking he would be the weaker candidate. Do you subscribe to that theory?

BYRD: No. You can't manipulate people that way. Out here people sit around and conjecture talking about this group of people and this element of people, they're going to vote for this candidate because he's weak. You may have a hundred people who think that deeply about it, faction some approach along those lines, but no, there was no need to.

HENDERSON: So you don't see any conspiracy out there between Republicans?

BYRD: No.

HENDERSON: So, you would disagree with Mr. Arnall in that regard, even if there was.

BYRD: Yes.

HENDERSON: In the general election between Mr. Maddox and Mr. Callaway, did you support Mr. Maddox?

BYRD: Yes, I did.

HENDERSON: Enthusiastically or just...?

BYRD: No. As a citizen, and as a Democrat supporting the Georgia Democratic Party.

HENDERSON: When neither of those two gentlemen receive the majority, the issue is thrown into the [Georgia] General Assembly. Do you think there was an alternative to allowing the General Assembly to elect the next governor? There was some discussion about having another runoff election.

BYRD: I think our law is fairly clear as to the proper route to take. I think it tells that it is proper province of the General Assembly to [establish?] the vote and if there wasn't a winner,



then as I recall, the law provides a method of selection for him. That's in the General Assembly.

HENDERSON: Did you concur with the decision the General Assembly when it elected Mr. Maddox governor?

BYRD: Yes.

HENDERSON: If you had been in the General Assembly then you would have voted...?

BYRD: I'd have voted for him.

HENDERSON: Primarily because of loyalty to the Democratic Party or for any other reason?

BYRD: I voted for Maddox in the general election. I guess if I'd been a member of the General Assembly, I would have exercised that same discretion that I exercised in the private voting booth. So, I'm saying that, not having given it a lot of thought. Not having had that in mind all around me, only at that time when it was for real, for example. You know, my actions could have been different, but I don't think so.

HENDERSON: Was there any difference between Mr. Maddox and Mr. Callaway as far as their political philosophy?



BYRD: No, no difference.

HENDERSON: Why do you think Mr. Callaway who was a Democrat and who left the Democratic Party I believe in '64 and became a Republican, why do you think he did that?

BYRD: Well, I think he did it for two or three reasons. Number one being opportunity. It was an opportunity for a young, upcoming Republican, particularly in this area at the time when there was gold in the Goldwater bandwagon. He was no more frustrated than I was. Most of us--the other Democratic Party leaders--we were just as frustrated with what was taking place. We weren't as emotional about ours as he was. I frankly think he overreacted. I think that some of the other Democratic Party officials in Georgia at that time also [unintelligible]. I think they perhaps overreacted. Some of them might have regretted it, I don't know. But if you recall, Callaway wasn't the only one who bolted to the Democratic Party. And it wasn't easy to remain and stay a good Democrat at that time.

HENDERSON: If you had gotten the nomination, how would you have campaigned against Mr. Callaway? Would you have tried to "out-conservative" him or tried to be a more moderate or how?

BYRD: I think that if I had gotten the nomination that I would have looked back at the track record we set in getting it, and I would have changed players in the ballgame. I'd have followed the same concept, because if that concept had brought me to the runoff and into the general election, I would of assumed it was good enough to go the rest of the way. Now you always

make some adjustments. Ballplayers, at half time, the football coach makes some adjustments in his method of play. Now, I don't know enough about the campaign to know what adjustments I would have made. In a political campaign, you adjust every day. You've got to hire professionals to—well, now you have, but we didn't have back then. You've got PR [Public Relations] men to brief you at night. You've got people now that brief you daily. We didn't have—none of us had access of that type of know-how even back originally in 1966. But we did make adjustments. We did have the benefit of some advice. And I'm sure I was kept—following that same strategy.

HENDERSON: Mr. Maddox--going back to the primary--accused Mr. Gray of trying to get him out of the race by offering him a hundred thousand, a hundred-fifty thousand dollars, whatever. Do you think there was anything to that?

BYRD: I have no way of knowing what transpired between the two candidates. I remember the charge. I remember where it was made—it was made over at Macon [Georgia] at the rally of all the candidates. I think I was sitting by Mr. Maddox that night at the head table. I saw Jimmy Gray's reaction—it was one of unbelief. He didn't react like a guilty man. I know Jimmy Gray well enough to know that it would have been uncharacteristic of him. It could have been that some of Jimmy Gray's friends may have approached some of Maddox's friends or something. I don't think Jimmy Gray knew about that. As a matter of fact, I'd bet my life he didn't know about it.

