

INTERVIEW I

DATE: May 13, 1969

INTERVIEWEE: CARL SANDERS

INTERVIEWER: THOMAS H. BAKER

PLACE: Governor Sanders' office in Atlanta, Georgia

Tape 1 of 1

B: Sir, do you recall if you met Mr. Johnson any time before the 1960s while he was still a senator?

S: Oh, yes, I had met Mr. Johnson. Actually, I had talked with him and had become acquainted with him long before that when he was actively representing the state of Texas. I was trying to think when he went to the Senate--1960, was it?

B: In 1948.

S: 1948. I remember I had a girl who came to work for me from Texas back in the early fifties, and he was representing, of course, the state. She had a problem with her husband, who was in the military, and I made the acquaintance of Lyndon Johnson then. I called him up and talked to him. I think it involved something about where her husband was or where he was going or something, and he was very gracious and accommodated her. From that point on I had an occasion from time to time to make his acquaintance. He was a good friend, as you know, particularly back in those days, to Dick Russell, and he always felt close to Georgia and occasionally would come down here.

B: What was his reputation in Georgia in the days that he was a senator? If in those days you had to classify him politically, how would you have done it?

Sanders--I--2

- S: I think they classified Lyndon Johnson back then as a Deep South southerner who had pretty much the same political philosophy that the solid southern bloc in Congress represented.
- B: Did you share that opinion yourself?
- S: I shared that opinion then. I felt I didn't have any reason to feel otherwise. It was pretty popular. As everybody now knows, back then that was about the only public position or public posture that an officeholder in the South could have.
- B: Did you see or hear any signs of presidential ambition, say, in 1956?
- S: I didn't. I was not that close to him. I was not in Chicago in 1956 when Jack Kennedy almost got the nomination for vice president, so I really was not that close to Lyndon Johnson then to observe whether or not he had any presidential aspirations.
- B: I was wondering if Senator Russell had perhaps sounded out Georgia politicians on the possibility.
- S: No, not really. Not to my knowledge.
- B: Did anything like that start prior to 1960?
- S: I think 1960 was probably the first time that I felt or anyone felt that possibly Lyndon Johnson had ambitions greater than that of being the majority leader in the Senate.
- B: Was there a fairly well-organized pre-convention drive?
- S: 1960?
- B: 1960.
- S: Yes, there was so far as the Georgia delegation was concerned.
- B: Who conducted that for Mr. Johnson?

Sanders--I--3

S: Well, primarily it was conducted I guess through Senator Russell via his nephew, who was then the governor, Ernest Vandiver. I was serving then as the floor leader, and it was pretty well put together, I think, from the offices of Dick Russell.

B: Was there an active Kennedy campaign in Georgia, too?

S: In 1960, of course, there was a very active Kennedy campaign after the convention, but prior to that time there was some activity for Kennedy. There was Bobby Troutman and there was Taxi Smith from down in Albany and a few of them that were active and open for Kennedy. They went out prior to the convention in Los Angeles and were active in the Kennedy headquarters, but they were not really in a position to have any real broadly based support in this state.

B: What was your personal stand?

S: I admired Jack Kennedy. Frankly, at that time I felt like he was a breath of fresh air, and I had hoped that it would probably work out where he would become the nominee. But I was bound by the unit rule in my delegation, and of course we cast our ballots for Lyndon Johnson on the first ballot. Jack Kennedy won it on the first ballot. Following that I went out and worked very hard, just as vigorously as I could, for Senator Kennedy.

B: Did anyone talk to you before that convention about the possibility of a Kennedy-Johnson ticket or a Johnson-Kennedy ticket?

S: No. In fact, that was a tremendous surprise I think to everyone, and particularly to me. I just didn't believe, first of all, that Jack Kennedy would ask Lyndon Johnson to run with him, and secondly, I didn't really believe at the time that Johnson would accept it if he was asked. I thought it probably would have been either Freeman or maybe Stuart Symington, someone like that.

