

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

Series I: Ellis Arnall

OH ARN 17

Herman E. Talmadge Interviewed by Harold Paulk (Hal) Henderson, Sr. in Hampton, Georgia

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Cassette: OH ARN 17, 01:20:21 minutes, Sides 1 and 2

[Cassette: Side 1]

HENDERSON: [tests tape] Senator, first of all I would like to thank you for allowing me to interview you.

TALMADGE: Privilege indeed. It's good to see you again, Hal.

HENDERSON: I believe this is the third time I've had the pleasure. I always look forward to it.

TALMADGE: Thank you.

HENDERSON: Let me begin by asking you to discuss your family history.

TALMADGE: Talmadge finally came over from England. Went to England—William the Conqueror [William I, King of England] with Battle of Hastings from Normandy [France]. They emigrated--my branch of the family--emigrated from England in the early part of the eighteenth century and settled on Long Island, New York. And one Talmadge served in the Senate from New York; another Talmadge served in the Congress from Connecticut. One of

the Talmadges, Benjamin Tallmadge, was aide-to-camp to George Washington and started our first secret service for George Washington. He's credited with conquering, capturing "Andre the Spy" [John André], which is famous in history. His sword now is in Francis Tavern [Museum] in Brooklyn, New York. He also has some of his paraphernalia in the Washington, D.C., in the historical museum there.

My branch of the family came to Georgia from Connecticut in 1722, and settled on a farm just north of Forsyth, Georgia. Incidentally, that farm stayed in my family until about seven [or] eight years ago and I sold the remaining portion of it at that time. Subsequently, the Georgia State Patrol acquired 4[00] or 500 acres and now, I have their patrol training headquarters on the farm, portion of it nearest Forsyth, adjacent in[side?] a cotton mill. The first Tallmadge, to my knowledge, that attended—Benjamin Tallmadge who came down in 1821 from Connecticut was a skilled carpenter. I have a few pieces of furniture that he's alleged to have made now. My great-grandfather was the first Tallmadge that I know that went to the University of Georgia [Athens]. His son went to the University of Georgia. My father [Eugene Tallmadge] went to the University of Georgia, and I went to the university, and my son went to the university, and I have two grandsons over there now. So that's six or seven generations of Talmadges that have attended the University of Georgia. My father finished the University of Georgia in 1908, I believe. He joined the law firm of Dorsey, Brewster and Howell in Atlanta, Georgia. In addition to that, he obtained a job in the Georgia Senate as reading clerk. And one of the Petersons from Montgomery County [Georgia] was in the Senate from that area, and he and my father got to be great friends. So, he persuaded my father to go down to Montgomery County to enter the practice of law. My mother [Mattie Thurmond Peterson Tallmadge], at that time, was a young widow. Her first husband, John A. Peterson, having died very young, and

she had one son, John A. Peterson Jr. So my father went to Ailey, Georgia, in Mount Vernon in Montgomery County, and opened a law practice there. He and my mother met and were married, and some two or three years later they moved to McRae, Georgia. I was born in the town of McRae in 1913. The home burned when I was about a year old, and [we] moved out on the farm five miles south of McRae. And [we] built a modest home there. And that's where I lived up until I was a senior in high school. The home on the farm burned at that time. We moved to Atlanta. My father was then commissioner of agriculture. I enrolled in the public schools in DeKalb County, Druid Hills High School [Atlanta, Georgia]. And [I] got a high school diploma from Druid Hills in May 1931. Subsequently, [I] entered the University of Georgia the fall of that year.

HENDERSON: Looking back on your childhood, I wonder if you could describe what kind of childhood did you have.

TALMADGE: It was a typical south Georgia farm childhood. All members of the family, we didn't have much money. We had a larger farm than most of our neighbors. Ours was considered about a ten-horse farm. Most of our neighbors had about a one- or two- or three-horse farm. But we probably lived modestly better than they did. But we raised virtually everything we used on the farm. I don't think my mother bought much except salt and pepper and flour and a few things of that type as long as she lived. We raised our poultry on the farm. We raised our livestock on the farm, hogs and cows. We raised our fruits and vegetables on the farm. In those days farms were almost wholly self-sustaining. We bought very little.

Every member of the family had chores and responsibilities on the farm. My job was to get up the cows to milk. I would plow sometimes when they needed an extra hand. I was a 4-H club member. I had a cotton project in 1936. It rained the whole year. My cotton made stalks about seven feet high [HENDERSON laughs] but didn't put much cotton on, so I didn't do very well with my cotton project. We started the school—I didn't enter school until I was seven years old. I was born in August, and I was seven years old in August. [I] entered a two room school right back of our farm when I was seven years old. And I didn't like that idea of going to school at all. It didn't feel to me... I was taught to read in that I.J. Davis School, we called it. The following year, I went to Scotland School. It was about two and a half miles from the farm, and we walked both ways. No matter what the weather was, if it was raining, or snowing, or sleeting, we walked to and from school. We didn't have school buses in those days. Then the third year of schooling, we enrolled in the McRae-Helena public schooling system there. And we went by automobile then. My father would take us to school up until he got to be commissioner of agriculture. By that time my sister and I could drive. So we would drive to school in the morning and drive home after school. We had either a T-model Ford, a Chevrolet automobile that we drove to and from school. And when school was out, I would join in with the plowing and the harvesting and the crops, weighing cotton and taking cotton to the gin and things of that nature. Sometimes I would operate as a full field hand on the farm and my wages were fifty cents a day. So, I worked five and a half days, usually, until Saturday noon and get paid. [I] had a pony by then. [I would] either ride to Scotland or to McRae with a whole lot of spending money in my pocket. [I'd] go to a Tom Mix [Thomas Hezikiah Mix] movie if I went to McRae, or swim in Gum Swamp Creek in what we called "the whirlpool" if I went to Scotland. And then Sundays, afternoons, my family would usually go to church every Sunday,

sometimes twice a day. Sunday afternoon, all the boys that lived in our area, black and white, would gather and go down to Sugar Creek and go swimming, in the nude, of course. We had three favorite holes in Sugar Creek. One was called a Watermelon Lake, the other one was the Bridge Hole, and the other one was known as the Bay Hole. I learned to swim quite young. My older brother, half brother, John A. Peterson, simply threw me in the water over my head, and I swam out.

HENDERSON: We hear a good bit about him, and knew a good bit about your father as a politician. But how would you describe him as a father? Was he a firm disciplinarian?

