

Harold Paulk (Hal) Henderson, Sr. Oral History Collection
Series I: Ellis Arnall
OH ARN 12
Ellis G. Arnall Interviewed by Harold Paulk (Hal) Henderson, Sr.
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Cassette: OH ARN 12, 0:47:45 minutes, Sides 1 and 2

[Continued from OH ARN 11]

[Cassette: Side 1]

ARNALL:was elected to pass a bill to constitutional commission. And what we did--and there was always a question about the legality of this, still is--what we did, my idea was to have the whole new constitution submitted as an amendment to the old constitution, which kept the "Preamble" and that was all. And I was concerned that the courts would hold--this is what's never been said before: the commission met with adopting a constitution or amendments to the constitution which was a whole new constitution--to be illegal, because the constitution provided for a convention system. So, therefore, I did something that was rather expedient or political. I had in the constitution every judge's salary raised, increased, [on the] Supreme Court, so that they would be disqualified [ARNALL and HENDERSON chuckle] from passing on the constitutionality of the amendment since they were the beneficiaries of it. So no one ever questioned it, but this was the issue.

Now, the other thing I wanted to tell you about me being conservative or liberal or whatnot: the '45 [1945] constitution was a compromise constitution. It did not reflect all I wanted or what I wanted, some of the things. But I had two things to overcome: one, I had to get it by the legislature with the requisite number of votes, and the legislature was very jealous of their authority. And second--for example, when you get to home rule and things like this, they wanted to control that. And second, I had to have a constitution that would be

accepted by the voters, which meant anything highly controversial just couldn't be put in it because one highly controversial thing could kill the whole amendment which was the whole new constitution. So, what we did, if you remember, due to Roy [Vincent] Harris fighting most of the way on the things I wanted, although we were good friends, he wanted everything controlled by the legislature, which meant him... So, what we ended up with was a right weak constitution, which wasn't a great improvement over the present one until the newspapers and the mass media began to raise hell about it and said we didn't come to grips with certain things that were awfully important. So, I reconvened the commission, of which I was chairman, and we came to grips with some of those things, probably not to the degree that was wanted by the press, but we did come to grips with them and did improve it. So, when we finished it was not the best constitution in the world but it was a better constitution than we had, and the people accepted it. Georgia had a new constitution, and they were pleased with it. But as you know, they've recently done another constitution and any constitution that they have will be amended so many times that ultimately another one will have to be written to pick it up. But these local amendments play havoc on the constitution.

HENDERSON: Let me change direction just a little bit. You were generally referred to as a "New Dealer." Is it fair to characterize you as a New Dealer, and two, was there anything that you disagreed with the president about?

ARNALL: Well, first of all, let me tell you about--I don't know that you know this; I don't think I've seen it written--when I finished law school and went to Newnan [Georgia] to practice law. I told you it was in the height of the [Great] Depression and you'd just sit there

and look out the window and twiddle your thumbs unless you wanted to take in some chickens and eggs on legal fee, which I did. But I kept reading in the paper about a fellow named William H. [Henry David] “Alfalfa Bill” Murray, governor of Oklahoma, who was talking about running for president as a Democratic nominee. So one day, having nothing to do, I picked up the phone and called Governor Murray in Oklahoma City, state capital. I said Governor, this is Ellis Arnall, and I am very interested in your political plans. Are you going to be a candidate for the Democratic nomination for president? He said Yes, I am. And I said Well, that’s fine. I want to help you. And we chatted a little. So then I called a press conference, had press releases going out that Governor William H. Murray will be a candidate for president of the United States Democratic [ticket], according to Ellis Arnall, who he told this such and such and all that. So, then immediately the AP [Associated Press] went to see him at Oklahoma City at the capitol, and he said Well, that’s true, that’s true, but I didn’t mean for Ellis Arnall to make my announcement. [ARNALL and HENDERSON laugh]