Sanders -- I -- 4

B: Did Mr. Johnson campaign in Georgia in 1960?

S: In 1960 Lyndon Johnson, if I remember correctly, possibly came through here one time, but not any real campaign.

B: During the Kennedy years you became governor of Georgia, ran in 1962 and took office in 1963. Did you get any help from the national party in campaigning?

S: None at all. You mean monetarily and that sort of way? None.

B: I gather that generally you don't try to avoid that kind of thing anyway.

S: Well, when you say avoid it, you mean if I had been offered some help and I had felt like it would have been helpful I would have probably taken it, but no one offered me any help and I didn't get any help.

B: Did you see anything of Mr. Johnson during these years in which he was vice president?

S: Yes, I did.

B: How frequently and under what sort of circumstances?

S: I don't know. I went out and hunted on the Ranch with him once or twice, and I had occasion to be with him from time to time socially, sometimes in Washington. I had a very pleasant relationship with him.

B: What is Mr. Johnson like on a hunting trip?

S: He is a very, very hospitable host. Back in that day and time they used to shoot deer on his ranches out there. I now understand they have cut all that out. But he would try to make it as pleasant and as interesting for his guests as any man I have ever seen, and it was a very pleasant experience for me and some of the other people who had an occasion to visit and hunt with him.

Sanders -- I -- 5

B: Where were you at the time of John Kennedy's assassination?

S: I was on the golf course at the Augusta National in Augusta, which is my home. I was in the process of playing golf with a group of people, one of which was Tom Rice, president of Atlantic Coast Line, and a couple of others, and someone came out on the golf course and apprised me of the fact that the President had been shot. They thought he was killed, and they thought at the time the Vice President had been shot. We had a couple of nuts in Georgia about the same time who heard this, and they promptly called up the Capitol over there and said, "Now we are going to shoot the Governor." So it was [a] rather exciting day for me.

B: I should imagine. Did that involve special precautions for yourself?

S: They sent some G.B.I. people in and they traced some of the calls, and they found out, I think, a couple of them were made by a fellow in Macon, Georgia, who apparently was at a bar and who apparently was having too much to drink. He just decided he would get in on the act, too, like a lot of people of that particular stripe do when something like that happens.

B: Did you go immediately to Washington?

S: No, I did not. I came back to Atlanta, came back to the Capitol, tried to talk with some people, kept in communication as much as I could, but I did not go immediately to Washington.

B: Did you receive a call from Mr. Johnson or any of his staff?

S: Not immediately following that. I don't recall that. I probably was in touch with him shortly after that, but I don't recall having any calls from Mr. Johnson.

B: You were in Washington for Mr. Johnson's address to the joint session of Congress?

Sanders--I--6

- S: Yes, I was. I received a call, and of course that was several days, I have forgotten how many days, after the assassination. I went to my home again that weekend and made an address in my church over the horrible tragedy that had occurred, and I came back to Atlanta and I did receive a call asking me to come up and to sit with the family when the President made his inaugural address. I was in the box with Mrs. Johnson and with the daughters and with Dick Daley. I have forgotten a couple of others that were there. I think Arthur Schlesinger was in there and a couple of others.
- B: It was generally assumed at the time in the newspapers that you were there as kind of a representative of the New South.
- S: I think that's the connotation that was put on it. That was not my interpretation of it. I didn't put that connotation on it. If that was what was placed on it by the President or his staff I was not aware of it. But I was a loyal Democrat and I had supported Kennedy and I had supported Johnson and I didn't make any bones about it, so I was glad to be there.
- B: Did you at time there have any doubts as to whether Mr. Johnson would carry out Mr. Kennedy's policies?
- S: No, I did not. I felt that Lyndon Johnson would do everything he could to carry out Kennedy's policies.
- B: Did he call on you for advice in regard to, for example, the civil rights bill that was before Congress then?
- S: No.
- B: Or advice or counsel of any other kind during that first year?
- S: Oh, I talked with him on many, many occasions about many problems and many things, and I was serving back then on the National Governor's

