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Interview with  
Ghent Sanderford  
May 8, 1967, and June 3, 1967

Place of Interview: Austin, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. E. Dale Odom

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Oral History Collection

Mr. Ghent Sanderford

Interviewer: Dr. E. Dale Odom

Also Present: Dr. Fred Gantt

Place of Interview: Austin, Texas

May 8, 1967

Dr. Odom: Mr. Sanderford, the first thing I want to ask you is how and when did your relationship with the Fergusons first begin?

Mr. Sanderford: Well, Governor Ferguson was a native of Bell County, and so was I. I naturally had a pride in Ferguson because I considered him an able man, a successful businessman, and an ambitious man, and I kept in close contact with him for two years before he announced for governor. He first was supporting Sam Sparks who was also a native of Bell County, but for some reason I do not recall, Ferguson did not support Sparks for a very long time. He wrote a number of letters to prominent people in Texas, trying to get them to run for governor at that coming election. One of these men was Mr. Tom Henderson, a native and resident of Milam County, a very fine man and a very great lawyer, and a good friend of Jim Ferguson. Ferguson wrote him a letter and solicited or suggested that Mr. Henderson ought to make the race for governor himself. He was a man highly qualified, of the right age, and experienced in life, and would have made Texas a great governor, so Ferguson was out

seeking a good man to run for governor. Then, to Ferguson's surprise, Mr. Henderson came back with a proposition and said, "Mr. Ferguson, you are the man yourself to run for governor." And he set out his reasons why Ferguson should run for governor in 1914. Well, Ferguson thought the matter over and one thing and another, and kept it to himself, as I remember. And so, one day he startled his whole neighborhood and all his friends by announcing for Governor of Texas. At the same time, he stated that he had set aside \$30,000 for the campaign, which is not much financing, as things are these days. And everybody thought that was a powerful lot of money for him to put up to run for governor, \$30,000.

But, he kept getting more interested. Finally he set his opening date for Governor of Texas at a little town in Bosque County by the name of Blum and it's quite a historic place and date on account of the announcement of Jim Ferguson for Governor of Texas at that time. Ferguson then was forty-three years old. We had quite a large crowd, most of them rural people, who came out to his opening address, and he was not a polished speaker at that time nor an experienced campaigner, so he just let go and spoke from the cuff, like he always did, and the speech made a great impression among the farmers of Texas. Of course, nobody heard it over the radio, and no one, of course, saw it on television, but they read about it in the papers. And before he hardly knew it, the pitch that he made for the farmer vote was successful. The farmers over all the state, generally speaking, supported Ferguson for governor in the

1914 campaign.

Odom: Did you work in that campaign, Mr. Sanderford?

Sanderford: No, I was about twenty-three years old.

Odom: Did you work in that campaign in any way?

Sanderford: No, just around friends and talking on the corner like all upstarts did in those days, and frosting their man for governor.

Odom: In Temple?

Sanderford: No, I lived in Belton, Texas. In fact, Ferguson was born in Salado, a little town near Belton, and he went to Belton after he got back from his trip in the Northwest and studied law, passed the bar examination and opened a law office. The first office he ran for was City Attorney of Belton, and he was elected. Then he practiced law, as best a young lawyer could in those days, and developed into a real good lawyer. He had some good, important civil cases and criminal cases, and he was making a good record as a lawyer who devoted his time to his practice. He kept that up, but in the meantime, he got interested in the banking business. I remember on one occasion, he boasted up there, in Bell County--I didn't hear him, just heard it quoted--saying that he was one of the richest men of the county because, for one reason he said that his wife had just inherited a thousand acres of black land farm in Little River at the bottom of Bell County.

Well, he went ahead then and organized the Temple State Bank, became president of it, and I don't remember capitalization or anything like that, but he was then known, from then on, as a banker

and not as a lawyer, because he didn't take any more law cases; he just told himself that the law was too slow for him, and he got interested in financing, trading, and buying land and one thing and another. At the time Ferguson announced for governor, if I remember, he was supposed to have been worth about \$350,000, or somewhere in the neighborhood, I don't know exactly. In those days, he was considered to be a fairly wealthy man. Not so today, though. Anybody worth \$350,000 lacks a whole lot of being what is considered to be a rich man. Anyhow, when he got in the governor's race, he had to turn his banking interests over to a banker that he found up in Eastland County. And, unfortunately, that man and Ferguson didn't seem to get along too well. That is, after Ferguson was elected governor. Ferguson kept in touch with the bank, of course, during his campaign, and was still head of it. I think the man's name was Poe--H. C. Poe of Eastland County. And after Ferguson went into the governor's office, Poe took over the bank there at Temple.

