

Harold Paulk (Hal) Henderson, Sr. Oral History Collection
Series I: Ellis Arnall
OH ARN 15
Ellis G. Arnall Interviewed by Harold Paulk (Hal) Henderson, Sr.
Date: March 26, 1987
Cassette: OH ARN 15, 0:48:35, Sides 1 and 2

[Cassette: Side 1]

ARNALL: --[unintelligible] a chapter on prison reformation, and I don't believe this has ever been stated in anything I've read. It was the fact that *I'm a Fugitive from the Georgia Chain Gang* [sic]--the movie--played such an important part in my determination to reform the prisons. I told you when I was running for speaker *pro tem*[pore], I was over toward Augusta seeing members of the legislature. And one night [I] went to see *I'm a Fugitive from the Georgia Chain Gang* with Paul Muni playing the part of Robert Elliot Burns. And it was directed and done by Mervyn LeRoy, Mervyn LeRoy who was a great motion picture producer. He did things having to do with laws and trying to make an impact on the public to make a better world. And I determined after I saw *I'm a Fugitive from the Georgia Chain Gang* to reform Georgia's prisons when I became governor, because I knew I was going to sooner or later. I think I told you that also, when we undertook to reform the prisons, we had the head of the federal prison administration come here and make suggestions to us as to how we could do it. And we undertook to do away with barbarity, inhumane treatment, and we did away with the shackles, the cages, the ill-treatment. The stripes--we took the stripes off the prisoners and we tried to give them an environment whereby if they wanted to they could bring about not only restitution for their crime but rehabilitation as well. And after we had reformed the prisons, and there were quite a bit in that, I sent Roy [Vincent] Harris and Frank [Cleveland] Gross to the

[Georgia] Senate and Roy was speaker of the House to the south and all the southern camps and they said Georgia had the worst of any they encountered. I think that is referred to in some of the reports to me, as governor. But ultimately, we did the best we could in prison reformation; we were at war. It was hard to get good personnel. States' finances were inadequate. But we reformed Georgia's prisons; we gave Georgia a good name nationwide in having restructured its penal institutions. And we obliterated for all time the blight that has afflicted the prison systems due to Robert Elliot Burns' book and motion picture *I'm a Fugitive from the Georgia Chain Gang*. On occasion after we brought about the reformation, and the national press had commented most favorably on all we were doing, I was in New York City to speak to the New York Southern Society at their annual meeting at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel [New York, New York] ballroom, and I had a call from Robert Elliot Burns saying he'd like very much to see me if I could work it out. I arranged the next afternoon for him to come to my hotel, which was the Sherry-Netherland [New York, New York]--it's now been demolished and General Motors' building is there [*sic*]--right across from the Plaza Hotel in New York City. So Robert Elliott Burns and his wife and children came to see me there and we chatted. He then was a certified public accountant, who was head of the civic club, he was active in the church there in New Jersey and seemed to have a fine wife and children. And I was impressed and I--he said he'd heard so much about the reformation in Georgia's prisons, he wanted to come back and give himself up. That this was a blight on his reputation, having been a fugitive and he longed to correct it.

Flack swore he had been in Florida during the boom and the bottom fell out of things in Florida. As it did, he started back North and in passing through LaGrange [Georgia], he broke into a bakery or store and stole a loaf of bread. I believe he got twenty years for that. And then

shortly after he was incarcerated, he escaped. Georgia undertook to extradite him, but was unsuccessful because Georgia's name was so bad in so far as prisons were concerned that the governor of the state where he was refused to grant him extradition. So he was a free man in New Jersey, but he wanted to get this cloud lifted from his name, being a fugitive. I told him if he'd come back to Georgia and give himself up, I would represent him as his attorney--there was nothing to keep me as governor from being his attorney--and go before the pardon board and ask that, ask that they give him a pardon. He tried to get a pardon from the board through writing, but the board declined on the fear that they could not grant a pardon in that censure, that the felon requesting the pardon [sirens sounding in background] had to be in the state in charge of the state authorities.

