

Harold Paulk (Hal) Henderson, Sr. Oral History Collection
Series I: Ellis Arnall
OH ARN 08
Ellis G. Arnall Interviewed by Harold Paulk (Hal) Henderson, Sr.
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Cassette: OH ARN 08, 0:83:50 minutes, sides 1 and 2

[Cassette: Side 1]

[HENDERSON tests tape recorder in preparation for interview]

ARNALL: "... Free men, F, R, W, men shall stand. When free men shall stand between their loved homes and wild war's desolations," [sic from] "Star-Spangled Banner." The third was *Victory and Peace*. "Blessed victory and peace made us a nation" and so forth. But, when I submitted the second book to the publishers, *Free Men Shall Stand*, they thought it didn't have enough zip. And we argued about it, changed it to *What the People Want* [1948], and I agreed to do that. Now, the third one I've got a great deal of memoranda and all--if I'll ever sit down to do it. But I've been toying with this: instead of me doing it I may have a biography done. Because a biographer can say things about the person about whom he's writing that the author can't say. It wouldn't be quite gracious, you know. So, I've been toying with that. What I'm coming to is this material you're getting together might be very beneficial if we ever determine to do a biographical book.

HENDERSON: Well, now, have you thought about somebody doing your biography?

ARNALL: No, not yet. You got any thoughts about it?

HENDERSON: Well, do you think I'm up to par to tackle something like that? [chuckles]

ARNALL: Well, I don't know. Let's see what you end up with and see if we want to go forward.

HENDERSON: All right. OK. I would consider it an honor to—

ARNALL: You say that you have read everything about me pretty much.

HENDERSON: Well, I never want to say "read everything about you," but I think I've read a good bit.

ARNALL: The main thing in a biography is getting together material, because actually a lot of it will be eliminated.

HENDERSON: Yes.

ARNALL: But, a lot of it will be tied together.

HENDERSON: Right.

ARNALL: And probably enlarged or not. But we could sit down if we ever get far enough along, and together I think we might could do something that would be a rather historical book.

HENDERSON: I think certainly there is a gap there in Southern politics.

ARNALL: Oh, yeah.

HENDERSON: Because there needs to be a biography of you.

ARNALL: You see, when I came along timing is everything, timing, timing in anything. Life, business, whatnot, timing. I sometimes think it's a marvelous thing there has to be a God or somebody running the lives of mankind, people, you and me. How people meet through chance or circumstance or luck and become married. And how your business opportunity just happens so.

HENDERSON: Right.

ARNALL: Something deals these cards around, and I have thought life is a marvelous thing. How it comes about, what happens. Some people call it luck, some chance; I don't know what it is. But there is a fate that shapes the destiny of mankind.

HENDERSON: I think you're right.

ARNALL: Very interesting. And of course, as you know, if you've read some of the stuff I set out to be governor because it was ordained that I be governor. There was never any question

about it. Due to the fact that you read this in the first grade grammar school, had a fortune-telling contest on Halloween. My teacher was Miss [Margaret Lucy] Maggie Brown, [I've] got a lot of articles about her. And she took a chalk box, dumped the chalk out, put slips of paper in it--what business profession you'd be--and I drew one. And mine said governor you'll be. I didn't know what a governor was, I'd much rather drawn the one that said fireman, policeman, or something like that. But I took it home to mother, and she explained to me what a governor was. And so I said I knew I'd be governor. It wasn't an issue, just a question of when. It came a little quicker. Incidentally, there's the issue about whether I'm the youngest governor, certainly when I was elected I was the youngest in the United States. Now, I'm the oldest governor--oldest living governor.

HENDERSON: Is that right?

ARNALL: I'm seventy-eight. I'm seventy-nine in March. And more active than I've ever been.

HENDERSON: Good.

ARNALL: And intend to continue activity. I think that human nature is such we all want to feel needed, that's why we love our children so much. And I think that we want to feel that we make a contribution to the welfare of mankind or the profession or the business we're engaged in whether it's teaching, whatever it is. And I think anyone who hangs up their spurs, if they're physically able and so forth--mentally, physically--is making the first start toward the graveyard.

Because when you lose interest in life what have you to live for? So, I continue very active in the law business. We're talking about this thing, we've got so many lawyers up here I don't even know their names. [HENDERSON chuckles] I've got a road map of these offices. You commented on them. I don't even know how to get to people, you see. [ARNALL has pulled out a map for HENDERSON to see] That's a road map of the fourth floor—

HENDERSON: Oh, my goodness.

ARNALL: You have to figure out.

HENDERSON: Worse than the interstate system.

ARNALL: And this is the fifth floor roadmap, and here are all the people you call.

HENDERSON: Oh, my gosh.

ARNALL: I don't even know half them down there. [HENDERSON chuckles] But, it's interesting, and I've always enjoyed litigation. I don't like paperwork. I like to be in court and stir it up. And then I am active in the insurance business. I'm chairman of Coastal [States Life Insurance Company], vice-chairman of Sun Life Group [of America], and I have many interests. [I have] directed many corporations, some in New York, the other in yonder, and I just stay busy, enjoy life.

HENDERSON: Sounds like you do. Wonder if I could zero in on the '42 [1942] election?

ARNALL: '42. Yes, indeed.

HENDERSON: Let me preface my question by simply saying, you know, in that primary there were two candidates you and Mr. [Eugene (Gene)] Talmadge.

ARNALL: Right.

HENDERSON: And that was the only time that there was only one opponent to take on Eugene—

ARNALL: Now, let me interrupt you here.

HENDERSON: Yes, sir.

ARNALL: I'm a great fellow to interrupt.

HENDERSON: Go right ahead.

ARNALL: My wife says that if I was the last lawyer on the Earth, and she had to have a lawyer she wouldn't engage me, because I'm always interrupting.

HENDERSON: Go right ahead.

ARNALL: I'm just taking things over. But before you get to the primary, that was the end result of activity. The first activity had to be that I had to be the sole candidate against Eugene Talmadge.

HENDERSON: That's leading up to my question—

ARNALL: And this took a great deal of doing and activity. I was attorney general, and I used that office as a springboard for the governorship. I had a press service, a clipping service, and a letter writing service. And we took every paper in Georgia--every rural paper, every county paper, every daily paper--and we clipped everything having to do with local people. For example, if a man became president of the bank, he got a letter from me, a personal letter, on attorney general stationery commending him and wishing him much success and happiness as president of the bank of Chattooga County [Georgia] or wherever. If there was a death in family, they heard from me. Whatever happened locally, if a mayor was elected county commissioner, he heard from me, mayor he heard from me. And I built up a local contact following that was very, very powerful. Second thing I did, I had two paid men that were selling sanitary supplies to city halls and courthouses, and they went all over the state. Wherever they went to sell their supplies, they would talk to the leading people. And they were completely impersonal. They were not for me, but they just would sound people out--the leaders, who they were for, whether for Talmadge or Columbus Roberts [Sr.] and a lot of them were playing around with--he [Roberts] was commissioner of agriculture. And then as they

would feed me these names of the ones for me, I would write them a letter or call them on the phone and tell them I heard they were for me and how much I appreciated it. If they had a leading citizen who was for Columbus Roberts, for example, I would telephone him and say, "Mr. Jones, I understand from the grapevine that you're close to Columbus Roberts or intending to support him in the primary, if he runs. And I wouldn't interfere with your determination to what you want to do, but if circumstances develop whereby you can support me instead of Columbus, I'll appreciate it greatly. [Phone rings] And second, if you going to stay with Columbus Roberts I ask you not to be too active, because you're such a leader and such a wonderful—[ARNALL answers telephone and tape stops]