TALMADGE: Yes, he was a disciplinarian. [If] he told you to do something, he wanted it done then, immediately, with no procrastination. If he promised you a whipping, you got it. If he promised a stick of candy, you got that. My mother was somewhat the same way. My mother was really the most remarkable woman I ever knew in my life. I never saw her smoke a cigarette in my life. I never saw her drink, take a drink of whisky in her life. She didn't even like to take an aspirin and seldom did that. She was very frugal. I've seen her save brown wrapping paper and pieces of string. Her main interest was her family, her church, and her country. She worked everyday almost up until she died. She died two weeks shy of 101. And I believe if she hadn't fallen and broken her hip, she'd still be living well over 100 years of age.

HENDERSON: Did either of your parents encourage you to enter the political arena?

TALMADGE: No, that came about, I think, largely by a combination of factors. My colleagues in school and I had a very remarkable teacher that came along when I was in the ninth grade. Prior to that, I was an indifferent student, lackadaisical. My idea of what a fellow ought to do was to hunt and fish. And going to school was a chore and a burden that I thought was unnecessary and useless. And then when I got in the ninth grade, we had an assistant principal from Dublin, Georgia. She was an old maid; her name was Ballard, Enda, Ballard [Enda Ballard Duggan]. She afterwards married the postmaster over there, one of 'em in Laurens County, and her name was Duggan after she got married. She was a stern disciplinarian, and she apparently could perceive latent talent and had the ability to drive students to express that talent. She was a debate coach, among other things in school. And she called for volunteers—we had compulsory chapel every day in those days, and we'd sing a song and someone would read scripture, things of that nature. And one day at chapel exercises she called for volunteers for the debate team. Well, I didn't volunteer for anything, [but] several of them did. And she said, "and Herman Talmadge." So, I was drafted to participate in debates, and I won a spot on the team that year. And [Melvin Ernest] M.E. Thompson was principal of the high school at Hawkinsville [Georgia]. I was in the ninth grade; I had a little squeaky-voiced colleague named Marjorie Sessions who was in the tenth grade, one year ahead of me. And M.E. Thompson brought two boys about six feet tall, both athletes and football players on his debate team to debate us down at McRae, Georgia. And, of course, the visiting principal presided. The issue we debated was a hundred million dollar bond issue for roads. We had the affirmative side of the issue. Mr. Thompson presided and we won the debate. We defeated his team and neither one of us realized at that time a few years later, we'd be competing for the governorship. So, Mrs. Duggan got me interested in public speaking, got me interested in

debating. And my colleagues started electing me to every public office--every office we had. I think I was vice president of the ninth grade. I was president of the tenth grade, president of the eleventh grade, and I was president of one of the literary societies, and I was president of the athletic association in high school. And then when I got to college, it was somewhat a repetition of the same thing. I was president of the body of everything [coughs] I was a member of at the University of Georgia, and then I really got into politics after my father passed away after winning a campaign for the fourth time for governor of Georgia and dying before he could take office. That's how I got into the political arena.

HENDERSON: Were there any family members--uncles, aunts, grandparents--that had a significant influence on your life?

TALMADGE: My mother and father had the greatest influence on my life. My grandparents died when I was quite young. I remember them and that's about all. So, the real influence on my life was my mother and father and then, of course, subsequently, people I was associated with in college--my friends, my wife, and so on.

HENDERSON: When you were at the University of Georgia as an undergraduate, what did you major in and why?

TALMADGE: I majored in history before I went to law school. I was in a hurry to get out of law school just as quickly as I could. So I took what was known as a pre-law course. That was half the requirements of an A.B. degree, and then you could enter the law school. And after

three years of law you would graduate with one LL.B. degree. And that's what I wanted to do. I wanted to get out as quickly as I could; I was in a hurry. I wanted to start making my own way and earning my own living. And the reason I majored in history was because it was my favorite subject. When I was a kid, I'd sit around and read history books like other boys would read the funny papers. And about the time that I was about fourteen years of age, I guess my father found a fire sale somewhere in Atlanta. Because he brought me, it must have been fifty books the lives and some of the biographies and some of them autobiographies of great men and women in history. Napoleon Bonaparte, Julius Caesar, Catherine the Great, you name it. And I would sit around and read those books like other people would read the funny paper. I was interested in history, and I made my best grades in history. So when I got to the university, every elective that I could take I took in history. [William Oscar] W.O. Payne at that time at the university was head of the history department. He'd also taught my father at the University of Georgia. And he was a great history instructor. And it fascinated me, and it's always been my favorite scholastic subject.

HENDERSON: What kind of student were you in your undergraduate days and at law school?

TALMADGE: Indifferent. I was doing everything anticipating politics, courting girls. Everything else, if I had it to do over again, I would apply myself more to my studies than I did. I made passing grades and I could have excelled far beyond that if I had applied myself more.

HENDERSON: I think you alluded to this just a few moments ago. What kind of political activities did you engage in while you were at the university?

TALMADGE: I was president of my fraternity over there. I was very active in the literary societies. I was president of the Interfraternity Council. I was on the debating teams that were in the university for five years. That was my principal activity there.

HENDERSON: Was there a law professor that stands out in your mind?

TALMADGE: Yes. We had one outstanding law professor. He was Henry A. Shinn. He came to the University of Georgia about my junior or senior year from Mercer University [Macon, Georgia]. And he had been an instructor in public speaking at Kansas, in Kansas, I believe. And you could learn more law accidentally under Henry Shin than you could on purpose under any other instructor I had. If you had about normal intelligence and attended his class regularly and listened and paid attention and had any sort recall from what you heard, you could make good grades under Dr. Shin. In fact, I made the highest grade I think I made in the University of Georgia Law School under Dr. Shin, with very little application.

HENDERSON: When did you decide that you wanted to go to law school and become a lawyer?

TALMADGE: I guess probably in high school when I was involved in debating and public speaking, I thought I was better than average in that regard. And I felt that my talent was probably in the law.

HENDERSON: Your father being a lawyer, did he encourage you along this line?

TALMADGE: No, I don't think—he actually wanted me to go to Georgia Tech [Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, Georgia] as a co-op student. And if I had done that, I probably would have been an engineer. I couldn't have been a lawyer, because Tech didn't offer a law course. But mathematics was always my weakest subject. And I knew that if I went to Georgia Tech, I wouldn't make a good engineer and probably would flunk out because I was weak in math.

HENDERSON: After you receive your law degree, you practice for a number of years before going into the navy. Describe your law practice.