Some months later, he wrote me that he was coming back to Georgia and surrender to me, which he did. I'd been waiting for the pardon board and as his attorney and requested that they give him a pardon and recited his complete rehabilitation, the fact that he had made restitution, and that he was entitled to a full pardon by a reasonable life that he was now leading, the life he was now living. And so they granted him a pardon and that went over the nation's wires and news services and again inured to the benefit of Georgia, that here we are in Georgia, have rectified the evil of our ways in prisons; we've done away with the shackles; we've done away with the stripes; we've done away with the sweatboxes and cruel and inhumane beatings to such an extent that Robert Elliott Burns, the most notorious criminal who had ever escaped from Georgia, had come back to Georgia and that the prison board had granted him a pardon. This spoke well for our state. And we got publicity that we could never have received in any other manner or method.

So, the story of prison reformation dates back from the Robert Elliott Burns movie, *I'm a Fugitive from the Georgia Chain Gang*. And I took great pride in what we did for the prisons. But having said that, I hasten to say we didn't do enough. Because we were at war, we could not get trained personnel, we could not afford to spend the money that we should have been able to spend for prison development. I had the head of the federal prison system come here and help us set up our prison system. We ultimately did away with county prison camps where they used to take people out, the prisoners, and make them work the roads and beat them and whatnot. And we did away with rented prisoners. There was a time that we'd rent prisoners to people who had farms and whatnot to work on the farms, or if they had mines, they would help the mine. They would pay for that. We did many things that were good in the way of prisons. But I hasten to say there is no good prison, and no good hospitals, and no good mental institutions. We can have them as well as we can provide for them because they are essential. But actually, with prisons, we just don't like prisons, and we don't like hospitals. We don't like to go to [them] but sometimes we have to and when we go we're glad we went. But today in Georgia and the nation there is an overabundance of crime. There will be increased crime because every time congress meets in every state legislature, they get up more criminal laws, many of which nobody understands, and we get into all kinds of trouble. And second, there's more people; there's more violence; there's more robbery; there's more arson; there's more rape--there's just more crime. So, as a result of that, we are not building the prison system that we need because people don't want to pay taxes. As a result, the federal courts are letting people out of prison who ought to be there. But the trick is that there's more people and more crime. We need more prisons and those prisons ought not to be just for punishment. They ought to be for punishment, in part, but it ought to be humane punishment. It ought to be for

rehabilitation to teach them a job that they can make a living and fit back into society. So, I think the prison authorities do well under the circumstances. There's too many crimes, too many prisoners, not enough good prisons, [and] not enough money to make division. If someone would figure up what it'd cost to keep a prisoner in prison a year, I would say I think I saw it costs \$20,000 to keep them in prison for a year. So, we need to go forward along in prison reformation. There's a lot to be done. Yes, sir?

HENDERSON: Let me ask you about your economic philosophy again. I know we've talked about it before. You ran in '42 saying if elected that you would not to raise taxes. Did you advocate that because here was [Eugene] Gene Talmadge, a low spender who also believed the same thing and you felt like politically you needed to make that position? Or was that really how you felt about what government should be doing?

ARNALL: Well, I ran against Talmadge, if you remember, ran on the program that he did not raise taxes and would not raise them. Therefore, to keep education the sole issue, I had to join with him in saying I was against any tax increase, which I was, and I carried that out. So what I was trying to do in that campaign, just like on the race issue, to down play it and not have an issue, I didn't want an issue on taxes. I wanted one issue, education, and that's what I got. And the people didn't want any more taxes. If you remember, things weren't good economically at that time. We were in bad shape in the South, in Georgia. So, my program against taxes was—and we were at war, remember that. It wasn't a time to raise taxes. We were fighting; we were cutting back government instead of increasing it. So, my theory is that you've got to have taxes to operate government properly. And always have. However, everyone that I ever heard