Sanders--I--7

Conference and on the executive committee at the time. I conferred with him about a lot of things. I went to Vietnam in 1965 with seven or eight other governors. But so far as conferring with me specifically about legislation and about what he should do, the advice and counsel that I offered to Lyndon Johnson would be the same that I would offer to any other good friend, perhaps letting him know what I heard and how things seemingly were being accepted in this part of the country, giving him some ideas as to what I felt like the grassroots reactions were to some of his proposals and all. But I never was in on the policymaking, or in on trying drafting on specific legislation or attempting to help prepare speeches or material of any kind that he might have been giving the Congress.

B: Did you find him pretty knowledgeable about what was going on in this part of this country?

S: I have always found him to be a very knowledgeable man. I think he probably had on his finger tips and kept in touch with what was going on in this country as well as any man I have ever seen serving in office.

B: In the 1964 presidential election you spoke out for the platform on civil rights and headed Mr. Johnson's campaign in Georgia, didn't you?

S: That's correct. I didn't really speak out for the platform on civil rights, I spoke out for the fact that it was the law of the land and that we must accept it and that we had to make some changes and all that, but I was not a leading advocate of the passage of that law. I had nothing to do with that. In fact, I had some qualms about this business of being able to subject private property to the Civil Rights Act and went to Washington and testified against that particular phase of it. But once

Sanders -- I -- 8

that became the law of the land and once it was established as such, I felt strongly that it was necessary and absolutely imperative that we all pull together.

B: Did you discuss your qualms about the bill with Mr. Johnson before its passage?

S: Oh, he knew that. He was, I think, aware of that fact that I was not in favor of the public accommodations section of it, I think it is called.

B: Did he ever explain to you his reasoning for pressing it?

S: No, he didn't. I believe that Lyndon Johnson had a sincere conviction that what he was doing was in the best interest of the country and, although it might not be palatable in some areas of the country, that he was doing what he felt like he had to do as the president of this country.

B: How effective was Mrs. Johnson's train in the campaign of 1964?

S: I think Mrs. Johnson's train was an effective campaign gimmick. In fact, I was one of them that suggested that she have the train and that she do that, and I think it was effective. I think she is a very, very attractive and a very effective person when it comes to communicating with people, and although we didn't perhaps sweep the South, I think if we had not had the train and if she had not been able or been willing to do that it could have been more disastrous than it was.

B: Did the train coming through Georgia pose any unusual security problems?

S: Oh, it posed some problems. When you say security problems, I don't think really security, but it posed some political problems, because there were a lot of local politicians and congressmen and other people who didn't want to get on the train. And of course some of them got on late at night, some of them came in the back door. Some of them, a few of them, fortunately stood up and didn't make any bones about it, like I was doing,

Sanders--I--9

but many of them wished they had never heard of it because they just didn't want to get associated with it.

B: Was one of the ideas of the train at its inception to kind of make people stand up and be counted?

S: That was one way, I think, of bringing some of the, you might say reluctant, so-called Democratic leaders out in the open or finding out just how cowardly or how weak they felt about getting involved in behalf of a candidate who represented their party.

B: Are Senator Russell and Mr. Johnson still as close in these years as they had been before?

S: That's pretty hard for me to judge, because I'm not in Senator Russell's shoes. I think that even through the 1964 campaign, however, they maintained a pretty close relationship. I am quite sure that it probably wasn't as intimate or as fatherly-son or however you want to [call it], mentor and pupil, as it had been when Lyndon Johnson was the majority leader and Dick Russell was the chairman of the Armed Services Committee and really the leader of the southern bloc back in the late forties and early fifties.

B: I have seen a story to the effect that you considered running against Senator Russell in the senatorial primaries in 1966.

