

**Betty Sanders interviewed by Bob Short**  
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**Reflections on Georgia Politics**  
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**Reflections on Georgia Politics**  
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BETTY SANDERS: Well, I was born in Statesboro, Georgia, August 6, 1926 to Ida Teresa "Doll" Bird Foy and Jesse Ponita "J.P." Foy. I was born at home on South Main Street and I lived there until I finished the first grade. But at the beginning of this interview, I would like to say that I have had a fantastic life, and it is hard for me to even tell you about it. But I was fortunate to be born into an interesting family, and I think that that's important for me to tell you about. This is unusual since I ended up as a political wife, but my great-grandfather's name was George Washington Foy from Egypt, Georgia down by Savannah. My grandfather's name was Washington Manassas Foy, and his wife, my grandmother's mother's, name was America. Then on the Bird side of the family, I was descended on the Bird side from Colonel William Byrd of Virginia, who was sent over by the king of England to look after his interests in the states in the 1600's. And as they migrated south, they changed from B-Y-R-D to B-I-R-D. So, a lot of my interests and personality and dedication and aspects of me have come down through history in what my ancestors left me. My youth was spent by my father, who had gone to the University of Georgia, and most of the men in the family had gone to the University of Georgia, decided that we were big agriculture people. My county, Bullock County, is an agro county, so his father had left approximately 11,000 to 12,000 acres out from Statesborough to his four children, side-by-side. And he said to my mother, "We have got to move to the country. I can't look after my interests and be here in town. I need to be out there when the workers go to

the field and the turpentine men go to chip the pine trees.” We grew cotton, tobacco, big into naval business, chipping pine trees. We had a turpentine still, and I grew up with a wonderful young life, very exciting living out there. I roamed the fields, I traveled around with my dad to check on the workers, I fished at the pond at the base of the hill. I picked blackberries, blueberries, wild plums. I knew how to entertain myself since I was an only child for ten years. We had all the animals on our place, a barn, and two vegetable gardens, so there was one thing for sure, we were never hungry. And second, my mother had a big iron bell out in the yard, and everyday at 12 o’clock she rang it so that the people on the farm heard it and knew that it was noontime. We had neighbors and cousins that lived close. My cousins had ponies and we just had a wonderful life. One of the best things about living there was the Canoochee River backed up to our farmlands, and if we got bored on the weekend, we all went to the river, went swimming, had a picnic, fried chicken, pineapple sandwiches, pimento cheese sandwiches, and home-churned ice cream. Otherwise, my father would say on the weekend, “Okay, pack your bathing suits. We are headed to Tybee.” Or, either he would say, “Alright, we going into town to the movies,” and that was a big deal. The movie was \$.25 for them and \$.10 for me, and then we’d have dinner in town and return home. So, I wouldn’t take anything in the world for the base that all of that taught me by living out there and communicating with people. I attribute the fact that I am able to converse with all levels of society because I’ve had the opportunity to.

And as my mother saw that, as I grew, I was real talented. I lay on the floor and drew at night. There was no television. There was no electricity for a while that I lived out there.

There was wells and there were refrigerators that the ice man came by once a week and you bought 50 to 60 pounds of ice, and I don't know, all those things just did not bother me growing up. When rural electric came, we got electricity, which was a privilege. Now, as I said, as she learned the fact that I loved to create, and I drew, and I made Christmas decorations. I made paper dolls. I made playhouses out of bales of cotton since there were so many bales in the yard. I would make an imaginary house out there. She said that she wanted to give me the chance to study dancing. I took piano for five years, and I took art. And then as time progressed, she decided that I wanted to go to a bigger school, so in high school I went into my Grandmother Foy's in the tenth grade and started in Statesborough High. That was real exciting, being in the town that was 5,000 people after living in the country. There I also played basketball. I was very good at basketball. I was a cheerleader, and I marched with the band. Life was really great, classes were bigger, things were really going on, and on the weekends I would take friends home with me out to the country, and daddy would have a big pot of boiled peanuts going and Cokes, and we'd get the wagon and ride those town girls around and go to the country store and pick out all kind of goodies, and I don't know. It just was a wonderful life.

Now, at 42, my father's health started to fail. He had high blood pressure and ended up going to Mayo's and several places about it, but it never got better. So they moved back to town to their original house that they started out in, on South Main street, and I went back home and joined them. I meant to mention at one point in my life came a sister. We were ten years apart, and she was Teresa Brannon. She's Teresa Brannon now, but that added to the excitement of

my life. So the three of them moved back to town. I was a senior in high school. I was very active, but it was a real hard time in my life to see my father going down. I was strained with all the excitement of being a senior, and back then seniors were eleventh grades, and only Atlanta had twelfth grade. So, you were very young, and that fall I was selected to be the Halloween Queen. And someone says, "The Halloween Queen?" Well, small towns and schools have great fun at Halloween time. They have food and cakewalks and prizes and dances and this, that and the other. It was a big deal. And I was very nervous because they kept calling and saying, "I don't know if you going to be able to do that. I don't know if your father's going to make it through that time." But anyway, he didn't die until November 12th, and that left quite a void in my family with we three women. I went on to finish my senior year as the most popular girl, and Miss Statesborough High. So, I have always felt close to every place that I have had the opportunity to live. That fall, Mother said, "I don't believe you're quite ready to go to Georgia, Betty," I was still down emotionally. She said, "I know you were planning on it, but how about going out to Georgia Teacher's College your freshman year, and you can work off a lot of your basic subjects and be close to home." And Georgia Teacher's College was just four blocks down the street, and it was 500 students. A great deal of them were studying to be teachers, as the name implicated. So, she said, "To give you experience of growing up, I'm going to let you stay out there in a dormitory, and you can come home just off and on all the time." So that I did. Finished out there and got ready for my sophomore year, when I went to the University of Georgia. And that was real exciting to me, all of 2,000 students. The war was on, and so many