running for public office who got elected was against taxes and for increased spending. But this is how silly you get to be. Yes, I think there ought to be a tax system that raises adequate taxes. And I think in that campaign of '42, it was not the thing to talk about because we were at war, we had enough money to finance the restricted operation of the state. We did well. But today, I think we've got to have more taxes in government--but not the [Ronald Wilson (Ronnie)] Reagan tax reform, which squeezes the middle class people but helps the rich and the poor. But I'm more interested in expanding the middle class, and not just the two extremes, the poor and the rich. I think we've got to change our tax system. As I travel over the world, I [have] run into a system that works well. They call it the VAT, V-A-T, Value Added Tax. We would call it a national sales tax. But every time you buy anything in a foreign country that has it, Europe has it, mostly European countries, you pay the VAT tax. And if you don't want to buy it, you don't pay it. And if you buy expensive things, you pay more taxes. It works well. And the second thing that I think that we'd do well in this country, among other things than the tax program, we have a capital gains tax. I do not believe in a capital gains tax. Most of the European countries do not have a capital gains. They want to encourage people to save and invest instead of taxing them on their investments. I think that's wrong, and next, I think that many foreign [unintelligible], they have a capital levy. I'm all for a capital levy. There are many fortunes in this country that were made before the days of taxes--the Harabins[?], the Rockefellers and so forth. They got a free ride and I think each year they ought to tax a small percentage if you've got, whatever you've got above a certain amount. That would equalize it. England has a capital gains, a lot of countries do. But as far as taxes are concerned, we will always have taxes. They will always be high. The question is who's going to be the guinea pig and get stuck. And the game is to tax the other fellow, don't tax me.

HENDERSON: Did you ever, while you were governor, advocate or contemplate restructuring the tax system in the state of Georgia in any way?

ARNALL: No, I did not, because at that time we were at war. Remember, I was a wartime governor. It would have been dumb to fool with the tax system. So many of our people were tied up in the military and federal service of some kind. We were making airplanes up here at Lockheed [Martin] [Marietta, Georgia] and Bell Bomber [Marietta, Georgia] and on and on. You just couldn't come to grips with the tax system at that time. It just couldn't be done. [It] never occurred to me at all. As a matter of fact, taxes are very unpopular. I was trying to get—to restructure Georgia's image. I wanted changes made so that we could move forward. And of course, another thing, it would have been foolish to talk about tax structure then because Georgia was an agricultural state. It was only when we brought about the freight rate equality that we became industrial. It was interesting in the morning papers, I don't know whether you saw it there, the fifteen fastest growing counties in the United States. Did you see that?

HENDERSON: No, sir. I haven't seen the paper this morning.

ARNALL: Thirteen of them [are] in the South. Only two: one in Alaska and one in Denver, Colorado. And Denver is the government of the United States. You see, people don't know this but most of the government is in Denver because we wanted to get out of the path of shell and shock. And everything in Denver is just a second Washington. It's out there and it's going to be [unintelligible]. And then some county in Alaska. But it was amazing to me that Atlanta—

Gwinnett [County] [Georgia] is the fastest growing in the United States, according to this in the paper today. And Atlanta and Orlando [Florida] are the two that are really booming. Cobb County [Georgia] is fifth, I believe. It's just going. But again, since we didn't have a balanced economy, how could I fool the taxes. That was what I was fighting for, to get industry in the South so we could do something. Now we can afford to play with taxes if anybody's got the courage to do it, to come out with a program. But if they did it, they'd probably be defeated. Now if they got in, they could shape it up. Taxes are unpopular; people hate to pay taxes. And they always feel that they're getting gored with somebody else's stick, which they are. There's also a big piece in the paper today or yesterday about there was a thousand of the richest people in America who never paid a dime for it. I think everybody ought to pay some taxes.

HENDERSON: Let me go back to one of your predecessors, [Eurith Dickinson] Ed Rivers. He had the reputation of being a liberal and you had the reputation of being a liberal. How was Ed Rivers, in your philosophy, similar and where did you differ?

