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Georgia Political Heritage Project

Interview with Jimmy Carter, May 4, 1993, concerning his years as Governor of Georgia

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Interviewer: First, let me say it is an honor to interview you. I've never met a President before or a former President. For someone who is the son of a steel worker this is a big deal for me. So, question number one: You entered the 1966 campaign at the last minute, yet you finished third. Why do you think you did so well? And, to follow that up, where did you stand during general election in November, during the general assembly's election of Lester Maddox, which was a controversial election in '66?

Carter: I had served in the Senate for four years and I had run for Congress aggressively in the third district and when Bo Calloway withdrew from the third congressional district race I had the election won. When I saw the outcome of the fall election between him and Lester Maddox, I thought it would be a worthwhile investment for me to make. I campaigned hard day and night. I visited as many people as I could. I was a young, aggressive relatively unknown, untarnished candidate, so I think the activity that I exhibited as compared to Ellis Arnold's more dormant campaign and Lester Maddox having both very enthusiastic supporters and also detractors opened up a place for me. The polls that we ran showed I was increasing very rapidly. I think if the election had gone on a couple more weeks, at least one week, I would have been in the run off. So, hard campaigning, a lack of negative responses to me, a lot of publicity as a campaign, approached with my rapid increase in public opinion polls were some of the factors that made me do as well as I did. As far as after the election was concerned, between Lester Maddox and Ellis Arnold, I didn't take a position in August on Ellis Arnold, but between Lester Maddox and Bo Calloway I came out for the Democratic candidate which I had pledged on my word of honor to do and even though I didn't have any confidence in the Lester Maddox prospect, I thought the state would be better off with him than it would have been with Bo Calloway.

Interviewer: O.K. What did you learn with the '66 campaign that helped you win in 1970? Why do you think you defeated Carl Sanders?

Carter: Well, one thing I learned in 1966 is that I got into it too late. I needed to cover the state. My style of campaigning is to use my own family and personally visit as many places as I could, speak to Lions Clubs, Rotary Clubs, and shake hands with people at athletic events and all night singings and concerts. During that four year period of the interim, I had to run my business, pay off my campaign debts. I was very active in the Lions organization. I was district governor

which took a lot of my time, but at the same time I visited, along with Rosalyn, about 600,000 Georgians, we figured. It was a very accurate figure. We shook hands with them and personally asked them to vote for us, and later it was a superb organizational basis for a successful campaign. We had an organization in every county. We had an arbitrary allocation of funding of ten cents per person in every county, so we were able to judge quite early which county chairpersons were performing and which weren't. If they couldn't get the equivalent off $3,000 for a county of 30,000 populations we knew something was wrong and we would visit it. I don't think any other candidate in the history of the state prior to that had ever done that kind of meticulous operation or planning organization. I had a very large cadre of young people headed primarily by Hamilton Jordan who had been my college-age support in 1966. These were idealistic, young, innovative political supporters who were relatively unknown in politics. Everybody who was established in Georgia politics basically worked for Carl Sanders. The newspapers were for Sanders. He was strongly supported by Coca Cola Company, the C & S Bank, and by the Atlanta Constitution, which went crazy on behalf of Sanders. So, I think that I came out of nowhere and I don't think anybody realized that I was strong as I was at the grass roots level and that really paid off later on when I got down to the point that I was in the run-off a little ahead of Sanders. There was no way he could have beat me.

Interviewer: It was the grass roots organization and also the appeal to youth maybe?

Carter: That right. I would say not only youth but new-comers to politics. We were recruiting people who had never been involved in politics before and sometimes they were older store owners, sometimes they were just farmers, sometimes they were housewives, sometimes they were young people, but it was a youthful political generation that had not been involved in politics in previous elections and these were the ones who would get out and work. They weren't looking for anything from me and they weren't expecting a job if I got elected or a contract to build a road or an appointment to a superior court judgeship. They just wanted to be involved in an exciting and what turned out to be a very successful campaign.

Interviewer: O.K. In your most recent book *Turning Point*, you know that quote "playing the racial card seems to be the tactic that still wins the political contest." I am sure you are aware that some of our observers think that you played that card in the 1970 race against Carl Sanders who accused you of a secret deal with the black leadership coalition and especially with the photo of Sanders celebrating with the black Atlanta Hawks basketball team. How do you answer such speculation that you too used the racial card?

