

RBRL OHD 009

The Oral History Documentary Series

A Conversation with Carl E. Sanders, former Governor of Georgia (1963-1966)

Carl E. Sanders Interviewed by George W. Justice

Date: February 9, 2005

Original: video recording, 95 mins.

JUSTICE: Hello. I'm George Justice. On behalf of the Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies, the University of Georgia, it's the 17th day of August 2004 and we're at the Van Der Kloot Film Studios in Atlanta. We're here today with former Georgia Governor Carl E. Sanders to discuss the highlights of his most distinguished public service career and to provide an oral history documentation that will accompany his papers at the University.

Governor Sanders is a former state Legislator, state Senator, Floor Leader, and President Pro Tempe of the Georgia Senate before being elected to the governor's office in 1962. He was the first Georgia governor to be elected by popular vote and was, at age 37, the youngest governor in the nation. Governor Sanders led the state during a time of tremendous political, social, and economic changes in the 1960s and brought both energy and professionalism to a reform agenda unmatched by many of his predecessors. Currently he is the chair and co-founding partner of Atlanta's prestigious law firm of Troutman Sanders and has been involved in numerous investments, corporate boards, and charities. We appreciate your taking the time to speak with us today Governor.

SANDERS: Glad to do it.

JUSTICE: Let's begin with our first question. Governor Sanders, you grew up in Augusta, an old Georgia city with a very colorful history and one of it's most interesting and important

legacies is the political leaders the city has provided to the state. This is especially true in the twentieth century; people like Tom Watson, Roy Harris and even yourself rose to political prominence and became indelible figures in Georgia history. But even the local politics of the states second capital has included a very contentious, often contentious, political history with party strife and I was wondering whether or not that during your youth whether you were aware of any of the partisan struggles?

SANDERS: Well Augusta of course politically was dominated and ruled by a party called the Cracker Party for years and in fact it got to the point where if you wanted to hold public office of any sort or you wanted to work for the city or the county you had to go through the Cracker Party in order to achieve employment. I was aware of that as a young man growing up but I was not so concerned about it until I came back after the war and after I went to law school and returned home to practice law. We had a situation where the Safety Commissioner who used to be the head of the fire department, by the way was named John Kennedy, control the Cracker Party. And after I had returned from the Air Force I practiced law in a firm called Hammond and Kennedy, later Hammond, Kennedy, and Sanders and I was approached by some of the local elders who had decided that the Cracker Party needed to be broken up because it was like Taminy Hall in New York. And they prevailed upon me and a few other young veterans to run against the candidates proposed by the Cracker Party. That was my entry into politics; that was in 1954 I believe it was and I ran as a member of the Independent Party and we successfully broke up the Cracker Party's hold on the public offices in Richmond County.

JUSTICE: As a youth were you aware of—was politics a topic of household conversation at your home?

SANDERS: Politics was not a topic of household conversation in my home. My father was employed by Swift & Company, the meat packing company. He grew up in Rex, Georgia south of Atlanta. He went to work for the company in Atlanta and then they transferred him to Augusta. He was with them for forty-four years. When I was growing up he didn't indicate any interest in politics and I had no interest in politics. I was more concerned about whether I was going to go to the YMCA and learn how to swim or play basketball or football or all the sports programs were not in the public school but were in the institutions like the Y. My father later, after I came back after the war, did become a County Commissioner and he became a County Commissioner when the Cracker Party was still in its heyday. I learned in short order that that was not a very attractive job. Everybody wanted you to pave their driveway or pick up their trash or build a new road somewhere. So when I went to law school I really had no political ambition. My ambitions were to go through the University law school and come back home and practice law. And when I was in law school there were a lot of students who were already running for Governor, running for Lieutenant Governor and Officers. Most of them, for reasons that I never understood, never really achieved much success politically. But I came back to Augusta. I finished law school in—really in December '47 and I returned in January of '48 and joined the law firm. They worked me to death. I didn't have time to be worried about politics. I was worried about making a living. My wife who I married in September had—actually in August, September was our anniversary—anyway, my wife became seriously ill so I had to try to provide for her. I not only had to practice law during the day but I taught law school at the

Augusta Law School three nights a week so I was fully occupied and employed looking after my wife and practicing law. When I was asked about running for public office, I really didn't know whether I wanted to do that or not. I went home and I talked to my wife about it. She was not too happy about it but she said if you decide to do it fine. I thought about it at length and decided that maybe the time had come for me to try to do something about what the situation was politically in my home town, so I ran. And I luckily won, led the ticket, ran against a boy that I had played YMCA football with, another lawyer—

JUSTICE: Billy Barton?

SANDERS: Billy Barton. Later he was the District Attorney in Augusta some years later. But we had a very vigorous race but there were no monumental issues. The issue was, are you going to vote for the Cracker Party candidate or are you going to vote for the Independent Party candidate? And that's how I got started.

JUSTICE: So, was your lack of interest then, in politics when you initially came back to Augusta, because of the experience that you'd seen your dad go through?

SANDERS: No, my lack of interest really was just what I said. I was so busy trying to make a living. I made \$150 a month practicing law. I got a \$600 bonus at the end of the year. In 1954, my first year's salary and bonus was \$2400. So you can imagine how I was trying to live and in addition to that my wife was sick. I finally took her to John Hopkins Hospital. They diagnosed her condition as Regional Ileitis—she had to have surgery. At one time earlier than that right

after we were married, she was in the hospital in Bullock County, her home of Statesboro. The minister told me one night that she'd never live through the night. I got down on my knees with the minister and prayed as I never prayed before. Fortunately she lived through the night. She recovered. We didn't think that we would ever be able to have children. Fortunately we had a daughter and a son and so I was really busy trying to make a living more than trying to determine whether I wanted to get into politics. But I knew that a political job like the County Commissioner was not everything that people thought it was cracked up to be, that it was a tough job. So, when I got into the legislative race it was different—I knew then that I would be going to Atlanta if I was successful and I would be serving in the General Assembly of Georgia.

JUSTICE: You've talked about before a couple of things that had a lot of impact on you in your youth and one of those things was the YMCA.

SANDERS: The YMCA has had a great impact on my life. That's why I'm so interested in supporting the Y today, why I've tried to give back some of the material goods that I've acquired over the years back to the Y because my mother took me down to the YMCA on Broad Street in Augusta, Georgia when I was about seven, eight years old. That's where I learned how to swim, first. Secondly, I learned how to play basketball. Thirdly, I learned how to play football. I went to the YMCA camps in the summer time. They were not very sumptuous camps but I went there and I developed an athletic ability and it was as a result of that athletic ability that when I went to high school at Richmond Academy I played football and I eventually became the most valuable player on the football team, I became a member of the all-state GIAA football team, I earned a football scholarship to the University of Georgia. Had it not been for

some of the programs and so forth that I learned from the YMCA I doubt if I'd ever had an opportunity to get an athletic scholarship to go to Georgia. I don't know whether I would have gone to college because my mother and my father neither one of them had ever gone to college and my father's income working for Swift & Company was not such that you could just automatically put a kid through college. But I had worked in various and sundry forms before I went to college when I was in the high school and my dad, since he was with Swift & Company, got me a job with the Big Star supermarket. I worked from 7 o'clock on Saturday morning to sometimes 8 or 9 o'clock at night. I started out sacking groceries. I wound up catching flour sacks in the back of the store and when I was in college I came home, I carried the mail. During the Christmas holidays the postmaster was a friend of my fathers and I knew him. When I was in school, even in grammar school and during the summer time when school was out I had a paper route. I made seventy-five cents a week. I folded the papers in the morning and I gave my mother fifty cents to save and I spent a quarter. But I grew up in a wonderful middle class family but I grew up with a work ethic that I still have today. I grew up realizing that if you really wanted to get something, get ahead, you had to work and things were not going to be handed to me on a silver platter but if I was going to achieve anything in life, education or otherwise, I was going to have to go out and work for it. My mother was a very wonderful woman. She worked before she married my father she was a cashier at S.H. Crest and Company in Augusta and as I told you my father was a salesman with Swift & Company. So, growing up when I did, I was born shortly before the big stock crash in 1929. I was born in 1925 and of course I grew up in the depression. Now I didn't realize that the depression was a severe as it really was. But what happened is that we had a little brick bungalow house on the corner of Johns and Wrightsboro Road that we were buying, that my family was buying. My