of the men were not on campus. There was a naval air training academy out at Lucy Cobb, and we got to know the student body easily because you were in small classrooms. I'd say there was 36, 40, and what is there now? 5 or 600 sometime in the class? Lessons assigned over the Internet or whatever. I just think that I came along, to me, at the right time in history to have a broad base of experiences. One thing I do remember, nobody had cars, and you did a lot of walking. And I stayed in Clark Howell, and the art department was just up the street off of Lumpkin, and I walked back and to and I called my mother and I said, "There are too many hills in this town. My legs really hurt." But I pledged Tri-Del, Delta Delta Delta, and I stepped into school activities and dances and parties and net evening dresses and saddle shoes and all those things that was with that era, but all of us had come out of the Depression, and as I said, nobody had what students have today, and they don't even really know what you're talking about when you talk about these things. So, as I said before, I am so glad that I came along when I did.

Now, my junior year, I had something happen to me in early fall that changed my life completely. On a Sunday night, I was upstairs in the dorm studying and someone called up to me and said, "Betty, will you come down and talk to Carl Sanders?" And I said, "Okay." So anyway, he had had a fuss with a young lady up the road there, and he walked down there to where he had a friend, another football player that had a date with a Tri Delta, so he just walked down there to kind of lolly around with the crowd, and from that night on, it was Carl Sanders. I meant, there got to be nobody else. I meant, it was straight on with him for the next two years when he asked me to marry him on Thanksgiving and he gave me a ring, and we set a date for

September 6th, 1947, and I had graduated that June with a Fine Arts degree at Georgia, and he had one quarter to go. The way Carl bought me a ring, he has always been a hard worker since I have ever known him. If you talk to anybody about Carl, or his friends or his parents, it started early with him. Delivering the paper, catching grocery sacks in high school off the back of grocery trucks, then working hard at football, landing a scholarship, doing this, doing that. Then when he went in the service, they chose him after he signed for the Air Force, to be a pilot on a B-17 bomber. So, he is disciplined and he is a hard worker. So, I have no complaints from that end of things at all. But he sold flowers, corsages for dances, he put stuff in fraternity houses for nights, you know, crackers and this at the machines. On Sunday he did stunt piloting out at Athens Airfield, taking people up for a ride, and then he did stunts in one of these old biplanes. And I was so glad when he gave that up, because that was so dangerous. But he did come up with the money for the ring, and so anyway, that shows one bit of information about him. We went on to get married, and as I said, in September in Statesborough. It was 103 degrees that day. That was before air conditioning in churches and clubs and things, and Mother had thought that she had done the right thing with me by bringing me to Atlanta to J.P. Allen's to pick out my wedding gown and my attendants and have them pull it all together and this, that and the other. And I don't know what happened, but they put us in fall attire, and evidently they had never been to South Georgia, but anyway, we got married at the church. And my mother sat on the front row, and I noticed she was crying and I thought, "Oh, she's crying because she's losing me," and no, that wasn't it. She was crying because the candles were

melting and the flowers were wilting also. But anyway, there's always memories from your wedding, and I might as well say that was just part of it, and part of the culture and part of the times. And we went off to our honeymoon, which was at the Oglethorpe Hotel that sat on the bluff out from Savannah, a real pretty old, old hotel, and there were a couple of other University of Georgia friends that arrived that night also on their honeymoon. And so we stayed, and then I began to get a fever and Carl said, "Well, maybe we better go back to your home." So we went back to Statesborough and I was running a 103 fever. Mother took me to the doctor, and Dr. Mooney said, "There's something wrong, Doll. Her blood count is such that she has got an infection. We're going to have to operate." Well, they operated and he thought I had bride's appendicitis, whatever that is. But anyway, when they went in, it was a blocked intestine and it didn't look exactly right to him, so he did not remove the blockage, and it ended up that for the next six days my fever went to 106, gangrene set in and I was the color of Coca-Cola, and he told my family I would not make it through the night. The word got out around town, the front steps of the Bullock County Hospital was loaded, Carl was frantic. He and the preacher went and spent the night in an empty hospital room and before he went in there, he came in there and he got very close to my ear. Of course, I was in and out. He said, "Betty, I want you to listen to me. You've got to fight real hard tonight." And that's the last I remember, but the next day, everything worked. So, I have given credit to the Lord that he gave me a second chance in life, because he must have had something else for me to do down the road, and I have never forgotten that. I think of that weekly, monthly, and daily, and I try to pay homage to him.