Carter: This was a premise that Reg Murphy and the Atlanta Constitution hammered away at—that we got an enlightened progressive urban successful, and also experienced former governor running against a jerk from Plains, Georgia, who is just a peanut farmer and a red-necked racist. That was their theme and I didn't have to say a thing and never did. I didn't have to refer to Carl Sanders as cuff-links Carl. I didn't make any derogatory remarks about him, but there was a

tone in the basic political campaign, in billboards and TV spots and radio that was quite significant. I recall Sanders, for instance, I'm not knocking him, now he is a good friend, had a billboard called "Carl Sanders ought to be Governor Again" as though the Georgia people had an obligation to him. He had a beautiful five minute TV spot that showed him flying an airplane in an open cockpit with a silk scarf dangling out behind, coming out of a mansion walking down to a dock and getting into a speed boat and driving away, showing the Georgia people that he was a very successful business person. I've never had a photograph made with a necktie on. My campaign was based on my working in the peanut fields shoveling peanuts, which I actually did everyday when I was at home. I was a working man and I think that was the image that we both put forward. There wasn't any racism involved. I would be amazed if anybody ever could quote a single thing that I ever said that indicated an element of racism and I did work with black leaders. You know, I was the only one that went into black churches and to black school houses.

Interviewer: Was that a conscious part of the campaign?

Carter: No, I was searching for people that would support me and I had a lot of friends in the black community around Georgia and I was not embarrassed to go into a church on Sunday morning that happened to have a black congregation and speak to them about my own campaign, but I think that it is accurate to say that was a rare event in Georgia politics prior to that time, but I didn't have any restraint on me and I don't remember the black group to which you refer by name, but we would meet in Atlanta with the black leadership and try to get help from them. There is no doubt about that. I don't look upon it as racist to go to a black leadership and say to them "will you help me get elected governor? If you do, I'll do what I can to alleviate your problems."

Interviewer: Mr. President, you were elected in 1970. If there was any question about your racial views before your inaugural speech I think they quickly disappeared. That particular address has been called by several historians the most memorable in the history of Georgia, especially that section on the end of the time for racial discrimination. We wondered what you were thinking when you wrote that. We also wondered what reaction you expected from Georgians after the speech.

Carter: Well, the speech was only 8 minutes. Every word was written by me. It expressed what I had been saying in the campaign in a very accurate fashion. That was the only facet of it that was so highly publicized. The phrase came about in a very interesting fashion. I had a volunteer who worked for me who had previously supported Ellis Arnold in the 1966 campaign named David Rabhan. David Rabhan had a twin engine Cessna plane and quite often he flew me around to places to make speeches and so forth, so it was a very sacrificial contribution to my campaign. David Rabhan was intimately involved with black leaders including Daddy King and others. He would build nursing homes and kindergartens (he called them Learning Tree Programs) and he knew the leaders quite often who were the preachers in the major churches and

the funeral directors that were black. So, David was very liberal on the race issue and toward the end of the campaign, late one Saturday afternoon, I was flying from the coast in Brunswick over to the west part of Georgia over near the Alabama line with David. By then, I had learned to fly the plane pretty good. I could land and take off but I never had a license. Quite often we were tired. He would sleep and I would fly along, keeping the altitude. We were flying along and the plane gave out of gas. We were at about 8000 feet altitude. It sputtered and both engines stopped and I punched David who was pretending to be asleep and he didn't wake up, so I really knocked the heck out of David and he said, "What's the matter?" I said, "We're out of gas and we are going to crash." He laughed and reached down and turned this valve and opened up the other gas tank and the engines caught up and we went on ahead, but I was very angry with him. We were both wide awake by this time, not surprisingly, and I said, "David, you do an awfully lot for me. It's near the end of the campaign and I've got a good chance to win it. Is there anything I can do for you?" He said, "I don't need your help your help as governor. What I would like for you to do is tell the Georgia people what you think about the millstone of racism that has oppressed our state." And, I said OK. I took an old map, an aerial map that everybody had to show the location of airports, and I wrote on the back of it "I know this state as well as anyone. I say to you quite frankly, I think the time for racial discrimination is over." I handed it back to David and I said "if I am elected, in my inaugural speech I will make this statement." He said "sign it" so I signed it and gave it back to him. So, when I wrote my inaugural speech I put that in it. I didn't really know what the reaction would be but I did know Georgia perhaps better at that point than perhaps anyone. I had been in 600 towns and cities in the state and every county, as I said, we had shook hands with 600,000 folks. I knew the Georgia people and I knew the feeling among the white people that somehow we had to get past the racism that had divided us too long, but I didn't have any trepidation about a condemnation or uproar about that statement. I thought that I was speaking accurately for the vast majority of Georgia people, that is, in fact, except for a few dozen letters that I got from two clubs, John Birchers, etc. I never had any adverse reaction to it and it was highly publicized. Two or three months later, because of that speech, I was on the front cover of Time Magazine as a key example of the young generation of southern governors who had come along back then. Reubin Askew, John West, Dale Bumpers and others. And so I think that speech put me on the front page of Time Magazine and also it stimulated my ambitions for the future.

Interviewers: My students were so impressed with it. Some historians say that Carl Sanders was the last of the strong governors and your immediate predecessor, Lester Maddox, allowed the power of the governor to wither by giving it up to the legislature. Did you consciously set out to restore the power of the office to control legislation and to control the actions of the state government?