So, anyway, he and I became good friends, and I campaigned with him. He had married an Indian princess [Mary Alice Hearrell Murray]--and by the way, his son [Johnston Murray] later became governor of Oklahoma. And he was a great speaker. He taught me a lot about politics and speaking; I shall never forget it. He told me a few things that always amused me in reflection. One was--he always wore a muffler when he spoke, muffler around his throat, and he never drank water. He said Ellis, he said whenever you see a speaker reach for a glass of water, you’ll know he’s running out of soap. [HENDERSON chuckles] I thought about that. And the other he told me was very important. He spoke at Montgomery, Alabama, one night in the courthouse. The courthouse probably would seat five hundred and

it was full and [there were] people standing out in the yard, probably a couple hundred more if you counted 'em[?]. And the press said Governor Murray, how many people you think you have here tonight? And he said Oh, at least 6,000. And he told me later, he said Always exaggerate in politics. [HENDERSON laughs] [He] said You make your point. And [he] says What does it matter? And you know, that's one reason I like [Ronald Wilson] Ronnie Reagan. He and I are friends; we were friends in Hollywood when I was head of the Society of Independent Motion Pictures [Producers] and he was head of the Screen Actors Guild. But he exaggerates in his speaking and this gets attention. I employed that when I was going all over the country making the plight for freight rate equality for the South. Everywhere I went--I'd speak everywhere--I'd say the disparity is thirty-nine percent. No, I'd say the disparity is forty-nine percent and the next week they would have the president of the railroads, lawyers for the railroads, somebody come in and make a speech after me, same group. And they'd say Governor Arnall lied about this. The disparity is not forty-nine percent; it's only thirty-nine percent. But this was the point; you get the point, of course. But in any event Governor Murray didn't get anywhere in the—[to someone else] Thank you ma'am.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE VOICE: If you give another quarter—[tape stops and starts]

HENDERSON: See, Governor, I don't know whether we really dealt with the question or not. Is it fair to call you a New Dealer? And two, was there anything about the New Deal that you disagreed with?

ARNALL: Well, I was telling you about how I started out with Bill Murray, not with [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt. Roosevelt was very popular. I have a very strange [ARNALL requests that HENDERSON close the door] nature in that I'm always for the underdog. If everybody is for Roosevelt, I'm not for Roosevelt. If they begin to criticize him and jump on him, I get awfully strong for him and that was what happened. I just naturally sway toward the underdog in everything...the little fellow. And in Georgia, Roosevelt was very popular. Then he got very unpopular as the New Deal unfolded. And then I got strong for him, stronger, stronger, stronger. I remember a man in Newnan, a very prominent man who died, and I went over to his home and under the bureau in his dressing room there were clippings, all of them critical of Roosevelt where he'd done this, this, this. He just hated Roosevelt because his theory was if a man can't run his own business, it's a terrible situation. He didn't want government to have anything to do with it, telling him what to do, what not to do. So, big business and business began to turn against Roosevelt. That's when I really got going. Now, I suppose you'd say that I was fundamentally a New Dealer and still am, because the New Deal was a progressive, novel, innovative approach to the nation's ills, and it came at a time when we were down in the ditch. And it was badly needed, and I don't know anything Roosevelt did that I recall at the moment that I say I was against; I don't know a thing.

HENDERSON: In 1938, Roosevelt tries to defeat Senator [Walter Franklin] George in Georgia. Did you play any role behind the scenes in the Roosevelt effort?

ARNALL: Not one bit in the world; I did not participate in any way. Senator George was the first man that introduced me to Roosevelt. We were good friends. And Lawrence Camp

had been attorney general and he was from Fairburn [Georgia], my neighbor down here; we were good friends. I did not participate in that one bit at all because anything I had done would have hurt me politically. I was still looking forward to fulfilling this preordained fate of being governor of Georgia, and I didn't do anything that would hurt me. No.

HENDERSON: All right, let me back up two years. Did you play a role in [Richard Brevard] Russell's [Jr.] victory over [Eugene] Talmadge in 1936?

ARNALL: I did not. At that time, if you remember, they had the three R's running, [Eurith Dickinson] Rivers, Russell, and...who was the other one?

HENDERSON: [Columbus] Roberts [Sr.].

ARNALL: Roberts. Rivers, Russell and Roberts. Roberts was the commissioner [Georgia State Commissioner of Agriculture] back then. And I was so busy helping Ed Rivers that I never did participate in that. It was just an automatic thing; they went together.

HENDERSON: You promised the voters in 1942 that you wouldn't raise taxes. However, in the fall of 1945, the state warehouse fee on liquor was raised from fifty cents per gallon to three dollars per gallon.