father's salary was cut half in two like many other people during the depression. We had to give that house back to the bank or to the insurance company and rent it instead of purchasing it. But I never really realized that I was suffering as a part of that depression. I didn't have wonderful play toys, but I had skates and I had a football and I could play cops and robbers and we had some woods not too far down the street from where I lived and we had wonderful opportunities. We had a nice neighborhood with a lot of kids. We had some football games in the street. We had a basketball rim in somebody's backyard. We just enjoyed a wonderful upbringing in my early years. I walked to school, to Monta Santa Grammar School. I served as a captain of the state patrol—safety patrol. Get there early in the morning. Make sure that the kids got across the street when they were coming to school and not get run over by an automobile. I, as I said earlier, I was active in the Y. I had a bicycle. I never had an automobile until I came back out of the service and I bought a black Plymouth Coupe; paid \$640 for the automobile, brand new automobile by the way. You can imagine how that compares to automobiles today.

JUSTICE: So, these middle-class values, the values that you learned from the Y, do you think any of those values translated over into your political career?

SANDERS: Yeah they did, for instance when I went to the paper route, you had to fold the papers in order to throw them so you can hit them on somebody's front porch. I didn't know how to fold the paper into the form that you could throw it. And one fellow that I got to be a good friend was a fellow named Charles Butler who was an African American. He taught me how to fold my papers so that I could put them in my sack and I could ride by bicycle and throw the papers. I learned from him right off the bat that he was a good solid individual and became

a good friend of mine. Later when I was Governor I appointed him to the Board of Education. He later became principal of one of the high schools in Augusta and his name was Charles Butler but they called him “98” because that was the route, the paper route that he threw. So I learned early on that it really didn’t make any difference what the color of your skin was it was what the people—the person that you dealt with, what they stood for and how they felt about you and how you felt about them. So I really learned early on that I didn’t have any prejudice, racially, against anybody because of the color of their skin.

JUSTICE: Tell me about the ROTC and what kind of impact that had on you as a youth.

SANDERS: Well, Richmond Academy when I went there was a thousand boys, military ROTC. We wore uniforms every day except Thursday and that’s when you supposed to put them in the laundry and you could wear civilian clothes. I didn’t fully realize what an impact that would have on my life. It was a fine school. The girls had a school several blocks down the street called Tubman High School but Richmond Academy was fully all male. So I initially started in the military ROTC program. I became a Corporal, a Sergeant, later became an Officer, later became an Officer, later became one of the top officers at the high school. I was elected President of my freshman class in high school and as I said I played athletics. But I learned how to do left face, right face, about face, and all the oblique left, oblique right, and how to march in the parades and how to take an old Springfield rifle and take it apart and put it back together. When I was an officer I wore Saber and had the tassels on your shoulders like a military thing. Well, all that was wonderful and I enjoyed it but what really happened was when I enlisted in the United States Air Force after I’d gone to Georgia for a year and I was seventeen

and I had an alternate appointment to West Point that Congressman Paul Broun had awarded me but I thought the principal who was at the Citadel would not take the principal and he took the principal appointment to West Point so that left me out. And so I went over and enlisted in the Naval Air Core in Atlanta and they told me that I had a problem and I said, "What's my problem?" They said, "You're seventeen years old. You've got to go home and get your parents consent." So I went home the next week to get my parents consent. Thought about trying to land a plane on one of those aircraft carriers somewhere out in the Pacific Ocean and I said, "You know, I don't believe I want to do that." I went out to Daniels Field in Augusta and enlisted in the Army Air Core. Well, a month later they called me up and my first stop was Kessler Field in Biloxi, Mississippi. Well that was just a beginning of a military career. I began to realize, though, that most of the people that were—that I was in the service with had never had any military training whatsoever. They didn't know left face, right face, about face or anything about the military. So when I went into the service the military experience and training that I had in high school stood me very well. I later became the wing commander when I was in primary training, flight training. I had an official officer position all throughout my training to become a pilot and I even had a choice at a time to decide where I wanted to go to take advance training but much of it was because all the military had come so easy to me and so difficult to some of the others that I was miles ahead of the, militarily wise, and that was because of the ROTC program at Richmond Academy which, by the way, was one of the finest schools in the country. Was actually started, originated before the adoption of the United States Constitution. And I went back some years ago to the 200th Anniversary of that school. They had a faculty that was as good as any college faculty and it was a wonderful educational process.

JUSTICE: And this military experience led to your participation in World War II, is that right?

SANDERS: Well, that's right. I mean, you know, I was like every other young man at that time. I was anxious to go out and defend my country. I didn't want to stay at home and I certainly didn't want to be classified as some people were back in those days, 4F is the terminology that was used. But I was anxious not only to go to the service and defend the country but I wanted to learn how to fly. I wanted to be a pilot. I didn't know whether I could fly or not. I eventually went to Santa Ana, California where they had preflight school and they classified you bombardier, navigator, or pilot. I took all of the tests of written and the dexterity tests that they gave you and I came back and thought, "Man, I'll never be a pilot." Some of my friends and buddies said, "Oh, that was easy. We going to get to be pilots." Well they wound up becoming bombardiers and navigators and I wound up as a pilot. But, there were a couple—in fact there was one boy from Augusta that was with me at that time named Ben Popkin. Ben Popkin later, I think, became a navigator. Ben's dead now. But Ben was in the military about the same time that I was. I went in at—enlisted at seventeen, went in at eighteen, became a P-17 bomber pilot at 19 years old, first pilot with a ten man crew and of course was in the military almost three years and returned to civilian life and went back to the University of Georgia.

JUSTICE: Did the war itself have any impact on you?

SANDERS: Yeah, the war had a lot of impact on me. The first thing it did, it matured me far beyond my teenage years. I didn't have those sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen year old experiences that some of these kids have today because I was in the service and we were at war

and I was trying to make the best of whatever I could do to help my country. What it did for me was when I was at Richmond Academy and I made reasonably grades, I had some good grades in Chemistry. So I thought, "Well, some day I'll be a chemist." I didn't know what a chemist did other than it was in a lab and had a uniform of some sort on and tried to look at test tubes and things. But I said that because I really didn't know anything else at that time that I wanted to do. While serving in the Air Force and in the military I began to realize that I didn't want to be a chemist and I began to think about what I really wanted to be. I think the war matured me to the extent that it gave me an opportunity to make some judgment calls that I don't believe I would have made if I had not gone to war. When I came out of the war I knew that I did not want to be a chemist but I had decided that I wanted to go to law school. The reason that I decided that I wanted to go to law school was because almost everybody that I heard about that were leaders and movers and shakers in the country at the time, in the world at the time had some type of legal education or legal background. And I thought if that's the kind of education that it takes for you to really become successful in life in what you want to do, that's what I want to do. So when I came back out of the Air Force September '45 I'd only had about one year of academic work in college. But they gave veterans an opportunity to take tests and if you could pass the test in any subject that you took they gave you credit because we had all types of educational courses when I was training for pilot. I passed enough tests to where I needed to take only one quarter to qualify for law school. So that was in '45. I played football that year. I returned to the football dormitory. Went back on the football team; played in the Oil Bowl which later became the Blue Bonnet Bowl. And then I applied to law school. I went into law school in January of '46. It didn't take me but a few weeks to realize that I could not continue to play football and get through law school. Law school was very competitive and I wanted to

get in and get through law school as quickly as possible. So I went to Coach Butts and told him I was going to give up my athletic scholarship and I was going to continue to take my GI Bill of Rights and go to law school. That's another thing, before I went into the service I played that year of football under Wally Butts and the University of Georgia football team and I promise you I thought the war was easier than playing football for Wally Butts as a freshman because it was tough. We not only had to play football on the football field but we had rat courts at night, we had belt lines, we had to run through—we had all kinds of obstacles to stay on athletic scholarship. But anyway, I got in law school. Law school normally takes three years. They allowed us to go around the clock, twelve months instead of taking the summer off. So I was able to finish law school in two years rather than three years. And back then, which they do not allow you to do now, you could take the Bar Exam if you felt like you could pass it. I went over at the end of my second year in law school, took the Bar Exam thinking I was taking it for practice with a couple of students who lived in the same house that I lived in out on Springdale Street and I lucked up and passed the Bar Exam after my second GI still had a year to go in law school but I passed the Bar Exam so I knew that I could practice law no matter what. That's when I got serious about marrying my wife who was at Georgia at the time and who was in art school. And so we actually got married about three months before I finished law school and about six or eight months before I picked up my diploma.