S: I did in 1965. Well, 1965 was the time because Senator Russell became desperately ill. In fact, he was hospitalized, and it was pretty well accepted and recognized that he possibly would die. All I did was try to fill the vacuum that was being created there, to make sure that there were other people who might conceivably want to fill that. So I sort of stepped in the breach while that was in limbo. Of course, when it was determined that Dick Russell's health was going to be restored and that

Sanders -- I -- 10

he could serve and would serve, then I immediately withdrew any consideration of that and made it perfectly clear that I was supporting Dick Russell. Because I think Dick Russell has been a great senator, and I think he has a great storehouse of knowledge and expertise, particularly in the military areas and all, to a greater extent than almost any other senator or any other congressman that I know of. I was not about to try and take that type of leadership away from the country or away from the people of my state. In addition to that, it would have been a very, very difficult job for anybody to have tackled Dick Russell.

B: There was some speculation at the time that perhaps Mr. Johnson would have preferred that Senator Russell stay [in the Senate].

S: I think that that was the speculation, and I think that was probably true. Because I think Lyndon Johnson realized, just as I am talking to you, that although he and Dick Russell may not have been as close as they had been previously in earlier years Dick Russell was a strong man in the Senate; and that he could communicate with him and he still had that friendly relationship with him; and that he might not vote with him on every issue, but that when the ox was really in the ditch and when things got down to a real hard, pitched battle on those matters that were critical to the country, and probably critical to Johnson's administration, that he could generally get Dick Russell to help him.

B: You mentioned that you were trying to fill a gap to prevent someone else stepping in. Would that possibly be a reference to Lester Maddox?

S: No, Lester Maddox was not really at that time considered to be a formidable candidate for anything. He later developed into one.

B: Incidentally, did you ever discuss Mr. Maddox with President Johnson?

Sanders -- I -- 11

S: Never did. Never have.

B: I was wondering if he had ever asked you to explain what was going on in Georgia politics?

S: No, not really. We talked generally about politics down here, but I've never really discussed Lester Maddox with him to any extent.

B: You mentioned the trip you made to Vietnam with other governors. Did you report back to Mr. Johnson?

S: Yes, I did, sure did. After I was over there I later went by the White House and I think sat down and talked with him at length about my observations and what I had seen and all.

B: Do you feel that you had an opportunity to really see what was going on? The tour was not guided or conducted?

S: I felt like we had fine opportunity, and I didn't feel the tour was guided. We were able to go where we wanted to. We were not told where we could go, but we were given options to select areas. We pretty well covered the country and went right out on the front lines and also had a chance to talk with many, many boys in the field that either were from my state or my area. I felt like it was an objective tour.

B: This was about at the time of the increase in the troop commitment over there, I believe, wasn't it?

S: November of 1965. I don't know when they [committed more troops]. It may have been a little bit earlier than that. I have forgotten exactly how many troops they had over there then, but they had several hundred thousand.

B: What sort of tone did Mr. Johnson take in talking about the thing? Did he listen to what you had to say?

Sanders -- I -- 12

- S: Yes, he did, and I think Lyndon Johnson was always a tremendously concerned man about the great responsibility he was carrying about this Vietnam situation. I think he worried about it, I think he sought the best advice he could get, and I think it was a matter that he agonized over every day. Because I think he realized that he was having to sacrifice a lot of young Americans in defense of a cause that many people in this country did not agree with and didn't understand. I admired him for the fact that I believe his policy may not have been perfect, and perhaps it was wrong, but at least I think he believed in what he was doing. He was totally sincere about what he was trying to do.
- B: Was your report in 1965 favorable to the course he was then undertaking?
- S: In 1965 of course we felt, having come back [from] over there and listening to [General William] Westmoreland and some of the others, and Henry Cabot Lodge, too, that things were looking up. They felt, and led us to believe, rightly or wrongly, that there was a good possibility of getting out of that situation maybe in another year. That has proven to be not the case, and since that time I'm sure that many of us have had second thoughts about what really was happening over there. But that was the feeling at the time. Everybody on that tour, including George Romney who later said he was brainwashed, was pretty much of the same mind. When we got back there weren't any real doubting Thomases that I remember in the delegation. I think everybody felt very agreeably pleased with what we had been given an opportunity to see, and most of them, I think, supported the President's position. Because subsequent to that we had a National Governors Conference--I think it was

Sanders--I--13

subsequent to the trip--and it was a pretty unanimous situation, nonpartisan, Republicans and Democrats supporting Johnson's position.