TALMADGE: Well, I got my law degree. We had twenty-seven in our senior class in law school. And it was the first law class that had to take the bar exam. Prior to that time, they were admitted to practice by diploma from the University of Georgia. But the state legislature had changed the law and the chairman of the Board of Bar examiners was Judge [Elijah W.] E.W. Maynard of Macon, Georgia, and that time. He was a friend of my father. And I happened to be home one weekend when Judge Maynard was visiting my father at the executive mansion. And he knew I was going to the university, and I was a senior in law school. He said, "Herman," said, "What are you doing to get ready for the bar exam?" I says, "Judge, I'm trying to pass my work over at the University." He says, "If that's all you're doing, you're going to flunk." Well, that scared the devil out of me. He said, "Let me tell you what you do." [He] says, "You get you a code of Georgia and you live with it." [He] says, "You subscribe to the

southeastern advance sheets [*Southern Reporter*] and you read every decision of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals of Georgia. And if you do that, you might pass the bar exam.”

Well, it scared the devil out of me. The code we had at that time was Michie’s code, I think it cost me about twenty-five dollars. I lived with that thing. I didn’t even go to the bathroom without my Michie’s code. And I subscribed to the advance sheets and was studying them.

And I did more than that. We had, my mother had given me a car for Christmas my senior year in law school. And there was a fellow named Tillo Van Nunes that ran a cram course over there in Atlanta and had a daughter named Irma that helped him. She was the first woman I ever saw with a haircut like a man. So, three of us drove over there about two nights a week from Athens to Atlanta to his cram course. And then we had full time for about two weeks before the bar examination. And of the twenty-seven in my senior class that took the bar, all of them flunked but five. And I was one of the lucky five, and I would have flunked except for Judge Maynard’s advice and Tillo Van Nunes’ cram course. [HENDERSON laughs] When I started practicing law, I had no law practice at all. No clients, and of course, in those days, very few people could get a job with any law firm at any salary. I got “hanging around” privileges with the law firm of Hewlett and Dennis in Atlanta and considered myself lucky. They would let me use their library, let me use their stenographers, and I had a little cubby hole office over in the corner of a room somewhere and all that was free. So, if I got a client and made a fee, it was money in my pocket, but I had no clients. So, Judge Maynard said, “Herman, you go down there”—not Judge Maynard but Judge Hewlett who was a senior partner of the firm—says, “You go down and see Judge [Hugh Manson] Dorsey at the court house and get him to appoint you on some criminal cases. Get some trial experience.” I went down, the first thing I knew Judge Dorsey had me in three murder cases. And I got some experience in a hurry with those murder cases. And the

rules of evidence and John [Abney] Boykin himself came out and prosecuted one of them. My client that I had been appointed to defend had held up a streetcar conductor, robbed him and killed him. Georgia Power Company was involved heavily in that case. Boykin as solicitor general was prosecuting it personally. Though I was a young lawyer down there wrestling with some fellow who had thirty-five, forty years of trial criminal experience. Every time he'd try to get something in, I would object to, following the rules of evidence. Boykin was smart enough to come in on the side door, you know, and I'd object again. Judge [Walter Clifford] Hendrix was presiding. Finally, Judge Hendrix got a little exasperated with Boykin himself. He said, "Mr. Boykin, I've ruled on that matter two or three times now. I don't want you to pursue it any further." So, Boykin came down to earth then, of course, he convicted my client of murder and they sentenced him to the electric chair. I carried it to the Supreme Court of the state and Judge [Richard Brevard] Russell [Sr.] then, Dick [Richard Brevard] Russell [Jr.]'s daddy was chief justice. He ruled with me on it. Occasionally, I'd get a case that paid me a fee, but first year I practiced law I think my total gross income was about \$1,000. I lived humbly in those days.

[HENDERSON laughs]

HENDERSON: Your father was elected three times to the State Commission of Agriculture.

Did you play a part in any of those campaigns?

TALMADGE: Yes. The first campaign, of course, my father was an unknown country lawyer and farmer in McRae. And some people were interested in trying to get a candidate to run against J.J. [John Judson] Brown who was deeply entrenched politically at the time and had swarms of employees well-connected politically in every county in the state. Mr. Brown would

have won overwhelmingly except he made one very serious mistake. I think he thought he'd run my daddy out of the race if he'd challenge him to a joint debate, which he did. Of course, my father accepted readily. They set up three joint debates. The first one was to be in McRae, Georgia, my father's hometown. The second one was to be in Elberton, Georgia, Mr. Brown's hometown. Third one was to be in Dawson, Georgia, the heart of southwest Georgia. Of course, we hadn't had any real debates in Georgia since those days except the debates I had with [Zell Bryan] Miller in 1980. And [we] hadn't had any prior to that time, in some time. It was a big crowd there in the public park at McRae, Georgia. My father had sent watermelons up there from the farm for people to eat. And, of course, my father was one of the great debaters of all time, so Mr. Brown was completely out of his league debating with my daddy. And after the debates were over, Mr. Brown and papa were standing there talking and I walked up there and he says, "Son, go get Mr. Brown one of those watermelons." I went over there and picked out the biggest one I could and brought it back and give it to Mr. Brown, and he said, "Leave it right there, son." [He] says, "I'll have my chauffeur pick it up." I was only thirteen then and that's the only participation I was involved in my father's races for commissioner of agriculture.

Then after he ran for governor, my job was advertising speeches. I'd go around and hand out these handbills and nail them up on courthouse bulletin boards and put 'em in automobiles, country stores, things of that nature. I got my first real baptism of fire handing out circulars, I guess, in Cedartown, Georgia. I went in a meat market there, one of the old fashion types with sawdust on the floor. Great big, old chopping block and great big fellow about six feet and two, weighed about two hundred pounds with a meat cleaver in his hand chopping meat. So, I handed him one of those fliers. He looked at me and said I wouldn't vote for the goddamn son-of-a-bitch for nothing. [HENDERSON laughs] I didn't know whether to hit him

or whether to argue with him or whether to run. But he had the meat cleaver, and he was a whole lot bigger than I was so, I chose to ignore it and walk out. [TALMADGE excuses himself. Tape stops and starts]

HENDERSON: We were talking about your first involvement in politics, and I'll ask you to pick up from there.

TALMADGE: Well, we were advertising speeches in the '32 campaign. I was freshman at the University of Georgia at the time. The next campaign when he was running for re-election to governor, I had a good friend over at Georgia named Aubrey [Carlos] Evans who was from Turner County. His father was in the ginning and warehouse business there. And he wanted to have a rally down there for my daddy with me as the speaker. So, I agreed to it. And I drove down to the little town of about 300 people. They had a great big sign across the street, "Welcome Herman Talmadge." I felt like I was really somebody. Then we had 4[00] or 500 people jammed in the cotton warehouse there. And I made my first speech for my daddy. I wasn't quite old enough to vote at the time. But apparently it went off very well, and I made speeches in all of his campaigns thereafter.