Odom: How long did Mr. Ferguson retain his interest in the bank? Do you recall that?

Sanderford: No, I can't answer that, except for this; I remember this. This is all off-hand. There was another man in the bank named Hughes. Another man's name was--I forget which--but anyhow Ferguson got interested in being governor and making a good impression on the people as a man who could make a good governor in his first administration. It went down in the records as one of the best administrations Texas ever had, from the standpoint of the things he ac-

complished, what he did for the state, and how he got along. It was only in the second term, he ran into a lot of trouble. And the origin of that was mostly with the Temple State Bank, his bank. Because he didn't think that some of the men who were running the bank were exactly loyal to him. He was borrowing from the bank when he was running for governor. Of course, the \$30,000 that he had laid aside didn't last too long in the governor's race. Incidentally, I can say this about it; he had to make a decision about running for governor or going abroad. He and his wife had planned to take a trip abroad the year that he was to make the race for governor. And so, if he made the race for governor, they couldn't go abroad, but they gave up the idea of going abroad, and he ran for governor, and was elected.

Odom: Were you in Austin any of the time during his first or second term in any capacity?

Sanderford: In no capacity, as far as being connected with the governor's office. I was a student at the University of Texas, and I heard his first inaugural address in 1915.

Odom: How did the students react?

Sanderford: At that time, he seemed to be the favorite of most everybody. I remember one remark he made, his closing remarks he made to the legislature, "If you love me like I love you, no one can break our love in two." (laughter) But, the love was broken--the love was broken right in two--it was broken later on. I always remembered that little ditty.

Odom: What was the reaction among the university students over his veto-

ing the appropriation bill?

Sanderford: Well, that was bad.

Odom: In 1917?

Sanderford: That was a bad reaction. Well, before we get to Ferguson as governor, what he did, he wanted to itemize the appropriations they made for the support of the university, put salaries and everything down to the appropriation bill. And they had been accustomed to just making a lump-sum appropriation to the university, and he didn't like that; he wanted to know what each professor was getting. The result was that a lot of these professors at the university didn't like it at all. Whether they cared what he knew about their salaries, I don't know. But that was one of the issues that started the rift between the University of Texas and Jim Ferguson. And so, it was not an issue particularly, in his second race for governor. He ran on his record as governor and beat a man by the name of Morris for Governor of Texas by a good margin. In those days, the women couldn't vote. You don't remember that (laughter); they couldn't vote anyhow at that election.

Odom: He opposed woman suffrage in that election, didn't he?

Sanderford: I don't remember. I should remember that, but I don't know. I wouldn't want to say whether he opposed it or not.

Odom: He still maintained his stand that he was against prohibition; not necessarily against prohibition, but he would veto any legislation pro or con concerning prohibition?

Sanderford: Oh, yes. That was one of the first...that was put out in his first campaign for governor. We'd had issues here in Texas well, since

practically years on end over prohibition. People were aligned against their neighbors, their kin people, and everything else. So Ferguson promised them that if he was elected governor there would be no more prohibition question to fight over. He'd veto any legislation, pro or con, concerning prohibition. I don't think any liquor legislation ever got to his desk.

Odom: It didn't, the first term. What about in the second campaign? I was trying to think, did he also continue that in that form or not?

Sanderford: Oh, yes. I think he did. I think he did. One of the issues that was so pleasing to the farmers in Texas during his first campaign was that prior to his race for governor, there had grown up in Texas a custom among the landlords of Texas, to charge the tenant more than the ordinary one-third rent for grain and one-fourth for cotton. They'd make the tenants pay a bonus on top of that. Well, there were a lot of tenant farmers in Texas in those days, and so he aligned all the tenant farmers, you might say, in Texas in his favor right from the beginning. And they stayed with him--that part of the people stayed with him, all through his campaigns for governor, I guess, right till the last.