Now, I don't know exactly where to go from here, other than to say, I stayed home for three months. Carl went back to finish his last quarter at law school, and then we moved to Augusta, Georgia for him to practice law. We lived in an apartment, a little one-bedroom garage apartment, and we lived there and then as he progressed with his law practice and the main lawyer died, he got even higher up in the law firm, and then the next lawyer was appointed judge there, and then he ended up with the law practice of theirs. So, things really looked up. We had lots of medical bills still. There weren't many myosins or antibiotics at that time. I struggled with my health. He taught law school at night for extra money, and gradually it got to the point that, well, we think we can build our first little house. So, we built our first home and I was real happy. The doctors at John Hopkins in Maryland had told me that I probably wouldn't have any children, and then after five years, I was pregnant and happy as all get out. Well, Carl came home one afternoon and he said, "Betty," he said, "The city fathers and some of my friends want me to run for the legislature." I said, "Uh, what?" Because I knew I was marrying a lawyer. I never knew I was marrying a politician. I certainly didn't know I was going to marry a governor, but that was the beginning of another phase of my life. It was an exciting one. We were young, we had enthusiasm, and Carl went off to the legislature, and then he changed and went to the Senate, where he was Ernie Vandiver's floor leader, and then he was President of the Senate, and we participated during the legislature a great deal as grandparents stepped in to help me with children. Over that expanse of time, though, we had a son, 16 months after having Betty, and so I had two little ones, and him busy with the state. As time went on, he thought he

would run for lieutenant governor, and he was not known all over the state and I certainly didn't know all over the state. So, being a pilot, he got his red single-engine Comanche out, and off we went, all over everywhere, landing in fields and little tiny runways in all hours of the night, in all kinds of weather, and I thought, "Goodness gracious. This is the hardest thing I've ever had to do in my life. I was not in the Air Corps, Carl." But anyway, we proceeded and we were back and to Jekyll Island for conventions, conventions, conventions. And it seemed like every time we went that way in the summertime, there was always those big, puffy clouds with thunderstorms off in the distance, but we made it. And I remember when in the plane coming back, he said, "They're trying to talk me into going for governor instead of lieutenant governor." Well, I don't know, being a wife is one thing. Being the husband is another, and all these different calls are coming at you right and left, and all these people you're meeting and shaking hands with and all that barbeque you're eating and all the time spent in the air, and I thought, "Goodness gracious. I don't guess it'd be any harder than what we're doing now," so he changed and went for the governorship. And that was very, very interesting in meeting and greeting and making friends all over the state. I'm very thankful for that experience.

**BOB SHORT:** Election day was a very successful day for the Sanders family.

**SANDERS:** Yes, we were all excited. Polls indicated that things were looking good. My children, mother, mother-in-law, his father, the family all arrived in Atlanta, and we were all

hunkered down at the hotel, waiting for the votes to come in, and then we went down when they came in, and we were just ecstatic. Enthusiasm was high. The crowd was enthused. I had just never been that up as to see my husband being made governor so early in life. He was the youngest governor in the United States at the time, and so we celebrated and then we took a week off to come up for air before we started thinking about what we had to do in front of us, and then came the decision-making time. I started planning on how to approach my children because they had been at home in the neighborhood we were in, friends were just over the fence, their school buddies, and now they were going to move to this big house in Atlanta, leave their friends, and we start a new and different life. So anyway, it got to be close to November, and I said to Carl, "You know, I really don't know what that house looks like inside. I don't know what's in it other than I've been to the legislative dinners, but everything's cleared out. I've been out there once or twice with you when you'd talk with Ernie Vandiver. And other than that, I really need to know what to expect." So I called Betty Vandiver and I said, "Can I come up and visit and let you tell me about the mansion?" So we fly to Atlanta. It's raining, and I go out to the mansion and he goes to a meeting. So Betty, you know, greets me and we sit down and talk and then we have a bite to eat at lunch. And the man that worked for her came in and said, "Ms. Vandiver," said, "The house is leaking upstairs." And she said, "Well, go get the buckets," and then my food kind of went down in lumps, and then I said to Betty, "Alright, now what do I need to bring? Do we have a full set of china here?" "No," she said, "We don't." "How about silverware?" She said, "Well, people have taken part of it as souvenirs, so there's

not that.” It had governor’s mansion on it. There’s very little.” “Is there crystal glasses?” because I knew I was expected to entertain. “No, we don’t have that.” “Table linens?” “No, don’t have that.” And so, I said, “Well, what do we have?” She said, “You’re looking at it. We have the silver big punch bowl and the cups and the candlesticks from the Georgia battleship that was given to the state of Georgia.” So that’s still the most important and impressive pieces that the state owns that you view if you visit the present governor’s mansion.

So anyway, I left after looking at all the rooms, and the mansion had not been freshened in quite some time. They were low-budgeted, and things just weren’t done. And after all this many people come and go through any home, it just has to be freshened. So when we got on the plane, Carl says, “What’s wrong with you?” I said, “I don’t know, but my house looks a whole lot better to me.” But anyway, I called up Dick Rich, who I knew, and he said -- well, first I called Mr. Forson. I said, “What am I to do? I don’t have equipment to even have people over to dinner.” He said, “Betty, you go out to Rich’s and you pick yourself out, you know, a dozen or two dozen place settings, some silver, some crystal, and I will call Lenox China,” who made the state dinnerware with the seal in the middle. And so I went out there and I talked to Dick Rich and he said, “Don’t worry about it. I will send my decorator over there to help give you some advice.” So, we moved to Atlanta two weeks before the inauguration, took an apartment, freshened the mansion. We fluffed it up. I got what I had to have, and we moved in. And my children were scared to death because they had double windows, ceiling to floor, in each bedroom upstairs, and none of it latched. None of the doors locked. We had new faces that we

had to look at, like we had three prisoners that were sent to the mansion to work. One was a laundress, one was a maid, and one was a butler, and we did hire, for the first time, a chef, Ben Cruise, from Pine Mount, a oriental who had been the chef for a general, and that was about the best thing that had happened to us. And so, we got started. I was scared to death. I had never been around people that had been in jail for manslaughter. I got so nervous about it, I was locking my doors every time I went to dress or get in the tub or whatever. Carl said, "I'm going to have the head of the prison system come out here and talk to you." I said, "Alright." And he came and he said, "Betty, there are two kinds of manslaughter people," he said, "Those that kill for passion. They've been involved with circumstances that's personal. Or the other type, which is just, you know, robbery and this, that and the other." After talking to me about a hour, he left, and so I calmed down a little bit and got to be very big friends with, and now, you may have known Josh Lee, who was so good. He knew everybody's name that came through that door at the mansion, and he was just the epitome of a gentleman. We could not have asked for better.