ARNALL: Well, I was a liberal and am a liberal in political affairs, social affairs. I'm a strict conservative in fiscal things. Ed Rivers was a liberal in political and social and fiscal affairs. So that was the difference. He came along at a time, in the New Deal, where he was getting a lot of federal money and building things. He was a builder. He built and he spent a lot of money. I came along in the war, where you couldn't build—couldn't even pave a road unless you got a special permit. I did pave the road from Atlanta to Newnan [Georgia] when I was governor. And the way that came about, I had a highway commissioner, Ryburn [G.] Clay. And I said Ryburn, I want you to get in touch with your people and I want you to barricade the road from

Fort McPherson [Georgia], on the edge of Atlanta, down toward Newnan. Get five or six miles of barricade and don't let any army trucks, anything and if I have to get out the National Guard [Association of the United States] or the state guard, we'll do it. So he did. And my theory was that I didn't want the military forces who were going between Fort Benning [Georgia] in Columbus [Georgia] and Fort McPherson near Atlanta to have traffic accidents and fatalities and so forth. It was a dangerous road, and I was going to stop it. And so the war department gave me the authority to pave it.

HENDERSON: Governor, when you reformed some of these agencies to take "politics out of them and keep the governor from dominating them," was that more symbolic than actual reality? Did you ever intervene with say, the [University System of Georgia] Board of Regents ...?

ARNALL: No, no. It was symbolic. It was actual. I never interfered or made a recommendation to a symbol of constitutional agency while I was governor. Having said that, if some public issue came up and I had a press conference, I could express myself about those things. And I'm sure that some of the expressions that I had and opinions I voiced had some consideration by certain agencies, but I never tried—never talked with a one about doing anything. The very prestige of the governor has a lot to do. You know mostly he appoints people. And most of them [are] on the paper, but it's sedition[?]-they can't; they don't. No, I never tried to control—I was glad to get rid of it. All I wanted to do was go around and make speeches, and things like that. Well, I wouldn't fool with all that. I remember the day that I went in the governorship there were 350 files there, pardon files and all that. How could a

governor look at all that junk and how could he run the education department? How could Talmadge do it? He was just doing it by hearsay and it was wrong, but he did it. No, the governor is chief executive and his job is to represent the people, speak well for the people, and do things that need to be done. And he should not be an administrator. I think, for example, [James Earl] Jimmy Carter [Jr.], who was a fine man, an honorable man, a good man, if there's any criticism of his presidency it was the he was trying to be an administrator. He read everything that was said and came to opinions and told people. You can't do that. The president is many men. The governor is many men. And you just can't do it all yourself. Why, what is it I wanted? I was governor. I didn't want run the government. I was perfectly happy. I just wanted to make a good name for Georgia and good reputation for myself, and that's what I undertook to do. I was a great fellow that believed in public relations. I still do, communications. I think Ronnie Reagan's a good president even though he may not know what's going on because he communicates well. When you see him on television, he comes across--he's an actor. All politics, I hate to say this, is acting. It's impressing people. You can be sincere as an actor, but you got to get into props[?]. The freight rate fight, for example. All in the world I did in the freight rate fight was go all over country making speeches and just raising hell trying to get attention. That's what I did. I'd write each member of the public—of the Interstate Commerce Commission [United States]. Never write it to the office. I don't write people's office. They'll throw it away. Some secretary won't think it's important. I write them to home. The average businessman gets very few letters at home, on business. He gets them at his office. Well, if he gets them at home, he'll read them because there's just two or three. He'll read those, but he come to the office and there's a stack of them, he won't read 'em. So, I used to write 'em all at home, and I made speeches everywhere, and I created a climate for

change. This is--the way change comes about, you've got to stir it up. You can't just sit still and think it's going to happen, because it won't.

HENDERSON: How do you deal with the criticism that while you were trying to create this climate there were a lot of people in Georgia that felt like that you were building your name by pointing a finger at the ills of Georgia?