JUSTICE: You're talking about law school and you're talking about the football at Georgia.

You were very competitive, weren't you?

SANDERS: I was very competitive, but I don't think I ever realized how competitive I was. I mean, I was competitive because I enjoyed what I was doing. I enjoyed athletics, I enjoyed flying, I enjoyed responsibility, I enjoyed work but I was never obsessed and never felt like it, you know, I'm a real competitive guy. I never felt that way.

JUSTICE: Did you take that competitive spirit with you into politics?

SANDERS: Well, I think I did. I'm pretty sure I did because I never would have run for Governor if I hadn't taken that into politics with me because when I went to the Legislature in '55 and served two years in the House I sat the first year and listened and kept my mouth shut and tried to find out how the General Assembly operated. Second year I became a little more involved in taking on some issues and then I went to the Senate and of course when I went to the Senate. The Senate back in those days, except for Fulton County, rotated within three counties for each district. Fulton County had the only permanent Senator. My district was the eighteenth Senatorial District. It was Richmond, Glascock, and Jefferson County and I first served the first term in the Senate from Richmond County. After two years in the Senate from Richmond County, Jefferson County allowed me to serve and for the Jefferson County term so I served a second term. The third term that I served in the Senate was for Glascock County. They allowed me to serve as their Senator. I was the only Senator and have been the only Senator in the history of the state that served in the Senate for three different counties representing those counties. If I had not done that I would not have been Governor today. But as a result of that I was Vandiver's Floor Leader in my first term in the Senate. I later became the President Pro Tempe of the Senate. That's when I decided before I was having to practice

law and serve in the Senate at the same time so I was going to the political arena when I had to in Atlanta and I was coming home on the weekend and trying to cram in a weeks law practice and I decided that I either had to get in or get out of this political thing because it was taking too much time to try to squeeze in both ventures. So I decided well I think I'll run for Lieutenant Governor. The county unit system was in full bloom. Segregation was still the law of the land. And I decided to run for Lieutenant Governor. Anyway, Ernie Vandiver—Peter Zack Geer had a closer relationship with Vandiver than I did and he was going to run for the same office that I thought I would run for. So I started campaigning for Lieutenant Governor and going around the state and visiting the various counties. And I got to Dublin, Georgia one day and the head of the newspaper down there was a gentleman by the name of Champion and he said, "Have you heard the news today?" And I said, "No, what's the news today?" He said, "There's a former policeman in Atlanta who's got a law degree from a night school named Carl F. Sanders. He has announced that he's going to enter the race for Lieutenant Governor." Well I knew what had happened. I mean, I knew that Peter Zack Geer and some of his friends had gotten this individual to offer for Lieutenant Governor. That would leave me in the position of having people to go to the poles and decide whether they wanted to vote for Carl E. or Carl F. and that would have been impossible. So I said to Mr. Champion, "Well, you know, if that's the way they going to play the game I'll just run for governor." And that's when I got in the governor's race. Believe it or not it was as a result of that particular incident. At that time when I went back to Atlanta to my office I had phone calls and I had people coming in saying, "Oh, don't do that. You're making a mistake. We've got the county locked up for you for Lieutenant Governor. We can't carry it for Governor. Don't make that change." And I said, "It's too late. I've decided to make the change." So I got in the Governor's race. The county unit system was

still in full force and effect. I didn't have any wonderful political machine. I was a bright young man on the white horse but I had a long way to go to get to the Governor's office. But I had made up my mind that I either had to get into the political arena full time and serve the people of Georgia or go back to Augusta and practice law and be satisfied with that.

JUSTICE: That was a very bold move going from Lieutenant Governor—

SANDERS: Well it was a crazy move when I think about it in retrospect because I had no campaign funds of any consequence. I knew that I had friends in my home town that would help raise money but I really didn't have—I was not a Talmadge, member of the Talmadge dynasty. I was not a member of the Russell family. I was from Augusta, which was one of the metropolitan areas in the state. The county unit [End Side 1, Start Side 2]...was willing to work hard so I thought, you know, everything else being equal it's just another opportunity to exceed and I got in the race.

JUSTICE: In all fairness, you had made quite a name for yourself in the Legislature, hadn't you?

SANDERS: Well I had and I had gone out on the legislative tour as when I was President Pro Tempe of the Senate the year before I announced and at that time the big question was "What are we going to do about the public schools in Georgia?" The Supreme Court *Brown v Board of Education* had already been decided. No longer were we supposed to have segregated schools but the Separate but Equal doctrine that the Supreme Court for so many years used to keep

segregation in the country had been done away with. I realized, thinking about my own life and thinking about the lives of other people, that you could not have a state with nothing but private schools for the people who could afford them and have public schools, if any public schools at all they would be sub par. So I took the position that if I was elected to any public office in this state we were not going to close the public schools. Frank Twitty who was the member of the House that was on the tour with me initially took the position that we had to close the public schools and we had to build private schools and we had to succeed from the Union or whatever we had to do. But by the time we got through traveling around the state and speaking three times a day in various cities and counties, he finally came to the conclusion that I was right and he was wrong and we both wound up advocating that the public schools of this state would stay open no matter what. Now that translated into the situation with Governor Vandiver who was confronted with the problem of whether he was going to allow the two African American students Hamilton Holmes and—

JUSTICE: Charlayne Hunter.

SANDERS: Charlayne Hunter was going to allow them to enter the University of Georgia. He called fifty some-odd leaders, legislative leaders, business leaders, political leaders, out to the mansion one night and said, "I've got to make a decision about closing the University of Georgia and I want to know how ya'll feel about it." He went around the room and took the statement from all fifty people. Forty-eight out of the fifty said close the University of Georgia, Frank Twitty and I said, "Do not close the University of Georgia. You can't do that. We can't wind up with a generation of illiterates in this state." Vandiver took our advice and kept the

University of Georgia open but it was that close. It was only two of us out of the fifty people that he called in to give him advice and counsel that were willing to stand up and say, "Let's keep the schools open."

JUSTICE: Why do you think he listened to the two of you over everyone else?

SANDERS: Well, I think inherently, I think, he felt like we felt that you couldn't have these private schools. But he had campaigned and gotten Roy Harris being one of the supporters when he was elected Governor had gotten him and a few other people to make this wonderful speech about "No Not One" not ever one will we ever admit to the public schools of Georgia. And I think he was confronted politically with that in mind and he knew that he would be going against what he had said in a political campaign so he had a lot of reservations. But basically and fundamentally, he was a good man, is a good man and I think he understood that education is a centerpiece of anybody's life and that we couldn't have private schools on the one hand for white students and public schools, if we had any public schools at all, on the other hand for black students. So I think he took our advice. Twitty was well known in South Georgia from Camilla and I was from Augusta and I think he believed that we had analyzed the situation properly and he followed our recommendation.

JUSTICE: Education had been high on your agenda early on in your political career.