I started managing his campaigns in 1938. And I was twenty-four years old--the first one when he ran for the [United States] Senate against Senator George. That one was unsuccessful. Then I managed a successful campaign when he ran for governor in 1940. I was overseas in the navy in '42 when he was defeated by Ellis [Gibbs] Arnall. And then I had returned from overseas and managed his last campaign in 1946. So, I managed three campaigns for him. Two of them successful for governor, one unsuccessful for the United States Senate.

Of course, during that period I was also making speeches. I remember the last campaign, I guess it was 1946, my father had fractured a rib and they had a big rally at Cairo, Georgia, and a state-wide hook-up on Saturday afternoon. So, I flew down there and made a speech. [It] went very well. There was a crowd of fifteen hundred, two thousand people there. And they cheered me and everything. [We] carried every county in that area of the state. I came back and went by the hospital where my father was. He looked at me and said, "You did all right, son." That's all he said [HENDERSON and TALMADGE chuckle]. He'd picked it up on the radio.

HENDERSON: Your father had the reputation of being one of the best campaigners and one of the most flamboyant campaigners in Georgia politics. How would you describe his campaigning style?

TALMADGE: He was the greatest campaigner I ever saw. It was really a conversation with the people. He would speak and they would yell at him, "Tell us about so and so, Gene." "I'm coming to that," he'd say and get to it a little bit later. And he would speak--he had huge crowds everywhere he went. One of his campaigns for reelection for governor '34, he opened at Bainbridge [Georgia]. [The] newspaper said they had 30,000 people there. I attended some of them; there was so many thousands there you couldn't tell how big they were. Just acres and acres and acres of them. [He'd] break up traffic in every town he went to and things of that nature. He was probably the most magnetic political campaigner I ever heard. President of the United States now couldn't get half the crowd if he came to Georgia that my father would get in his heyday. And sometimes he'd speak for over an hour in the boiling hot sun. Women'd stand there frequently with babes in arms listening to him. And he was not what you would call—I

never saw him read a speech in my life except his inaugural addresses to the General Assembly of Georgia. But other than that, it was wholly extemporaneous. I'd write some speeches for him from time to time, [and] send them over to the newspapers. He might look at it and summarize what I said in a few words. But he'd make it own speeches and yell back and forth to the crowd. [There were] hecklers nearly everywhere he went, and he was good at handling hecklers.

HENDERSON: I think there was a gentleman by the name of "Fiddling" John [William] Carson who traveled with your father.

TALMADGE: Yes. "Fiddling" John Carson was the original country musician. He was from Fannin County as I recall. And the first recording I ever heard in my life was a recording made my "Fiddling" John Carson when I was probably ten years old. He had recorded something they called "Preacher and the Bear." This was in a colored family that lived about a quarter of a mile from our home. Her son Thad and I used to fish and hunt together and go swimming together. And sometimes when I'd be visiting Thad down there at his house, they'd turn on what we called a graphophone or Victrola in those days. And it would be "Fiddling" John and "Preacher and the Bear," something like that. Then "Fiddling" John started traveling with my daddy, entertaining the group before my father got there. He had a daughter that he called "Moonshine" Kate. And then also there was a third member of the group sometimes that he called Professor Anderson. And "Fiddling" John would write songs. He wrote one called "The Three Dollar Tag." And he'd play that, and he'd warm up a crowd before my father got there. Of course, the newspapers would ridicule him about having country music. But it didn't seem

to hurt, and now country music is the most fashionable thing in the country. But in those days it was pioneering campaigning.

HENDERSON: Why do you think your father was able to attract such large crowds during that period of time?

TALMADGE: Well, he was a man who despised peace and harmony in the first place. He was in three or four major rows and ten or twelve minor rows all the time. And controversy creates excitement. And then there's commissioner of agriculture. He had enforced the laws. Virtually every farmer in the state got rebates on their fertilizer or their seed or something like that. And they figured well, here's one politician that does what he says and doesn't lie to you and handles his job. Then when he became governor, he had two or three short planks, you know. He carried all those out in short order. There were people in Georgia that would just—if he'd asked them to, they'd have gone to hell with him. 'Course he had about a third of the people in the state that hated him, about a third that loved him, and about a third of them supported him when they thought he was right and opposed him when they thought he was wrong. But in my lifetime, and I don't remember much about Thomas Watson, in the history of Georgia I don't think there have been but two political figures that people beloved as they did Tom Watson and Eugene Talmadge.

HENDERSON: Did his campaign style influence your campaign style when you began to run for public office?

TALMADGE: No doubt did to some extent. I followed the same pattern of open-air rallies and getting as big a crowd as I could speak to and reaching as many people by radio as I could.

Television was unknown in those days. I had the same huge crowds that he had up until the advent of the television and then just dissipated, I reckon.

HENDERSON: How would you compare your political philosophy as governor with that of your father while he was governor?

TALMADGE: I think most people would say that I was more progressive than my father. My father followed the old fashion, Jeffersonian principle that the least governed people are the best governed. He never raised taxes in his life; reduced them every opportunity he had. He believed in keeping the government poor. Well, when I came along, it was after the War between the States—I mean after the World War II. And I think the people of Georgia had made up their mind that they wanted to see more progress in state government. So, I advocated that what my father would have thought was a very progressive platform probably wouldn't have agreed to it himself. And I spent a lot of money on education and roads and health and things of that nature. Not in accordance with what he had done prior there, too. Of course, times and people had changed somewhat. World War II had intervened. The state was more prosperous than it had been. Industrial development had started to develop in Georgia.

HENDERSON: I detect a difference, perhaps between you and your father. You were willing to change. Was he willing to change or did he rigidly adhere to his philosophy and never change?

TALMADGE: Once he made up his mind on something, it was firmly planted in concrete. When he got in that row with university professors over there, I saw it as a great mistake politically and so did my mother. Both of us tried to talk him out of pursuing that thing but once he locked in a decision it was impossible to make him change. The whole world could be against him and he would stand alone. He was the most courageous politician I ever saw in my life. Most politicians stick their finger up whichever way the breeze is going that's the way they'd blow, just like a kite. But I've seen my father stand alone against his family and overwhelming majority of the people the legislature and everyone else, time after time.

HENDERSON: You once made the statement that politics is a rough, hard, mean, vicious life. What did you mean by that?