B: A number of the major civil rights organizations are headquartered in Georgia here in Atlanta. Has this situation ever placed you in the position of being a kind of go-between between Mr. Johnson and, say, Dr. King or any of the other leaders?

S: Not really. I have had a very friendly relationship with Dr. King's father. I knew Dr. King personally, but I didn't have any great intimate relationship there. I was in the President's office the night that Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated. I was sitting there with him when he received the communication over the wire and they came in and told him that he was shot in Memphis. I have a little piece of paper with a note on it from him which I treasure saying, "I'm sorry you had to be here to hear this" with his initials on it.

B: What was his immediate reaction?

S: I think it was one of--it was an appalling reaction. I think he was stunned by it. But I think immediately, as I always found him to be, that he reacted as any man would do who was a professional, who was a real soldier and a politician, who understood what had to be done. I think then he put into motion as quickly as possible those things that he felt like had to be done to keep the peace and to maintain order and tried at the same time to prepare himself to address the people that night on the results of this.

B: Did he immediately anticipate that there might be disorder?

S: I think it's always anticipated when something like that happens that there could have been a great violent reaction to that, and I think certainly that was in the back of his mind. I don't think he accepted

Sanders--I--14

that [as] necessarily having to happen, but I think certainly he felt, as anybody would feel, that he had to at least expect that as a possibility.

B: Did you and he speculate on the possible assassin?

S: No.

B: Did you stay there in Washington through the events of the next few days?

S: No, I stayed there that night, and I returned to Georgia the next day and watched a good bit of that on television and all that. But I did not stay up there the next several days, and I had no further conversations with him after that about it.

B: When he heard the news did he himself suggest or perhaps ask you to call Mrs. King or any of the other members of the family?

S: No, he did not to me. I don't know what he did so far as the other staff was concerned, but he certainly didn't make any suggestions to me of that kind.

B: As a governor, how did you get along with Mr. Johnson's administration?

S: I got along fine.

B: Do you believe that his choice of personnel was good in cabinet posts and sub-cabinet positions?

S: I can't fault him with anybody that I know. I think the people that he had in his administration were good. So far as I was concerned they were competent, and I know of no one individual, or two or three individuals or anybody that I would single out as being someone that I felt was not attempting to and apparently doing a pretty good job.

B: Did you find them generally knowledgeable and understanding about a state's problems?

S: Yes, I did.

B: At one time you served on the Commission for Federal-State Relations.

Sanders -- I -- 15

- S: That's correct. I did that in Jack Kennedy's administration and subsequently in Lyndon Johnson's administration.
- B: That organization--is it an effective group?
- S: I think it is pretty effective. Of course, they really don't have any great teeth where they can force any issues, but certainly it is effective, because it does give some of the federal establishment and the governors and some of the people in state government a chance to sit down and work around the table with each other and confer and discuss mutual problems and things. Yes, I think it has an effective role, but it is not a policy-making situation.
- B: There has also been a good deal of speculation throughout Mr. Johnson's presidency about possible rivalry between Mr. Johnson and the John Kennedy group or staff. As a man close to both sides, is that speculation valid?
- S: When you say rivalry, I don't know whether that's the proper term. I think that Lyndon Johnson realized--in fact, he has told me and I have no qualms about saying this--that if he had the chance to do this bit over again one of the things he probably would have changed if he had had an opportunity to do so is that he would have put more people on his staff and perhaps tried to recruit more people that were Johnson followers [rather] than some of the people that he inherited. I think he recognized that Jack Kennedy had a good staff and that he was going to carry out Jack Kennedy's program whether it was his staff or some of the people that Kennedy had. I think he was committed to that, and I think he carried it out.