SANDERS: That's because I had to work for it. That's because if I hadn't had to work for it I wouldn't have gotten where I'd been in life and I realized early on in life that the only free

people that I know anything about are people who've had the benefit of an education. When you're educated you're free to make choices; you're free to analyze situations. When you're uneducated you're blocked; you're not free to do very much of anything and you're imprisoned in your own life because of a lack of education.

JUSTICE: In fact you helped get Augusta College established, didn't you?

SANDERS: That's right. Augusta College started out as—they had a junior college attached to Richmond Academy, a local junior college. And it, to some of the faculty members there, used to also teach in the high school. When I was in the legislature property that was formerly known as the United States Arsenal Property up on Walton Way in Augusta, beautiful track of land of fifty something acres with buildings on it had been declared surplus. I went to work with the local people there to get that land transferred to the local board of education to move the junior college from the Richmond Academy building up to the arsenal property. I also went to work when I was in the legislature to get that two year junior college into the university system to become a part of the University of Georgia system. I was able to do that. When I was elected governor I made it along with three or four other junior colleges into a four year community college and created another ten or twelve junior colleges throughout the state. When I was in the Senate and serving in the Senate I went to California. I studied the community college system in California. Out there you could go to school free of charge in any community college that you wanted to enter. And I came back and realized that we couldn't educate everybody at the University of Georgia in Athens or Georgia Tech in Atlanta. And so I came up with the idea that we needed to create a series of junior colleges, community colleges

where kids could stay at home, could go the first two years and then back in that day and time transfer to a four year college if they wanted to. Many of those junior colleges today are senior colleges and of course that program turned out to be a wonderful educational program for the state of Georgia. At the same time we created these junior colleges. We created these vocational-technical schools which are a different type of educational process where kids could learn a trade, learn how to operate machinery and if they wanted to if they were not going for an academic degree in the junior college or the community college they could go back and forth between the vocational-technical school and the liberal arts junior college or senior college. It was a wonderful educational program. For instance, in Augusta a kid can go to high school, go to college, go to medical school, and get a medical degree without ever leaving home.

JUSTICE: Another issue at the top of your agenda early on in was honesty and efficiency in government.

SANDERS: That's right. I was on the Honesty and Efficiency Committee that was set up when Marvin Griffin was governor and Ernie Vandiver was lieutenant governor and I was a member of the Senate. And I saw first hand what could happen when people decided to become corrupt and use the resources of the government and the offices that they served in for corrupt purposes. So I realized that you couldn't serve in government and if—unless you were going to be totally honest and if you couldn't serve in government and be partially honest you had to be absolutely honest and you had to make sure that whatever decision you made was made with an honest intention and an honest purpose and not to feather somebody else's nest or to try to do something that would benefit you personally for something that you should not be entitled to.

JUSTICE: And that was one of the focal points of your platform for governor, wasn't it?

SANDERS: That was a big focal point for my platform for governor because the Griffin administration when Governor Griffin was in there had a very corrupt administration. Readers Digest had written an article, "Never Have So Few Robbed So Much from So Many," and they had rural roads that were built with a little grease on the road and that was about it. They bought gasoline and saving up machines that came off of boats and tried to put them on trucks. They favored some of their cronies and in all kinds of purchasing of equipment and so forth and that was one of the big issues in my campaign along with the racial issue.

JUSTICE: So, how were you able to garner all the support that you did in your campaign for governor, enough to win? How were you able to win that race?

SANDERS: Well, I think—well another thing happened too in the mean time. After I got in the race, after we were campaigning the county unit system went out of the window. So this was the first time that we had the popular vote. I just outworked the rest of the people; I outworked Marvin Griffin. I went from morning till noon till night everyday. I campaigned in every county in the state. I was supported by many of the people that I had gone to college with. I was able to get the support of Mills B. Lane who headed up the CNS Bank in Atlanta at the time. He had initially was going to support Garland Byrd who was the Lieutenant Governor who had a heart attack and dropped out of the race. He helped me raise financial funds. I later, when Byrd dropped out of the race who Ernie Vandiver was supporting up until then, I got the

support of some of the Vandiver people such as Jim Gillis Senior and some of them. But basically and fundamentally I just outworked the Griffin crowd. I knew that if I went every day as hard as I could go to as many places as I could go that they were going to call him up eventually and say, “You better come down here to this county and talk to some of these people. This young man has been in here shaking hands and garnering votes and if you don’t come down here we don’t know what’s going to happen.” He had the politicians; I had the people in that race.

JUSTICE: When you won that election you were part of a whole generation of young politicians across this country.

SANDERS: Generation of young politicians—young men and women who had returned from World War II who now wanted to do something that they had seen the rest of the world, they had fought for the freedom of the world and they wanted now to make some of these changes in their local communities and they were active and they went to the polls and voted when before the only people that generally went to the polls and voted were the professional politicians who had a hardcore supporters most of whom they gave jobs to after they got elected.

JUSTICE: And you also were part of that generation that had a special connection to John Kennedy.

SANDERS: Well, John Kennedy was a young, handsome, energetic senator who decided to run for President after he had tried to get the nomination several years before. He was a returning

World War II veteran. And of course he had a lot of charisma and a lot of people like myself and others of that age and that ilk liked what we saw in John Kennedy and supported him. And he carried Georgia percentage wise with the greatest percentage of any state in the union. But he, of course, his career was eclipsed by the assassination. I knew him well. He did me some great favors; one great favor he did for me was something that I will never forget. After I was elected in August of the primary of 1963 before I took—'62—before I took office in January of '63 Fort Gordon, which was located in Augusta, Richmond County—was the biggest payroll in my county. And the United States Defense Department announced that they were going to close Fort Gordon. Well, I said, "This can't happen." I'd just been elected governor. I can't afford to let the biggest payroll in my home town get shut down. So I went to see Senator Russell who was the Chairman of the Armed Services Committee in the Senate and who was a senior Senator from Georgia. And I said, "Senator Russell I've just been elected. I can't allow Fort Gordon to be closed. Can you help me try to keep them from closing Fort Gordon?" Senator Russell said, "I'm sorry but I've already signed off on the base closings in Georgia. There's nothing I can do about it now." I said, "Thank you very much." I decided to go see President John F. Kennedy. I went to see John F. Kennedy in the Oval office at the White House, explained to him my predicament, told him that I was elected and they were about to shut the fort down, could he help me? He said, "Let me see what I can do." I went back to Atlanta. A week later he called me up and said, "The order to close Fort Gordon has been rescinded." I said, "Can I make that announcement publicly?" He said, "Yes." I made the announcement; it made Senator Russell mad because I had gone to the President. But John Kennedy was the one who kept Fort Gordon from being moved from Fort Gordon, Georgia to Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. Later, several years later, Fort Monmouth, New Jersey was

moved to Fort Gordon, Georgia and it became the largest military telecommunications center in the world. But had it not been for John F. Kennedy more than forty years ago Fort Gordon, Georgia would have been shut down and would have been moved to Fort Monmouth, New Jersey.

JUSTICE: But you actually had a fairly close relationship with him.

SANDERS: Oh I had a close relationship with him. I did. I visited him many times before he was assassinated. I had a very close—*very* close relationship with Lyndon Johnson who later became president. I campaigned for the democratic ticket in 1964 when I was the only state-wide official that was willing to campaign for the ticket. I knew at the time that it was not the popular thing to do but I had been elected by the Democratic Party. I was head of the Democratic Party. Senator Russell went to Spain and spent the summer inspecting military bases, Senator Talmadge went under ground and didn't surface for the campaign so I was about the only state-wide candidate when they would come to Georgia that would stand up and appear on a platform and try to help him get elected. Goldwater carried Georgia and there wasn't much I could do about it but that still—I knew that it was my responsibility. I had been elected head of the party, I had been elected by the Democratic Party as governor and I felt like it was my responsibility to continue to lead the party and not abandon the party as a lot of the other public officials did.