TALMADGE: Well, it is. Ask Gary Hart [HENDERSON laughs] and anybody else whose ever been in a campaign. My first campaign for governor, there was a fellow down there in Seminole County that put out dodgers that I had murdered my first wife. First thing I did after I took the oath of office, I dictated a telegram to him discharging him. [HENDERSON chuckles] So, that's what you have to compete with all the time. They bring up every mistake you've ever made, and [as a] matter of fact, they're hundreds of them you never heard of before. And that goes on day and night. In addition to that, the mere physical ordeal of running for public office is worse than anything I've ever done except three things: killing rattle snakes, and I've killed some of them; combating war, and I've had some of that; and fighting fire and I've had some of that. A successful politician has to campaign at least a hundred hours a week or more. And he

has to work after he is in public office at least a hundred hours a week or more. When I was in the Senate, every minute of my day was budgeted just like a military operation. Seven days a week; sometimes as much as two years in advance. And your enemies will tell every lie they can think of about you. And every mistake you ever made in your life will be magnified and the newspapers taking advantage of the first amendment, freedom of press and the Sullivan decision by the Supreme Court and the *New York Times* case, they've got a license to kill you. And you've got no response whatever. The Sullivan decision said anyone in the public arena, if he's liable, you've got to prove malice to recover. How you going to prove malice? You can't. You can't tell me what's going on in my heart, and I can't tell you. So, there's no way to prove it. They've got a license to assassinate you just like if you were shooting fish in a barrel.

[HENDERSON requests change of tape]

[Cassette: Side Two]

HENDERSON: During World War II, you served as an officer in the navy. Would talk about your naval career?

TALMADGE: Well, in the University of Georgia military training was compulsory when I was there. And I took two years of basic cavalry, but that didn't get you a commission unless you took advanced ROTC, which I did not. So, it was perfectly obvious to me in the spring of 1941, that we were going to war, eventually with Hitler, possibly Japan. I didn't want to go in as a common soldier if I could avoid it, living in a foxhole and staying dirty all the time. I hoped to get an officer's commission and I thought my legal education from the University of Georgia

would probably be sufficient to get one. So, I started looking around. My preference was the navy. And I found with my legal training that it was possible to get a commission in naval intelligence. So, I applied and I was commissioned an ensign in naval intelligence April 26, 1941, by Chester W. Nimitz who was then chief of naval personnel. He signed my commission. Shortly afterwards I was called to temporary training duty [at] the cable censors office New York. Our job during war time was to censor telegrams and cable grams that went overseas to catch any spies reporting movements of ship or troop deployment anything of that nature. So, after thirty days of temporary training duty in New York, I was sent back home and in September 1941, before the Japs [Japanese] hit Pearl Harbor, I was called to active duty in the Atlanta naval intelligence office. And we were investigating whatever requests we might get from naval headquarters in Charleston [South Carolina], naval personnel to handle secret documents, any espionage matters that might come in our district, sabotage and things of that nature. And as soon as war was declared, they called me to my mobilization billet, cable sensors New York. I was stationed at sixty-seven Broad Street. I had a right interesting banking experience there. We were right around the corner from the New York Stock Exchange. The main branch of Manufacturer's Bank was right across the street. I lived out of my hip pocket for about two weeks. An ensign's salary in those days was \$125 a month. I got paid; my check was \$62.50. I thought that was pretty small, though, from account at the Manufacturer's Bank in the [unintelligible] area down there. So, I happened to have a few dollars in a bank in Atlanta. And I wrote out enough to make a total deposit of \$500. That was a huge sum for me in those days. So, I walked into the Manufacturer's Bank there, one of these little flunkies around the lobby of banks, like you used to see everywhere you don't see them anymore, probably a third assistant secretary or something. I had on my ensign's uniform with

my shiny ensign stripe. I walked up there and I said, "My name is Talmadge. I'm from Georgia, and I want to open an account while I'm up here in the navy." He had a silly smirk on his face, he says, "What size account did you want to open, Mr. Talmadge?" I braced myself, stood erect, and I was real proud of myself. I said, "Five hundred dollars." He grinned a little more and said, "Mr. Talmadge, we don't take accounts for less than \$10,000." [HENDERSON chuckles] I says, "Well, I didn't come up here because I wanted to. The government sent me up here against my will. While I'm here, I'm going to have to do some modest banking. If you won't accept my account, would you direct me to bank that would?" [HENDERSON chuckles] He wiped that smirk off his face and said, "We'll take your account, Mr. Talmadge." So, that's how I came to do business with Manufacturer's. They afterwards merged with Hanover and the president of the combined bank was [R.E.] Jeff McNeill [Jr.] who started off as a turpentine operator at Live Oak, Florida. He, afterwards, got to be a good friend of mine. I'd tell him that story, and he got a big kick out of it.

So, I was there in naval intelligence for a few months and then living in New York. In those days it was supposed to be livable, but it was not my idea of how I felt I ought to live. The favorite pleasure of New York people was young, robust men shoving old ladies out of the way getting in and out of subways. So, I thought it'd be better to fight Japs than it would be to live in New York, so I requested sea duty. They transferred me to the first officer's training school at Northwestern University. So, I already had a commission. We went in and acted as midshipmen from the very outset and got the same training that midshipmen get. And then after I completed my training at Northwestern, that's where I met young Robert Taft who afterwards served in the Senate with me, Bob Taft's son. One day he was officer of the day and I was junior officer of the day, and for twenty-four hours we had to run the midshipman's school there

at Northwestern. Then I was sent to a pre-commissioning detail out in California, just across the bay from San Francisco. And the ship that we boarded was a disguised hospital ship, called the U.S.S. Tryon. The Japanese didn't pay any attention to the Geneva Convention [1949], so we started arming our hospital ships, very fast ships. We'd take troops in and bring casualties out.

So, I served in the Tryon for about eighteen months and then afterwards served about ten and a half months in Auckland, New Zealand, as aide to Commodore [Stanley D.] Jupp, the personnel officer down there for a time. And then after a tour of more than two years, they sent me back for thirty days leave and reassignment. And then after my leave was over, I went to Newport, Rhode Island. They made me executive officer of the pre-commissioning detail up there for the U.S.S. Dauphin, an attack transport. So, we went to sea in the Dauphin, and I served in the Dolphin until the Japanese surrendered. We landed the first cavalry division in Tokyo Bay while MacArthur was dictating his surrender ceremonies. I was officer of the deck standing in to Tokyo Bay. We were at general quarters. We didn't know what sort of reception the Japanese were going to give us. We had what we call walkie-talkie radios from bridge to bridge. Someone asked [William Frederick] Halsey, who was in command there, says, "What should we do if a Japanese aircraft approaches a ship?" Halsey's instant reply was "Shoot him down in a friendly sort of way." [HENDERSON chuckles]

HENDERSON: Let me go back to the 1946 campaign. Your father, I think it's fair to say, favored the negative states. In 1946, though, he runs on platform that favors expanded state services, and for a lot people that seems to be out of character for your father. Roy Harris once stated that you actually wrote the platform that your father ran on, and you released it without

his permission. Now, according to Harris, your father raised hell and said he wouldn't run on it, but it was already public knowledge. Is there any truth to that?