He was elected governor by a flattering majority, and he thought everything was going good. But this university question came up; it kept coming up. And so, it got so fierce that the whole university as a body was against him. Now before it got so bad, though, the legislature passed the appropriation for the University of Texas, and he vetoed that appropriation. I was living in Temple



then, and my roommate was Few Brewster, who later served on the Supreme Court of Texas, and is dead now. I picked up the Dallas News that morning and saw where Jim Ferguson had vetoed the appropriation for the University of Texas, and I predicted there to Judge Brewster, who was a judge then--he and another friend of mine started out practicing law. I predicted, and I said, "That's gonna prove to be Jim Ferguson's downfall, because this University of Texas student body--you can't whip it."

Gantt: What do you think really caused him to do that?

Sanderford: Well, he and Dr. Vincent had got at cross purposes; to my way of thinking, I thought Vincent was a pretty fine, qualified president. I thought he was good. Ferguson let his temper get the best of him; I didn't favor that at all--him vetoing the appropriation. But I talked to his nephew, Bryce Ferguson, soon after that and told him that Governor Jim had gotten himself in bad by vetoing that appropriation, and Bryce, by the way, turned out to be a great district judge. He served in some south Texas county and made quite a record...highly respected and died a few years ago. So Bryce told me, said now, "Let's don't draw our conclusions too soon." Said, "They're gonna pass another appropriation bill and the Governor will okay it." Now I've been told this. I didn't hear it, but I got the impression and it used to be fresh in my mind, that when he was trying to decide what to do about this appropriation, he was mad at the University. I have been told that Mrs. Ferguson and the two daughters had begged him to the last not to veto that appropriation. And I think he has always admitted

that he did the wrong thing. But they had irritated him a whole lot. But prior...either before or after the veto of that--I think it must have been after he vetoed the appropriation bill--the University of Texas put on a demonstration, such as we have today, but a little bit different character and a whole lot more intellectual people than have taken part in the protests we hear about today. And it was headed by George E. B. Peddy, and he was a schoolmate of mine, a fine-looking fellow and a poor East Texas boy, but he was a leader at the University, and everybody liked him. This demonstration was led by George E. B. Peddy. And they stood out in front of the governor's office on the grounds out there, and his office with just two windows between them, you know, and there they were. I didn't hear it. They infuriated him very much; naturally, he resented it--the governor having a bunch of students protesting. But to show you the type of man he is, while that was the meanest thing George Peddy could think of doing--it was the meanest thing that George Peddy could think of doing--but Ferguson and George Peddy became the strongest kind of personal friends after that. And Peddy ran for United States Senator against Earl B. Mayfield, as I recall, and Ferguson stumped the state actually every way he could, and they remained close personal friends until George E. B. Peddy died. That was something that was of interest to me always--knowing them both. You see, at that time, I wasn't intimately connected with the governor's office at all; I had never been in the governor's office, but a few times in my life, but I was an on-looker and a sympathizer and supporter of Ferguson during that

time.

Odom: When did you first become more active--

Sanderford: Well, I'll tell you. He knew me in Bell County. I won't flatter myself by saying that it was intimate or anything like that, but he knew my family, my old Daddy, and Old Daddy introduced him one time at a Confederate reunion up there in Bell County which I thought was a great honor to do the family. He knew me, and, of course, I knew him better than he knew me. But, after he was out of the Governor's Office, and struggling to get by, somehow or another, to make a little money, I was living in Comanche County, a little town called De Leon. He didn't have any money to pay a lawyer, but he was drilling a well up there for oil. He had a pretty respectable spread, and he had to begin the drilling of that well within a certain day; he had a lease, of course, I don't remember the provisions of the lease, but anyhow, it was interpreted two ways. He interpreted the lease that if he began to produce oil before the expiration of the lease it stayed in force. And he took the position that when he built his derrick, had got the machinery there, and was drilling down that he had started the production of oil. But while he was drilling down, his lease went out, (laughter) according to the fellow who wanted to cancel it, an old man by the name of Ragland, thought he'd sue Ferguson and get some money or get an extension or something out of him, and so he employed a firm of lawyers by the name of Hampton & Hampton. They brought their suit, and so I had to defend that law suit.