I think, however, that he also recognized, being a wise man as he is and a knowledgeable man, that he could not recruit out of his

Sanders -- I -- 16

section of the country, the South or Texas or Georgia or whatnot, the same caliber of people that Jack Kennedy had brought into government with him when he went into the administration up there. So I think Lyndon Johnson had to accept, whether he wanted to or not, many people whose first loyalty was really Kennedy's and not necessarily Lyndon Johnson's. He worked with them, and I think he did everything in the world to be fair to them and to make them feel like they were an integral part of his operation. But I think that this was really one of the things that probably in the long run did not help him as much as if he could have selected many of these people himself and put them into the various positions.

B: When he told you that did he have reference particularly to the staff in the sense of the White House aides?

S: I think it was a general statement, and I think he told it to me in reference to one of the reasons why he wanted to set up this school of government in the South, because there is no such institution now. I think he realized, and perhaps to a greater extent having been president, that although we were producing out of Harvard and maybe out of Stanford or California and some of these other places many highly qualified people who were attractive and who wanted to come into the government, that when he looked at his own native section of the country we were not producing those kind of people. Even the top-flight people that were Johnson's, you might say, friends, perhaps people like me who had a knowledge of politics, who really understood politics and were involved in it, most of us were in elective positions and we were not about to leave those positions to go into administrative positions in government. So he was pretty much having to try to crossbreed, maybe, Lyndon

Sanders--I--17

Johnson and his philosophy and his feelings with another group of people that were not essentially Lyndon Johnson-thinking people.

B: Did he ever express to you any regret that he had kept certain cabinet ministers?

S: No, he did not to me.

B: Did he ever discuss with you the idea of a federal appointment for yourself?

S: Oh, yes, several times. He offered me the opportunity to go on the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, which is the second highest court in the country. There were several vacancies on that during his administration. He and Dick Russell and Herman Talmadge all talked to me about that. I didn't want to be a federal judge. Subsequently I was asked if I would serve as the director of the Office of Emergency Planning, which Farris Bryant held and which Buford Ellington held. I told him and others I was not interested in that. One time he called me, oh, I don't know, a year or so before he went out, and told me that he was concerned about the Philippines and that they were becoming communistically infiltrated and wanted to know if I would be interested at all in going over there as an ambassador or something, and I told him I had no interest in that. I did agree to serve on the Public Broadcasting Corporation, which he appointed me on and of which I am now a member, and I also agreed to serve as a member of the National Commission on Urban Problems, which Paul Douglas chaired. I told the President that I would help him any way I could and in any fashion I could, but I had no real desire and had no wish to become involved as a full-time federal employee.

B: By the early part of 1968, before Mr. Johnson announced his withdrawal, had you discussed his political prospects with him?

S: Yes, I guess I had, generally.

Sanders--I--18

B: Had you presented a picture of pretty dismal hopes in the Deep South?

S: Not necessarily. I think I tried to be realistic with him and told him he had problems, which he knew, with the war and everything else. But I didn't feel like it was any hopeless situation.

B: The reason I'm asking questions like that is, did you have any prior indication that he might [not run again]?

S: None at all. I had heard and I had read that he had considered that. And when I say I had any reason, I talked with him several times and from the tone of his talk a year or so in advance I guess I could have very easily assumed that there was a good possibility he might not run.

B: You mean the tone of his talk was discouraged?

S: Not discouraged, but just indicative that he didn't know. A lot depended on what the situation [was], his personally and otherwise, as to whether he might offer for another term. I always assumed and believed that he would, but I don't think it was any sudden, overnight decision that he made, because I had been in his presence where I could have assumed very easily that this man was doing all he could for this term and maybe would go on.

B: Were you close to Robert Kennedy?

S: Yes, I was.

B: Do you know what kind of throes he went through in deciding to offer himself for the nomination?