Now, we started off after the victory, 10,000 people came to the mansion to the reception. I had had people from Augusta, Ms. William Morris, whose husband was head of the newspapers down there, and a very big flower garden woman. She and her friend came and did the flowers in the mansion, and then we had somebody head up the plans for the ball, as we told them what we wanted to do, and that was Ms. Jack Adair and Nell Watt, who was Mr. Woodruff's niece, and we had a wonderful ball that night. Everybody was all dressed up, evening dresses and

everything, and when they introduced the children Carl, Jr. came forward and he took his "mmm" and he backed up and he fell off the stage. So anyway, there were so many things that happened in public life it's just no way to describe all of these things that happened. But we got started. We entertained a lot. I think we entertained an awful lot. County Commissioner's conventions, school teacher's conventions, art gatherings, just on and on and on, and thank goodness for my chef back there in my 12 by 12 kitchen. It is unreal to think that you can handle 300 to 500 people's food out of a 12 by 12 kitchen with just one ice maker in the home. But we did it, and I'm proud of the fact that we did entertain and got a good image going for the state and the Sanders administration. I had business leaders from Atlanta come to dinner, 8 to 12 at a time, and we got to know the people that runs the companies and the businesses and makes this state tick. So anyway, whatever it was, I called my mother up and I said, "Oh, what am I to do? I don't know. Up here all this food is all these little fancy things and this, that and the other." She said, "Betty, do just what you know and serve just what you want to serve, and you will be fine." And I did. I poured on the Georgia food. Having been a farmer's daughter, I was very into fresh this and fresh that, and you know, fresh peach pie or fresh this, and I never had any complaints and things went well, and we went on to try to do what we thought was right. I know in the living room over the mantel was a huge painting of the first governor's home that the state built down at Milledgeville by Wilbur Kurtz. Well, we found out that the state had never paid him for that painting, and that was the most prominent thing in the living room, probably the nicest thing in the house, because there wasn't any antiques around. So Carl made

it a point to see that he was paid. He is the artist that was the consultant to "Gone With the Wind" for all their sets, and he also -- the Cyclorama, he knew a lot about Georgia's architecture, and he's very prominent in the Atlanta History Museum here. So, the state was lucky to have him paint such a lovely painting of the home at Milledgeville.

SHORT: Tell us about some of the celebrities, some of the prominent people that you entertained at the mansion.

SANDERS: Well, Robert Kennedy came out to see us and visited one time, and Betty or Carl had the chicken pox. And they came downstairs, they wanted to meet him. They didn't get close, and he said, "Oh, don't worry about that. I've got 11 children," 12, whatever it was. He said, "That doesn't bother me." And we visited with him. And then a movie star that came one time was Robert Goulet and he gave Carl a bunch of his records and songs, and then the most prominent one that came was Lady Bird Johnson. We had made friends with them definitely when he ran for president. But going back, I should go back before I get into Lady Bird's party, and say that the most startling thing that happened to us the first year that really jerked the emotions and the rug out from us was when our president was assassinated. Oh gosh, the phones at the mansion lit up. Everybody from the troopers to the help to me, everybody was crying, in shock, and for the second president in history to be assassinated, and us to go through the experiences of all that, and going to his funeral, and then President Johnson, you know, then

being sworn in as President and this, that and the other. It was a very traumatic time, not only racially in the state, but I would have to also say that my husband played a great part in keeping the state calm, because he was one of the two men in the whole legislature that advised Ernie Vandiver to not close the schools down, and I think that's one reason. There was lots of turbulence, but you had to, you know, keep it calm, and that was a very traumatic part in our life. Now, then as we went on to talk about Lady Bird, we had grown to great friendship, because we had campaigned with them. We had had the honor of flying on Air Force One, and the helicopter, his helicopter, and I remember taking him either pecan candy or something on the plane, and I do declare that between Atlanta and Augusta he ate the whole thing. He was quite a character. But then, we also were close to Lady Bird because we rode the Lady Bird Special with her and became real acquainted, and I want to tell you also, that was my first introduction, and it was the early introduction of Chick-Fil-A, because he showed up with baskets of it to go on the Lady Bird Special, and since then I've been a big fan of it. Now, Lady Bird decided to come down to Georgia, and so I said, "Well, I would love to entertain you at the mansion." So, we planned. It was during the summertime and the peaches were in, so I said, "Okay, let's have a peach of a party for her." So, gathered the decorations, had the special tablecloth built. I had the legislature invited and the city fathers and this, that and the other. And she came, and she was so well received. We had peach punch that we made up the recipe, and at that time, Georgia was trying to make peach puree down here at Griffin to go on the market. So, they sent us a bunch of peach puree and we made the peach punch. It has since not succeeded, or wasn't

funded. It folded. It did not hold through the year like orange juice would, or something.