Carter: Yes, yes I did. As you well remember, my predecessor Lester Maddox was not elected by the Georgia people, he was elected by the general assembly in accordance with our

constitution at that time. He was heavily restrained, being obligated to the leadership in the house, primarily, and also to some extent in the senate for his office itself. In that process a very strong and very fine speaker, George L. Smith, in effect, took over the reins of government to a great degree, in an unprecedented fashion. When I was elected I came out of nowhere, politically speaking. I didn't have any obligations to anyone except volunteers who had helped me. The political leaders all thought Sanders was going to win, so I didn't owe anybody anything, but when I got there I found a very good compatibility with George L. Smith and George Busbee, who was my successor, was the floor leader in the house. I had served in the senate four years and the house and the senate was divided almost 50/50 between my supporters and those of Lester Maddox, who unfortunately for me, was elected Lt. Governor at the same time I was elected Governor. Sometimes we cooperated. Most of the time we were on opposite sides. So, I thought at that time that the Georgia Governor should be as strong as possible and I was very ambitious in the legislative agenda that I spelled out. The state government had not been really reorganized since the time of Hardman and Russell and we had over 300 different agencies and departments. We had I think fifteen different agencies that could issue state bonds, almost totally autonomous. The doctors totally controlled the health system in our country. I mean medical doctors, not people who received the services. So I set out to reorganize the entire government and eventually did so, but it was a highly controversial effort, very difficult, and it stepped on a lot of toes. You know, anybody, a medical doctor who serves on the Board of Health--- and I think twelve out of fifteen had to be medical doctors--- did not want to give up that privilege. So, we abolished the Board of Health ultimately and I think we brought 33 different agencies together into one Department of Human Resources.

We eliminated all the bond issuing agencies and brought Georgia's bond issuing into one general obligation bond and immediately got a triple A bond rating because of it, with interest rates greatly reduced, but it was like pulling teeth to abolish a very important and very proud, distinguished group of Georgia citizens who had been appointed to do these kinds of things, and to put it all in a more cohesive way. Also, there were a number of contracts that were very lucrative. We were just in the beginning of the computer age. Instead of buying computers so that they would be compatible between the Department of Human Resources, the Budget Office, and the Governor's Office, and the Department of Natural Resources and the Internal Revenue Service, each one of those agency heads, or their civilian leaders would form a sweetheart arrangement with a computer supplier and it would all be totally different. We tried to bring some order out of that chaos. The buying of printing equipment, the buying of paper prints, and the publication of periodicals was all done on--- well, a lot of it was done--- on a political patronage basis. We did away with all that. You can imagine the furor that it caused. So, I think with a very few exceptions, like the protection of the Forestry Department, which I wanted to bring into Natural Resources, we were successful. We had to compromise some but not too much. And it was the power of Hugh Gillis with all of his people there that was able to protect the Forestry Department, and I'm not even saying that was a bad thing. I wanted to consolidate

it but we did a great deal of consolidation, but it was a very controversial thing and that could not have been done with a weak governor. You had to have a strong governor and I'll have to say that I had very good support from George O. Smith who was chosen by the legislature, not by me, and from George Busbee who was my successor in the future. They supported this program, so it was a good and very aggressive demonstration of a Governor's legitimate power.

Interviewer: What role did staff members like Ham Jordan and Jody Powell play?

Carter: Well, they were young people. Hamilton, in my 1966 campaign, was a college student. In the 1970 campaign Jody Powell was a college student. He came down with a group of volunteers one week-end. They slept on the floor in my front living room, about 30 of them. They just wanted to talk to me and rap a while late at night, drink a few beers, and talk about the future. Jody was one of the few who were old enough to have a driver's license. He was in graduate school at Emory then getting his Ph. D., which he never quite got. I wanted Jody to be my automobile driver, period, and Jody traveled with me and he heard my repetitive speeches. He heard me make the same speech 150-200 times. He heard my responses to local radio announcers and news reporters, so he got so he could speak for me very accurately and became my press secretary, and Frank Moore, who was also my executive secretary later on, was manager of a little eight county planning commission that I had started and organized and where I served as the director of it for a long time. It was called the Georgia Planning Commission at that time, but that is how those kids, as I called them, came to work for me. They were not influential in the legislature. They weren't part of the old political system, though Hamilton Jordan's family had been deeply immersed in politics indirectly, but they did well, and then they were not a threat to the established leaders. They could work with cabinet officers and the cabinet officers looked upon them as kind of my staff and not as competitors who were trying to invade their turf, so they were very effective, although quite young, relatively inexperienced, and non-threatening, I would say.

Interviewer: You mentioned your organization. You built a reputation as a reform governor in many areas: reorganization, classroom education, Goals for Georgia program, and many other directions you took the office in. At that time what did you see as the highest priority item?