ARNALL: Well, that was true. A lot of people thought right. What I was undertaking to do is to get across the idea that if every Georgian got to be part of the union. We could have a better economy and economics is the basis for freedom--intellectual freedom, social freedom, financial freedom. Somebody may have asked a man in the bread line, before your day, back in the Great Depression in '32 [1932], if he were free. He was in the bread line. And anybody said he was, was crazy. You've got the proof. You've got to have economic freedom. It's a corollary to political freedom. So, my theory was that by raising hell about it, when they said we were bigoted in the South, that we were ignorant in the South, I said The reason is you won't let us be in this union that we have created. You've got us restricted. And, whether people liked it or not, I didn't give a damn. It was the truth. The only way we could build a strong economy was to be part of the union so we could manufacture our raw materials and get the income from finished goods and not just be drawers of water and hewers of timber. And as a matter of fact in my judgment, and I hope I'm not taking too much faith in this, the Sunbelt is the--and the West--got spots today and I have bring by them and to them that they were just vassals--they were like Ireland and England, the United Kingdom. They were just a little pinion stuck on somewhere. And so the reason we had ignorance in the South is lack of education. It was either lack of

education or lack of money. If we had lack of money, we had no way to utilize our resources, our soils, our minerals, our wood, our cotton is shipped out. Somebody else was making it, we didn't. So, they didn't like that and they didn't like bigotry. Why did we have bigotry? There wasn't enough jobs to go around. The black man was the economic competitor of the white man. In order to keep him in the ditch, we stayed in the ditch with him. I once made a speech-- I'll never forget this time--in Liberty County. A big speech, there were thousands of people. And I think John [Rensselaer] Chamberlain of *Life* magazine accompanied me on that speech. But among other things, no reason, except I like to do things for no reason at all, I said to the crowd, I said Let me tell you, I want the black man to have more money. I want him to make more money. And you could have heard a pin drop; they didn't like that. And I said Now I'm going to tell you why I want him to make more money. If he has more money, you and I can get it. And they said Hooray! [HENDERSON and ARNALL chuckle] You see, a black man's hand don't stink up the dollar; they'll still be spending it. So, my speeches over the country was to arouse America as well as the South. And I spoke all over the South too. To the fact that we were still part of the union. We were the fourth state to join the union. We were the thirteenth state to sign the compact to revolution. We were one of the original thirteen states, and we were the fourth state to ratify the Constitution. And yet here we were like stepchildren. It was wrong. So, yes, I take full credit for saying we were ignorant because we didn't have money, no education. We didn't. We didn't have money, and we don't have enough yet but we're trying to get more all the time, and we are increasing our wealth.

HENDERSON: You made a speech in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1945—

ARNALL: Right. I remember it well.

HENDERSON: And it got you into a little bit of trouble.

ARNALL: Right. That was a little of blazing the trail. Always trail blazing. I remember it was a press conference and a black woman reporter asked me, she said What do you think about eating with Negroes? And I said Well, it would just show that they had something to eat. And What about this? Well, it would show that they were educated and so forth. And that's what would happen. So, she said Would you do it? I said Sure, I'll do it. And so that was hell to pay, but it's accepted today. Any trailblazer, you know, and so—and that's true. And that time we had segregated toilets, segregated everything. And we didn't—my whole fight, Hal, was for first-class citizenship. Not second class, and first class or third class, all everybody first class. All men created equal. I wanted them to have change. And now we do it, but the key gets back to economics. Again, economic freedom is a corollary to political freedom. Political freedom has to have as a corollary economic freedom. If you can't clothe your family and feed them--I just read, this right Henderson, Erskine Caldwell, the greatest, most prolific novelist who's ever been, is from Coweta County [Georgia]. Moreland, Georgia. Lewis [McDonald] Grizzard [Jr.] is from Moreland, too--very fine folks. I've been trying for a long while to find a good cause *In Search of Bisco*. So, I wrote--Erskine Caldwell just had his biography published by Peachtree Publishers [Atlanta, Georgia] here. So, I called them and they gave me his address in Scottsdale, Arizona. And I wrote him and told him I too was a Cowetian and so forth [HENDERSON chuckles] and that I was trying to find *In Search of Bosco--Bisco*. And that as I recalled it years ago, it was written with no punctuation and each line was written so you didn't

have to reverse your eyes if you go this way, this way, this way. And he wrote me back, out of probably out some secondhand publisher or some secondhand dealer, but he didn't recall it, didn't recall it. So I got my librarian to get *In Search of Bisco*, [unintelligible] very popular[?]. And I'd just read it. So I wrote him back that I'd gotten it read. I don't know whether it's because he is senile at ninety-three--well, I was wrong about my punctuation. It was some other book. But anyway, that book was--he grew up there in White Oak [Georgia] playing with a little mulatto boy, that was his only playmate. And later his father was the corresponding Presbyterian minister, [and] he was called to live somewhere else. So years later he tried to find Bisco, went of search of him. Never did find him, but that was his story. But he dealt with the black problem then. He said back in, that was in '65, and he said it was still a problem with the blacks. And it is, it is.