And we settled that law suit by paying Old Man Ragland \$3,000. So that brought us closer together. A very short time after that, I was elected County Attorney of Comanche County, and I had the distinction of prosecuting Thomas L. Blanton for libel. Thomas L. Blanton had been in Congress a long time, and he was a hard campaigner, he'd say anything about anybody, and so the Grand Jury indicted Blanton for libel, and it was a libel on Oscar Calloway's honor.

Odom: I was going to ask you about Calloway in that 1916 election; that was a pretty interesting election.

Sanderford: Let's see now. Oh yes, he had slandered Oscar Calloway. And they were good friends of mine, so I was in for prosecuting Blanton for him. Well, it so happened that when the jury was selected on the Blanton case, that every doggone juror on the panel had said they had voted for Oscar Calloway. (laughter) And so, Blanton was, he knew who to touch. So Pa Ferguson was governor for the first time; Oscar Calloway was in the United States Senate--I mean, in the United States Congress, and he and Woodrow Wilson had a terrible bust-up, and Ferguson was visiting in Washington, and went to Oscar Calloway, and talked to him, says, "Oscar," says, "what're you trying to fight him for?" says, "He's a good man. Make up with him and try to get along with him; that's the thing to do." And ole Oscar just resented it like everything, and at the same time, Tom Blanton was in Congress--no, Tom wasn't there at that time; he hadn't been elected yet.

Anyhow, Tom knew Oscar--knew Jim Ferguson had been up there and trying to get Oscar Calloway in line as quick as he could get him; and trying to call him off the fight with Woodrow Wilson and all that, so Tom Blanton, then, when he was subpoenaing his witness for this trial, he subpoenaed a few people out of Washington. And he subpoenaed Jim Ferguson, as a witness, you know. Well, that made it pretty obvious that Blanton thought a lot of Ferguson, and he seemed to think lots of me. And on account of the jury being Calloway men, the impression got out that particularly of Tom Blanton, that the jury was framed. But the results of the lawsuit proved that they weren't framed. So one night--they stood three and three to start on. They finally wound up by voting Blanton "not guilty." So everybody connected with the case was rooting for Blanton, but when Blanton came down to defend himself, from Abilene, I got out of my office and I said, "Now, this is your office during this trial. You just make yourself at home here." Well, Gib Calloway, a younger brother of Oscar, was helping to prosecute. And I told ole Gib one night over the phone, I said, "We've pulled a boner," I says. "Certain things that we have done have failed to connect Blanton properly with the facts of libel." "Oh, he says, "forget about that." Says, "We'll prove it when Blanton gets on the witness stand." I said, "He won't take the witness stand." And he said, "Why don't you think he will?" I said, "He'll make a speech to the jury and do all his testifying before the jury, and not submit himself to cross-examination."

Well, I remember the first day of the trial. The only person there in Comanche that had anything to do with Blanton was my wife--she took him out to dinner. We went on and tried the case in trial for two or three days, so to pacify, Governor Jim called me to come down to the courthouse; he wanted to talk to me. I thought he might want to ask me about something. And I went by and we sat out on a bench on the lawn by the courthouse, and he says, "Ghent, why don't you let on up Tom Blanton." Governor Jim thought it was a frame-up, too. And I said, "Governor, I said, "he's done Oscar Calloway a grave injustice. I just don't feel I can grant you an indulgence. And I think he ought to be stuck." And Blanton made an impassioned speech to the jury and complimented me most highly.

[The following was added on March 29, 1968.]

During the trial the court gave a short recess, and when the court convened after the recess the crowd in the courthouse began to call for Ferguson's next speech. So the county judge graciously allowed him a few minutes. He got up before that court crowd, there were several hundred in the courtroom, it being a bit country courtroom, and for about forty minutes he held them spellbound there and they cheered him and clapped (chuckle) for several minutes. Then they adjourned and...adjourned speaking, I mean...went back to trial the case. That's the first time I ever knew (chuckle) of a court taking a recess for a politician to make a speech to the spectators at a court trial. (chuckle)

Odom: Do you remember anything about the gist of his speech? What did he speak about? I mean, what generally did he address himself to? Do

you recall?