Carter: I think the total reorganization of the government. I might say that I have already expressed my appreciation to George Busbee, who was floor leader, who took my place. I don't think that Busbee ever blamed any of his problems in the Governor's office on me and he very carefully protected the steps in reorganization that he and I had helped implement together, and so, in effect, the total reorganization that we had established is still intact, which is quite an achievement after 20 years or whatever it is. Twenty years. That is, I think, the best achievement that I have had. We dealt with other things. One was with the racism issue. Under Governor Maddox there was a massive cadre of GBI agents, state patrol, sheriffs, that would move into a community whenever there was any racial disturbance. They would take over the

streets, take over the stop lights, they would have almost an inevitable confrontation. During the campaign, I promised not to ever do that again, and I didn't. I had a three person racial harmony group headed by a remarkable man at that time named Cloyd Hall who is still in Macon. You might want to talk to Cloyd. And when we had a racial disturbance, which was fairly frequent, I would send Cloyd and a white and black staff person into that community to meet with everybody involved, to meet with the mayor, to meet the sheriff, to meet with the black preachers, and others, and they would try to work it out harmoniously and they would invite that group of antagonists to come to the governor's office, or sometimes the governor's mansion, to have lunch with me and to talk over the problems. But, that's the way we addressed it, and I don't think subsequent to that time there has ever been a massive outbreak of racial disharmony.

So, those are some of the things that come to mind. Obviously I could go down the list. We established major trading areas for Georgia products overseas in Bonn, Germany; and Brussels, Belgium; Toronto, Canada; in Sao Paulo, Brazil; in Tokyo, Japan. I remember those. Or where we sold Georgia products and got foreigners to come and invest in our state, and that kind of opened up for our state a wonderful future relationship with the international community, which both of my successors, all three of them, have carried on I think very effectively. Those are the kinds of things that come to mind, but I think the overwhelming impression I have looking back, is of the reorganization of the structure of government, getting rid of corruption and pay offs and political intrigue and putting everything out in the open.

Interviewer: This question stems from an earlier interview we did with a former Governor, Ernest Vandiver. It concerns your decision to appoint someone to replace former Senator Richard Russell. In the interview that Political Heritage did, former Governor Vandiver feels that he had had a commitment from you that he'd be a choice and that he feels betrayed by your choice of David Gambrell. My question is, "Was there a commitment to Vandiver, and why Gambrell, and how much did his work for you in the 1962 Senate race play in your decision to appoint Gambrell?"

Carter: Well, if there had been a commitment to Vandiver he would have been senator. I entered the governor's office and made public statements to the effect that I did not have a single outstanding commitment and I did not promise anyone anything and would have been terribly presumptuous of me during the last months of Senator Russell's life even to assume that he was dying, particularly to his own nephew. Ernie Vandiver and I would not even discuss the possibility that Senator Russell might not be with us, even though I knew he was ill. When Senator Russell did die, I think only ten days after I was inaugurated, I was faced with the very difficult choice of who should replace him. I looked down a whole list of names, probably 50 names, I'm sure Ernie Vandiver's name is on it, it's probably still in the State Archives, but I never did seriously consider appointing Ernie Vandiver. If Charles Kirbo had wanted to be going to the Senate, I probably would have asked him to go. I knew him. He was from Bainbridge. He was an esteemed lawyer, and I had trust in him. David Gambrell had been

chairmen of the Democratic Party. He was a younger lawyer. I had known him well. His family is from Atlanta, but his wife is from Swainsboro, Georgia, not Gambrell, and I thought that he would be a dynamic senator. He never asked me for it. People didn't come to me and say "I want to be a senator sometime." They sent people, but I don't think David ever did, but I had seen David in action, primarily as the chairmen of the Democratic Party and as an up and coming young leader who was not involved deeply in Georgia politics.

Interviewer: With not a lot of grass roots support behind him.

Carter: Although I admired Ernie Vandiver. I still do. I looked on him as one of the finest governors that we've had in the past, despite the fact that he was not one to be outspoken when racism was prevalent, but he was one of the moderates even in those days, as I said in my recent book. But, I think David was a good choice. He went to the Senate and David made some very serious political mistakes, the most important one of which was voting against a supersonic transport that was going to be made by Lockheed. I thought the decision was right. We didn't need to build some more supersonic jets. I didn't think we were ever going to take over the global skies, though I may have been wrong about that, but David voted against it, and there were thousands of workers at Lockheed, all of whom became anti-Gambrell activists. I understand there were 98 counties in Georgia that had people working at Lockheed and Lockheed lost the potential of being the contractor for a massive expenditure of that type of federal funds in the supersonic program. He voted against it.