HENDERSON: Now, you consider yourself a trailblazer. Did you ever appoint any blacks to any positions in state government?

ARNALL: No, no. Because that was—remember, get your—your time element right. At that time, a black could not vote in a Democratic primary. The state was controlled by the Democrats, ninety-five percent. He theoretically could vote in a general election, but they discouraged it. Wouldn't let him, always you had to explain the constitution. They'd say no you didn't pass it. So he couldn't even vote. My fight was to make him a first-class citizenship and then once he got to be a first-class citizenship he could be appointed to office, but he was a non-entity. No, I didn't appoint one. There wasn't any need. What could he have done? I don't know if he could read and write in those days, it was—education was so scarce. And

second, he couldn't even vote and he wasn't first-class citizen. No, no. Later on, when I established the right for him to vote by refusing to be a party to the crowd that wanted to resort to devious ways to try to keep him from voting, then, after he became a recognized first-class citizenship, he could hold public office and [unintelligible].

But, I want to here register something else. I do not believe in an affirmative action program. I think they've gone too far. This decision yesterday was a terrible decision, and I don't know how they contend—I'm all for women—but I don't know how they contend they're a minority. They're in majority. There are more women in this country than men, than men. Why do they say they're minority? I don't understand that at all. But in any event, I don't think because someone is black or green or yellow or female or male they should have any privilege. The scales of justice, the eyes of justice are blind, or are supposed to be. I know there're those who say—I remember the Kennedys espoused this, mainly because they were in servitude for 300 years, they ought to get special treatment. But as I read the Good Book, the Bible, it says, You shouldn't visit the sins of the fathers on the children. But anyway, no, I didn't appoint any and wouldn't have [unintelligible]. I was fighting for basic rights, just like I was fighting for economic opportunity. I was fighting for political opportunity, not hold some damn office that follows.

HENDERSON: You--I think during this period of time it would be safe to say you were a segregationist.

ARNALL: Oh yeah.

HENDERSON: Talmadge was a segregationist.

ARNALL: Oh yeah.

HENDERSON: Now why does the difference—

ARNALL: Had I joined that issue with him, he would have defeated me. I wanted one issue, the crowing issue education, and therefore I didn't get onto the tax fight or the segregation—hell, I'd been defeated. You got to hold all this so you can do things. You've got to be intelligent. You can't come out to things that the public's against, and we were a segregationist society then; the voters. The blacks couldn't vote. So, no.

HENDERSON: Well, maybe my question is: what's the difference between Talmadge's variety of segregation and your variety?

ARNALL: Well, back in those days?

HENDERSON: Um-hum.

ARNALL: There were some—in those days...but I don't think we'd be the same today, the time has passed. Again, in those days we had second-class citizenship. It was regular then[?]. I used to lecture in the North and I think I told you this, I always had ten questions, everybody was asking, and I said You ask me ten questions when you get through. Here they are. One of

them is always that usually was based on news, what's news, they say news and wire services, papers, whatnot. But one of them that used to always ask me, I knew, it was on the look. That isn't it bad that the South how they treat the Negro. And I said Yes, it's bad. But I'm going to let you in on a secret. We in the South have segregation by law. You have accrual[?] of segregation. You have defacto segregation. It's just easier to talk about evil somewhere else than it is on your own doorstep. And that was true. Now, there wasn't a damn bit of difference. Run by law and run by--. Today, I think we are making a mistake. The scales of justice have swung too far. If two people apply for a job, one black and one white, you give it to the black person[?]. If two people apply for a job, rather they qualify or not, two people apply for a job one a woman, one a man, you give it to the woman rather she--that's wrong. I think qualifications ought to have everything to do with it. Equality, not the color of their eyes or the hair or their physical makeup. It ought to be a question of equality based on opportunity, based on ability. As a matter of fact, I think it's terrible that we are doing it at the courts—telling who you can hire and who you can fire, like this case here yesterday. I think that's abominable. And it'll meet with disfavoritism [unintelligible].