So, in the legislature, I'd been in the legislature and sometimes I think a man ought not to be governor of the state unless he's been in the legislature. Or, let me state it this way. He can make a better governor if he's been in the legislature, because he then knows how--the give and take of passing laws and compromise and what has to be done. So, I worked closely with the legislature. I'd write 'em and call 'em and have 'em come to see me. Then I traveled all over the state. I went from one corner to the other, met people. All of this is way before the campaign started. So that by the time we got down who was going to contest Gene Talmadge, it was pretty much a consensus that I should. And when the entries closed, and I was the only qualified man to run against Talmadge, I knew I had won the election. Because the real election was to get in by myself. Now another thing that's significant, in those days we didn't have to get a majority of the votes in the primary. All you had to do was be the leading--to lead the field. For example, a number of times, when Talmadge was running, in the old days, he didn't get a majority of the vote but he became the candidate. Because of the majority, but not the plurality. Now, I'm shifting to back when Carl [Edward] Sanders was governor and Carl was a

good governor and a good friend of mine. He changed the law where you had to get a plurality. Had it not been for him changing the law, I would have been the nominee in '66 because I got the most votes.

HENDERSON: Yes, yes, that's right.

ARNALL: Well, getting back to the question you asked me, and I got off to tell you that the first hurdle to get elected governor in '42 was to have Gene Talmadge to myself.

HENDERSON: Now did [Eurith Dickinson] Ed Rivers, did you have to deal with him? Did he try to come back in '42? Was that a problem?

ARNALL: No, no. I was so far out in front that nobody could effectively challenge me. But, let me tell you how that, when I say I was out in front, not only by really personal activity, which I told you about--letter-writing, contacts, telephone calls to the right people. And remember we had the county unit system in those days, and therefore it's entirely different from the way we do politics today. In those days if you could get the leading people in the community for you, you carried the county. Today, if you get the leading people for you, you lose the county. [HENDERSON chuckles] But the reason that I was so strong at the being the challenger to Talmadge, my wife and son and I were at Sea Island [Georgia]. We'd rented a cottage down there for a month, in the summer enjoying things down there. Gene Talmadge had started a vendetta against Walter [*sic* Marvin Summers] Pittman and Doctor [Walter Dewey] Cocking. And he took the position that anywhere that they were teaching racial

equality, that that was an anathema to the people and that they ought to be discharged. And he took it up with the Board of Regents. He was a member of the Board of Regents. And he couldn't get enough votes to throw 'em off. So, he removed Sandy Beaver, I believe who was his roommate in college, Marion Smith, Clark Howell, editor of the [Atlanta] *Constitution*, publisher, and several others, I've forgotten how many. And then he stacked the Board of Regents so that they would do his bidding. And he got an opinion, while I was away, from the assistant attorney general that this was legal and proper. Now, in those days, although I was attorney general, I didn't appoint the assistants. The governor appointed the assistants. So through loyalty to him while I was away, an assistant wrote an official opinion that what he was doing was legal and right under the constitution. So, I picked up the morning paper one day down at Sea Island and read this. And I was confronted with this: either I said nothing and that became the law and he was justified in it, or I denounced the opinion as being erroneous and incorrect. And, of course, it was erroneous and incorrect. So I issued a statement overruling the assistant attorney general that what he had done, what Gene Talmadge had done, was legally and constitutionally unlawful and improper. So, I became, immediately, the champion of those who were supporting [Cocking?] and Pittman and so forth. But that wasn't enough in itself to make me the candidate. But about that time the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges [*sic* Southern Association of Colleges and Schools]--the president of which then was Doctor Rufus [Carrollton] Harris from Monroe, Georgia, who was president of Mercer [University], before that Tulane [University]; he was president of Tulane then--they had a meeting, the Southern Association, and removed the University System of Georgia and all of its units from accredited standing. Which meant that if you had a degree from academic college or any of the colleges, you couldn't go to professional school at another college who would accept that,

because they said it was improper and that they didn't have standing. So then this immediately aroused the people. And I found, much to my surprise, that the Wool Hat Boys, who had always been for Talmadge--the fathers, the grandfathers, the uncles, the aunts, students at one of the university system colleges--rose up in arms because they were sacrificing to send their children to school. And now they were confronted with the fact that the governor, by intermeddling with the University System of Georgia, and saying who could teach and what they could teach and the fact that they had lost their accredited rating--then all the young people, all the parents, grandparents, everybody rose up in arms. So I became *the* candidate and no one entered the primary against me, because by that time I was so very strong that I was *the* candidate against Talmadge.

HENDERSON: Now, Governor, if that issue had not come along, do you think you still could have defeated Gene Talmadge?

ARNALL: No, and the danger I was in was any minute during the campaign. He could have made a confession to the people that he had made a mistake and that he never would interfere with education again. I think I would have had a very difficult time. But by the time he had made such a concession, if it was during the campaign, the division was so strong it would have been more difficult. But he could have done it early--that was the issue. You see, I hate to say this, Hal, I hate to say it, but I think a majority of the people in politics vote against people and not for people. I think they vote against. Let's take the national picture. If the economy's bad, they'll vote against Republicans--against 'em. If the economy is good, they won't vote against 'em. [HENDERSON chuckles] See how it works. It just is A-B-C. But that was the issue.

Now I knew I would be governor, but it came quicker than I thought it would because of this issue. Had that issue not arisen, I still would have been governor, but I would have picked a different time...and it makes it so much easier if you've got an issue. Talmadge, in the early days, I remember his issue, probably before your day, was the three-dollar automobile tax.

HENDERSON: Yes, yes.

ARNALL: People understood that, it affected everyone. And this school thing affected everyone. So it's much easier if you've got an issue. If you're not, all you run on is generalities--are you going to have a good government and all this, that, and the other.

HENDERSON: Let me ask you, how would your political philosophy differ from that of Gene Talmadge's?

ARNALL: Well, first of all hold on. I don't think it's a secret when I say that I am a progressive. I'm a liberal. I'm really a revolutionary Democrat. I don't mean to overthrow the government with force and arms, but I mean constantly changing things, putting it more in step with the will and the welfare of the people. Let's take constitutional issues. I think we rewrite the [United States] Constitution with every Supreme Court decision, and I think it's good we do because if we were rigidly standing by the Constitution that was written two hundred years ago, we'd overthrow the government. You've got to keep the government moving in step with the will and welfare of the people. Do you realize we are the oldest government in the world today? The oldest government in the world today, yet we're young. Since 1776, we are the oldest and

yet we think of being young. My mother [Bessie Lena Ellis Arnall] died when she was ninety-eight and a half last January '84 and when you figure she's lived about half the time. We're young and yet were the oldest government in the world. My position has always been for change. I think the only thing that is unchangeable in this world is change. And I think that concepts and ideas that are prevalent today will be different tomorrow. My wife and I talk about modern music. Do you ever look at it? God, it's so changed now. [HENDERSON laughs] They call it music, and yet the world moves on.

HENDERSON: Yes.