ARNALL: My administration did not raise taxes one single penny. Under the law that was in the text, when Georgia became wet, the law was that all the liquor coming into the state

had to be stored in the state warehouse so they could collect the state tax off of it. I didn't raise the tax on liquor one penny, didn't raise the tax on anything. The revenue department raised the warehouse charge, and the liquor people paid this additional warehouse charge, which was substantial. [They] passed it on to the buyers of liquor, which I thought was a good thing. If they'd doubled the price of liquor it still would have been a better thing. But I defy anyone and dispute with anyone that I raised taxes; I did not raise any taxes including the tax on liquor. I raised the storage charge. If you raise a parking fee, that's not a tax, that's something different. But some could construe it as you will, but I say it was a great public service because it could increase the price of liquor. It was just wonderful.

HENDERSON: [chuckles] OK, so you don't see that as a violation of your pledge.

ARNALL: There was not any violation at all. And anybody that says it was is playing Tweedly-Dum, Tweedly-Dee [*sic*] on what is a tax. I defy anyone to show me on the books of the statute of Georgia any tax increase. That's not a tax.

HENDERSON: You promised in 1942 to pay the state out of debt. In '42, the state debt was about \$25 million dollars and by '46, you had been able to do that. How?

ARNALL: Well, first of all I dispute the amount of the debt; it was \$35 million.

HENDERSON: Thirty-five? OK.

ARNALL: That's what the auditors' figures are and this was a bonded debt. Now, what was the question?

HENDERSON: How were you able to do this in four years?

ARNALL: Well, well...

HENDERSON: Less than four years.

ARNALL: First of all, when I was governor the state budget was only \$75 million dollars. Everything is relative, of course, and I said earlier as governor I made \$7,000 a year. We were able to pay the state out of debt for these reasons: number one we were a nation at war [World War II] [Telephone rings] and that meant you could not do certain things that in peace times you could do. [Tape stops, starts] We were at war; you couldn't build roads, you couldn't build buildings. There were many restrictions on the expenditures of state funds and so forth. The war economy was such that there were no raids on the treasury for all kinds of output, so that was good. Second, even in the cause of education--you'll be interested in this--Doctor [Steadman Vincent] S.V. Sanford was president of the university [University of Georgia] and later chancellor of the university [University System of Georgia]. When we were at war, he came to me and he said Governor, we've got to have more money for education. This was one exception to the rule I just stated. He said Most of the young men and young women are in service, and we've got these buildings to maintain and teachers to pay and no students, no fees coming in, so we've got to have more money.

So I contrived to get him up more money. When the war was over, he came to me and said Governor, we've got to have more money. I said Why, Chancellor? He said Well, now there are all these students, the war's over, and they're coming and going to the university. We're just overcrowded with students; we need more teachers; we need more money. So, I think we got that out. But basically we were able to pay the state out of debt because of the wartime economy, and the lack of the desire or means or ability to spend funds that in normal times there would have been great drives for roads and public improvements and so forth. That helped. And second, I kept a very tight reign on the expenditures that we had. We reduced expenditures quite a bit. We let people go. Frequently, rather than have three people on a job, we'd let one go. Or let two go, and then raise the salary of the one who would be more worth. We were very economical in the administration of public funds, but I would say that basically the timing was such that the war economy helped me pay the state out of debt. And right before I became governor, Talmadge increased the state expenditures quite a bit, which I had to carry on. Like aid to education, I couldn't turn my back on that and so forth.

HENDERSON: And that, was that an effort to embarrass you. Or...

ARNALL: Well, who knows. It had two purposes--the results--I won't say purposes. One, to embarrass me and two, to aid the people that he gave the funds to, the education or whatever. So I wouldn't be critical of it, but actually it did put more of a burden on me. But I don't say he did it for that reason.

HENDERSON: Now, Governor, some of your critics emphasize that you publicly never questioned the southern racial orthodoxy as a member of the legislature, as attorney general, or as a gubernatorial candidate. In fact, William Anderson, in his biography [*The Wild Man from Sugar Creek: The Political Career of Eugene Talmadge*] of Talmadge, says that there were two racists running in 1942: one wanted to close the public schools and one wanted to keep them open. How do you deal with that type of criticism?