HENDERSON: Let me shift gears a little bit. You've always said since you were in the first grade you wanted to be governor.

ARNALL: I drew that straw.

HENDERSON: Did you ever have any ambition to be—hold any other public office? U.S. congressmen? U.S. Senator?

ARNALL: Oh, no. No. There are only two offices in the United States that I would have been[?] one hundred percent effective: the president or governor. There are a lot of congressmen, a lot of senators. You know Truman used to tell me, I think I told you this that—
[Tape stops and starts; adjusting of the recording device]

ARNALL: Back when I was in Washington, head of price control, and [Harry S.] Truman was president, and I got him to seize the steel mills rather than to give the steel owners, steel mill owners a price increase to which they were not entitled. We were over there in the oval room one day talking and he said Governor, you know I'm the only man with any authority elected by all the people. A senator's elected but he has to pay attention to his state. He's interested in national affairs, but in order to get elected he has to look after the affairs of the people in the state, try to get them federal money and whatnot. And so the congressman is in the same position. He said Now, it don't make a damn to me. He says I'm the head man and I can call the shots as I see it. And I'm going to call them like I think is right and if people don't like it I'm just sorry. I'm going to be president. And it's that way as a governor. He can call the shots, he doesn't have to report to anybody. But a senator, a congressman any other public official, in my judgment, is limited in his authority. So I would say the chief executive of the state and the chief executive in the United States are the two offices where you can call the shots without having to ask anybody's views or opinions.

HENDERSON: Governor, isn't it fair to say after this next statement that you would liked to have had the opportunity to serve a second term?

ARNALL: No indeed. That's the last thing I wanted to do, but I had to be coy about it. You see there's nothing deader than a dead fish, a lame duck, a guy on the way out. He loses his influence. But if he can keep alive the glimmer that he may be the next governor, he's still got that wallop of power. The newspapers were strong for me and they wanted me to run for a second term and wanted the constitution amended, which I could have gotten it amended if I'd wanted to. But I had to play coy and not make them mad. I had lecture engagements booked all over the United States from the South to the North to the East to the West and I had contracts signed. I think at the time it was something like \$40,000 in lectures and I couldn't walk out on that. I thought I was through. I had no—what could I have gained by another term as governor? I'd done all I could think to do. I'd brought about every thing that I thought at that time needed to be done: a new constitution, pay the state out of debt, had all the programs of the prison system, teacher retirement--had it all done the way I wanted it. What was there to do? Now then, twenty-three years later when I ran for governor again, I thought it would be fun then because all the things that I had started had that come to fruition and there'd be something to do. And second, I was at a stage in life where I could take things easier. And third, I thought the things that I'd advocated had come to fruition and people agreed with me and those views. I later found, unfortunately, that prejudice dies slowly. Many people who gave lip service to being non-prejudice when they get into a ballot booth will secretly vote for the prejudice situation. Prejudice dies hard. But anyway, at the time, I had no earthly desire to be governor again. What was there to gain? I'd been governor, done everything I could think of.

HENDERSON: Couldn't you say that if you had a chance to run again though, you could keep your old archenemy [Eugene] Talmadge from having another term?