ARNALL: I read in the paper yesterday a big story in the Atlanta paper, you hear, you read it, about a couple that run some restaurants. Two young people, been living together ten years now. There was a time here that people would rise up in arms. Now I'm not saying that all change is good, but I'm saying we live in a changing world. Talmadge was dedicated, his concepts to conservatism and keeping the status quo. Mine was to shake it up and change it. And when I was governor I had more fun than any governor we ever had because I shook it from morning 'til night. I was in controversy. I brought up things that people wouldn't have dared bring up, and it was just so much fun. For example, in the race issue I took the position that we ought not to have second-class citizenship. I think everybody has a right to be a first-class citizenship, but their reward should be based on their ability and their work and what they do to achieve. Now, I was an apostate to people, yet I was very popular everywhere except right at home. And now today somebody asked me about Herman [Eugene Talmadge]. Herman had a birthday done a couple of years ago, and they asked me to speak, and I spoke and bragged on

him. I said that the reason we were such good friends now was he had adopted my philosophy. Which is true. [HENDERSON chuckles] And I said that as I've become old, I've gotten more compassionate and when Herman got up he said I've gotten older, I've gotten wiser. It was funny. [HENDERSON laughs] But, Gene Talmadge's political philosophy and mine were as far apart as the poles. I'm a progressive.

HENDERSON: Now, at one time when he first became governor and you were in the legislature, you were a supporter of Gene Talmadge.

ARNALL: Right.

HENDERSON: And in fact, I think he appointed you assistant attorney general.

ARNALL: That is correct.

HENDERSON: When did you begin to drift away from the Talmadge camp? Is it a gradual thing? Is it a sudden thing?

ARNALL: Well, actually, actually when I was attorney general, we got along fine. The Rivers administration were never Talmadge people--I mean Rivers wasn't. And they created an issue by failing to pass an appropriation bill. And Roy [Vincent] Harris, who was the speaker of the [Georgia] House [of Representatives] and a very dynamic public official, and Ed got together on not passing the appropriation bill. And Gene undertook to run the thing without it. And I was

attorney general. I suppose the first time [that] I ever hit him a lick was when I supported the legislature in saying that he couldn't appropriate the money, but it was up to them. But, it was a gradual thing.

But the thing that broke the camel's back was the university system. I was running for governor, not against Talmadge, but against whoever--. You see, another thing. He wasn't supposed to run for governor. At that time we had a law that said that you could run for governor for a two-year term and then be reelected to a two-year term. Well, he changed the constitution to where instead of a two-year term, even though he was under the restriction, that you could have a four-year term. And he ran for the four-year term. There were a lot technical questions whether he had the right to do it in constitution. But, I said he made the feather bed, and I'm going to get in it, which I did. But the thing that broke the camel's back was the university system. The great issue was this: to take the withering hands of the politicians off the throat of the educators. If you remember too, Hal, we were at war [World War II] then. And one of the attacks that Talmadge and his people made on me--I was subject to the draft and everybody my age was in the military--and that was true. But I answered it by saying that everything he said was true: that I was in the draft age, I registered for the draft, that people of my age were in the military, and that I would join the military the minute they defeated me for governor. If they wanted me to go abroad and fight a desperate [Adolf] Hitler, I would do it. But if they wanted me to stay at home and fight a homegrown, desperate, a domestic Hitler, I would do that, for them to make the decision. So, they said they wanted me to stay home, and we did. [HENDERSON laughs] But the thing that brought the cleavage between Talmadge and me was the university system issue. That was *the* issue, and it was a great issue. And since that time, sometimes they play around with it, but they pull their fingers back in time. They don't

fool with the education like the politicians used to, trying to say who should teach, what should be taught--that's over with.

HENDERSON: Let me shift to overall perspective of your administration. Looking back on it, what would you consider the major accomplishments of the Arnall administration?

ARNALL: Well, without any doubt in the world and this is a rather self-praise, self-adulation, egotism, call it what you will. When I sit here in this window and look out with you and you see all the buildings and all the people, and you realize that we have first-class citizenship today for all the people, and you realize that the South and Georgia are no longer procurers of temper and drawers of water, that no longer are we merely the source of raw material, but we refine raw material into finished goods, that today industry has moved South. It's moved from lower Lynn, Massachusetts, side. Today industry comes to Georgia. Atlanta is probably the first or second busiest airport in the world today. All of this, and I look over to Alabama, Mississippi, California, the West--all of that is due to one thing, and I take full credit for it. The industrialization of the South and the growth of the South, was my fight when everybody said it couldn't be done of suing the leading railroads in the nation and bringing about equality of transportation rates.

There was a man in Dawson, Georgia, Terrell County, Ed Stevens, who had a company, the Cinderella Peanut Butter Company [Cinderella Foods]. Terrell County grows more peanuts than any county in the state and he would make those peanuts into peanut butter. Well, he found it was cheaper for him to get peanut butter to Atlanta by sending the raw peanuts to Chicago, having 'em processed into peanut butter under his label, and ship it from Chicago to

Atlanta, than it was to ship the finished peanut butter from Dawson to Atlanta. What I wanted was to postalize transportation rates where they'd be uniform throughout the nation.

Now, there are two types of rates in the transportation business. One is commodity rates and the other is class rates. Commodity rates are corn, cotton, timber... Any raw material is a commodity. Now, the South had lower commodity rates, that is, we could ship from Tifton [Georgia] to New York cheaper than they could ship raw materials from New York to Tifton. The other type of rate is a class rate. That is a finished good. That shirt you've got on would be a class rate, those shoes, class rate. And the class rates were geared up to where it was much cheaper to ship finished goods from New York to Tifton than it was from Tifton to New York--a great disparity. That's why we had sweated labor in the South, where we kept the black man in the ditch, and we stayed in the ditch with him to keep our foot on his neck, because there was not economic opportunity. We had child labor, the few taxes on mills we had had mill villages--made people live in them, charged them too much, trade with a commissary. It was all rigged to where we had to survive, and we did the best we could under a system that penalized us since the Civil War, the War between the States. Today when you win a war, the losing nation is rehabilitated. But after the Civil War they kept their foot on our neck. We were just an appendage to the Union, like Ireland is to the United Kingdom.

Well, I brought the suit as attorney general, argued it as governor, and won the case in the Supreme Court. I tried to get the other southern governors to help me, but they wouldn't touch it. [They] said You have to go through the ICC [Interstate Commerce Commission]. And I said To hell with that. I spoke in the West, to the western governors. [I] said You're in the same boat. But, they were controlled by the railroad--nothing doing. So, I did it alone. I think the railroads had twenty-one lawyers when I argued it. You know lawyers are wonderful

individually, but as a group they can't agree on what time of day it is. So they couldn't agree on anything, and I just walked away with the Supreme Court and won the case and brought about the equalization of transportation rates. You'd be interested in this. I've told you about class rates and commodity rates. They confessed before the Supreme Court that the east imperial domain, the East, had lower class rates, and we had lower commodity rates. But they argued since Georgia and the South and the West are growers of raw material, this is to their interest. And since we have industry and they don't, it's fair for us to have lower rates so we can get them the stuff. And I answered that by saying that was the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard. Here are two highways side-by-side, parallel one is improved, hard surface. The other is mud and rocks and sand. And so we take a traffic count and we say that this improved road has more traffic on it. That's why we improved it. I said you give us equality of transportation and we'll bleed em' white. We'll get all the business, which we did.