Also, when David ran for election in 1972 he criticized me. That's okay. I'm not sensitive, but in one of his shows of independence--- and this is a natural trait of people who are appointed to the senate---in the process he alienated my supporters, many of them, and they were still loyal to me, and they greatly resented David very deeply saying antagonistic things towards me in, not in a vituperative or personal nature or harmful nature, but to show that he was independent of me. He even made some derogatory statements about his own father who was a distinguished head of a major law firm here in Atlanta, and I think David cost himself the whole election. That was when Sam Nunn was elected in 1972. Sam came and talked to me and Sam and I worked together on the Georgia Planning Association. I was the first president. Sam was the second president and was a supporter of mine when I ran for governor in 1970. He never thought I could win, but he was a supporter of mine. But when Sam came and told me he was going to run for the Senate he said he knew he couldn't win. He was just a state legislator, but he would do the best he could and lay the groundwork for a future election. But because of some mistakes David made and because Sam associated himself closely with Senator Russell and said all he wanted to do was to be on the Armed Services Committee that was very appealing to the Georgia people and Sam was elected, which I think was okay.

Interviewer: He used your tactics from the '70 campaign.

Carter: Yes, he did. Sam learned a lot from me. I'm not saying this in a bragging way, but I think I kind of set a tone that if you want to win in an election you've got to get out in the state and let people know that you care about them. We would even stand around the stadium for a Falcons football game and we would hand out a pamphlet to every person that went into the stadium. Fifty thousand people would get a Jimmy Carter pamphlet. I would be at one door and my wife would be at another, my three sons would be at another, and everybody that went in would get a pamphlet.

Interviewer: Work the family.

Carter: That's the way we did. We'd go to an all night singing in Waycross and stay out all night listening to gospel singing, which I like anyway, and everybody there that we could reach would get a hand shaken by me or my wife. If there were two entrances, everybody got a hand shake. That's the way we worked, so I think a lot was learned from that. It has only been this last election when Zell Miller ran that he basically decided that he could approach the Georgia people more effectively by dealing with television spots, which is OK.

Interviewer: Whereas, Andy Young tried to go more to the people.

Carter: He did. He did. Oh, by the way, David played a rather minor role in my 1962 campaign, but it was a role. He was a young lawyer then in the King and Spalding Law Firm and was an assistant assigned to Charles Kirbo, so David helped Charles Kirbo do legal research, prepare briefs, and that sort of thing, but I didn't know David from the 1962 campaign of mine for the senate well enough to have appointed him to the United States Senate later on. I did know David subsequently, as I said already, as on who worked in the Democratic Party and that sort of thing.

Interviewer: Okay. How about we talk about key business leaders in Atlanta and the influence they might have had on either state politics before you were governor, when you were governor, or after you were governor. Key business leaders like Robert Woodruff, Ivan Allen, J. B. Fuqua, Mills Lane.... we hear they exerted a considerable amount of influence on state politics. Was this true during your tenure? If so, how did it work?

Carter: Well, everyone of those men were actively and aggressively supporting Carl Sanders in the 1970 election so I was finally chosen to be governor without any obligation to them. Sanders was Fuqua's partner. Sanders was the attorney for Coca Cola Company and so forth. After the election was over and I was governor, Mr. Woodruff invited me out to Coca Cola. This was nine months later. I remember because it was on my birthday and he had a rose there for me for my birthday and he wanted to get acquainted and wanted to know this strange governor from south Georgia, and didn't want to apologize for having supported Sanders, but wanted to get acquainted with me. There was no way to ignore the significance of Coca Cola Company in

Georgia or in Atlanta, and the same way with other distinguished leaders that you named and many others as well.

I went to see Mills Lane during the '70 campaign. He was the head of the C and S Bank. He was the most prominent banker, perhaps the most prominent business person, in the state at that time. I explained that I needed his support. I knew he was well acquainted with Sanders; in fact, Sanders may have represented C and S Bank too. I don't know. Mills Lane listened to me and then when I got through he stood up and said, "Mr. Carter, it is a wonderful world." He shook hands with me and turned around and left. I stood there in his office by myself, not knowing what the heck to do. So I turned around and left too. That was the end of my conversation with Mills Lane. But, when we started the reorganization plan a lot of the success depended upon these same people coming in and giving me avid support in dealing with personnel management, or purchasing, or record-keeping, or computerizing, or the printing of documents , magazines, books, those kinds of things.

Interviewer: So they did help you once you had become governor?

Carter: Well, they did. I would bring them in at the top level---Delta and others—to the governor's mansion, and have, in effect, the key house and senate members there who were doubtful about the reorganization proposal and let the chief executive officers of these major corporations explain to the legislators how much money they thought might be saved if we had an effective approach to competitive bidding, or if we had general obligation bonds and we didn't have 15 agencies issuing state bonds, and the benefits and personnel efficiency if they would adopt the policy that might be prevalent, for instance, at Coca Cola Company. So, they were very supportive. I don't know of any major business person that was not supportive. J.B. Fuqua was not directly involved because his operation at that time was primarily in Augusta. He was in the senate with me and had been Carl Sanders' campaign manager and he was the chairman of the Georgia Democratic Party when Sanders was elected. But, I sat right adjacent to J.B. and knew him quite well. I am not criticizing him, but he was not one of those that I brought in in this effort that I am describing to you now.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, this is another question about when you were governor. How were your relations with the general assembly? In doing research on your governor's years, the *Atlanta Journal/ Constitution* tended to focus on the battles more between you and Lester Maddox than on what was going on. I was just wondering, how did you get along with the House leaders which I think you have addressed a bit already, but how about the Senate leaders and who were your strongest allies and your most dedicated opponents?