ARNALL: Well, I had fixed it to where he was powerless. Now, let's go back again. I'd put constitutional, the Public Service Commission, the Board of Regents, Board of Education, the pardon vote—I'd put them all in the con[stitution]--he was powerless. He couldn't do anything. And didn't, and actually wouldn't have done anything. And when Herman came along--and I want to speak compassionately here--what did he do except fight the civil war over again, trying to say we're going to defy the courts and they all knew they couldn't get away with it but they were trying to do it to get elected. So, no, in my judgment. As a matter of fact, [James Vinson] Jimmy Carmichael should have been governor and won it but they wouldn't give it to him because they counted those dead folks, you know. They put Herman [Eugene Talmadge] in the second man and the fellow [D.] Talmadge Bowers would have won on the write-in and then Herman was not, but they wrote him in.... Herman and I had a discussion on television, a couple of sessions on that. And I asked him about the write in and he laughed. Look, Jimmy Carmichael should have been governor. He was my candidate. He got the most votes and even on the unit system, he should have been, on any system he should have been, but they didn't.

HENDERSON: Now, Governor, you said that you could have gotten the constitution changed.

ARNALL: Right.

HENDERSON: If you wanted to.

ARNALL: Right.

HENDERSON: Are you saying that you did not lobby in any way to get the legislature to propose that constitutional amendment?

ARNALL: Oh no, no. What I did was keep it alive. I didn't lobby but if it was dying, I'd put some life in it and if it was getting to much like it's going to come about, I'd puncture it a little bit. I was just playing coy. Isn't this a new machine [tape recorder]?

HENDERSON: No, sir, that's—

ARNALL: Same one you—

HENDERSON: Same one I've been bringing. Yes, sir.

ARNALL: But really, truthfully, honestly let me go back again. When I finished the governorship, I didn't have any money. Oh, a little, maybe ten, twelve thousand dollars. I had \$40,000 worth of lecture engagements. The books were selling like *Memoirs of Hecate County*. I mean they were just selling everywhere. And I had done all I could do in Georgia. I'd given Georgia a good name. Why did I want to sit around over there for? There's nowhere I'd could have gone but down.

HENDERSON: Or could you have gone up? I mean another term as a governor, and there's the possibility of a vice presidency and maybe the presidency later on?

ARNALL: Well, no.

HENDERSON: That never had dawned in your mind?

ARNALL: Well, I don't think being governor would have helped it because I couldn't get the national headlines anymore. Because I was doing things, you know, like Georgia's prison system, like the freight rate fight. I was headlined everyday. But over there what could I have done? Headline: I don't want Talmadge to be governor? Nobody's interested in it. No, and as far as vice president and president, I was well known then and if it was in the cards--I don't know whether you ever saw it there's *Time* magazine that did an article. How I was on information police. [It] had my picture and John Karen? in the group and said that if Wendell [Lewis] Willkie bloomed on information police, I blossomed. And they went on to say that I was—asked me the question did I think that I could be president or vice president. And I said You play the cards as they fall. But I don't know. But I was a national figure then. I wouldn't have gained any--Look, if you're at the top of the polls, the only you can go down is bottom. And I got out of the governorship everything I could and given Georgia a good name, recognition, got them readmitted to the union. What in the world was you going to do, just sit there? Nah. No, I had no desire. And the only reason I had a desire twenty-three years later, I thought everything I sponsored and advocated had come into fruition and it would be a lot of

fun, and I could do some things then because the lapse of twenty-three years some more things needed to be done, but not right after I went out the first one.

HENDERSON: Let me change the whole tone of this a little bit. What is your most amused political story, memories of politics?

[Cassette: Side 2]

ARNALL: ...speak more kindly of them. And the early ones when I was an attorney and I thought about how these two black men were driving an old truck down the road. [The] highway patrol stopped them and said to the driver, said You're going mighty fast. Says Do you have a governor on this truck? If you don't you ought to have one. And he said No sir, I don't have no governor on this truck. That's fertilizer you smell. [HENDERSON laughs]
[Unintelligible] But I have so many stories—you've got my story about the time zone, that's a good one. There's so many, so many. And you told me you had my story about when I was attorney general, about the fellow that wanted the agriculture recrop[?]?

HENDERSON: Right.

ARNALL: I asked him how did you all do it. He said You know more about that than I do. I'm his lawyer. I'm going to come back twenty minutes and get it. So I drove to jail. Glad it's prosperous. So much of that. Now, let me talk to you.

HENDERSON: All right.

[End of Interview]



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