So, you ask me what was the most important thing. That was the most important thing not only for the state government and the governorship and things like that, but for the economy of the South. It has enabled us to go forward in education and industry and economic opportunity. And today there are jobs for all. The black man has jobs; he no longer is the enemy of the white man because there was only half a loaf for both races, and they were fighting to get that half a loaf. So I would say by far and foremost, the most important thing that happened when I was governor was bringing about the readmission of the South to the Union on the basis of full fellowship and full equality. And that's what you see everyday now. And by the way, I've got a treatise on that documented that I made to the Atlanta Historical Society. Have you got it?

HENDERSON: No, sir.

ARNALL: You want a copy of it?

HENDERSON: A copy of it.

ARNALL: I want to remember to give you that.

HENDERSON: OK.

ARNALL: Because that's the story. That's number one.

HENDERSON: OK, OK.

ARNALL: The second thing that you asked me what we did... The second that I take great pride in was broadening the electoral franchise. We let the black man vote in the white Democratic Party for the first time. We dropped the voting age to eighteen. We did away with the poll tax. We had the best soldier-vote law of any state in the nation, making it easy for our servicemen. We lifted the registered vote, as I recall it, from about half million to more than double that in the space of four years. My slogan is: There is nothing wrong with the government that a good dose of democracy won't cure. I'll even go a step further. While this is no footnote in history, it's a footnote to the future. I think that we do not have democracy in the United States anymore. We are controlled by minorities. And therefore, I strongly urge and

strongly recommend that ultimately we will accomplish mandatory registration and mandatory voting. There are nine western democracies that have that and their vote is about ninety-five, ninety-six percent of the people. The ones that don't vote are due to the fact that they are mobile and not are stationed near anywhere. Where as each year, it seems here, that in national elections we get fewer turnouts. I am so tired of hearing business people cuss the government, who are too damned busy making money to get out and take an interest in politics, who think that politics is corrupt, that politicians are corrupt, and they are not near as corrupt as business people. I'll tell you that.

But leaving that aside, I would say number two was the voting franchise. You'll be interested in how we did away with the poll tax. This was real a shibboleth; this is dangerous. During the campaign many of my liberal friends wanted me to advocate getting rid of the poll tax. I said Hell, if I do, I'll get beat. I've got to get in. The way you accomplish things is to have the power to do it, not talk about it before you get the power, 'cause it will be denied to you. So when I got in, I made a speech to the legislature that I wanted to do away with the poll tax, wanted them to do away with it. Well, all hell broke loose. Nobody was for it, because in those days we had the county unit [system]. You had the control of the people who paid the poll taxes. Farmers wouldn't let others vote. It was a machine-type operation. So, I figured out how I'm going to do away with the poll tax, and this crowd don't want to. And then I went before the legislature, and I said Listen, this is the best legislature we've ever had in Georgia. Every proposal I have made up until now has been unanimously passed. They called me "Unanimous Arnall." It was written up in all the national magazines. And I said I want you to do this and I know you have some misgivings about it, but I'll tell you why I want you to do it. This is the best legislature [that] we could possibly have, and I like each and every one of you. Now, I got

a four-year term and you're running in the middle of my term. And if you just won't do it, if you don't have the good judgment to do away with this iniquitous poll tax, I happen to have here an opinion of the attorney general. I'm going to read it. He says that when you adjourn, and you haven't done away with the poll tax, that by executive order I can do away with it until the next meeting of the legislature. So you'll be running without any poll tax. And when you go to ask somebody to vote for you, they say, Hell, if it hadn't been for Governor Arnall, I couldn't vote. I'm against you. Whereas if you take full credit of it, and you go home and tell it--put it in the local paper that you supported doing away with it--you wanted a broad franchise--you'll get reelected. [HENDERSON laughs] They did away with it.

HENDERSON: Governor, going the other way, looking back on your administration, were there any failures that come to mind?

ARNALL: I've thought about that a lot, and first of all, I wouldn't do a thing differently than what I did. I wouldn't undo anything I did, and I don't know of any failure. There may have been some, but I don't know of any. We restructured the state government. If you'll go to the capitol [in Atlanta] now you'll see it's my government. Everything over there is just the way I set it up. When [James Earl] Jimmy Carter [Jr.] was president he messed with some human resources, but if you look at it it's all just the way I had it. We did it top to bottom. There were so many things we did. Let me see. [ARNALL gets up]

HENDERSON: I can go around.

ARNALL: No, I can—shut it off. [Tape stops and starts] The third accomplishment of which I'm probably proudest was the advancement we made in education in Georgia. Not only freeing the schools and colleges from the withering hand of the politician, but when I was governor, listen at this, the total income of the state was seventy-five million dollars. I paid the state out of debt for the first and only time in the history of Georgia without raising taxes a dime. Now I have to say parenthetically we were at war, so there were some things we couldn't do that would have been done had it not been for war, like building buildings and things like that. But, we paid the state out of debt. But here's the significant thing. We spent more of the state budget for education than all of the other expenditures combined. Because I have always believed that education is not only the cure for ignorance, it's a cure for poverty; it's a cure for bigotry; it's a cure for illness. Education can accomplish everything. And so I would say my educational program was the next thing [that] I am proudest of. And we set up the minimum foundation for education, set up teacher retirement, created a constitutional board of regents, state constitutional board of education. We increased teachers' salaries in appropriation, and we began a program of scholarship for doctors who would practice in rural counties. No, I don't know anything I would do differently. I have done more of what I was trying to do, but not anything differently.

We paid the state out of debt for the first and only time in its history without raising taxes a penny. We cooperated with capital business, agriculture, and labor. [We] brought new industry to Georgia. [We] broke the freight rates, and I sued against twenty northern railroads in the Supreme Court and spearheaded the destruction of unfair and discriminatory freight rates. And this had restricted the industrial development of Georgia and the South and the West since the Civil War. We fought the Ku Klux Klan; revoked the state charter. And then we brought

about another thing—it was very important—prison reform. After I had been elected to the legislature, right out of college, I had never been in the capitol in my life. I asked somebody about the officers of the legislature and said the speaker of the House and the speaker *pro tem*, but the speaker of the House is entrenched. That was Ed Rivers, I believe. But, I decided to run for speaker *pro tem*--never been in the capitol--and I went all over the state, spent the night with members of the legislature and whatnot. And when the vote was [nine?] in the race, I walked away with it and got to be speaker *pro tem*.

Well, now when I was running--I'm telling you this, Hal, because when I was running for speaker *pro tem*--visiting all around--one night I was in Augusta [Georgia], and [I] went to the movies and there they had a picture called *I am a Fugitive from a Georgia Chain Gang* [*sic*]. Paul Muni was the main actor, and it was directed by Mervyn LeRoy. And I saw that picture, and I came away saying when I am governor--and I knew I was going to be governor--I'm going to reform Georgia's antiquated, iniquitous prison system. So, what we did was we brought about prison reform. I had a federal penalologist, who was in charge of a federal prison, come down and show us how to do it and get the right people. We put in civil service, and we undertook to rehabilitate prisoners instead of just putting them out on the road working and so forth. And I would say prison reform was one of the keys of the administration. And it was acclaimed everywhere. As a matter of fact, the story *I'm Fugitive from a Georgia Chain Gang* was about Robert Elliot Burns, who had been to Florida and on the way back North--he was from New Jersey—in LaGrange [Georgia] he broke into a store and stole a loaf of bread. And he was sentenced to eight years in prison for stealing a loaf of bread.

HENDERSON: Governor, let me stop you right there. I've got to flip it over. I'm about to run out on this side. Excuse me.