TALMADGE: No, that's not quite correct. The truth of the matter is that my father had stated his determination to run, and we were lining up votes everywhere we could. So, I wrote a platform for him and I said, "Papa, if you're going—" it was about April, as I recall or maybe even May--I says, "If you're going to run for governor, it's time we made a formal announcement. I've prepared something here. And look this over and see what you think of it." He looked it over and looked at me and said, "You're taking me pretty fast aren't you, son?" I says, "Yes. [If] you expect to be elected this time, you've got to go fast." So, he signed his name and I took it over to the papers.

HENDERSON: During the '30s and '40s, Georgia had some of the most interesting politicians the state has ever seen. And I want to go through and name some of these, and I'd like for you just to talk about them, your recollection of these gentlemen.

TALMADGE: Sure.

HENDERSON: The first one, let's begin with, is Ed Rivers.

TALMADGE: I first knew Ed Rivers about 1932, after my father was elected governor, and I was a freshman in the University of Georgia. Ed Rivers started running for speaker of the [Georgia] House [of Representatives] and was eventually elected with my father's blessing.

George [D.] Stewart, a great friend of mine around Atlanta, was close to Ed. And we would visit Ed frequently and I got to know him extremely well during that period. And after he and my daddy broke politically, [Benjamin Tillman] Ben Hewitt got elected commissioner of labor. And he had a very attractive job over there in the department of labor. It was under the merit system. It paid, as I recall at that time, starting off at \$250 a month and afterwards got up to a fancy salary for those days, 1938. But it required the governor's approval. So, I called up Ed Rivers. I said, "Now, Governor, Ben Hewitt's got a lawyer position over there in his department that requires merit approval, civil service examination approval, but it requires your approval. Now, I don't want to take that thing away from my time if it's not agreeable to you. If you approve it, I'm going to take the examination." "Yes, go ahead, Herman. I'll be glad to approve you." He and my daddy had been bitter enemies at that time. He'd been elected governor and my father's candidate was Charlie Redwine. Ed had defeated him. I went back and told my daddy what I planned to do, and he hit the ceiling. He didn't want me to do it. I didn't want an open break with my daddy, so I had to call Ed and Ben, thank them. I already taken the exam and passed it. And I was eligible for the appointment but I declined it. And it was the best advice my daddy ever gave me. If I'd taken that job, I'd have stayed over there until I retired and been some sort of attorney in the state labor department. Governor Clifford Walker, afterwards, held that job. Otis Hancock—Otis Hancock—took the job that I was applying for. He stayed there 'til he retired. And then Governor Walker succeeding him. So that's where I'd have been. I'd never been governor of Georgia, never been in the United States Senate.

Ed Rivers was the best extemporaneous speaker, one of the best ones I ever heard. Hubert Humphrey was the best. Humphrey had the best coordination of tongue and mind of any

man I ever knew. Ed Rivers was particularly good. He could make a speech on either side of any subject with or without notice very effectively. But it had a hollow ring of insincerity about it.

HENDERSON: One of the interesting politicians during this period of time is a man by the name of Roy Harris.

TALMADGE: Roy Harris and I were great friends for many years. He helped me manage my father's campaign in 1946. In those days he and I knew the counties in Georgia better than any two individuals in the state. He knew them and I knew them. We knew who the factions were. We knew who the strong factions were, weak factions. We knew why they hated each other and everything else. So, he and I together made a perfect team to organize a campaign. And he was in a hotel headquarters meeting with the public that came up there and I was running the day-to-day routine for the campaign. We'd meet every morning about daylight, exchange ideas and notes. And we didn't agree that that campaign was won until the Sunday—we'd check off every county each day. [We] wouldn't check one that was OK until we both agreed on it. And the Sunday before the election on Wednesday, we agreed on about 220 unit votes, as I recall. [It] took 206 to win. There was a bunch of folks gambling, was hanging around ready to take our word and place bets. The odds were overwhelmingly on [James (Jimmy)] Carmichael. Roy and I told them Sunday shoot the works. We wound up with 246 unit votes. Some of our friends carried suitcases full of money home to Augusta and Savannah. [HENDERSON and TALMADGE chuckle]

HENDERSON: Back during this period of time, one of your major adversaries was Ellis Arnall.

TALMADGE: Yes.

HENDERSON: Discuss Ellis Arnall.

TALMADGE: I've known Ellis a long time. Ellis graduated from the University of Georgia Law School either the year before or the year I entered the university. And he was president of the Interfraternity Council. And I was afterwards president of the Interfraternity Council at the University of Georgia. And Ellis was elected to the legislature when my father was elected governor. And he ran for speaker *pro tempore*. So, he put on a pair of red suspenders and campaigned all over the state of Georgia. And he had a suite at the Winecoff Hotel [Atlanta, Georgia]. He gave me a key to it and said, "Use it anytime you like, Herman." And I'd use it on weekends when I'd come over from the University of Georgia. The legislature would adjourn and he'd be back in Newnan. So, of course, he and my father afterwards split. He was assistant attorney general, appointed by Ed Rivers. And we were political foes for a long time.

When I ran for the Senate by reelection, the Senate in 1962, the first contribution I got was from Ellis Arnall. He sent me a check for \$500, and he supported me thereafter and even came to Washington [D.C.] and testified when they were after me in the ethics committee up there about people in Georgia giving cash to public officials down here, which is customary throughout the years during his administration and mine. And the folks in Washington couldn't understand that. Ellis came up and testified for me. And he headed up an insurance

organization, I guess it was in the early 70s or late 60s, he was council for them nationwide in scope. And he wanted me to address them. So, of course I readily agreed. Ellis introduced me in glowing terms about what a great senator I was and so on. And I responded with a little levity. I told them that the older Ellis got, the wiser he became. [HENDERSON chuckles]

HENDERSON: You've already talked, mentioned about M.E. Thompson. Do you care to discuss M.E. anymore?