ARNALL: Well, I think that criticism is right. I accept it. As a member of the legislature, as attorney general, I would not have in any way defied southern orthodoxy, because I wanted to be governor. I knew I had to be. I still didn't do it until the court spoke, and when the court spoke, I supported the courts. But I was never, surely, hell, if I defied southern orthodoxy, I wouldn't have been elected doorkeeper. You have to play politics to get in position to render public service. If you don't get elected, you can't do anything. If you get elected, you can do a lot of good things. Now, I didn't get the last part of your question.

HENDERSON: I take it you would agree with William Anderson's assessment that there were two racists running in the '42 campaign.

ARNALL: Two racists?

HENDERSON: Right.

ARNALL: No.

HENDERSON: One wanted to keep the schools open; one wanted to close them.

ARNALL: No, I wouldn't say that. '42, wanted to keep the schools open, who was it?

HENDERSON: Well, the school issue. You were running against Talmadge and...

ARNALL: I did not regard that as any race issue at all, although it was. My position was that it's a university issue. That—I remember there was a little quote that ran in the *[Atlanta Journal]* [Atlanta, Georgia], I think Governor [James Middleton] Cox wrote it himself. It said Old Gene Talmadge is always up to tricks. Now he's put a pickaninny in his peanut politics. [HENDERSON chuckles] I did not regard that as the issue. The issue was a university issue. Talmadge had created the university issue because of race, but I quickly played down race. I remember I said that if a black went to school or tried to go to school in my county in west Georgia, the sun wouldn't set on his head. And many of my liberal friends criticized that very much, but it allayed the race issue. Talmadge tried to make the race issue overshadow the university issue. My campaign was to make the university issue overshadow the race issue, which we were able to do. But there's no doubt that the university issue came about by reason of the race issue which Talmadge was trying to maintain these old concepts which later, of course, knocked out.

HENDERSON: So, your saying political necessity forced you to be a segregationist?

ARNALL: Or else, we could not have won that race, and if we had not won the race, we couldn't have reestablished the accreditation of the university system, and second, we could not have ultimately come out for supporting the courts letting the blacks vote in the white primary and upholding the courts. Had I not been in the position of leadership, I could not have done those worthwhile things.

HENDERSON: Now there was some people that on one issue, the poll tax, said that your leadership was a little late in coming, and let me explain what I'm saying.

ARNALL: I know what you're saying, [HENDERSON laughs] that I was slow in coming out for it. That is right. But let me tell you this: in life, and certainly in politics, in the business deal—isn't it?—timing is all-important. There's a time, for example, the worst man can get elected to office, and there is a time the best man will get defeated [unintelligible]. [It's] the timing. Now the reason I was slow in coming out for the abolition of the poll tax, the news media was all for it, and many of the progressive organizations were for it, and they wanted me to come out for the poll tax. But they're times you can do things and times you can't. When they wanted me to come out, the climate was not right to do away with the poll tax. So, I tried every way in the world to get it done away with without creating a big issue: by letting the legislature deliberate over it and everybody do everything, until finally I decided, hell, they're not going to do away with it unless I get tough. So, I'm going to get tough. And then I went to the legislature and told them I wanted to abolish the poll tax. I think they could've lynched me because this was sacrosanct to many people in certain boss-controlled counties. And I said if you don't it, I am. And let me tell you this: this is the best

legislature Georgia's ever had. You've passed everything I've asked you to do, unanimously. Nothing's been strenuously opposed; you've been wonderful; and I like you. And I want you reelected and come back to the legislature with me for my last two years of my four-year term. You're running in the middle of my term. Now, if you don't do away with it, then I'm going to do away with it and the reason I'm letting you in my confidence, I don't want you to do anything here that would be injurious to your political future. Now, if you don't do away with it, I am, and then when you run for reelection you're going to go around people and say, "A lot of folks say if it wasn't for Governor Arnall I couldn't have even voted. I'm not going to vote for him." Whereas if you do away with it, you can take credit for it, so you did it. And I want you back, every one of you. So this is my effort to help you whether you understand it or not. And they did away with it.

HENDERSON: All right now that strong stand some critics would say came after Gene Talmadge came out and said we would do away with the poll tax. How do you deal with that criticism?