JUSTICE: Is it true that John Kennedy had considered putting you on the ticket in '64?

SANDERS: Well I've heard that rumor, I've heard that story. There was always a very bad relationship between Bobby Kennedy who was John Kennedy's brother and who was of course the Attorney General—he and Lyndon Johnson didn't get along at all. And I think Bobby Kennedy would float names every day about who they were going to put into place of Lyndon Johnson when Jack Kennedy ran for reelection. And my name might have been put in there along with others but I never had any serious consideration to my knowledge about being on the ticket. Nobody had come to me and said, "Now we going to put you on the ticket." I think they were—Bobby was using that for leverage to keep Lyndon Johnson in line for the programs that he and his brother were advocating.

JUSTICE: But did that ever create any tensions between you and Lyndon Johnson?

SANDERS: None whatsoever. In fact, I sat in the family's box when he made his inaugural speech to the Congress. I was the only other outside member of the family with one other exception and that was Mad Dick Daily from Chicago. He and I were the two members—non-members of the family sat there. I hunted at the Johnson ranch. Johnson was good to the state of Georgia. Johnson, later part of our state qualified for the Appalachian Region and we got hundreds and millions of dollars for hospitals, roads, schools, and all sorts of things through the Johnson administration. Dora, I think it was that hit—the hurricane hit the Georgia coast and just about tore up the whole seaboard the whole Georgia coast. He allowed me to put huge amounts of rock along the coastal lines of Georgia. Johnson's administration paid for every dime of it, didn't cost the state a nickel, but it saved the Georgia coast. The people of Georgia benefited from Lyndon Johnson's administration in many ways.

JUSTICE: Your relationship with Johnson, did that affect your relationship with Dick Russell?

SANDERS: No, Dick Russell and Johnson were very close when Johnson was a majority leader of the Senate. And based on some tapes that I've been hearing recently they still, even after Johnson passed the Civil Rights Act, Dick Russell apparently still had a cordial relation with Lyndon Johnson but I think the relationship that they used to have before Johnson advocated the Civil Rights Bill had tempered their relationship to a great degree. But it did not affect my relationship with Johnson and it didn't affect—I didn't have a close relationship with Dick Russell.

JUSTICE: You didn't?

SANDERS: No, no, and when I was in the Senate another experience that I had, when I was in the state Senate the first time they made me head of the Veterans Affairs Senate Committee which was a do-nothing, know-nothing committee. But anything it had to do with the state military was involved with it. And we lost an Air National Guard pilot flying an old F-84 Dog they called them back them and he died. He crashed. And I went to Washington to see Congressman Carl Vinson who was the head of the Armed Services Committee in the House and who absolutely built the United States Navy as part of his duty as a chairman of the Armed Services Committee and told him about the loss of the pilot. And he asked me what I wanted and I said, "I want fifty new aircraft for the Air National Guard of Georgia." And he said, "What kind of aircraft are you talking about?" And the hottest aircraft in the world at that time

was the F-100 so I said, “I want fifty F-100s” and he laughed and said, “What’d you say Senator?” And I said, “I want fifty F-100s.” He laughed and he said, “Well, we’ll see what we can do.” I knew and he knew that I was not going to get fifty F-100s but a few weeks later I got a call from the head of the National Guard Bureau in Washington who I could tell was mad as a wet hen because I’d gone to Congressman Vinson and told me that they were going to send us new aircraft, F-86s, which were much more modern than the F-84s. They were not F-100’s but they were going to send those aircraft. Now this was in the 50’s. This was still when the schools were segregated in Georgia and everything else was segregated. So, sometime later I got a notification that they were going to deliver the first F-86 aircraft out at Dobbins Air Base in Marietta and so we had a big event. We had bands and we had people and we—here comes this F-86 aircraft in and he rolls—it’s a beautiful plane and I thought what a wonderful plane this is our first aircraft. And the band’s playing and all that and the airplane taxies up to the ramp. The pilot pulls back the canopy and out steps the blackest pilot you’ve ever seen and I knew that Air National Guard general said, “I’m going to deliver the aircraft but I’m going to deliver it with a pilot that they wish we hadn’t delivered it with.” It was funny. And of course he was a good pilot and we were glad to get the airplane. And, of course, subsequently to that point all the racial discord and so forth began to heat up and it was in full bloom when I became governor.

JUSTICE: Back to Dick Russell, you considered running against him in ’66, is that right?

SANDERS: ’66, I thought about it. But Senator Russell was suffering from emphysema and I didn’t know whether he was going to offer for re-election. He had come to the legislature to

make a speech and he used to have to carry one of these oxygen bottles around with him. So I didn't know whether he was going to offer for reelection or not. I thought about it, but he was determined to continue his service to the people of the state and to the nation and I finally decided that that was not what I wanted to do for two reasons. One was, it would have been a very difficult race and the second reason was my wife was not interested in me going to Washington. My children were teenagers, that was '66, that was when the hippie thing had started and I had seen too many families that had left their home states and moved to Washington for a year and then the family would move back and the senator would stay up there, the congressman would stay up there and they'd wind up in the divorce courts or the kids would get in trouble. So I decided that rather than do that I had an opportunity to build a law firm and I decided that I would build a law firm and if I wanted to get back into public life that I'd run for governor again four years later because I had to leave the office for four years under the Constitution at that time.

JUSTICE: When you went into the governor's office—let's talk about goals versus achievements. What did you hope to accomplish when you became governor?

SANDERS: Well, I hoped to do as much as I could possibly do within four years that anybody had ever thought about doing. And I hoped to reform the educational system of the state, particularly the higher education system. I hoped to bring more industry in than anybody had ever brought in before. I hoped to elevate the teacher's salaries of the state. I hoped to build airports. I campaigned in a little 250 horsepower Piper Comanche aircraft. The first time anybody in Georgia, a politician had ever campaigned in an aircraft. And we only had thirty

paved airports in Georgia; most of them were auxiliary fields from World War II. When I left office we had 100 paved airports in Georgia. We built seventy paved airports. All I ever asked the county commissioner to do was furnish me a strip of land 3,000-3,500 feet long. I'd put up half the money, the state would the federal government would put up half the money and we'd build an airstrip. And so we had the number one airport development in the country for four straight years. That brought more industry into this state than you can ever imagine because people before were not thinking about flying to Atlanta and then driving two hours to look at an industrial site in a rural county but if they could fly to that rural county, land on that 3,000 foot strip of airport they would go out and look at the industrial sites in those counties and many of them built plants that never would have been built in Georgia.

JUSTICE: Was there anything that you had hoped to accomplish that you didn't achieve?

SANDERS: No, I accomplished much more than I ever thought I was able to accomplish. I had one disappointment but it was not because I didn't accomplish what I sought out to do. And that was I decided to rewrite the Georgia Constitution which it had not been rewritten in years and there was no place in the state where you could sit down and actually read the Georgia Constitution because it had been amended thousands of times. So I had a special session to rewrite the Constitution and remodel the election laws. And that was in 1965 or 1966 in the summer and of course I rewrote the Constitution which was one of the toughest jobs that you could ever have and I rewrote the election laws. Immediately somebody filed a petition saying the legislature was mal-apportioned. They went to the federal court and the federal court to this day, I'll never understand, it was a fifth circuit court of appeals, they decided that both of those

pieces of legislation had been done in the same session that it was all right to rewrite the election laws that they were not going to declare them invalid because of mal-apportionment but it was not permissible to rewrite the Constitution and they were going to declare that unconstitutional because it was mal-apportioned. I appealed that decision from the court but by the time that the Supreme Court of the United States voted upon it which was too late to get it on the general ballot in '66 I was not able to get it on the ballot. That was a big disappointment because that was a big piece of work that I had done and I was unable to get it finished.

[End Tape 1]

[Begin Tape 2]

JUSTICE: You were succeeded by Lester Maddox as Governor and the 1966 gubernatorial race was contentious and controversial.

SANDERS: Very much so.