Anyway, that later went by the wayside. And we also developed a peach cookie that we used the dried peaches and pecans in. The press were real impressed. Lady Bird was impressed.

And we greeted first in the library at the mansion under two portraits that had just been finished of us, and that came about by having dinner with Mr. Robert Woodruff one night, and he had Elizabeth Shumatov as his dinner guest. Mr. Woodruff had been a very big supporter and admirer of Carl, and he would often call him to come around there and sit down and talk to him, and so Ms. Shumatov said, "I have never painted a young governor and his wife," and she said, "I really would like to paint y'all." I said, "Well, alright." So anyway, the background of Ms. Shumatov is, she was painting President Roosevelt at Warm Springs when he had his stroke, and her portrait is called The Unfinished Portrait of Franklin D. Roosevelt, and it hangs in the White House. She was a Russian by descent, and she and her brother both -- he was a botanical artist and a botanist, and she was a portrait painter, and she did several portraits of Mr. Woodruff, and we just happened to be at the dinner table that night talking to her when she decided she wanted to paint us. Leading up to the fact that we had just gotten the portraits just before the tea, and we stood under the portraits in the library, and Lady Bird said, "Who did y'all's portraits?" I said, "Elizabeth Shumatov." I said, "You ought to know that name." And she said, "Elizabeth Shumatov." I said, "Yes, the Portrait of president Roosevelt hangs in the White House." "Oh my goodness," she said. She said, "You know, we just had Lyndon's portrait painted, and he thought it was so awful he threw it out." So she went home, and two

days later she called me and said, "Give me the telephone number of Elizabeth Shumatov."

And she painted their official portraits. Now, let's see, I had gone and had the Lady Bird tea and now we were getting close to Carl going out of office, and the children had gotten up in their teens and we were about to leave the mansion. But before I left, Channel 5 called and said, "We would like to do a walkthrough tour of the governor's mansion." I said, "What for?" They said, "We'd like for you to tell us all about it, and also Jacqui Kennedy did such a good job at the White House, we would like to record this house because you're fixing to finish up the new mansion." And I said, "Well, we'll do that then." So they came out and they did a walkthrough tour, and it's the only recording of color, live, inside the governor's mansion, because one year later the governor's mansion was gone and there's no more part of history where the nearly 50 years it housed many of Georgia's governors.

After Carl was elected and we knew that the legislature had voted that a new governor's mansion be built, I knew what our responsibility was going to be, and so right off the bat, that's what I started thinking about after I got my family settled into home and schools and everybody on the same page. And I decided that, well, let's see, how are we going to do that. So Mr. Forson and Ernest Davis came out and sat with us at the dining room table, and we ate and talked about how to go about this. He said, "Well, what we should do first is look around the city and see if there's a piece of property or a home that would be suitable." So, okay, we start out. We go to the Swan House over here in Buckhead. It was a gorgeous home with the most beautiful woodwork and paneling and setting and gardens and stately looking. But, it had small

rooms, considering you had to entertain hundreds at a time. It had the same problems, old plumbing, you know, rewiring, this, that and the other. It was not built to be a governor's mansion, and Mr. Forson, of course, had said, "We do not need an Italian villa as the governor's mansion." Now, we could have bought that home and property for \$450,000, and you think about what things are today, \$450,000 when they build anything around here for a million. And so we left there, then we went over to Blackmon and looked at Ms. Hugh Nunley's home, which is stately, sits back from the street, very Southern in nature and appearance. Beautiful grounds, not all that much backyard. No place to park -- well, that was a big no-no right there, because when we had functions and there were 300 people or 400 people or 250 people, they had to park somewhere. We could only park 13 cars at the present governor's mansion. And when the inauguration was, you had to pull troopers off the road to come help with the parking at the mansion for functions in the future. That just didn't make sense to me, and there was no parking companies like there is now that you'd hire and they would come and handle all that. This was just the way it was then. So anyway, we said, "No, that won't work either." So, word got out that we were looking for property. Mr. Robert Maddox, former mayor of Atlanta, 91 years old, living in his home on West Paces Ferry Road, called up and he said, "I would like to sell my property to the state, if you will build the governor's mansion on it." So, we went roaring out there and it was lovely. Eighteen acres, sunken garden, statuary, fountains down in the sunken garden, acreage, but the house was kind of a Tudor nature with dark paneling and this, that and the other. So, Mr. Ben said, "Well, how much do you want for it?" And he said, "\$250,000."

And that was a home run. His health had failed. He didn't live much longer, but he did call up and he told Carl that he was willing to give the statuary on the grounds to the state, and that that particular garden had -- his wife was a big gardener, and she had entertained Caruso there. And I could just visualize myself having functions down there with a temporary stage put over the pool, and performances, and it was layered, you could seat people like a, you know, a stadium. It was graded downward. All kind of things ran through my mind that could be done with that beautiful garden. Well, we had to tear the house down and start from scratch, and get an architect, Thomas Bradbury, and pick a Southern-style home to go on that. There would be plenty of room for facilities. I wrote every former first lady and asked them did they have any suggestion of what they thought should go in the new mansion as far as accommodation. I had letters from them, I put all that into my thoughts. I gathered a committee of 70 people over the state that were knowledgeable in antiques, landscape, art, interiors, historical things. It was a wonderful group of dedicated people. Called them all into the mansion, had a reception for them, told them what our project was, Henry Green was going to be the chairman, I was going to be the co-chairman, and we were going to go with furnishing and building the state a beautiful mansion and spend their money correctly. So, I hope we did a good job. When it was finished, it was considered one of the best in the country, and for 14,000 square feet, we spent \$600,000. With that many rooms and that much drapery, carpet and landscape and everything, I think we did a hell of a job. A lot of things were contributed to the mansion from prominent families that gave -- well, for one thing, the rug in the living room was contributed by the Robinson family,