ARNALL: Well, the question in my mind. Number one, as I recall it, I came out before he did. How, I'm not sure of that. But in any event, whether Talmadge came out for it or not, I was going to do it because the time was right, and I was just waiting for the right time. You know, getting back about pressure, too, I remember when we got up this eighteen-year-old vote proposal, which we dropped the voting age to eighteen. The legislature wasn't for that. But I got in touch with the veterans' hospital in Stackford[?]. The house chambers and the gallery with wounded veterans and so forth... And, gosh, you know this was a force that I

said Here are these men that are [telephone rings] wounded and for the rest of their life that they're riding [unintelligible], living in wheel chairs. [ARNALL answers phone; tape stops and starts] We became the first state in the union, probably twenty years ahead of any other state or even the nation of dropping the voting age to eighteen. I went to Washington for a congressional committee, trying to get them to do it. But the way we were able to do that was exerting the pressure on the legislature. Here are these men in wheel chairs, no arms, no legs, and you mean they're not twenty-one and they've given their all, and we owe the people by reason of our disbelief and ideals plunge the world in the war and then we call on the kids to save it for us. They've got to vote, and they voted. So I was always nice to the legislature, but it came time to pressure 'em, I knew how to turn on the heat.

HENDERSON: What kind of heat could a governor turn on the legislature back then?

ARNALL: Well, all kinds of heat. I'll give you an illustration. One of Coweta County's [Georgia] representatives was Myer Goldberg, Myer Goldberg. And low and behold some of my staff ran into my office and said Your representative Myer Goldberg's up there making a speech against eighteen year old voting. And I said The hell he is. They said Yeah. I said Go up there and catch him as soon as he sits down and bring him down here. They did it. And Myer came in, and I said Myer, I just want to tell you that you have hurt me to the quick. You've embarrassed me. You've chagrined me. And I never thought a friend of mine, my own representative, would almost land a marbled blow on this guy. He said What have I done? I said You've made a speech against my eighteen-year-old voters. He said Well, I don't believe in that. I said I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about me, how

you've hurt me, injured me, wounded *me*. Well, he said I wouldn't do it for the world. Now what can I do to make it up for you? And I said You can go up there and make a speech for it. [HENDERSON laughs] He said What am I going to say? I said You're going to say it's been explained to you [ARNALL chuckles], and you understand it. So he went back and made a speech. Many times I've had members of the legislature come into my office who were opposed to something I was for and I'd put the squeeze on them so that they would actually throw up there in the office; they would be ill, because they were caught between two forces, you see.

Second, you know, there is such a thing as patronage. And a lot of the people on the state payroll, although later I put in the merit system, but before that, a lot of people on there were uncle and aunts or cousins of some representative. I would call them in and say Now, here's Aunt Jo. I hate to punish her for you being recalcitrant. I want you to--and they'd do it. Or maybe they wanted to roll by the peach orchard, and we'd talk about that. Remember, a man in the legislature is there to serve his people, his county, his community, to get good treatment for them. Let's take Tift County [Georgia]. They interested in Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College [Tifton, Georgia]. The governor or the budget commission can give them money—there are a thousand ways you do it. But, you don't do anything crooked about it. You just use the political machine as best you can through patronage and favors and whatnot. Somebody's going to get it. I remember when I was governor, we were at war and Ryburn [G.] Clay was head of my highway department for a while. He was an Atlanta banker, good friend of mine. And I wanted to pave the road from Atlanta to Newnan, and they had a restriction. You couldn't pave the highways, the government had a restriction. So, I called Ryburn in and I said Ryburn, now here's what I want you to do. I want you to

get your work crews from the highway department and go down there right between Newnan and Fort McPherson [Georgia] and barricade the road. Don't let anybody come by there. Get state police, whatever you need, barricade it. I don't want anybody to come by there, especially a government or military convoy. Stop them. Which he did. [HENDERSON chuckles] The war department called me. I said Look, I'm not thinking of letting a convoy come through there and that bad road it may overturn and kill these nice boys, brave men. I'm going to pave that damn road or else you're not—. So they got me a special order to pave the road. There are a lot of ways you do these things, really there is. [HENDERSON laughs]

HENDERSON: Let me change direction completely here. The constitution prohibited the governor from succeeding himself.

ARNALL: Right.