JUSTICE: And, with the Republican Party running Bo Callaway as their nominee and with Ellis Arnall and Lester Maddox. James Cook, your biographer, writes that you had some very strong reservations about that election.

SANDERS: Well, what happened in that election, the truth of the matter is Bo Callaway, if he had played his political cards correctly, would have been elected Governor. But Bo Callaway

ran as a republican candidate and of course Ellis Arnall—I don't know Ellis Arnall and Lester Maddox—but I think Ernie Vandiver at one time was in that race. There were several candidates that were trying to run for governor. Maddox wound up in a run off with Ellis Arnall in the democratic primary. Bo Callaway had no opposition in the republican primary and he was supported by a lot of the business leaders in Atlanta, some of whom are my good friends. And Ellis Arnall had a campaign deficit after the run off. My recollection is something like \$50,000 that he still owed for his campaign and his run off against Maddox. Some of Ellis Arnall's friends in Atlanta went to see Bo Callaway and said, "If you'll help us, when you get elected Governor pay off Governor Arnall's campaign deficit we'll throw our support to you." For reasons that I never understood, Bo Callaway declined that opportunity. They said, "Well if you're not going to help us get rid of Ellis Arnall's campaign deficit if you get elected Governor, we're going to run Ellis Arnall again as a write-in candidate in the November general election." That's what they did. Ellis Arnall polled enough write-in votes to keep either Bo Callaway or Lester Maddox from getting more than fifty percent of the vote as required by the Constitution and the election laws. Under those circumstances at that time the Constitution said in that event the election of the governor will then go to the House of Representatives and the governor will be elected by the members of the House of Representatives each of whom will have one vote. The democrats were not very happy about Maddox but they didn't want Callaway as a republican governor. So the democrats sort of held their nose and voted for Maddox and that's how he got appointed Governor and Callaway got defeated for Governor in that particular situation. Subsequently, the Constitution was changed and now today if you have that type of a situation you have a special election, it does not go into the House of Representatives.

JUSTICE: Tell me about Maddox's stint as Governor. How would you rate it?

SANDERS: Well, Maddox did pretty well. He did better than I thought he was going to do for one reason: all these people that had been called Maddox supporters that had been running around with Ax handles and egging him on in his campaign he realized that they were not qualified to hold the high positions of office in the state government. So he kind of took the position that he was not going to change many people that were already running departments in the state government. In fact, I made up the budget for the two years, his first two years, and he didn't change a bit of that budget so I really had six years of budget to submission for the state. But his position was that he was going over and take the Governor's office and protect the public from those scalawags that he might find in government but he was not going over there and try to change all the offices and change the people. So he left most of the people that had worked with me in office and he didn't meddle too much with—the only thing that he did that I regret was that he allowed the General Assembly of Georgia to take over much of the executive power that the governor previously had. And they created their own budget and they became independent and ever since Lester Maddox, the governor of Georgia has been a lot less politically forceful than he was when I was in office.

JUSTICE: You think if Maddox had of been a stronger executive that that would not have happened?

SANDERS: I think if he had ever held public office, I think if he had ever been in the General Assembly like I had been before I was elected governor, I think even if he had been mayor of Atlanta or something I think he would have been much stronger in controlling the executive power and not allowing it to be taken over by the legislature.

JUSTICE: You think that that—that a strong executive could have survived much longer in Georgia?

SANDERS: Yeah I do. I think that's the best form of government. I think the governor goes out and lays his program out in front of all the people of the state. The people vote on that program. And I think the governor ought to have the responsibility of implementing the program that the people had voted on rather than the way it is now. Legislators, they don't represent the entire state; they represent their own county or district. And they now put programs through the legislature that the governor may not want or other people may not necessarily have ever approved.

JUSTICE: Well, after Maddox's term as governor you decided to run again.

SANDERS: Yeah.

JUSTICE: Talk about that campaign.

SANDERS: Well, that was not a very nice campaign. I stayed in Atlanta and built a law firm. I probably should have gone back to Augusta and returned to my law firm in Augusta rather than doing what I did, but I had an opportunity to represent companies and clients in the Atlanta area that were national and they were much more interested in good legal representation than I would have had if I had gone back to Augusta. If I'd just wanted to be a politician the rest of my life I probably should have gone back to Augusta. So I didn't do that. Jimmy Carter, who had been in the Senate when I was governor, had spent—and who had been in the race in '66 with Maddox and that group and who had failed in that race, spent four years traveling around the state, planting seeds to run for governor in 1970. I thought, just like many people think, that the people of the state or the people of the country have a memory of the things that you did when you were in public life and the accomplishments that you were able to achieve for their benefit and that I had such a good administration, no scandals, a lot of progress, a lot of opportunity for people that they never had before, that to run in 1970 that would give me a good edge to be reelected. Jimmy Carter, much to my chagrin, took the position that he was going to play the racial card. He took the position that he was supporter of George Wallace, which I was not, and that I had not allowed George Wallace to come over and take over the Georgia legislature that he would if he was elected. I happened to—while I was in Atlanta—happened to own a part of the Hawks, Atlanta Hawks basketball team. They took pictures when they won the Western Division in the locker room with me and some of the ball players pouring champagne over my head and these were African American ball players. Carter's campaign took those pictures in all spread them all over South Georgia, all over the rural counties of the state and took the position that I was a rich Atlanta lawyer and that I was a—one who favored integration. That he was a southern peanut farmer in south Georgia who supported segregation

and who was a big friend of George Wallace and I got positioned as an Atlanta lawyer who supported people regardless of their race and he put himself in the position as a south Georgia farmer who supported the white race and not the black race and that's how that campaign was run. It was a mean, dirty, campaign. But it was politics. And the truth of the matter is everything is fair in love and war in politics. Now the irony of it, if you go to the Carter library today and ask to see the gubernatorial papers of the 1970 campaign they will tell you that those papers are still being processed some thirty, forty years later because immediately when Jimmy was elected governor at his inaugural speech he said, "Forget about all this racial stuff that I've been running on and all this stuff that I've been telling you to vote for me on. That's not me. The greatest friend that I've got in America today is Martin Luther King Jr. and I believe in integration and I don't believe in segregation and I ran that kind of race to get elected and now I'm going to put that aside and operate in a completely different manner."

JUSTICE: He used race and class, didn't he?

SANDERS: Yeah.

JUSTICE: Because he called you "Cufflinks Carl."

SANDERS: Oh yeah, well course he claimed that I was wealthy and finally we disclosed our net worth and he was worth more money than I was. But for the time being I was the rich lawyer living in Atlanta, and the truth of the matter is too nobody up until that point running for

state-wide office had ever lived in Atlanta as their permanent home. All the officer holders that ran the state government lived outside of Atlanta in some other section of the state.

JUSTICE: So how would you rate Carter's stint as governor?

SANDERS: Carter didn't have a very good gubernatorial experience but I've gotta say this in his behalf: one of the reasons he didn't have such a good four years was Lester Maddox was his lieutenant governor. And Lester Maddox and Jimmy Carter disliked each other tremendously and they never got along and everyday they'd have a fight over what kind of legislation that they were going to try to entertain. And Maddox would be in one corner and Carter would be in another. And that went on for four years. So he didn't have too much of an opportunity to do too many things without having to run through Maddox and try to stomp him down in order to get something passed.

JUSTICE: What was the source of tension between them?

SANDERS: Well, Maddox believed Carter was hypocritical and dishonest when he ran as a segregationist and then turned into an integrationist and Maddox says you know, "I'm a segregationist, have been, always will be," and Carter has changed his stripes and his colors and I dislike the man because he hadn't been honest. You know Maddox all—for all of his faults one of the things that he believed in and one of the things that I think he tried to do was he tried to be honest no matter how different or how un-political some of his views might have been. He

at least said, “This is my honest viewpoint. I’m not going to change on you if you elect me and I’m not going to be something that I said I was not before I ran for the office.”