[Cassette: Side 2]

ARNALL: ...gang used to chain and shackle people. Keep them in little steel cages, beat 'em, whip 'em. He escaped and went to New Jersey. He became a CPA [Certified Public Accountant], married, had a family, and he was highly acclaimed. He was member of the Rotary Club up there in one of the communities in New Jersey and whatnot. I was in New York [city] speaking to the Southern Society at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. And he learned I was there, and he came to my hotel room and said that he had read about all the reforms we've instituted and he wanted to come back and give himself up, that he was tired of being a fugitive. And I told him that if he did, to come to my office. I would take him and go before the pardon board and argue his case, which he did. I argued his case before the prison board--the constitutional board--and they granted him a full pardon. And this publicity went all over the nation, and Georgia began--where we'd been the laughing stock--we began to be the leader. Have you read what [Ellis Merton] Coulter said about this?

HENDERSON: Yes, yes, yes.

ARNALL: Everybody came to Georgia to praise 'em not to condemn 'em. So, the prison reform was another. And Coulter said, "Arnall was the most dynamically constructive governor Georgia had had within the memory of its oldest inhabitants. Too often previously the attention

of the nation had been directed toward Georgia for her sins and the sins of her leaders, and feature writers in their articles for national magazines had brought Georgia into shame and disrepute. Now the picture was completely changed and reversed. It seemed that none could come to Georgia but to praise the state and its young governor.” [from *Georgia: A Short History* (1960)]

HENDERSON: Governor, in the '42 campaign you called Talmadge, among other things, a dictator who had too much power over the state agencies. And you said that when you would become governor that you would set up a great number of constitutional boards to remove the influence of the governor. And you've already alluded to the fact that this still is in place, that this is a lasting impact on the state of Georgia.

ARNALL: Right, right.

HENDERSON: There was one agency, though, that you did not do that with, and that was with the state highway department. In fact, you reorganized it where you would have a director appointed by the governor and could be removed by the governor. And at one time the legislature, I believe in 1945, wanted to make the state highway board a constitutional body but you fought that. Now, why were these others agencies you're willing to make it a constitutional board and remove the influence of the governor, but some of your critics would say not with this very important agency?

ARNALL: Because I believe, and believed, and still believe that highway construction is purely political, and it ought to be. It ought to meet the needs of the greatest number of people on hearings. We do this constantly. It's always in the papers, you know, people lay threats. What I did, though, I placed in charge for the first time a technical engineer. I put an engineer as chairman of the highway board. But I always thought that the highway department is by its very nature a political department. For example, if you build a road here it's going to help somebody and hurt somebody over here. And I don't think you can do it without taking into consideration the views of the local people--and that is the politicians, the county commissioners, the city officials... So I don't think it can be non-political, I don't know one in the nation that is. I think there comes a point beyond which you can't go. Now, I confess this: that I used that highway department to get through a lot of things that I couldn't have gotten through unless I controlled it. While we had a highway department, I was in control. And you know, I don't like the modern way we do democratic politics, all these elections and bunk. It used to be the governor was head of the party. He called the shots. He named the committees. And he was responsible. He's the one fellow responsible. I don't think you could just say that the governor ought not to fool with politics. The very nature of government is politics. But what I did was remove the influence of the governor from the agencies that ought to be left alone and should be run based on technical knowledge and experience such as education, such as the merit system, such as the prison system. I don't think those are political. But I think highway building is purely political, and it always has been and always will be. And again not a state in the Union has a constitutional highway board.

HENDERSON: Now, some of your critics said that while you removed the governor from the position of being on some of these governing boards--

ARNALL: Took him off every one.

HENDERSON: --you still retained control over the finances of these agencies.

ARNALL: Well, to some extent. The legislature enacted the budget--finance bill--but they always the governor a fund that he could use for special purposes. But the appropriations for the department is purely legislative; it always has been.

HENDERSON: But now, if an agency wanted to spend say X amount of money, you didn't have the final authority before they went to the legislature?

ARNALL: No. They had to get the appropriation from the legislature. I had a little fund, and the governor still has an emergency fund they call it, but it's not significant.

HENDERSON: Now one time when Ed Rivers was governor, he started out with a very progressive administration. In the second term he ran into some scandals—

ARNALL: Right.

HENDERSON: --financial and so forth. Was there any scandals or any financial improprieties in administration?

ARNALL: I have never heard of the first one. I don't know of it. Of all the things that I was accused of being--progressive, a nigger lover, and all that stuff--nobody ever accused me of any financial irresponsibility [Phone rings] or wrongdoing or any other kind of wrongdoing. Just a minute. I want to talk about this. Hello. [Tape stops and starts again] We were talking about scandal. Let me tell you how I prevented it. This is a right interesting side note too. I hadn't quite thought about it before. When I was elected governor, I said that I wanted the mansion to be a home. That even a man who's governor is entitled to some privacy. I wanted family life with my wife and son, and I thought the mansion in time would echo to the patter of baby's feet. And we had the second child ever born to a governor and his wife while governor--and the other one was from Newnan [Georgia] too—strange. We're the only two that ever had daughters or children while elected. But, getting back to...that call disconcerted me. What were we talking about?

HENDERSON: Finances, Ed Rivers, scandals.

ARNALL: Oh yeah. In my inaugural speech and frequently I said that I wanted the government run honestly and above board. That if anyone ever went to any department head or people in government and said they were my friends and they supported me and wanted some special favor, to call me on the phone so I could cuss them out. [HENDERSON chuckles] They would come into my office—listen at this Hal—delegations. They had some scheme--all

amounted to reaching into the state treasury. And say, you know we supported you, we contributed to your campaign, and all we want is to reach a little into the treasury--in effect, whatever the scheme was. And I said, Well let me tell you I'm sorry that you didn't know when you supported me and contributed to me that I'm the most selfish man you ever saw in your life. I'll do anything in the world for my friends as long as it does not hurt me, but any irregularity would hurt me, and I'm not going to do it. Do you blame me?

HENDERSON: No. [laughs]

ARNALL: They'd say no, we don't blame you. But we never had the breath of scandal. Another thing--the Rivers administration and later the [Samuel Marvin] Griffin [Sr.] administration, if you remember, were subjected to charges that they sold pardons or the chauffeurs gave them out and whatnot. During the campaign without meeting that issue head-on, without saying anything to the effect that the pardon power had been abused, I said We are going to take to the pardoning power away from the governor. I said The first day I came into office there were twelve thousand files, if I'd done nothing but read those things for the next four years, I wouldn't have finished. And therefore I took the pardon power away, because that was where the main scandal [was].