Sanderford: No, I couldn't...I couldn't...I don't know what he...what he said. It's just...just passed out of my mind, it's been so many years ago.

Odom: Largely a political speech...it wasn't necessarily on the case itself?

Sanderford: Oh, no. He wasn't commenting on the case at all. But anyhow, the jury went out and it was out for a number of hours and finally found him "not guilty," which proved that there wasn't any picked jury. And from that time on...oh, yes. That night he came down to talk to me. And I pulled a little fast one on Governor Jim. He was under the impression that maybe old Ghent knew the Calloway boys had framed that jury. So Jim said, "Ghent, you could ruin Blanton. It'll ruin him if you find him guilty." So I just listened a little bit; I kept old Governor Jim unsure. I said, "Governor, no harm's intended." I said, "We're not only gonna convict him, we're gonna put him in jail for a long time." And that just wilted old Governor Jim. He just knew then that his close friends had participated in packing a jury or something. He got up and he says, "I'm awful sorry." Well, I says, "That's the way it stands." But I was prepared just like Blanton was. (laughter)

Odom: Those libel charges--did they arise in that 1916 campaign? The charges against Calloway?

Sanderford: Yes, I think that's when it was. Oh, they sent a lot of old Blanton's political circulars out.

Odom: By that time, had we gotten into the war when the trial was going

on? Do you recall?

Sanderford: Oh, well, let's see. No, we hadn't gotten into the first World War. No, we hadn't gotten into it. But that was the beginning of our relations. Then, he called me over the phone one day and told me he was up at Bosque County at that ranch up there. He said, "I want you to get on the train and meet me at Meridian. I want to talk to you. I'm going back to Temple." So I didn't know exactly what it was, of course. So he said, "Ghent, I wanna tell you something. I've been thinking about--my mind's not definitely made up, but I've been thinking about--getting you to be my...Mrs. Ferguson's private secretary." That was Mrs. Ferguson's first race we're talking about now. Well, I didn't know anything about the Governor's Office, and one thing and another, and yet, I was egotistical enough to think I could fill the job quite well. So, he finally wrote me then and told me that he was gonna make me private secretary.

Odom: Was this after she had won the primary, or before?

Sanderford: Yeah, I think it was maybe. It might have been after the general election because old Dr. Butte ran against her on the Republican ticket, and he got a pretty big vote, too. And so, that was the beginning of our association, really.

Odom: Did you help any, other than in your own home town, in that 1924 campaign?

Sanderford: Well, I might have made a few speeches at country picnics and such stuff as that, you know, but around his office a right smart and one thing and another, did what I could.



Odom: That was the race that the Klan was one of the big issues. Do you have any Klan stories you could tell us?

Sanderford: No, in 1924 I was running for County Attorney of Comanche County. In that race I didn't have such a particular interest in the Governor's race because I had my own; and the Klan was an issue up there. But there weren't many Klansmen in the county. Actually you might say there were very few, but some of the best friends I had were Klansmen. They came to me and begged me to run against Mr. Holloway who was the father of these other Holloway boys, you know, up there. Bob Holloway, who lives here and his brother lives in Brownwood. Well, anyhow their daddy had served one term as County Attorney, and he had made a good county attorney and there wasn't any reason in the world why anybody should oppose him for re-election for a second term. But I got over persuaded by some of these fellows and on the last day I got in the race. (laughter) It was a two-man race but I covered the county pretty well. And I beat him by ten votes.

Odom: You had been persuaded by your friends who were Klansmen, you say?

Sanderford: In that little town they had a lot of Klansmen and I was anti-Klan, but they had something personal against Holloway. They picked on me, you know. Well, I was elected and served one term and then ran for district attorney. I believe that was in 1929--district attorney in 1924...let me see. Anyhow, I ran for district attorney instead of county attorney, and I got beat. Then's when Ferguson made the overture to me to come to Austin with him, and it was the finest thing that ever happened to me at all--to be defeated up there.

And my wife and I moved down here, and we...

Odom: In 1924?

Sanderford: We moved to Temple in '24, in the fall of '24, and I went into office there. He didn't have any competent secretaries to help, and I'll betcha there were 2,000 letters piled on top of his table there, and lots of them went unanswered. Some of them had contributions in them. I found one for \$200, two years after it had been issued--piled up and then some.