Carter: In the House I had fairly good rapport with the speaker and with the floor leader and others. I don't think we had any strong focal point of inherent opposition to my programs in the House of Representatives. The speaker was very powerful. He was also from Swainsboro,

Georgia where David Gambrell's wife was from, and he was honest, and he dealt with me fairly but he protected the integrity, statue and the prerogatives of the House of Representatives. The Senate, as I've said, was almost half divided with the key opposition in the Senate being focused around Lester Maddox, who, as you know in the Senate, still as Lt. Governor, has a major role to play. He appoints committee chairpersons and makes committee assignments. Hugh Gillis, whose father had been head of the highway department, whom I had fired when I came into office, was deeply antagonistic to me at that time and Culver Kidd has always been an arch enemy of mine, for various reasons that Culver can explain better than I . So, I would say they were the focal point of the opposition and they and their supporters were almost exactly 50% of the Senate.

Interviewer: Did it frustrate you having, for example in newspaper accounts that I read, it seemed almost everything you proposed Lester Maddox would immediately take issue with.

Carter: Yes. If he had been for something when he was governor and I came out for the same thing when I was governor, he would be against it. It was a very serious headache for me so quite often in the Senate, as Lester would confirm, I spent a lot of time using maximum political influence or promises or whatever to get the votes that I needed because I thought that reorganization and the other things were very important and no matter what I attempted they opposed. I remember when we had a key vote on abolishing the multiple health agencies, particularly the State Board of Health, all the medical doctors in Georgia were against it and so was Culver Kidd who was from Milledgeville and who was involved to some degree with them. Lester and everybody were against it, and it was a key vote. I had to have 28 votes to win and one senator who had always been on Lester's side was ill and couldn't get out of the hospital and the vote was tied, according to our count, 27 to 27 and this senator was brought in on a stretcher and wheeled in to the Senate Chamber and when they called the roll he voted for me.

Interviewer: On a stretcher?

Carter: Yeah. And it was the only time he ever voted for me and I don't know if he was so ill he was confused or what.

Interviewer: [Laughs]

Carter: But Lester Maddox, Hugh Gillis, Culver Kidd—all were taken aback that their strong dependable ally had come in and cast the crucial vote for me.

Interviewer: Did you bring him in or did they?

Carter: No. They did. I don't know if he had a vision from God or if he thought for once I'll vote right, I don't know, I'm highly prejudiced on this subject. [Said jokingly]

Interviewer: [Laughs with Carter.]

Carter: But it was a very good achievement. It was very unpleasant then but when Lester and I were in a meeting together we were, you know, polite, but Lester Maddox then, not now, but then, was much more effective with the press than I was. If Lester called a press conference there would be a hundred reporters. If I was governor and called a press conference, there might be 20 people there because what he said was sharp and somewhat radical and he had a reputation as a racist and also as a governor he did some good things. But anybody who calls a press conference where you know there will be a major attack on the incumbent governor, these reporters come. There was always inevitably a conflict between him and me and his supporters and mine, and since he did control the assignment of senators to a particular committee or to the chairmanship of a committee or secretary of a committee or vice-chairmanship of a committee, that's a powerful factor. He would decide who was going to be on the committee, the judiciary committee.

Interviewer: That's a lot of power.

Carter: Yeah, that's a lot of power and he used it. He wasn't all that naïve in politics then because he had served four years as governor and he was experienced. He also had some superb advisers in Hugh Gillis and Culver Kidd, in particular, who knew how to play the machinations of the legislative process. But, despite all that, if you look at the factual record or what we attempted and what we did, it is remarkable what we got done, primarily because the Georgia people thought that it was the right thing to do, and that's my totally unprejudiced opinion.

Interviewer: [Laughs] Mr. President, just to follow up on that for a second, with a situation like that that you described, how did you go about lobbying legislators and putting pressure on legislature to support your programs?