HENDERSON: Twice the legislature considering allowing a governor to succeed himself.

ARNALL: Right.

HENDERSON: First time was before a special session in 1945.

ARNALL: Right.

HENDERSON: What was your role in the 1945 session?

ARNALL: Well, I never did want the constitution amended to where I could succeed myself. As a matter of fact, I was under political pressure. Governor Cox, who then had the *Atlanta Journal* and *Atlanta Constitution*, was very close to me. I was somewhat of his political protégé. He was governor, you know, of Ohio, and I visited him up at Trails End [Dayton, Ohio], his home out from Dayton. And we were very close friends. And he was candidate for president of the United States but was defeated, if you remember. [Warren Gamaliel] Harding defeated him, who was also from Ohio. Yet, Harding ended up disgracefully and Governor Cox was highly regarded. But anyway, the governor was so impressed with my administration and others, that they wanted me to be governor another term. And they wanted the constitution amended. Well, I didn't want to defy them and say I'm not going to do it. And yet, I didn't want it because among other things I was tired of being governor. It later developed I could have been governor, if I'd wanted to, for four more years without running. But I was tired. And second I had a lot of lecture engagements. I was contracted and booked and whatnot. So, I didn't want to offend them and yet I didn't want to have 'em pass the amendment because number one, as long as I could keep it dangling there--neither dead nor alive--I was not a lame duck governor. The minute it was defeated, I was a lame duck or it was passed, I was in another political campaign, which I didn't want. So, I played it both ways. I played it—I think the people ought to have a right to select whom they want but I don't want it to apply to me. They even had a group of legislators who came there and under the law signed enough petitions for me to have to call a

special session to do nothing but that. But still I didn't want it. If I had, I could have passed it.

HENDERSON: Now governor, according to [Thomas Elkin] Taylor's thesis, when this drive for a special session begins to stall--

[Cassette: Side 2]

ARNALL: ...[the] minute it was defeated, I was a lame duck or if it was passed, I was in another political campaign which I didn't want. So I played it both ways. I played it—I think the people ought to have a right to select whom they want, but I don't want it to apply to me. They even had a group of legislators who came there and under the law signed enough petitions for me to have to call a special session to do nothing but that. But still I didn't want it. If I had, I could have passed it.

HENDERSON: Now, Governor, according to Taylor's thesis on this drive for special session begins to stall, [Melvin Ernest] M.E. Thompson, at your request, makes a few critical calls to get some people to sign that petition.

ARNALL: I think that's true. But the reason was not--let me make it plain--was not for me to get the issue in my favor, but to keep it a live issue, dangling out here. There was enough to call the session, and I called it. But when they voted, there wasn't enough to pass it. I

think it lacked ten votes or something, which suited me to perfection, although I couldn't say so.

HENDERSON: Well, how about in '46, at the regular session. What role did you play there?

ARNALL: Well again, I think we kept it dangling, dangling. I didn't want to be a dead pigeon, you know, dead duck. And yet, I didn't want to run for governor. I'd had it.

HENDERSON: But now, some critics would say that you made a rather strenuous effort to get the legislature to change at least in '46, and that you clashed a good bit with Roy Harris because of that, and your political friendship almost split because of that.

ARNALL: Well, there was no—Well, it did split. You know, then, you know, it split on the black voting.

HENDERSON: Right.

ARNALL: But I wanted to keep the issue going. I thought it was a good issue. And it kept me in position of strength and power. I did not want to be required to run for governor again. I did not want to antagonize my friends and supporters who'd wanted me to run and I didn't want to antagonize [those] who didn't. But I didn't want the issue dead. I wanted it still cooking, still cooking. Roy and I clashed frequently. On that we clashed because I said he