and then lots of beautiful pieces of silver. Henry Green knew furniture backwards and forwards in every period. We just had a top-notch committee, so we proceeded. It was all slow. The house had to be torn down. The grounds had to be rearranged. Things started, and I don't know but we met frequently to discuss all this, and it was a slow process. We knew it wouldn't be finished by the time we went out of office, and the future governor that moved in was Lester Maddox, and he told them not to change the Maddox off of the mailbox, so anyway, the present mansion has large facilities that can seat 500 people on the basement level, with catering facilities right by its side, that we never had. Poor Ms. Cobb from Athens, Georgia that was my caterer the whole time I was in, and these dinners were in January, she lined up tables in the yard to put the china and the crystal and everything, running back and to, back and to. I just think living in the new mansion would have been a cakewalk after what all of us that had gone through it originally.

SHORT: Before we get too far into your art career, which I would like to talk about next, tell us, if you will, the reaction of your children to living in the mansion and in a sort of a fishbowl.

SANDERS: Well, there was no one to play with. Ansley Park had a older generation of people. There were just a few, and so we looked at schools, and the one closest to them was down on Spring Street, but somebody had told us it was a very transit school, children in and out,

and not, you know, real settled with a great deal of sports activity or this, that and the other. So, we put them in Westminster School, and of course, they participated in everything, but in a way, it was kind -- I think Carl, Jr.'s major fun living at the mansion was aggravating the state troopers. Steve Polk was our driver assigned to me and the children, and they were forever picking at each other. I think Carl, Jr. put a rat in their bunk bed one night, and I think they got him for some time to come. Betty, she was thinking that she heard ghosts in the attic, which really was squirrels squirming around up there. Even I didn't like that myself, and there was also a story that we never solved, and I should have asked Mr. Ben when they tore that down if that was actually true. Carl, Jr. for years looked for the hidden basement under the house, the tunnel. Well, to my knowledge, other than hearsay, there was no tunnel, but I do know that one thing I wanted to mention was that house was built out of Stone Mountain granite, and when I gardened, you could dig three feet down and you would run into fingers of granite, and it's surprising that Stone Mountain has these feeder veins that go out into Atlanta that so often you don't even know about. But anyway, that was, you know, I gave Betty music lessons, ballet lessons, Carl, Jr. played sports, and then as I said, he played with the troopers, and then he had a little old red automated automobile that they roared around and around out there in the parking lot. There wasn't a whole lot for children to do. These people that live in the mansion, it's hard on children, real hard on them.

**SHORT:** Tell us about your children today.

SANDERS: Well, Betty's married to an attorney, David Botts. He finished Georgia Law School. She has had three children, Austin Sanders Botts was the oldest, and we lost him two years ago to cancer, and that was a very hard part, sad part of our life that you never get over. And then she has Michael that's 22 now, and Alyssa, who is the youngest, who is a senior in high school. Carl, Jr. went back to Augusta after being in banking ten years in Atlanta, and went back to Augusta to work with the property that his father owned, and he has thoroughly enjoyed that, coming out of the suit and tie, and riding around in trucks or Land Rovers or whatever and developing. He does not build. He only develops, cuts the streets, paves, puts the lights up, landscapes the entrances and so on, and he's very happy being back in Augusta.

SHORT: When did you first realize you had become an artist?

SANDERS: Well, I drew a lot when I was a child, because there wasn't all that many things to do, but when my mother gave me art lessons in high school, and I took from Ms. Mary Lou Carmichael. And then when I went on to Georgia, I thought I wanted to be a home economics teacher or something in that line, dietician, and I realized I had not had enough chemistry and physics in school, because I had gone to a small school at Register, Georgia when I was in the grammar schools, and then moved on up to Statesborough in high school. But I did not have enough of those things to really kick in for me, so I chose to go to art school. And the

highlight of my life was entering art school and being a student of Lamar Dodd, which was Georgia's most famous artist, and frankly, back then the art school, I can't think of the name of that building. It's where the beauty reviews used to be held on the corner of Lumpkin and something. It's a block below the law school, whatever that street that goes down close to where you park and you go to the football games, but it was in the basement, about 10 or 12 rooms was art school. And on the other side was music school. So, that's where you -- if you were a music major. And that's how I got started. I was real into crafts and finger things and this, and then I did take painting and Lamar Dodd said to me, "Betty, do you ever paint anything other than flowers?" I said, "Well, I love them." But anyway, it's funny that umpteen years later, I would take on five years of recording Georgia's wildflowers, which was influenced to some degree by Lady Bird being so interested in wildflowers, then I decided, well, I'll do the wildflowers of the state. But before that, my main first exhibition was dedicated to a group of paintings that went around to ten cities that helped me raise money to put that big white marble fountain out front of the mansion, so I was hoping that that would be a gift to the state that would be pumping and spewing with its beauty for years to come, and that was my first major, back into art, because at one point -- I'm jumping around. I became people-poopied, as I told Carl. I said, "Everyday I get up, there's just people, people, events, events, dinners, dinners. I have got to do something else." I said, "You go play golf or you go to the Y or you do this, that and the other." And someone had told me that there was a lady named Ouida Canaday, and they took me and introduced me to her, and she gave lessons. And so anyway, she and I become

acquainted, became devoted friends, she came to the mansion and taught me once a week, and then finally I got where I went and joined her bigger class of women, and we traveled abroad eventually for three weeks at a time, painting. She was well-educated in the field of the arts and was the best art teacher I ever had in my life. And I miss her to this day. I painted with her until she died, and I must have painted with her nearly 20 years, and when I get in problem back there and I can't think, I say, "Where are you, Ouida?" You know, because she could really push you to the point.