HENDERSON: How—

BYRD: That type of foreplay back and forth, you hear it all the time, that kind of talk from [one another?] and I guess if some of that conversation gets out and [if] you want to take advantage of it you just announce it publicly. There must be a million rumors that go around every campaign that could become scandal if anybody took them seriously.

HENDERSON: Observing Mr. Callaway, he has the nomination. He's planning to defeat Mr. Maddox. How would you describe him as a campaigner? Was he too military-oriented? When I talked with Mr. Talmadge he said, you know, he'd be going through a town at 4:17 [p.m.]--he was scheduled to try to be there. He believed in [little things?] regardless of what was going on he just followed the schedule. To keep up--

BYRD: Well, my impression—of course, I was never around when he was campaigning in that gubernatorial race. He was rather militaristic. I don't think ever warmed up to the man on the street. He was not the typical campaigner that some of the others were, some of the others have been in Georgia politics. I think that Callaway probably didn't get a lot of votes that a candidate normally gets on personal charisma having mingled with people. He did convey the image of being the man up on the hill.

HENDERSON: Do you think Mr. Arnall was involved in the write-in movement? Publicly, he says he's not.

BYRD: I'm just trying to think whether he was. I don't remember whether he discouraged it or not. There's no indication to me that he ever was, and I'm trying to think back. I don't—

HENDERSON: Publicly, he said he was not involved with it, but he did not disown it.

BYRD: I think that's my idea about it. [You] notice I said I don't recall him disowning it, but I don't recall him politically straining [to get ahead?].

HENDERSON: That's right. Looking back, let's play Monday morning quarterback just for a moment. What would you have done if you had—

[Cassette: Side 2]

HENDERSON: [Laughter] Did you have any time as it begins to progress that this is a losing cause, you're really not going to get in the run-off or did you think right up to the end you had a chance to be in the run-off?

BYRD: Well, you don't ever make up your mind that you don't. You certainly have a realization, a day of awakening somewhere along the route, and we could tell that—I had enough political know-how to know that it was a high-risk situation, even at the beginning, and it became over realistic in time. I can't pinpoint a time schedule—it's been too long.

HENDERSON: But you did have a realization even before the votes were in that this was not going to be your vote.

BYRD: Right.

HENDERSON: I've asked most of the candidates approximately how much their campaigns cost--and I realize this has been years ago, and I'm not trying to pin you down to a specific--but do you have any generalities about how much your campaign cost, roughly speaking?

BYRD: Off the record, what did the others say theirs cost?

HENDERSON: Mr. Gray said he spent around \$800,000. Mr. Carter, well, just from the press reports—I haven't interviewed him yet—around \$250,000. I realize there's no way to go back and get [unintelligible].

BYRD: I don't have any idea. Not a thought.

HENDERSON: Would you say--we have the image that Mr. Arnall and Mr. Gray are really spending the money. Were you spending less than they were?

BYRD: Oh yes, yes, considerably less. I think I would have spent less than Carter.

HENDERSON: OK. Let me make sure I've asked the...Mr. Byrd, I think that this finishes my questions. Unless you have anything to add?

BYRD: No, I don't. It's been a long time, you know.

HENDERSON: I realize. Yes, sir.

BYRD: I hope I've been able to help you a little bit.

HENDERSON: You certainly have. And I certainly appreciate you taking your time from a busy schedule and putting up with a doctoral student.

BYRD: [Laughter] That's all right. So you've got one more to go, huh?

HENDERSON: Well, I have, let's see...

[End of Interview]

## Name Index

### A

Arnall, Ellis Gibbs, 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 12, 14, 15,  
19, 21

### C

Callaway, Howard Hollis (Bo), 9, 10, 14,  
15, 16, 17, 19

Carter, James Earl, Jr. (Jimmy), 5, 6, 7, 21

Cocke, Erle, Jr., 11

### G

Goldwater, Barry Morris, 10, 17

Gray, James Harrison, Sr. (Jimmy), 5, 6, 7,  
9, 18, 21

Griffin, Samuel Marvin, Sr., 1

### J

Johnson, Lyndon Baines, 10

### M

Maddox, Lester Garfield, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 14,  
15, 16, 18, 19

### P

Pace, Stephen, Jr., 11

### R

Rivers, Lucius Mendel, 10

### S

Sanders, Carl Edward, 1, 12

### T

Talmadge, Herman Eugene, 2, 3, 11, 12, 19

### V

Vandiver, Samuel Ernest, Jr., 1, 2, 3, 5, 6,  
11, 12

Vinson, Carl, 10