S: No, I really don't. I don't know what kind of throes he went through when he finally made that decision to jump in the race. I know that he was agonizing with himself during that period of time prior to the President's announcement as to what if anything he should do, and there

Sanders--I--19

were many people of course encouraging him and trying to push him into an open confrontation with the President before the President made his decision.

B: What was the relationship between those two men?

S: Well, on the surface I think it was cordial, and I think they worked together. I think beneath the surface there wasn't any great love and affection, but I think certainly it was a working relationship that both recognized was beneficial to both of them and I think they lived with each other.

B: Was there animosity there dating back to the 1960 [convention]?

S: I don't know how far it dated back, I have no way of knowing that, I'm sure that there was some natural jealousy, probably; that happens I think in any situation of that kind, Kennedy's brother having been president and probably Kennedy having not been enthusiastic in the beginning when Jack Kennedy selected Lyndon. But I think that they were locked together in a set of circumstances and both realized it was far better for them to work together and get along together than it was to part company.

B: Did you ever get the impression that Mr. Johnson was particularly hurt by the criticism he got from the Deep South?

S: I never got that impression--that he was hurt. I think I got the impression that it didn't please him, and I got the impression that he probably realized that with his background and things he had said and speeches he had made and all of that that there was pretty good reason for some people down there to feel that he had sort of done an about face on them. But I never got the impression that he felt like the South was ungrateful to him, or that there was any amount of ingratitude.

Sanders--I--20

B: Do you feel that there was any way that Mr. Johnson could have better presented himself? For example, you have been a progressive southern governor and haven't gotten that much criticism.

S: He probably could have, but I started out more in that vein and he didn't. He had been up there thirty years in Washington, and there has been a tremendous change in the last thirty years in this country. I think for Lyndon Johnson to work his way up the ladder of leadership in the southern bloc in Congress and all that, it was just almost essential that he follow the old line of the so-called states-righter and segregationist or he never would have gotten in the position that he finally achieved.

B: Did you ever suggest to Mr. Johnson any particular campaigns in the South? Not political campaigns but, say, a speech tour or anything like that to try to mute some of this?

S: Oh, we asked him down here, and he came down here. During the campaign we had him down here in Atlanta and Macon. Sure, I made some suggestions during the campaign that he ought to come and talk to the people and that sort of thing and talked to him about Hubert Humphrey. And I agreed to go into south Georgia with Hubert Humphrey. They wanted him to come down. He went in to Tifton; Hubert came down and we had a good rally down there. Prior to that time, they stopped over in Moultrie, and I thought they were going to hang him and me both back then.

B: This was in 1964?

S: This was in 1964.

B: Did you participate in the Humphrey campaign in 1968?

Sanders--I--21

- S: I did. I helped. I was not of course in the same position as I was in 1964, but I contributed and I did what I could to help. But it was a pretty lost cause down here to begin with.
- B: I suppose Wallace pretty well had it sewed up.
- S: He did.
- B: With the assistance of the current Governor?
- S: Right.
- B: We're getting sort of toward the end here. From your knowledge of the man, what do you believe are Mr. Johnson's greatest strengths and weaknesses as a man and president?
- S: I think his greatest strength was his knowledge of the government. I think he had a great reservoir of experience. I don't think any man who has served in that office had any better background, actual working knowledge of being president than Lyndon Johnson. I think his weakness was that he was a sensitive man, although he doesn't give that appearance. He was a man who was probably a little vain in some regards, and he was very sensitive to criticism and that type of thing. But that's just a human trait that many people have, and I never did feel that it was such a liability that it warped his general perspective. But I think his other liability was that although he was a most effective individual in the confines of a room or with a small group of people--he could charm a jaybird out of a tree or he could sell iceboxes to the Eskimos--I think it was unfortunate that he was never able really to project himself as he could in that kind of gathering over the television to the masses of the people. I think this hurt him, and he never really communicated like Kennedy did.
- B: Was he aware of this problem?