JUSTICE: How do you explain Carter’s winning the presidency in ’76?

SANDERS: He just absolutely outworked the rest of the candidates who thought they were going to sit back and somebody was going to nominate them and put them into the democratic nomination. Carter, I’ll say this for he and his family and his friends, he started—that’s another reason he didn’t have as much opportunity to do as many things as governor as perhaps he would have been if he had not been already looking to run for President. The last couple of years of his office—of his tenure as governor he was out in the country campaigning for President. And of course a lot of these people in Washington who sit in the congress thought they could sit in the Senate and the House and never have to go out into the rural areas or the other parts of the country but they were just going to go to the convention and they’d get nominated. Carter just outworked them. He out politicked them and he got the nomination of some of these states that they never dreamed he’d get and that’s how he got the nomination for President. The people never thought he had a chance but he just absolutely outworked and out-campaigned the rest of the people who thought they were going to be President.

JUSTICE: And it doesn’t seem that the press seized on this characteristic of Carter from switching from one side to the other.

SANDERS: Well, they didn't do that in the Presidential race. He had already spent his four years of redeeming his self as a racial George Wallace supporter when he ran in '70 and the press didn't hop on him for that when he ran for President. He—what they did do they gave him the benefit of the doubt that he was an outsider and all these other people who thought they were going to run for President at that time were insiders, inside the beltway in Washington. And Washington was in such a mess that it was time for an outsider to come in and clean it up. And that's what Carter ran on primarily as, "I'm not one of the insiders in Washington but I'm an outsider. I'm a governor and if you'll elect me I'll go to Washington and I'll straighten out this Washington mess that's created by all these people who spend all their time inside the beltway."

JUSTICE: Do you think he was a better President than he was a governor?

SANDERS: No, I think he had a tough time being President. I think he tried to be a good President but I think he got caught up in inflation and I think he got caught up in the Iran hostage situation. I think he had a lot of problems that were not necessarily his making but you know, interest rates during the Carter's Administration for the President got up to be twenty percent. People didn't have jobs. People couldn't afford to borrow money. The hostages got taken over in Iran. He just had a huge—you know in politics, let me tell you something: you can be smart but you've got to have a little luck along with it. The economy went bad. He couldn't turn the economy around. The hostage situation went bad. They even waited to release the hostages until the day Ronald Reagan was sworn in as a President. They could have released them earlier; they didn't do that. And Jimmy went up to Washington, I think, with the

idea that he would straighten out a lot of the old pros that had been around. And he had a terrible relationship with Tipper O'Neal, Speaker of the House and some of the other old Washington pros. He liked to micromanage too much. In my opinion, if he had delegated more authority to more people he probably would have had a better administration. I think he's learned that since he left the presidency and I think he has done some rather remarkable things following his tenure as President. He certainly has continued to campaign and work harder as an ex-President than any ex-President I've ever known. Some people, some of these sitting Presidents have sort of resented maybe some of his meddling, as they would put it. But he's been out here trying to relieve problems in the world. Most ex-Presidents go back to their ranch, they go back to their home and don't do that. He's taken a different approach and I think as a result he'd been elevated; history has elevated him higher as an ex-President than they give him credit for being a president or a governor.

JUSTICE: After 1970 you considered one more office in 1972; briefly you considered a run for the Senate, didn't you?

SANDERS: Well, that's when Russell died.

JUSTICE: Right.

SANDERS: And I thought about it again. But I had a good law firm being built at that time and I was involved with my family as I always am and I decided again that I didn't want to go to Washington. I had talked to too many governors that I had served with when I was governor,

some of which went to Washington. And they told me, and just like most people know, that you got to sit in the Senate for about twelve years and vegetate before you get enough influence and power to do anything. And I was helping build a bank and I had some other business ventures that I was involved in. So Sam Nunn who had never run for state-wide office and who was a member of the General Assembly who was Carl Vinson's nephew decided he was going to run and I like Sam Nunn, knew him, and I took Norman Underwood who was one of my law partners and asked him to go over and help Sam Nunn run his campaign which he did. And Sam Nunn got elected to the United States Senate and served twenty-four years in the Senate. Came out with his reputation intact. And I never regretted making the decision in '72 that I thought about going to the Senate again because most of the people, as I said earlier that I knew that had served as governor and when you serve as governor and you're Chief Executive and you can run the state (it's like running a big business) that's different than being one of one hundred in the Senate where you sit there and hope you can get your name on a bill. And in the mean time you just almost vegetating for years and years and that's not my demeanor. That's not my personality and they told me, most of them said after they served one term they wanted to go back home. Herman Talmadge, when he left the governor's office and served in the Senate for a number of years, every six years when—every four years when the governor's race would come up you'd always see where Talmadge is thinking about coming home and running for governor again. It's much more fun to be governor than it is to be a United States Senator.

JUSTICE: Well why didn't you consider running for governor again?

SANDERS: Why didn't I consider running for governor again?

JUSTICE: Right.

SANDERS: Well, I felt like that I had accomplished a great deal as governor the first time. I felt like that the people had decided that they were going to elect somebody else to be governor and I still at that time when I ran in 1970 I still had in my mind a lot of programs that I still wanted to do more about. But by the time that I got an opportunity to run again I had gotten so immersed in my own personal affairs and my family's affairs and building a bank and building a law firm and getting involved in some real estate transactions that I felt like, "Well, I gave the people the best I could give them for the four years that I was governor. Now the people selected somebody else, rather, when I ran for reelection." I'm going to look after my family and look after my personal business and it was one of the best decisions I ever made. Because otherwise I might, I don't know what'd I be doing today but I wouldn't be where I am today with my family, with my business, with my law firm, none of those personal accomplishments I don't think would have taken place if I had continued just to devote my time to the political arena.

JUSTICE: So you weren't really dissuaded by the bitterness of the '70 campaign?

SANDERS: No, you know, I—politics—I've been there and done that. And I've got a good record and I put sixty cents out of every dollar into education. Nobody's ever done that before or since. And I accomplished all those things and I thought too, you know, if I go back ten years later I may not be able—the Maddox thing the legislature had taken over the power, I

wouldn't be able to accomplish the things that I accomplished when I was governor and instead of having the record that I have I'd probably have a good record back then and a mediocre record later. So I said, "Look, the people decided that they wanted somebody else to carry the flag in 1970. I'm going to look after my personal business and be happy," and I've got no regrets and I got no ill will toward anybody.

JUSTICE: What would you, if you had to put it in a sentence or two, what is your political legacy? What have you left to—?

SANDERS: The most progressive administration in the history of Georgia in all aspect of the operation of the state government. If you look at every department in the state government and you look at the accomplishments that were made and the programs that I inaugurated, nobody has come close even when the governor's served eight years have come close to putting into full force and effect what I put into full force and effect in all the areas of government and done so without scandal and done so—I left \$140 million in surplus funds when I left the office. Nobody had ever done that before.

JUSTICE: In the end, do you think that you were more affected by Georgia politics or that you affected Georgia politics more?

SANDERS: Well, I think I affected Georgia politics more in that a lot of things back before my term as governor was sort of accepted politicians, you know, could do things personal benefits and things that politicians today wouldn't dare do but they could get away with it. Gene

Talmadge, when he ran for governor, they said, “You stole so many bales of cotton when you were the commissioner of Agriculture.” And he said, “Yeah I stole them but I stole them for you.” And the people said fine and voted for him. Well you couldn’t get away with any kind of statement like that today and I think that I was at the crossroad at the time in history when the political arena in this state changed. I think, too, because of that particular time with all the Civil Rights and all the changes that took place I took the high road. And some of the other southern states around us, Mississippi and Alabama and Louisiana, they took a different road. But because I took the high road and I accepted the law of the land as being, we being a government of laws and not a government of men, I think Georgia came into the limelight—at that particular time when I was elected governor Birmingham, Alabama was better situated economically to take the leadership of the south in Atlanta, Georgia but because we took the high road when I was elected governor and accepted the law of the land and eliminated all these racial barriers and things. I opened up the National Guard, I opened up the State Patrol, Atlanta and Georgia took the leadership in the south. People living in other parts of America moved to Georgia that never would have moved here before. Educators came into our schools that never would have moved into Georgia and taken jobs in our schools. We captured the leadership of the south and that’s what we have today and I think I happened to be at the right time with the right attitude about what we needed to do in the state in order to do that.