Now, another thing you would be interested in: while Ed Rivers and I was attorney general there was a fellow named Doctor Hiram W. [Wesley] Evans, who was head of the Ku Klux Klan. And he had an arrangement, I learned, with the gasoline and asphalt companies to the effect that he would tell them on state bid--not only in Georgia but throughout the South where the Klan was strong--what to bid, who'd get this one, who'd get this one--he would skim

off the top. So, I filed suit against the Ku Klux, Dr. Evans, and the oil companies seeking reimbursement for the stealing they'd done from the state. Now, Ed Rivers was the governor, and he was Ku Klux, but it was my duty to do it, and I did it. Now, you'll be interested in this: I sued the Klan and the oil companies under what we call the Sherman Anti-Trust law [*sic* Act] which is when you sue for treble damages. The federal law says any person aggrieved or victimized through a conspiracy can sue for his loss, damage, and get three times that amount in treble damages. So, I filed my suit and filed it in the district court here, and the court threw it out. They said the state is not a person. Then I appealed to the circuit court, and they threw it out. They said the state is not a person. Now all the time I had in mind suing the railroads and breaking up the freight rate and all. But, I had to establish the fact that we were a person. So then I did something--and I don't want to disillusion you when we talk about courts and justice, all that. There are a lot of ways to win cases, and I've always won cases because I've always come up with new concepts and new ideas. We had an association called the [National] Association of Attorneys General, and I was vice-chairman of that association and the chairman was Earl Warren who was attorney general of California and later became chief justice of the [United States] Supreme Court. Through those contacts I got every attorney general in the United States to file what we call an *amicus curiae* brief, which I wrote--my department wrote some. They'd sign it, put Nevada, Massachusetts, whatnot. So, when that case [*Georgia v. Evans et al.*] came to the Supreme Court to be heard, here was every state in the Union saying we're a person under the Constitution because the federal government has criminal sanctions. Every municipality can sue--it's a corporation--every corporation, every partnership, every individual. To say that Congress meticulously said everybody can sue under the Sherman Act, except the state! And so [Felix] Frankfurter wrote the opinion and said, [laughs] Of course!

[HENDERSON laughs] with all that pressure Of course, the states are persons under the Sherman Act. So, this then, I could sue the railroad, directly in the Supreme Court. But up until then it was always questionable whether you could do that.

HENDERSON: Let me come back to—some of your critics have said—

ARNALL: Yes.

HENDERSON: --on race issue--

ARNALL: Yes.



HENDERSON: --that you looked at the race issue and said it was primarily economic.

ARNALL: Right.

HENDERSON: And that while you were governor you tended to, if not avoid, perhaps ignore the problem that the schools where blacks and whites were not equal in Georgia, that teachers' salaries were not equal, that blacks were being deprived of the right to vote and that sort of thing. How do you respond to that criticism?

ARNALL: Well, we didn't deprive the blacks [of] the right to vote. We opened the white primary while I was governor, too. In so far as the schools were concerned--and I don't

understand this today, I'll have to tell you--I believe ... that--let me state it another way. It's hard for me to understand the drive today--and this goes on all time, television, newspapers, solicitation--for negro college funds. I thought when we integrated the schools, we weren't going to have black schools and white schools. I thought they were all schools. I don't understand that. I'll tell you a story though. There was a head of one of the black colleges down at Fort Valley [Georgia] that appeared before the legislature constantly for more money for the black schools, and they didn't get it. Until one year while I was governor, he went before--and by the way this is legislation, you know, we are talking about, not the governor here-- and he said he decided not to ask for any more money for black colleges. That he wanted more money given to the white schools than black colleges. Because he had reached the conclusion that when the white people were adequately educated, there wouldn't be any need for the blacks to undertake to eliminate bigotry, because the whites would have done it themselves. But, the point you make that the alleged critics leveled at me were legislative matters. The governor couldn't appropriate money to the black schools or the white schools. He could advocate appropriations, but they did it. Now what was the other criticism?

HENDERSON: I think you touched on the basic idea there. Some people have called you a conservative on financial matters and a liberal on race matters.

ARNALL: That is true. A liberal on all matters except finances. I'm a very conservative fellow on finances, yes.

HENDERSON: But now—

ARNALL: And when I was governor, to try to appease people, I'd do something real progressive over here in government matters of some kind and then do something real conservative over here in finance matters. Like paying the state out of debt, things like that, you know, just kept 'em off.

HENDERSON: But now if, usually when you think about the term "liberal," you're thinking about expanding state services to the people. But, at the time, you're talking about not raising any more revenue, paying off the debt—

ARNALL: I explained that, Hal, by saying that it was a peculiar circumstance involved--we were at war. You couldn't do any of those things.

HENDERSON: So, if—

ARNALL: Now, I'll take credit for it, but had we not been at war I don't think I could have done—I mean, I would have wanted to do other things.

HENDERSON: But if we had not been at war, would you have had something like the Rivers administration, where there was a great expansion of state services?

ARNALL: If we had not been restricted in the way we were, I would have used my influence to bring about more proper state services--yes. And I would not have hesitated one bit to talk

about raising taxes. As a matter of fact, I didn't do it, but following me they put in the sales tax and all that stuff.

HENDERSON: You have always opposed the sales tax. Why?

ARNALL: I did in those days, but I'm going to shift to national affairs. I don't think [Ronald Wilson] Reagan has any chance--Reagan's a good friend of mine, by the way. We were in the motion picture business together. I was head of the producers [Society of Independent Motion Picture Producers] and he was head of the screen actors [Screen Actors Guild]. But he was a Democrat then. But, I don't think they have a chance to get the budget through and don't think they're going to get any tax bill through, 'cause each congressman and senator is about to get reelected, and they're not popular. But, I'll tell you one thing I heard Paul [A.] Volcker talk about it yesterday or the day before, which were coming to might as well face up to it--the VAT tax, Value-Added Tax, which is a type sales tax, national sales tax. And when you go to Europe--have you been there?

HENDERSON: No, sir.

ARNALL: Well, if you go to England, France, Germany, wherever you go, when you get your hotel bill you'll see a V-A-T, you get your restaurant check, a V-A-T. That's the way they finance, and it has this advantage: it makes everybody pay some taxes based on what they do. When I made speeches against sales taxes, when I came along, I was against it, but I have changed that view today. I think that the next tax we need in this country is the VAT tax which

levies taxes on everybody based on how much they buy or spend. For example, we have a great number of people today who don't pay any tax at all, and they ought to pay some tax, no matter how little. And I think we're going to the—ultimately—to the same tax they have in the western European democracies--that's a basic tax they have.

HENDERSON: Let me come back to Ed Rivers. We've talked about Talmadge's philosophy. Would your philosophy be more in line with Ed Rivers?

ARNALL: Yes, yes. You see, Ed Rivers came along when [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt was president, and Roosevelt was a good friend of mine. And if I had not been a wartime governor, I think I would have followed very closely to the philosophy that Ed Rivers did, minus the scandal.

HENDERSON: Minus the scandal. Since you mentioned FDR, if FDR had not died when he did, would the future of Ellis Arnall been a little bit different today?