Odom: Did you hear Mrs. Ferguson speak any in her campaign in 1924?

Sanderford: Yes, I heard several of her speeches.

Odom: What kind of campaigner was she?

Sanderford: About like Lurleen.

Odom: About like Lurleen? (laughter)

Sanderford: She was...

Odom: In that first race, they traveled together a good bit...

Sanderford: Oh, yes. They made a good-looking couple. They made a good-looking couple. We went over to Brownwood--my wife and I did--they spoke over there one day. He had me come over there. I think that was the day he told me that he wanted me to come on to Austin. And some people get the idea that Ferguson was uncouth and slouchy, something like that, and his wife was, too. But they were the best-dressed couple I ever saw around the capital. She had elegant clothes, beautiful diamonds. Ole man Jim, he dressed like a prince, too. He was always immaculately dressed, always wore the same black tie. Never quit that. But they were together most all of the time in the campaign. I think, I guess ever trip they make was

together. She'd make a short talk and he'd make the big one.

Odom: Well, was this...now later on in other subsequent races, they did separate, though.

Sanderford: Well, I don't recall exactly, when they were separating. I remember during that second race, and here's something that's strictly oral history, I think you'd say. Old Governor Jim--I always refer to him as "Ole Governor Jim" when there wasn't any reason for me to do that, but Governor Jim--he was a good politician in many respects, a very poor one in others. So Dan Moody was running against Governor Jim...running against Mrs. Ferguson when she was running the second time. And she had...Governor Jim had made the promise--there were several in the race--that if he didn't...his wife didn't get a majority of the...I mean, didn't lead the ticket in the first primary, he would withdraw. And he double-dared Dan Moody to accept it, providing Dan would do the same thing if he led. Well, ole Dan just backed off and he wouldn't do it, and ole Oscar Colquitt, Governor Oscar Colquitt of Texas, he got a hold of that and just told him he was just beating himself by not answering that challenge. And by George, he just pulled him across the table and made him answer and said he'd accept the Ferguson proposition. And then Dan led the race. And then the big fuss went up. Ferguson said he'd resign--now resign. Joe Bailey came down...(laughter) Joe Bailey came down to see him, says, "Governor, you made your promise. Said if you didn't lead the ticket, you'd resign, if Dan would make the same proposition." Bailey says, "He accepted your proposition, and he beat you. Now you're honor bound to resign." And he said,

"I guess so." but "I wanna tell you something. I can't afford to do it, and I want to tell you why." I've got the most loyal bunch of supporters here in my administration that any governor ever had. And every one of them to the last child would be fired if I were to resign. And I'm not gonna do it. May not be the right action to take, but I'm not gonna resign." He told Bailey that. I tell you, that's a little unwritten history I imagine.

I tell you something else people don't know. Governor Neff was a very eloquent, polished, urbane man, you know. And big Baptist, everything like that. Ferguson wasn't aligned with any church, and a lot of people thought he was going to hell just the moment he died, and I was surprised myself to know--to find out that Ferguson and Neff were the closest kind of friends. And they each contributed to the other's campaign during their races. And one of them was a big, uncompromising prohibitionist, and the other was an uncompromising anti--but each admired the other one. And when Mrs. Ferguson's first administration started, I was walking down the street with Governor Jim, and he said, "Ghent, have you seen anything about getting employees for the Governor's office?" I said, "No, haven't done a thing. I thought you were tending to that." Said, "No," said, "I haven't done a thing," "I tell you what you do." "You go up there this afternoon and call all those employees out in the reception room there, and get them back into the office, and talk to them and tell them that we want every one of them to stay on." That was something unusual, you know.

Ferguson had been impeached, don't you see, thrown out of office, and yet, he was willing for Pat Neff's, executive-secretary-- I can't think of her name now--she was an excellent secretary, and she would become his private confidential secretary. Yet this refuted the idea that Ferguson was carrying on any crooked stuff in that governor's office, when he hired that woman. Several of them stayed on, others had already gotten other jobs. So that was something that people generally didn't know--that Ferguson and Neff were good friends, had been for years on end.

Odom: Whatever happened to Mrs. Ferguson when--

Sanderford: Am I making this too long?