JUSTICE: Many of the issues that were on the table in the 60’s such as the national and state economy, civil rights, international relations, are still at the forefront of controversy today.

SANDERS: Yeah, the racial business is still very much involved. People don't call it racial but it is. It's still involved. And the economic situation is of course very much involved today. The foreign relations is a tremendous problem.

JUSTICE: Do you think we've made progress since the 60's?

SANDERS: I think we, in the south and particularly in Georgia, I think Georgia has made a lot of progress but I'm not so sure many other places have made as much progress as we have.

JUSTICE: Why do you think Georgia has—?

SANDERS: Because I think we had more enlightened leadership at the critical time than other parts of the country had. And I think enlightened leadership brought on more enlightened leadership later on and it's just like anything else, you get into the habit of enlightened people seeking public office. They give you a better form of government and a better economic opportunity than if you put people in there who are not enlightened, who still want to live in the past and who still want to fight the Civil War over again and all that sort of stuff, who still want to keep this country isolated from the rest of the world. I think we, fortunately, went down a more enlightened road in this state than most any other state that I know anything about.

JUSTICE: What do you think is the most critical issue facing us today, politically speaking?

SANDERS: Politically I think the most critical issue is that we are not looked upon today in the world in the same manner that we used to be looked upon. We used to be admired and respected all over the world for our political beliefs, our economic beliefs and everything else. I think we are, today, more isolated economically and more isolated foreign relation wise than we've ever been. I used to take my grandchildren, when I was out of office, at least on a trip once a year somewhere else in some other part of the world and did that so that they would have a benefit later on in life to being better educated about the world. Today I wouldn't do that because I think there are too many places in the world today if you come in there and say you're an American instead of them saying, "We're glad to see you. We respect you so much and your country," they say, "Well, you're an American. We don't like you. We want to harm you," and we've got a long ways to go to regain the credibility that we are a nation of—free nation who believes in freedom for all people and we've got to do something about it or I don't know where we're headed.

JUSTICE: How do we go about fixing that?

SANDERS: I think we're going to have to do what we said earlier and that is we're going to have to elect more enlightened leadership in this country in order to do that.

JUSTICE: Philosophically speaking, and the bigger picture, what are the marks of a good governor? What are the benchmarks that make a good governor?

SANDERS: Well, I think he first has to understand the government and he has to understand that he's representing all of the people of the state. And secondly I think he's got to lay out in front of him and in front of the people that he's serving a program that they understand. And then thirdly I think he's got to be willing to pay the price to whatever it takes to work as hard as he needs to work to implement the program that he has run on. And most people sometimes get the impression, I think, that they can run on some issues and then once they get elected they can discard those issues and forget about them. I think a good governor has got to stick to his guns and stick to his programs and tell people that he's doing exactly what he told them he would do when he ran and asked them to vote for him. And I think if you abandon that process and you say well I may have said that but I lied, I shouldn't have said what I said you never make a good governor. And you gotta be independent enough where you're willing to accept the fact that you're not going to win every battle and you're not going to be able to accomplish everything that you feel like you would have liked to accomplish but you gotta be willing to say, "If I lose a battle I'll win another one and I'll keep on until I accomplish what I said I would accomplish when I went in front of the people and said 'Elect me and I'll do what I said I'd do if you elect me.'"

JUSTICE: Are there any governors since your term in office that have distinguished themselves in meeting these benchmarks that you've laid out?

SANDERS: Oh, I think a lot of them have. It depends on what you mean by distinguishing themselves. I don't know of anybody right off the top of my head that I think has not distinguished themselves in the office. I just think that they haven't had the tools or the power

to work with that I had. Now Zell Miller when he was governor did something, when he ran for governor, did something that I probably would not have done. He ran on creating a state lottery and of course I thought that was sort of living in the Bible belt and living in this thing. I didn't think that was a [End Side 1]—Good governor's, in my opinion, some of them have been impeded with reluctant Speaker of the House or reluctant lieutenant governor at times and they just maybe haven't been able to accomplish as many things as they would have liked to accomplished.

JUSTICE: How much effect do you think that the press has on the effectiveness of the governor?

SANDERS: Oh the press has a lot of influence. The press can take a piece of straight bread every day and twist it into a French roll and if they twist it there's not much you can do about it. You can say something and if they twist it the way they want to twist it won't look anything like what you said. So the press has a great deal of influence on anybody's public chair.

JUSTICE: Now has that changed since the 1960s?

SANDERS: Well I think it's worse now than it was back then. Now they go after your family and they go after—go into your bedrooms and things like that. Back in my day and time they didn't do that.

JUSTICE: The press was fairly kind to you in your day.

SANDERS: I thought they were very kind to me.

JUSTICE: Well, thank you for your time and speaking with us today.

SANDERS: I enjoyed it. I hope somebody later in history will take the time to listen to it.

JUSTICE: Well, thank you very much.

[End of Interview]

Biographical Information

RBRL OHD 009

Carl Sanders

b. May 15, 1925

Occupation:

U.S. Army Air Force

Hammond Kennedy and Sanders Law Firm

Georgia House of Representatives

Georgia Senate

Troutman and Sanders LLP Attorneys at Law

Subject Analysis

RBRL OHD 009

Carl Sanders

- Early political life
- Involvement with the YMCA
- Youth during the depression
- Time in the ROTC
- Time in the Army Air Corps
- Involvement World War II
- Law School
- Sander's competitive spirit
- Time in the Georgia House of Representatives and the Georgia Senate
- 1962 Gubernatorial Race
- Sanders role in Segregation
- Hunter and Holmes admission to the University of Georgia
- Sander's role in the establishment of Augusta College
- Honesty and efficacy in politics
- The effect of World War II on young politicians
- Relationship with John F. Kennedy
- Relationship with Lyndon B. Johnson
- Relationship with Richard B. Russell
- Accomplishments as Governor
- Election following Sander's term
- Lester Maddox as Governor
- 1970 Gubernatorial Race
- Jimmy Carter as Governor
- Jimmy Carter as President
- Sander's Political Legacy
- Sander's affect on Georgia politics
- Progress in Georgia
- America's current position in the world
- The affect of the press on the office of governor

Alphabetical Index

- Arnall, Ellis Gibbs, 29, 30
 Barton, Billy, 4
 Broun, Paul C., 9
Brown v Board of Education, 15
 Butler, Charles, 7
 Butts, James Wallace (Wally), 12
 Callaway, Bo, 29
 Carter, Jimmy, 33, 35, 49
 Cracker Party, 2, 3, 4
 Griffin, Marvin, 19, 20
 Harris, Roy Vincent, 2, 17
 Holmes, Hamilton, 16
 Hunter-Gault, Charlayne, 16
 Johnson, Lyndon B. (Lyndon Baines), 23, 24, 25, 49
 Kennedy, Bobby, 24
 Kennedy, John F. (John Fitzgerald), 2, 21, 23, 24, 48, 49
 Maddox, Lester, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 35, 40, 49
 Miller, Zell, 46
 Nunn, Samuel Augustus, 39
 Reserve Officers' Training Corps, 8, 49
 Russell, Richard Brevard, 22, 23, 25, 26
 Talmadge, Herman Eugene, 23, 39
 The University of Georgia, 1, 5, 10, 12, 16, 18, 49
 Twitty, Frank S., 16
 Vandiver, Ernest, 14, 19, 20, 30
 Vinson, Carl, 25, 39
 Wallace, George C., 33, 37
 Watson, Thomas Edward, 2
 YMCA, 3, 5, 49