doesn't trust the people. Nor Ed Rivers trusts the people. If they will pass this amendment and I--then that would give the people the right to vote for whom they wanted to who was a candidate. Once I said I would be a candidate. Again to keep the issue alive, but my wife would have divorced me if I'd run for governor again. She'd had it, and I'd had it. But I couldn't say that, couldn't say that. But that's an issue that'll always be alive and no one will ever settle it because of the diversity of opinion about whether I could have gotten that amendment through had I wanted it. And second, if it had gone through, whether I would have been forced to be a candidate or not, nobody will ever know. I was tired of being governor. You see, I was once a boy scout; I was an eagle scout. But after I'd done all that I didn't want to go back and be an eagle scout. And yet, you say well why did you run nineteen years later? For the reason that the things that I had fought for had come into fruition, I thought. And I thought it'd be a lot of fun to be governor again. I'd gotten all the weariness of being governor worn off, you see. Nineteen years, it's different now. So that's why I did. And I thought I could win. And I say I would have been governor had Carl [Edward] Sanders not changed the law, and that's not critical, but I mean that [unintelligible]. And second, I would have won in the runoff with [Lester Garfield] Maddox had it not been for the Stokley Carmichael race riot which intensified it a week before. But getting back to when I was winding up my term, I had no earthly desire to be governor. Yet strangely enough, ironically, I didn't want to be a dead duck because then I would've lost my influence. So, it all worked out. But nobody'll know the answer. You can play it as you will, either way.

HENDERSON: All right, now there's something else where there's some disagreements. Ed Rivers had been speaker of the House, and you had supported him.

ARNALL: Right.

HENDERSON: According to Rivers, he had talked with you about the second term bill and he said if that amendment is defeated that you assured him that you would support him for the governorship.

ARNALL: Well, it's not white or black. My success politically was due to Roy Harris and Ed Rivers. Ed Rivers was my friend, and the coalition we called it. Together with the mass media: the *Atlanta Journal*, *Constitution*, WSB-TV, radio, all that stuff. We were together, and as long as we were together we were unbeatable. But there came a cleavage between the mass media, newspaper, *Journal* and *Constitution*, and Rivers. It probably started through what was called the "pardon racket." It grew into fruition with the [Richard Gray] Gallogly case. I got Gallogly back from Texas as attorney general. Later on, Rivers pardoned Gallogly, but before he did so he made Governor Cox and the editor of the *Constitution*, and so forth, sign affidavits that there was no personal injuries in it, no fees paid, and all this stuff which was an indignity to these men, the press, having to take an oath that they had nothing to do with that. So the papers turned against Rivers and through their influence, largely, they had him indicted, and he was tried for malfeasance in office; I've forgotten what all it was about. But he was acquitted. I think the jury was eleven to one allegedly for acquittal. But anyway, he was acquitted. Well, by this time, the papers hated Rivers like the devil does

holy water. He couldn't have been elected dogcatcher with that mass media, and they had connections with other papers. I mean there's a fraternity; you know that pretty much, having a few against you. So I told Ed Rivers that if the political climate was right, I would support him, if he could get elected. But he would have to see if he could get the papers off of his neck because they would crucify him. Even though they wouldn't do that, it would have intensified. So it wasn't any commitment; it was encouragement, but it was no commitment. Then, later on, you know, I went over to Augusta, and we beat old Roy for the legislature, but later he and I became friends. But Rivers was never--I never committed myself to him. Hell, I was too much of a politician, Hal, to make a commitment that was not possible of fulfillment. And he could not have been elected. He had the press participating[?] strongly against him; he had this pardon business, all kinds of favors—highway, oh, it was all kind of scandal. The papers were full of it, just full of it. He'd had Miller thrown out of office, you know, physically. Oh, just all kinds of commotion, and he couldn't have done it. So I would have been foolish to have gotten behind a dead pigeon or committing myself to a dead pigeon. Had he been able to pacify the press, well, I thought he could have been elected governor, I would have supported him, but he couldn't do that. He'd have been a lost dog[?] for starters.

HENDERSON: You mention Roy Harris being defeated. He was planning to run for governor until he was defeated in the legislature.

ARNALL: Right.

HENDERSON: Did you have anything to do with his defeat in Richmond County [Georgia]?

ARNALL: Oh yeah, oh sure. I organized the machinery against him. And then we added black voters too, you know [unintelligible].

HENDERSON: Now let me carry it one step further. Why did you do that? You did not want him running as governor, or are you trying to get back at him for something he has done to you, or...?

ARNALL: Well Roy Harris, through our lives, we had checkered political association. Sometimes we were very close and sometimes we were bitter enemies. And I wanted him defeated because he had in the last session of the legislature used his influence against whatever I wanted. He was against me all the way through.

HENDERSON: Including the second term amendment?