Carter: [Laughs] Well, pressure is not really a good word. First of all, it's persuasiveness. I had around the state a fairly strong support base in the senatorial district where that senator was looking for re-election. If I could reach them, who might be a local sheriff or local newspaper editor or a local radio station, whatever, that was an important factor. Another one was that I still had a rapidly growing foundation of support among the black people of the state and they were becoming an increasingly important element in a close election. Another factor was that the business community was almost unanimously favorable about the key issues of my administration: how do you deal with bond issues? How do you deal with this that and the other? I have already named those so I won't repeat myself. That was an important factor. And then, of course, I had control or heavy influence over some important agencies in the state government, like highways: which highway is going to be paved and which highway is not going to be paved? That was a factor as well, and so I didn't hesitate to use those sorts of things within the bounds of Georgia law in order to influence a senator to support me and if someone came in that was doubtful, that wasn't totally committed to the Lester Maddox faction and said "Governor, we really need this road paved between the schoolhouse and the cemetery or out past

the livestock sale barn." Then I would say, "Well, that's very interesting" and then I would say, "Well, I really need a vote on this bill," and he would say, "Well, I think I can support you," and I would say, 'Well, I'll give the highway department a call," and I would get his vote and the road would be paved. So, that is the way we got the things done, but I would say it was primarily the fact that in their own senatorial district there was a strong cadre of relative newcomers to politics who were still loyal to me and wanted their senator to be neutral, at best. And the hard liners were not all that numerous. I've named the key ones who were always against me. I knew they would always be against me no matter what I did, and they were, as I said, quite powerful.

Interviewer: I wanted to ask you a question about your style as governor which was something of a topic of discussion by the end of your term, certainly by 1976. At one point you had people like Reg Murphy [Editor of the *Atlanta Journal/Constitution*] who described you as, let me quote this, as "a mean, hard-eyed sort of fellow who tolerates nobody who opposes him." Ham Jordan, on the other hand, defended you. He said you were tough, demanding, but not vindictive at all. Ruthlessness, vindictiveness, it's all politics. How would you describe your style as governor?

Carter: Unfortunately, a major factor I've never understood is why Reg Murphy had such a deep antagonism against me. I've never done anything to him. I didn't know him well, but he had a feeling that I think was deep felt, that I was at heart a racist and the things that I did that were not racist were superficial. How could I otherwise be a peanut farmer from Plains, Ga., and get elected against an enlightened and progressive guy like Carl Sanders if I weren't a racist? I really believe, that is my best judgment, is what Reg Murphy felt. That is, unfortunately for me, although I don't lose sleep over it, a major base for news reporting that will be the foundation for a lot of history that is written 20 ,30, or 40 years from now. They'll read the headlines and the editorial page of the *Journal/ Constitution* unfortunately, and that is where they will get their opinions. That is part of life which I don't want to change. But I don't think of my own character as changed. I don't look upon myself now as someone who is mean, vituperative, or punitive or filled with antagonism. I had been gloriously successful. I had come out of nowhere as a school board member to be a senator, then governor of Georgia, but I used the political arena when necessary to accomplish my ends along as I thought it was both legal and morally proper to do so and I don't think there is anything wrong with that. So, I regret that newspaper report and I don't think that most people--- even that were on the other side in the senate, which is going a long way for me to say this--- would say that I was mean and vituperative. One of the examples of that which might contradict what I just said is with Mr. Jim Gillis. Mr. Gillis had run the state highway department with an iron hand for years. He was a king maker. He strongly supported Sanders because he thought Sanders was going to win, which is okay. But Mr. Jim and two other people ran the entire state highway system. They decided who got the contract to build a road; they decided who got a road paved. It didn't matter what anyone else thought, the legislature or anyone else. So, when I got in thought that one of my major early tasks was to

abolish that triumvirate that totally controlled this and put into place a comprehensive highway board that represented all the congressional districts and that would, in effect, have executives running it that were non-political in nature.

So, I went to talk to Mr. Gillis in a very confrontational way and I was nervous. I was a young---relatively young governor who didn't know much about politics and he was an older person, old enough to be my father who had been in politics virtually all his life, you might say. He was a massive land owner and very influential. In effect, we had a confrontation in his office and he said if you ask me to resign, I will resign. Then I said, "Mr. Chairmen, I am asking you to resign." And he did. And his sons, who are good people, legitimately resented it---that I asked their distinguished father to step down. It was a highly publicized event. But, fully out of that could come what I wanted as my legacy as governor. So, I can't say that I wasn't tough and confrontational when I thought it was necessary but I don't think that I was personally vindictive because my heart went to out to Mr. Jim Gillis. I never had any antagonism toward him, and never have, and his children either. But, if I thought something needed to be done, then I would do it.

Interviewer: Do you think you were a demanding boss of your staff?

Carter: Yeah. I was but I think it was kind of a harmonious thing. People worked late hours and in a dedicated fashion. They were part of the team. I never have wanted to have a major chief of staff between me and the key people that worked for me. I've always wanted to have kind of a multiple, maybe seven or eight, maybe as many as ten people, that had direct access to me all the time without having to go through an interim boss and I appreciate working that way. I don't even mind if those 10 or 12 people are even incompatible with each other. I don't object to getting conflicting advice or opinions from different ones. I make the final decision---have been at the Carter Center to some degree. Demanding, I think , yes, but I don't think anybody could ever say that I ask people to work harder than I do or later hours or so forth than I do, and I don't say that in a self-congratulatory way, it is just kind of a team effort.