SHORT: You promoted art for a long time.

SANDERS: Yes, I got called to create the first Georgia Council of the Arts in this state, and we went and got that started in every town that was off and on around the state in all directions. Lamar Dodd was the chairman of the ten people we selected, and that has been very successful. We granted money to, you know, special students and special projects, and I served seven years on the Georgia Council of the Arts until I stepped down, and then another thing I was interested in, put four fine art buildings on Georgia college campuses and three or four additions. That was the biggest dose of culture that the state of Georgia has had to introduce these fine art buildings over the state to people that were interested in the arts. And I went down and dedicated, he and I, one of the first ones at Georgia Southern, and that was in 1966, and in 1967, I dedicated myself to that project down there with time and money over the years, giving

them an Outstanding Georgian's Work of Art, three scholarships for first, second and third to help with their education. Then funded a travel fund for them to be able to go see, look at other exhibitions and places of interest that would be interesting to an artist. I gave them a bus for them to be able to do that, and then we had the Olympics, I hired a big bus to haul 50-something students and teachers to Atlanta to see the major exhibition at the museum here, and they have since come up to see other exhibitions. I have really done and given a lot of effort to that, because back when I came along, the main two places you could study art was Athens and Atlanta, and that was it. I wanted it all over the state to have the opportunity. And certain sections needed that ability to do that more than other sections, so Carl decided at the end of his administration he was going to put his efforts towards the University of Georgia law school and the law library. And I was going to devote my efforts to my hometown and make a contribution in that section that had contributed so much of themselves and the culture down there to making me the woman that I became, so I wanted to give back to that section. And then about, oh, I don't know the exact date after working with them so long. Well, the Foy Fine Art Building was dedicated. Several years later I put a 16-foot piece of sculpture in front of that and dedicated that to my father, and then I kept going each year and then about two years ago they named the art department the Betty Foy Sanders Fine Art Department, and I was so embarrassed and they insisted, and I said, "I don't know if I'm due this honor." But anyway, they have worked very closely with me over the years. Now, I just in March of this year clipped the ribbon to the new art theatre building that is the site of the present facility, the art department.

And my daughter and I -- well, I was the main exhibition and she showed in an adjoining gallery, but that was my last exhibition with about 16 or so paintings called, "Romancing the Stones," which it was a totally new direction for me the last few years. But a thousand people came to the opening, and it pays to go home.

SHORT: So Betty Foy is also an artist.

SANDERS: Yes. She showed signs of that in high school. She won the gold medal in high school in the arts when she was there. But I tell you, I don't know how she did it between ballet, dancing, art, piano. She finally made up what direction she wanted to go -- made up her mind. And it's been good for her, because losing her son was so hard, and as a mother-daughter, I said, "Betty, I know I can't tell you how bad this hurts, because you're the mother. I can tell you how bad it hurts being the grandmother. But the best thing for you to do is to pick up your brush and you go over to your studio and just take some of it out on your canvas." And I think that it's been a godsend for her to do that, and she's active and devotes a lot of time to that and other things. And one of the things I'm proudest of Betty, she spends at least once or twice a month feeding the poor in Grant Park, and has for years, and she will not give up. She will give up going to anything, but she will not miss that. So anyway, it's good to see your children develop. They grew up during the hippie years when it hit full-blast when they were 16, 15, 17, and I thought, "Oh Lord," but children do have to grow, and their mind has

to expand, and now they are both middle of the road as they can be, and I'm proud of all of them.

They got a good family, and so I guess that's what success is in life.

SHORT: You're also well-known for your love of hats.

SANDERS: Well, my mother started me out as a baby in all these fancy bonnets and it must have stuck, because she had bonnets or bows in my hair all the time. So, I really wore a lot of hats, I'll have to admit that, and hats were kind of in style, and styles have changed so. When I came to Atlanta early on, all women had on their heels, they had on their gloves, they had on their hats when they went downtown shopping. And Lord, look at them now. Look at us. We have stepped back from all of that formality, but yes, I did become known. And nationally, there was me and Ms. First, who were recognized by the millinery institutions, and when we had the governor's conference, the southern governor's conference at Sea Island, and all the 17 states came, one of my planned events, I planned two events for the ladies, one was a fashion show over at the Agorama that Dick Rich stepped in and promised Saul Kent, who was the guru of fashion in Atlanta that had put on Fashionada for years that all the women flocked to. Dick Rich called the hand of every big designer they traded with, and they came and sent their best clothes to the Agorama for that southern governor's conference. Then second, I had a luncheon out by the pool the next day, and it was all about hats. And we had a hat fashion show. In the process of that hat fashion show, the governor of -- let me see -- Oklahoma said,

“Well, we have a present for you.” I said, “Well, great. What is it?” Said, “We brought you a hat. We brought you the headgear of the Cherokee Indian.” Feathers and all. So anyway, everything worked out great during our administration. I have no complaints about any of it or anything. It was the most exciting time in my whole life. I just couldn’t be more thankful to the people of Georgia for giving me the opportunity to serve beside of my husband.