ARNALL: Everything, yes. But I didn't want it but he, you know, this is not the point. He wanted that killed so he could run for governor. And we were thrown against each other. Yes, and Roy never got over that although we ostensibly made up. He never did get over it. Yet, there were times in his later days I'd pick up the phone and call him, when he was sick and whatnot. And ostensibly, we were friends because we did have—I used to say it this

way: Roy can raise all the hell he wants to but he's done more for me than I ever did for him. So, I felt very kindly toward him.

HENDERSON: After the legislature defeats the effort to allow a governor to succeed himself, several hopefuls came forth trying to—

ARNALL: Including [Samuel] Marvin Griffin.

HENDERSON: That's my question.

ARNALL: Marvin came to me and wanted me to support him. I didn't think Marvin could be elected. Remember, he was the man in charge of the goon squad that threw [Willis Linton] Miller out and all that, you know. And second, he was alleged to be involved with Rivers and the pardon racket, you remember? No, he couldn't have been elected and I never told him I'd support him. But he always courted me, trying to get to me. I wanted a winner, and I wanted somebody to, listen at this—that the newspapers, television, radio, all this mass media, would enthusiastically support.

HENDERSON: Well, was [James Vinson (Jimmy)] Carmichael that man?

ARNALL: Right.

HENDERSON: You think he was the best man to run—

ARNALL: At that time, yes.

HENDERSON: Now, a lot of people say while he was good campaigner, he was not in the same league with you and Rivers and Talmadge.

ARNALL: Well, he didn't have the burning desire to be governor. You see, you've got to, you know, some people are ambitious and some are not. He did it, but he wasn't as enthusiastic about it as some of us. We pushed him in to it, the newspapers [unintelligible].

HENDERSON: [In] 1948, Attorney General [Eugene] Gene Cook ruled that the winner in the 1948 election could not succeed himself. In 1950, Cook reverses himself—

ARNALL: Correct.

HENDERSON: --and says that Talmadge who won in '48—

ARNALL: Right.

HENDERSON: --could run again. He also said that you could run.

ARNALL: Right.

HENDERSON: Now, a lot of people said that—the speculation was that Cook would rule that Talmadge could not run in 1950, and you were going to enter that race in 1950.

ARNALL: That's right. That was speculation. I had no earthly desire to do it. I was under contract, speaking all over the country.

HENDERSON: All right.

ARNALL: But Cook reversed himself because he saw the Talmadge strength was such he wanted to get elected to attorney general, so he played both sides.

HENDERSON: But his decision wasn't a setback to you?

ARNALL: No, no.

HENDERSON: Regardless of how he—

ARNALL: Although people said it was. No, I wouldn't have run. Hell, I couldn't, wouldn't have done that. I'd come out, let me tell you this, of the governorship...with very little of this world's goods. I had been so intent in public service that I never thought of my own financial or personal situation. And that's true of anybody in politics who's dedicated to public welfare. And then I saw that I could capitalize on the national publicity I'd gotten as a governor doing progressive things, different things. Winning the freight rate fight or

bringing back freight rate equality, industrialization of the South and West, the poll tax, lowering the voting age to eighteen, paying the state—all these things. That I just had all kinds of lecturing engagements and wherever I would lecture they would have a sale of my latest book. Bookstores, I'd go by and autograph books. It was like having the fish basket open at both ends. I got them coming and going. I was making money and I needed to because I'd never put aside any of this world's goods. And I couldn't have afforded to get back into politics; I'd had no earthly desire to. As a matter of fact, that first race for governor I was very anxious to win, and I had good financial support. But there were occasions where it was not forthcoming and I had to borrow the money myself. Had I lost the race for governor, I would have been in very financial straights. But having won it, then indebtedness disappeared overnight because people wanted to be close to me and they'd say we want to take care of your obligations. I'd say as long as it's an investment in good government with no special privilege, OK, they did. In '66 when I ran for governor, I was defeated and ended up with indebtedness that I never dreamed of in the world. For example, I got a bill from the [unintelligible] Driving Company for thirty-two cars for two months. People had hired in my name, working for me [HENDERSON chuckles] and things like that. Newspaper ads that local people had put in, then when I was defeated they wouldn't pay for, just on and on. [HENDERSON chuckles] There was just a.... but unlike the Marvin—

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