ARNALL: Yes, there are two things, a footnote to history. Roosevelt and I were very close friends. He would, on occasion, when he was going down to Warm Springs [Georgia], I would get a call from the White House saying that he was leaving tomorrow, coming on the train, going to get off in Newnan, and wanted me to ride down to Warm Springs with him--which I would do; the Secret Service [was there? or wouldn't care?]. And I have pictures of him and us riding around and whatnot--I'll show you one day. But, anyway we were very close. And when I ran for governor, he was very active--not in the headline, but you know, calling people or

doing things. So, we were very close. He told me that it was his plan for me to be attorney general of the United States. I told him I would like to be [unintelligible] part. As a matter of fact, when he died at Warm Springs on April the 12th, I was to make the Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner speech for him in Washington [D.C.]--he was going to do it on the radio, but I was the speaker--I've got the books up there--the Democrats and doughnuts and dinner. He died. Now, here's a little background. I went to Washington to see him before the convention and ask him first, if he was going to run for the fourth term. And he told me he was, and in spite of what others say, I'm the one that made the announcement. I asked him could I do it, and I came out and told the press that he was a soldier and if they wanted him he would follow through. I asked him about who he wanted for vice president, and he told me Henry [Agard] Wallace. I've got in my home Wallace prints that Henry gave me. He came down here, and he and I used to play tennis together, visit and whatnot. Said he [Roosevelt] wanted Henry Wallace. So, I lined up my delegation for him in Chicago and made the seconding speech for Wallace after Roosevelt got the nomination. But before I did, Hannegan, who was head of the Democratic Party—Steve Hannegan [*sic*]—came to me and said, look, the president's changed his mind. He wants [Harry S.] Truman to be vice president and not Henry Wallace. And I said, well—it was Bob [Robert Emmet] Hannegan —I said, Bob, I went to the White House, and he told me he wanted Wallace. And if he'll call me and tell me, I'll shift, but I'm going to carry through. He said, Well, he can't call you. He's in the Pacific—could have, but he's in the Pacific. So, he showed me a note handwritten by FDR. [It] said If I were a delegate to the convention, I would vote for Harry Truman for vice president. And he said There it is. I said Hell, he ain't a delegate. [HENDERSON laughs] That ain't nothing--that's double talk. So I wouldn't do it. We placed a nomination about eight o'clock at the Chicago convention, Henry Wallace for vice president; I

seconded the nomination. And had they voted, he would have been elected. We had the balcony stacked with labor union people and all this crowd, Sidney Hillman and all of them. The chairman, [Samuel Dillon] Jackson, adjourned the meeting. He put the motion--it was overwhelmingly defeated--but he said it carried and [unintelligible].

HENDERSON: Uh-huh.

ARNALL: So that night they twisted enough arms to where Truman became the nominee. When Roosevelt got back from the far East or the Pacific, wherever he was, he called me and wanted me to come to Washington to talk with him. And he said that he was embarrassed that he had told me to support Wallace, and I had done it--which he appreciated--but that he'd changed his mind. And he wanted to apologize, and I said Look, I don't care. I did what I told you I'd do. You asked me to do it, and I did it. Now, if you changed your mind and didn't let me know, I'm still going to carry out what I told you. And then he said Yes, and you know--and then he philosophized about, I'll say lies, but it was misrepresentation of change of mind. He said that when he told me that he was very sincere about it but he later had found out things and talked with the politicians to where it was not propitious to do that, so he changed. And he said You know I think the president ought to have the right to change. I said I do too. I said I think any politician ought to. When a man says something, solemnly, that he going to do a thing and later he gets in office and finds out that if he was going to do this it would be hurtful to the country, hell, he don't have to go to the people and apologize. He just changed his mind. OK.

Now then the next thing that happened was Harry Truman was sworn in and Bob Hannegan came to Warm Springs to issue--he was postmaster general then--a postage stamp

commemorating Roosevelt's [unintelligible] and asked me to come down there and meet him, which I did. And he said that he had talked with Truman, and they were going to fly A-1 or whatever the president's plane down for me to Atlanta and wanted me to be solicitor general of the United States and that if I would, I could be attorney general. So I went Washington to see Truman, and Truman told me that I know you didn't support me but I want your support. I've heard you've got a great record, [you're] a great man, and I admire you greatly. I want you to be solicitor general. And I'm going to appoint Tom [Thomas Campbell] Clark who is the attorney general to the Supreme Court at the first vacancy, and then I want you to be attorney general. So, I accepted. And while I was there, I bought me a cutaway coat and striped pants and everything. [I] came home and told my wife Mildred [Delaney Slemons Arnall] what were going to do and she said We're not going to do that. [She] says I'm pregnant. We're in the mansion now, and I'm not thinking of moving to anywhere else. All this is in the paper and whatnot, so I called Truman and told him that I couldn't do it.

HENDERSON: Because of the pregnancy.

ARNALL: Because my wife wouldn't [unintelligible]. So, I had two chances to be attorney general. I used to go to Washington to see Truman. I later became head of--he had twisted my arm and got me to be price controller, and he also called me and wanted me to go to India to settle the dispute between Pakistan and India over the boundary. And he wanted me to be a civilian governor of Germany and all kinds of stuff, and I said thank you I'm not interested. But I used to go see Truman and he used to look at me and say Ellis, if you'd been my attorney general we would have remade the United States. And I said Yes, we would have, and we

would have both been assassinated. [HENDERSON laughs] He was my kind of man. I think he was the greatest president. Roosevelt was the second. But I was very close to them both.

HENDERSON: Well, you know in the literature that I read in this period of time, I get the impression that because you supported Wallace and then you go with Truman that you suffered nationally because Truman held that against you.

ARNALL: Well, he never did. He didn't, no. No, he did not. As a matter of fact, I was so popular--if you pardon me saying this Hal--in those days, that I had a lot of support--unsolicited--[unintelligible] West Coast. Now, Jimmy Carter came along, and he capitalized on all I'd done, and he did fine. And I supported him for president, although I defeated him in the '66 primary.

HENDERSON: Right, right.

ARNALL: I made speeches for him in Alabama and Pennsylvania. And he had my wife and me up to state dinners and whatnot. And I think it was a miracle he was elected. As a matter of fact--you'd be interested in this, I'm jumping about--everybody laughed about Jimmy running for president and Charlie...he's a [right-wing?] over in King and Spalding [King & Spalding]...let's see, Philip [Henry] Alston [Jr.] and [Charles Hughes] Charlie Kirbo came over to my office to see me and said look, we got to get these Atlanta papers to vote for Jimmy, said Hell, they were laughing at him. I said I'll give it to them. So I went to see the editors of the paper, publishers. I called them all in and I said Listen, Jimmy Carter doesn't have a snowball's

chance in hell to be elected president. Really it's a joke. But, he's a Georgian, and he's been our governor, and *the least* we can do is to promote him. He won't get anywhere, but we can do that. And I made great speeches to them. So they did, and that's where that started up.

But Jimmy, my feeling is that maybe history will change his record, but he was so conscientious that he didn't know how to delegate responsibility. And it just was a heavy load on him. But, I think history will show that he was a good president--maybe not a great one--but a good president. And my relation--Truman was never a failure; we were great friends.

As a matter of fact I'll tell you another story which is of great interest. He twisted my arm to get me to come up there and be head of price control during the Korean War. And I said I will do it for six months, but that's all. [Michael Vincent] Mike DiSalle had been chairman, and he ran for the Senate from Ohio and was elected. So, this was the [one vacancy left?]. It was the best job I ever had because all you had to do was say "No," but you had to say it pleasantly, you know. [HENDERSON chuckles] You have to listen and say "No." One day I was, well, we had a setup. I was the single man who fixed prices of everything in the United States--one man. They had a wage board, three from industry, three from labor, and three from the public, and they fixed wages. And then we had an economic czar over us both, [Charles E.] Charlie Wilson. And the wage board raised the steel workers salaries and so immediately the steel barons came to me to get a price increase. We had a system where we gave any industry the last five years they could take the three best and we could give them an average profit of those three best years, and if the inventory cost went up or the labor costs went up and they couldn't make that profit, we'd give them a price increase. But if they could do it, they didn't get a price increase. So I had my economist apply the rules and found that they could raise the steel workers wages twice as much and still would have made a profit, so I had to say "No."