Interviewer: As you look back now on your term as governor is there anything you would like to do over or differently?

Carter: Well, it is hard to say. I think if I had had the opportunity to run for re-election I would have done some things differently. I would have been much more cautious in confrontation and antagonizing interest groups. I would have been possibly more dormant, but under the circumstances, under the Constitution, I had four years and I couldn't run for re-election if I wanted to, and so I thought that each individual task or project or ambition or goal of mine, that I ought to go out to win it, and let the chips fall where they might. So, under those circumstances I don't really have any major regrets. It's a little bit hazy now in my mind to go back to which particular personal appointments I might make different or things like that. One possibility

would be David Gambrell. If I had appointed Ernest Vandiver to the state senate, he would still be there but I don't think that Georgia would be any better off with Ernie Vandiver in the Senate now than Sam Nunn. Although Sam was not my choice he was my strong supporter when I ran for governor. He probably did as much for me as David Gambrell did. So those are the kinds of things you look back on with some sense that history could have been a little bit different. But no, I really don't have any regrets. All the way through my subsequent years when anybody has asked me what has been the best political experience of my life I always say Governor, being Governor. Governor was a very strong office when I was there. It's not as strong now because Busbee and Joe Frank Harris have given up a lot of the Governor's prerogatives and authority to the legislature. I didn't do that. I tried to gain back all I could. I couldn't gain back the right of the Governor to appoint the Speaker of the House, which had always been done before. But, under the circumstances, with an enlightened speaker, George L. Smith, I did take back a lot of gubernatorial prerogatives. I feel quite at ease with it.

Interviewer: We are about out of time. Let me ask you one more question. What do you consider to be your greatest achievement as governor? What do you consider to be your greatest disappointment as Governor?

Carter: I think the greatest achievement was the total reorganization of the government which is still basically intact. If there has been any modification of it in law I don't know about it. There may be some insignificant modifications, but that is inevitable over a long period of time, but it has basically stayed intact and it is taken now for granted despite its highly controversial nature at the time, so I think that is the greatest achievement I had.

The thing that I really wanted to do was to see some consolidation of the school system and some dramatic improvement in the school system, and we got the laws passed but we only formed one comprehensive school on a multi-county basis. That's Tri-City School down in Buena Vista, Georgia, located near Buena Vista. That encompasses three counties. It happens to be adjacent to Sumter County where I live, but I wanted to do things of that kind, but that was politically impossible. The four years passed in a hurry for me and some of the major programs that we set out at the beginning to accomplish were not accomplished until the last year, so I think the biggest disappointment would be the lack of substantive improvement in raising much higher the standards of education. I put in a mandatory test at the 4th grade, 7th grade, and 11th grade levels and as best I could as Governor, I required that no child be moved from the 4th to 5th grade or from the 7th to 8th grade or 11th to 12th grade unless they passed the statewide standardized test. I thought it was good because there were too many social promotions and then that's kind of faded away in subsequent years.

Prison reform was initiated under Lester Maddox. I continued with it and brought in professionals to handle that challenge. I think that in recent years the main prison reform is to see how many cells we can build and now they are flooded with people who have excessively

long sentences. There is not an adequate commitment to rehabilitation or to half-way houses or early release or things of that kind, so most of the legacy that I left there that was important to me has been dissipated. Some of it has not but I don't know of any real sense of regret or sense of failure that I felt. [Whispering occurs among the interviewers about baseball. One says "ask him the baseball question."]

Interviewer: It was in *Sports Illustrated* last week that you are the only President since Taft who never threw out the first ball on opening day.

Carter: Yeah. I don't know why I didn't. I did throw out a ball at the World Series in Baltimore when I was President but I didn't throw out the ball in the first game. In fact, when I was Governor I was a very avid Braves fan and was there frequently and at that time I was promised by Bill Bartholomew and others that if the Braves ever got in the World Series I would throw out the first ball, so I did. But, I'm sorry I didn't. It is a historical omission in my life. [Laughs] I was there when Hank Aaron hit 715.

Interviewer: That's more important.

Carter: And that was I guess the most exciting sports event of my life and the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce took up a collection and brought a brand new beautiful Cadillac. At that time it cost $12,000 which was a *lot* of money. I bought a $10 tag which said HR 715 and I gave to Hank Aaron. That's all I could afford. I paid it out of my own pocket and that photograph of me giving him the HR 715 tag was in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. [Laughs]The Cadillac was not in the encyclopedia but it was much in the news media. So, I had some great moments with sports but unfortunately I didn't throw out the first ball.

Interviewer: [Laughs] Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Carter: It was a pleasure. I enjoyed talking to you.