Sanders--I--22

- S: I'm sure he was aware of it. Yes, I think he was aware of it. I think he was so aware of it that he went to extremes sometimes to try and overcome it, and I think by doing that he gave people the impression that he was trying to be an actor and put on performances that were not Lyndon Johnson. I think he destroyed, sometimes, the sincerity that you expect from a man in that position.
- B: Have you seen Mr. Johnson since the end of his presidential term?
- S: I have talked with him. I had not seen him since he left office. I saw him just before he left office, and I have communicated with him I think once or twice. From all that I know and all that I hear he seems to be getting along fine. He has young Tommy Johnson out there from Macon, who is a friend of ours and a very fine young man. But I have not had any personal contact.
- B: I was wondering if you had had any indication that he intended to retain an interest in active politics?
- S: I have no way of knowing that. All I know is that when he left office he was going back to set this school up and I guess write his memoirs and perhaps do some lecturing and get the Johnson Library all established. I got the impression that he probably was going to try and be an elder statesman and keep his finger in the pie by keeping in touch with his friends, but that he never really intended to be an active participant in the political arena. I just felt, and I still feel, that Lyndon Johnson is a man that can render a good service still to this country, like other presidents have, and that he ought to be called upon by people in that office just like Eisenhower and Truman have been called upon for advice and counsel. Because no one knows the great burden or great responsibility that a man has in that office until he has gone through it.

Sanders--I--23

B: Did he ever discuss your future plans with you?

S: Only in a general sense, and the fact that he knew--and I have always never made any bones about it--that I intended to stay here in Georgia and to try and stay in the political arena down here, possibly return to the governorship or maybe ultimately some day serve in Washington if I have a chance to.

B: I was wondering if he had ever discussed with you the circumstance where men like yourself and Terry Sanford and a few of the other New South moderate, progressive governors find themselves in a kind of eclipse?

S: Well, no, not in that regard. But he told me one time that the greatest job in government, so far as he was concerned, was serving in the United States Senate, that he enjoyed that position more and he apparently got greater satisfaction when he was serving in that particular office than any public office that he had ever served in.

B: Did you interpret that as a kind of hint to yourself?

S: I think he was trying to just give me some good advice, that down the road if I wanted to look in a direction where I would enjoy public service that that certainly was a position that he had enjoyed. When you say we are in an eclipse, that's a pretty broad term. I don't know whether we are in an eclipse or not, but in fact I'm not in an eclipse, because I'm preparing right now to get involved in politics next year. I don't know what Terry is going to do. I think Terry passed up an opportunity here recently to run for governor and run for the United States Senate. Of course I followed Terry, I was about a year or so behind him. We served together, but you can't stay out of politics forever and expect to come back.

Sanders--I--24

B: Is there anything else you feel should be added to this kind of record?

S: Not a thing. As I say, I think Lyndon Johnson's service to his country was, to me, of the highest caliber. I believe him to be a good American, a dedicated American. I think his wife, Lady Bird Johnson, is one of the most charming women I have ever met. I think she, too, was an excellent companion for him and a woman who, too, was totally dedicated to doing the best she could in that office. Although he has been criticized, and he probably has made a lot of mistakes and maybe he was not perfect, I think that his administration was progressive and I think that he served our country in as fine a fashion as any other man who has ever sat in that office.

B: Thank you very much, sir.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE  
LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON LIBRARY

Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interview of Carl Sanders

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, Carl Sanders of Atlanta, Georgia do hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title, and interest in the tape recording and transcript of the personal interview conducted on May 13, 1969 in Atlanta, Georgia and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

(1) The transcript shall be available for use by researchers as soon as it has been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

(2) The tape recording shall be available to those researchers who have access to the transcript.

(3) I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcript and tape.

(4) Copies of the transcript and the tape recording may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request.

(5) Copies of the transcript and tape recording may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

Donor

*Carl E. Sanders*

Date

*6/12/78*

Archivist of the United States

*James B. Rhodes*

Date

*June 26, 1978*