Every weekend when I went to Newnan in my front yard waiting for me would be [Benjamin Franklin] Ben Fairless, U.S. Steel [Company], [Abbingdon Rail?], all sitting out in my yard. And I was nice, but the answer was always “No.” [HENDERSON chuckles] So, finally they said, in desperation, that we going to shut down the mills, bank the furnaces, put the fire out, no more steel. We needed steel. So, Truman called me over there and said What are going to do? I said We going to seize the mills. The government’s going to seize them, run up the flag, and keep making steel--which he did. All right, while that was going on, I was over at the White House in the oval room working with him on a speech he was going to make, a nationwide speech about all this stuff. And he told me, he said Ellis, I’ve got to go out here and see the Rose Garden [White House, Washington, D.C.] and speak to these damn newspaper editors. He said You know, they think they know everything in the world. They live in isolated chambers high above the world, but they can tell you everything about it. Well, I’ve got to go out and speak to them. So, when he came back--he was out there a few minutes--he said I’ll be back. He unbuttoned his vest and said I really wound up one little ol’ newspaper editor’s clock. I said What happened? He said A damn, little, ol’ newspaper editor came up to me and said Mr. President, you seize the steel mills do you think you can seize the newspapers? and I said, You’re damn right. If they need seizing, I’ll seize ‘em. [HENDERSON laughs] I said They going to give you hell. He said I don’t give a damn. I’m the only man elected by all the people to represent them, and I’m going to do what I think is right. I’m not going to seize them, but I ain’t going to have him give me any short talk. Well, so much for that.

Later, the Supreme Court held that Truman had no right to seize the mills. So Charlie Wilson met with the steel barons at Miami [Florida] on the president’s [request?] and agreed to give them ten dollars a ton price increase. And he called me. I was staying at the Reed House

in Washington out of the way one night and said Governor, I want you to go to the office in the morning to give the steel mills a ten-dollar per ton price increase. And I said Charlie, I'm not going to do it. He said Well, after all this dilemma the president sent me down here, and told me to do it. I said He didn't tell me to do it and that's my job. He was economic czar. And he said Well, I'm going to call the president and see if he will see us first thing in the morning and I'll call you back. And I said Fine. So we went over to the White House at eight o'clock--seven or eight--walked into the oval office and he said What's the problem, boys? And I as quickly replied, said There's no problem, Mr. President. We have a clash of philosophy here. Charlie's for the big man, and I'm for the little man. Well hell, he never heard another word from that moment on, after it was all explained to him. [HENDERSON laughs] Charlie said--he turned red--he said Mr. President, I went to Miami and met the president of the steel mills and did exactly what you told me to do--gave them a ten dollar per ton price increase. Truman sat on the edge of his chair and said Charlie--and Charlie Wilson was a big Baptist, a big churchman, honorable, fine man--he said Charlie, I want to ask you a personal question. He said Do you play poker? And Charlie said No, sir. He said That's your trouble. Right there.

[HENDERSON laughs] I didn't mean for him to go down there and roll over and play dead. I meant for you to do a poker job. And Charlie said Well, Mr. President, I resign. And Truman said I accept your resignation. And he turned to me and said I want you to be the economic czar. And I said I'm not going to do it, Mr. President. I feel badly getting this good man out of the government, and I won't take it. He said Well, get me somebody--which I did. But, he was a great fellow. We were close friends, wherever that story came from is bunk. He was my close friend.

HENDERSON: OK. Governor, let me go to the '46 election. We had the court case that said that blacks should be allowed to participate in the white primary.

ARNALL: Right.

HENDERSON: And Gene Talmadge and Roy Harris and various others wanted to call a special session of the legislature—

ARNALL: Right.

HENDERSON: And do away with any state laws that applied to the white primary.

ARNALL: Right.

HENDERSON: Some people said that maybe it was a political mistake on your part in that you would not go along with them, [and thus] giving Talmadge an issue in '46. He could run as, I want to say, the white primary.

ARNALL: That's true, and let me tell you what happened, historically. In those days we had two newspapers in Atlanta, the *Constitution* and the *Journal*--there were three, the [Atlanta] *Georgian* [Atlanta, Georgia]. Former Governor [James Middleton] Cox of Ohio, who was a candidate for president, bought the *Georgian* and put it into the *Journal*. And George [Clinton] Biggers was the editor who was close to me, and I told George I wanted the *Journal* to support

me, and he said Well, there is a problem about that. If we come out for you the *Constitution* will be against you. It's vital that you get us both. I said How are we going to do that? He said I don't know. [He] said You can go to Ohio and visit Governor Cox and talk with him. So my wife and I went up Ohio, Dayton, Ohio. He lived out in the country. He had a fine place called Trails End, and we were their guests. We talked, Governor Cox and I, many a night hours. And he told me when we got through he said Ellis, the *Journal's* going to support you for governor. He said I'll tell you how we're going to get both papers for you. They've never been concerned about me. I said How we going to do that, Governor? He said You're going down there, forget what I've told you and you go cultivate Clark Howell and get Clark Howell to come out for you in the *Constitution*. And he is the kingmaker, but we go in [unintelligible]. So, I did, and that's the way we got the papers for us. First time ever they were together. All right, it was easy to get Clark because he had been kicked off the Board of Regents.

HENDERSON: Uh-huh.

ARNALL: Now, getting back to this issue. When the Supreme Court came out with this decision and Roy and all of them wanted to have a special session and fix it where it didn't apply to us and Herman said they misconstrued the constitution--you remember all of this--

HENDERSON: Uh-huh.

ARNALL: I went to Florida to see Governor Cox. He had one of his homes down there, Fort Lauderdale or something near Miami Beach. And I said Governor, this issue is here, and if I go

along with those that are clamoring to still outlaw the blacks, I can control Georgia politics for the next forty years. But conscientiously, I can't do it because it's a violation of all my inborn concept of first-class citizenship for all the people. And he looked at me and said Ellis, if you did I would say that I'd made a mistake and never support you for anything. But I said I'm not going to do it, and I'll be a nigger-lover and I'll catch hell, but I'm right and I can't do it. But I just wanted to tell you I'm not going to do it. So that was the aftermath and for years I was branded a nigger-lover, apostate, trader to the South and our traditions. But strangely enough, I was right. Not only legally right and politically right, but martyred. And now everybody, whether they mean it or not, publicly subscribes to that doctrine, and that's what I've told you about Herman. Even Herman embraced my doctrine. So, you always--any leader or anybody that bucks the tide of public opinion has got to be a strong, strong guy. It wasn't fun, but it was no issue, never was. I believe in upholding the courts even when they're wrong. Who am I to say their wrong? That's the system of jurisprudence.

HENDERSON: If that issue had not come along and Talmadge still had run, would it have been a possibility that [James Vinson] Carmichael could have defeated him?

ARNALL: Oh, yes, as a matter of fact Carmichael did defeat him if you remember the popular votes. I think he got close to fifty-five--I've forgotten.

HENDERSON: Seemed like about sixteen thousand.

ARNALL: That's something. Yes, Carmichael could have defeated him but the old nigger issue reared its head again. Yes. And I thought Carmichael was going to defeat him anyway, and he damned near did.

HENDERSON: That was the year that Ed Rivers plays an important role in that campaign.

ARNALL: He was a spoiler.

HENDERSON: Right. Now he contended that you had all along led him to believe that you would support him in '46.

ARNALL: He wanted to be the candidate instead of Carmichael. And I had never told him that I would support him. Ed Rivers was politically wise. The newspapers were after him. They would have cut him.....

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