TALMADGE: I first met M.E., of course, during my debating years; I didn't know him well. I didn't think any more about it until M.E. came on the state scene as a protégé of Ed Rivers. And Ed Rivers had gotten him a job in the education department in some capacity over there. And he stayed there until he ran for lieutenant governor in 1946. And M.E. was elected lieutenant governor in 1946. My father was elected governor at the same time, and he died before he took office. And, of course, that precipitated out of famous two-governor row [sic]. And, of course, M.E. prevailed in his court decision before the Supreme Court of Georgia by vote of five to two. I won before the legislature, and I defeated him before the people in 1948. He ran against me in '50, and I defeated him again. He ran against me when I ran for the Senate in '56, and I defeated him again. He afterwards became a good friend of mine. He would call me from time to time about various matters and always called me collect. I never would accept any collect calls except from M.E. Thompson. Every time M.E. called me collect I said I'd pay for it. [HENDERSON and TALMADGE chuckle]. And M.E. would always be calling me about some problem with some citizen or giving me some advice about someone. And I attended his funeral. Marvin Griffin also attended his funeral, the only two politicians of any

note there. The people that had defeated M.E. for governor and senator and his confederates and allies, none of them were present. [It was] right sad.

HENDERSON: In 1946, your father is elected governor and before he can take office he dies. And, of course, the legislature then elects you governor. If that unfortunate circumstance of your father's passing away had not occurred, do you think you would have entered politics?

TALMADGE: Probably never would. As a matter of fact when I was in the Pacific standing watches those long hours, my law practice had been interrupted three different times by political campaigns. And the law is a very jealous mistress; you've got to work at it. And I'd made up my mind when I got back to Georgia, my father had spent a lot of money educating me for a lawyer. I thought I had more than average ability. I wasn't going to get involved in any politics in the future. And when I got back my daddy was running for government for the fourth time. And like any dutiful son, I pitched in to help him and that's what happened. [TALMADGE excuses himself. Tape starts and stops]

HENDERSON: In the 1946 general election your father's elected. However, in that election you received 675 write-in votes. What was your role in the write-in effort on your behalf?

TALMADGE: There was friend of mine who was a county school superintendent in Jasper County. When the word got out that my father was ill, he came to see me one day in the William Oliver building [Atlanta, Georgia]. He was a student of history, and his favorite pastime was sitting around reading history books and the constitution and so on. And he

brought me a copy of the constitution with him. And he tell[s] me, he said, "Read this: In the event of a failure of election--going about the governor election--the General Assembly will proceed to elect a governor among those then in line with the next highest number of votes." I looked at that thing and looked at it again, I didn't recall ever having read it before. So, I immediately took it up with some leading lawyers. We had Charlie Bloch in Macon look at it. [B.D.] Buck Murphy in Atlanta looking at it. Baxter Maddox in Macon looked at it. Those were the three lawyers I considered the best lawyers in the state. They all told me, [they] said, "Herman, if anything happens to your daddy, the legislature will elect a governor." We knew D. Talmadge Bowers was a tombstone salesman, and he had run for governor several times on the write-in ballot. And we knew a large number of disgruntled Carmichael folks would vote for him. So, while I thought there was no danger in my father passing away--the doctors at that time didn't consider it serious, or if they did they didn't tell me or didn't tell him. We thought the better part of wisdom was to get a few write-in votes so if the worse came to the worst I could be considered by the legislature at least. So, I passed the word to about a half a dozen faithful and close friends. One of them was the sheriff of Worth County at Sylvester. Another one was Stanley Brooks of Helena. Another one was Andy Tuten in Bacon County. And a few more of that type, I said Now, pass the word to a few of our friends around. Get me a few write-in votes, just write in my name for governor in the general election. So, they got me up five or six hundred as I recall. There was a big row about George Goodwin at the *Journal* went down to check the votes in Helena and found that they'd voted in alphabetical order. Stanley Brooks could have had them vote in order they wanted to, alphabetical or otherwise and in Helena, you see. [TALMADGE laughs] I don't know whether they voted that way or not; they may well have. Stanley figured maybe it's too much trouble to pass the word; I'll just fix it at the end.

So, George Goodwin won him a Pulitzer Prize on that basis. But when it finally came in, I had 5[00] or 600 votes and Jimmy Carmichael had about 500. D. Talmadge Bowers had 4[00] or 500, so it complied with the constitution. We had a big battle before the General Assembly, just like another campaign, which it was. And [J. Robert] Bob Elliot, who is now on the circuit court—district court—federal court down in Columbus, was my floor leader in the House. And the first vote, I got a two-vote majority: proceed to elect governor. And then in a matter of electing a governor, I won by about a two to one vote. They had three networks in the nation at that time: Mutual [Mutual Broadcasting System], NBC, and CBS. [The] legislature convened as I recall about nine or ten a.m. They finally inaugurated me as governor about 2:30 a.m. the next morning. All three of the networks stayed on the radio, stayed on live as the results in the Georgia election. I had to make an extemporaneous inaugural address nationwide before three networks without notice. [TALMADGE and HENDERSON laugh] Then we went down to the legislature after that, appointed an escort committee as they always do, [to] escort the newly elected governor to the governor's office. We went down to the governor's office and Ellis wouldn't surrender the office. He considered that legislature was without authority to elect me, and I was "an imposter," I believe, to use his words. So, there was several thousand people there in the capitol. Ninety percent of them [were] my friends, some of them armed, some of them drunk. I knew it was a dangerous situation. So when Ellis refused to surrender the office, I went out in the little reception room, mounted a desk or something, several hundred jammed in there. I said Now, everything's going to be all right. Ellis has refused to surrender the office, but that's all right. It will take care of itself. Don't worry about that; go on home. The election is over and we have won. Go on home and stay out of any trouble. And then I got the National Guard--I've forgotten whether it was Major General [George G.] Finch or Marvin Griffin--

anyway, I told them Now, you escort Ellis Arnall home, all the way to Newnan. You be damn sure nothing touches him. Get him home safely and when you do that, you come back here and change the locks on the governor's office and I'll come in and take possession tomorrow morning. So they did. And then the next morning I got home about, I guess, four o'clock. I got about an hour and a half, two hours sleep. I never carried a concealed weapon, but I always had pistols around the house, rifles, shotguns, and all sorts of weapons. Next morning I stuck a .38 in my pocket for the first time ever. I didn't know what might happen. Likely scared Betty [Shingler Talmadge] to death when she saw me stick that pistol in my pocket [chuckles]. So, I went on up to the governor's office, went in the governor's office and took possession there about seven a.m. And staff came in and we started functioning. I guess it was 9:30 or 10 o'clock, Ellis came in. He was a great man at publicity, you know. [He] had the news media with him wherever he went. So, he came in. Benton Odom was my executive secretary. And Ellis demanded his office, and Benton said, "Now, Mr. Arnall," said, "If you want to see the governor, you've got to take your turn like anybody else. Now sit down and you'll see him." [laughs] So, Ellis stomped out, had him a press conference and then he got all of his newspaper folks—he'd already moved out of the executive mansion days before the legislature met and we'd moved in as soon as the legislature voted. And so he went out there with his newspaper folks and tried to take possession of the executive mansion. The state trooper there met him at the door told him he couldn't come in and says, [Are] you refusing me admission?" "Yes, that's exactly what I'm going to do." Says, "Are you going to use force to keep me out of the executive mansion?" He says, "If that's what its required that's what I'm going to do." Then Ellis left. Set him up a little office in the rotunda of the capitol over there. Jimmy Dykes was in the state Senate and Ellis had his office under the rotunda for two or three days. Jimmy got a