SHORT: Well, you’ve been a great first lady and we certainly appreciate your taking you time to be with us today.

SANDERS: Well, I got one other thing I wanted to -- let’s see. Are you finished, you think?

SHORT: It’s still open to you.

SANDERS: Well, let’s see. I wanted to mention the first in my life was the first lady to have a televised -- you know, television wasn’t -- it had just come about in the ‘50’s, and here we were early ‘60’s, so I was the first to have a televised view of the governor’s mansion. Then I was the first to entertain a sitting president’s wife in the governor’s mansion. And then I was first, woman, to be part of, as co-chairman of building a governor’s mansion, because we had only built one before, and that was in Milledgeville, Georgia. So, I really was proud of the

responsibilities and the opportunities that I had to do that. Now that the years of politics is over and we are just living a kind of normal life and away from the public, I tend to my house, my yard, my children, my grandchildren, I paint three and four days a week, and I've given up civic work. I've done my share being head of this and head of that, and after the election, say what you will, a loss take such a blow out of a family and their children, that my desire was to live in a home, garden, paint, do what I wanted to do, go where I wanted to go, and just be me every day of the week. And at this home, we've hosted wedding parties for children, we've hosted functions, we've hosted parties by the pool. The biggest party held at this house was when the Democratic party, when Dukakis was running for president, asked Carl, since we had been very active in the party and had been to two or three conventions, national conventions, if we would host a party in our home, because everything was scheduled up, hotels and civic buildings. And they were asking about three people to host parties at their homes. So Carl came home and had told me, and he said, "Now, they want us to have about 100 to 150 people out here." I said, "Well, okay." And he came back a week later, he said, "Uh, it's gone to 300." I said, "Three hundred -- well now, we need to start thinking about a caterer, and what time of day is this party?" "3:30 in the afternoon" "In July?" I said, "Good gracious, we could have a thunderstorm, we could have power failure. I don't know." And he said, "Oh, come on. We can do it. We can do it." So, came home the last time, he said, "Betty, it's 500 people." "Five hundred? Where am I going to put them?" Well anyway, we hired the tour girls of Atlanta to bus everybody out here. I set up the dining room table in the dining room in the typical

Southern manner. Had the pretty lace tablecloth and the tea and the coffee and the little sandwiches and the this, that and the other. Then we went straight out in the back with a canopy and put a huge tent out there, and fans in the tents, and we had music and we had ambassadors and we had congressmen and we had legislators and city fathers from everywhere and Lady Bird Johnson's daughter came because I had Lady Bird's peach punch. And we had peach margaritas and watermelon daiquiris. And I tell you what, that convention started at 8 o'clock. They stayed here until 6, 6:30. I thought, "My goodness." But we had Georgia food out there, the shrimp, the fried chicken, the this, the that, everything. Well, come to find out, the New York paper said it was the best party held at the Democratic Convention in Atlanta, Georgia. So anyway, that was the last biggie. No, I haven't had any more other than sometime the law firm out or something. Now it's gotten so big I can't entertain it, so it's all on the back list.

SHORT: You know, I'd appreciate it if you'd just take a minute to tell us about the house so we can put that in there, about the house.

SANDERS: Okay, when we started looking for a house after the election was all over and you know, we "well, are we going back or what, or to Augusta." I had house plans, we had property, ten acres we were going to build on or whatever. We rode around and looked and the house market was absolutely flat, I mean real flat. This house had been empty over a year. The Brown Trucking people had lived here. He was originally from Waynesboro, Georgia. So we

came in and looked around and the thing that caught my eye, it had high ceilings again in my life, and big rooms, and bigger closets, which women are always interested in. And it had nice grounds, and so anyway, we ended up buying it. Nobody told me when we bought it that tour buses stopped in front of this house. I'm sure because it was Bobby Jones' home. It's not ours. But they stop out there five and six times a day, and at the back gate. See, this property goes from Tuxedo all the way to Northside Drive, so that made me responsible for two yards, not one. And anyway, the house was mostly aqua. So I struck out trying to make it Betty Sanders' house, and that was my project then. This had been the home of Bobby Jones, and of course, we all know he is the world's most famous golfer, and a very respected gentleman in nature and reputation. And the other fact was, the Augusta National was more or less planned here, and so next came the Masters Tournament, and that was planned here. So, since the children are grown and everybody's out of the house, I didn't understand at this stage in life why we needed this much house, but I would never get Carl out of this house because it's tied to Augusta and tied to Bobby Jones. He said, "When I go out of this house, I'm going feet first." So I guess I'll still be looking after a big house and a big yard and making it, you know, home for the rest of our life. And we've now been here 36 -- let's see, we bought this in '72, I think. So we've been here 36 years, but anyway, I want to say one other thing. As I look back at my life, I want to thank my heavenly father for giving me the opportunity and the privilege to serve my state and to give me talent that I have used every bit that you gave me. And I would like to really close with a poem that I quoted on the steps of the Bulloch County Courthouse when my husband opened

for governor in July of '62. And it's called "My Influence." I've quoted this many times. I've more or less lived by it. It's almost my trademark in most anything I undertake, but that day in front of all those people, I said, "My life shall touch a dozen lives before this day is done. Leave countless marks for good or ill 'ere set the evening sun. So this the wish I always wish, the prayer I ever pray. Lord, make my life help others lives it touches by the way." Thank you.

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