little tired of that. So, in those days these great big old firecrackers were legal, you know, about eight inches long. Jimmy went up there above where Ellis's desk was, that little gallery on about the third floor of the capitol as I recall, lit one of those firecrackers and dropped it behind Ellis's desk on that floor and it went off, KABOOM! Ellis thought somebody was shooting at him, [laughs] so he grabbed his hat and ran out of there and that was the end of Ellis playing governor in the rotunda. [laughing] He went to his law office up in the building where he'd already moved several days before that and that's how he got out of the governor's office.

And, of course, suits were filed. The first two suits hit Fulton Superior Court. Ellis Arnall had appointed the judges down there. Bond Almand ruled in my favor, he'd been appointed by Ellis. The next one was Walter Hendrix, he'd been appointed by Ellis, and I won that one. So, they got desperate. So, they filed a suit before Claude Porter up in Floyd Superior Court. He'd been appointed by Ellis or Ed, I've forgotten which, and he was a political judge from the word "go." This time it was a collateral issue. It didn't even test tied to the office, full warrant though. It was a suit on bond or something. So, Judge Claude Porter ruled in favor of the other side and against me. And then it went to the Supreme Court of the state. Ellis appeared with me on Channel 5 about two or three years ago, a series of joint interviews. Much to my surprise, he admitted on Channel 5 that he knew what the Supreme Court was going to rule. Of course, it been packed by Ed Rivers and Ellis Arnall, but I got two of the five votes. I was vindicated by the people as soon as the people could vote. I was vindicated by the court as soon as the personalities on the court changed in the Maddox case. That case was similar to mine. Supreme Court of the United States ruled on the Maddox case, five to one and five to four in favor of Maddox. And the Supreme Court of the state, I think, five to one in favor of Maddox. Just reverse of what it was in my case with Ellis. So, as soon as the Supreme Court

made their decision, Ben Odom, my executive secretary, came in and told me about it. I says Well, we've got no choice except to move out. So, I called Betty and I said, "Pack up. We're leaving the executive mansion. We're headed for Lovejoy." And then the press came in and I said, "The court of last resort's the people. I'll appeal my case to the people." So, I got in my car and started work. [It was the] longest campaign I've ever had, about eighteen months. Next election I carried 130 counties and M.E. twenty-nine.

HENDERSON: When your father died, [there was] a lot of speculation as to who would be the incoming governor. Now, if I remember correctly there were three possible interpretations of the constitution as to who should be the successor. Thompson was arguing that as lieutenant governor he should be and Arnall said because he was still governor he should remain in office until a governor's picked.

TALMADGE: That's correct.

HENDERSON: To state for the record, what was your position as to what should have been done?

TALMADGE: M.E. Thompson had never been inaugurated as lieutenant governor. He was a private citizen at the time. There was no right of succession whatever [for] a private citizen. The election of the governor of Georgia is not completed under our constitution until they canvas the vote and the legislature announces the result and elects the governor. So, the

legislature, just like the Congress, is involved in the electoral process. The election is never completed until the legislature acts.

HENDERSON: Now, if your interpretation is to prevail, the lawmakers will play a major role.

TALMADGE: For sure.

HENDERSON: Did you—

TALMADGE: They did. They elected Maddox.

HENDERSON: Right, all right. But did you engage in any type of lobbying activities in January of '47 with lawmakers to persuade them?

TALMADGE: Oh, sure. We all did. [HENDERSON laughs] Everybody on our side was lobbying everybody they could and everyone on the other side was doing likewise. It was another political campaign for several weeks there. Lobbying the Georgia legislature.

HENDERSON: Now, up the '46 primary, Roy Harris was a key figure in the anti-Talmadge faction.

TALMADGE: Yes.

HENDERSON: But he switches over his allegiance to your father because of the white primary issue. What role did he play in getting the legislature to elect you?

TALMADGE: He was very helpful. He had been speaker of the House. He knew a lot of them personally, but of course most of them, legislators you know, want to get reelected. They followed by and large with a few exceptions what they thought was a majority sentiment in their counties.

HENDERSON: Once you're elected, one of the major issues before the legislature is a white primary bill--

TALMADGE: Yes.

HENDERSON: --which you were very strongly in favor of. What was the issue of the white primary bill? What was all of that about?

TALMADGE: Well, you remember after Reconstruction [United States] virtually all, if not all, of the southern states passed a law providing for a white primary where the white Democrats could choose their nominee. It started off as a rule of the party in Georgia. But then they didn't want to leave it to the whims and rules of party. And W. Cecil Neil, who was in the legislature in Muscogee County, was the author of what was known as the Neil Primary Act. And it provided that the white Democrats would hold the primary and present their nomination for offices. All of the other southern states had the same situation, or virtually all of them. And

then the court had ruled--I've forgotten where the case originated, maybe Georgia. Primus King, maybe, case--held that the primary was unconstitutional. And we thought the remedy—we're acting on a law you know—we thought the remedy was to repeal the statute and go back to party regulations. Practically every southern state followed the same line, then of course, the Supreme Court held that the party regulations were likewise illegal.

HENDERSON: One of the big issues in the '46 primary was what should be done to save the white primary.

TALMADGE: Exactly.

HENDERSON: Your father had a suggestion and Governor Arnall differed with that. Why was Governor Arnall opposed to retaining the white primary?

TALMADGE: Well, you know, Ellis after he got elected governor, he [unintelligible] nationwide as this fair-haired liberal down in Georgia and Roosevelt was one of his allies. He was leaving the impression that he was going to be his next vice president. So, Ellis I think, thought he was going to be nominated for vice president on Roosevelt's ticket. And then that didn't come to pass. He pitched in with Henry [Agard] Wallace. I think he had national aspirations at that time and, of course, no one who wanted to be president or vice president could be guilty of discrimination. The southerners in those days were considered lepers outside the South and Ellis had looked at the broad base rather than the local base.

HENDERSON: I need to change tapes.

[Continued on OH ARN 18]

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