Odom: No, that's all right.

Sanderford: You can cut out anything you want to. None of it's...

Odom: When Mrs. Ferguson got into office, when people had business, you know, to transact, and all, did they visit her, did...

Sanderford: Yes, sir; they visited her; they visited her.

Odom: Was he present a good deal of the time whenever she transacted business of this sort?

Sanderford: Lots of times. That's right. Most all the time. That was true. If he hadn't--if the people hadn't thought that Ferguson would be the governor himself, they never would have elected Mrs. Ferguson. And it's the same thing about Lurleen Wallace. If the people of Alabama thought her husband would have nothing to do with the governor's office, they wouldn't have elected Lurleen. Those are just facts in my mind. I think that's true.

Odom: Do you know of any cases where, or were there cases when she might

go against his advice in any way?

Sanderford: Well, I'll tell you. On the all-important things where there's lots at stake, Ferguson was the controlling...he controlled that. But small matters, small matters, routine of the office and like that, she did it. As far as shaping the policies of the governor's office, Governor Jim did it. I think it's fair for me to say that.

[The following was added on March 29, 1968.]

Odom: On more than one occasion Mr. Sanderford has indicated that people of Texas elected Mrs. Ferguson because they knew and really expected Governor Jim Ferguson to act as Governor. And he has an incident here which occurred one day that is very indicative that Governor Ferguson tended to think, usually, of himself as Governor, even though his wife was legally Governor. And even though he courteously deferred to her as Governor, he generally thought of himself as Governor. Mr. Sanderford, would you comment?

Sanderford: May I say what has immediately been referred to...what Dr. Odom said is true about Governor Jim not only acting as Governor, but sometimes it appeared that he thought he was Governor. A little illustration is rather amusing that brings out this point. At one time we had a lady working in the Secretary of State's office on the pardon desk. And in...late in the evening, she'd pass my residence with a bunch of proclamations under her arm to write up that night. She was a very hard working woman and was the mother of six small children, and needed the job very much. But unfortunately, in the Secretary of State's office there were a bunch of gossiping women who were always hunting an opportunity to carry him

some critical statement that somebody else had made about Governor Jim. It so happened that Governor Jim was patient about this matter, didn't give it a lot of trouble.

But it kept coming to his ears that this Mrs. Nola Wood was actually disloyal to him, that he didn't think that she ought to continue on the payroll as long as she was disloyal to the Governor. He called me in one morning and says, "Ghent," says, "I hate to tell you...hate to announce this, but we're going to have to let Mrs. Wood go." It infuriated me very, very much. I stood up before him on the opposite side of his desk, and very viciously-- and I might add...ignorance on my part--I looked him straight in the eye and shook my finger at him. I says, "Governor, you are not going to fire Mrs. Wood!" At that instance he jumped up from his chair, faced me, and doubled up his fist and hit the top of the desk, and says...said to me, "Who in the hell is Governor of Texas--you or me?" I shot back immediately, I says, "Neither one of us is Governor!" (laughter) "Neither one of us is Governor." (laughter)

Gantt: Did Governor Ferguson have a desk right there with Mrs. Ferguson?

Sanderford: No, he had a desk in a separate office.

Odom: Much of the time that she would be consulting with someone on important business, he would be there?

Sanderford: Oh yes, some, but she had callers all the time when he was gone, as far as that's concerned. Yes. But here's something that you boys... I don't want to talk to you but an hour or so--then I know you'll

be glad when I quit. (laughter) Ferguson was condemned so severely about the pardon business, the most outrageous, untrue accusations that you could make against him. Here's the situation. Governor Neff had preceded Ferguson four years as governor, and Colquitt had had a very liberal mind on the question of pardons. Neff was...He put out the word he would never pardon a single soul from the penitentiary--he pardoned three, I think it was, in four years. And naturally, there had been lots of convicts down there on account of their good records, and good records in the penitentiary, before they got to the penitentiary and everything--they had paid their debts to society, and under the constitution, they were entitled to be considered in line for clemency. And naturally, there was a backlog of worthy convicts down there who were entitled to a pardon, and were never given any at all. And so Ferguson got in there and he had lots of pardons to grant.

Odom: What had been Governor Hobby's pardon policies?

Sanderford: Hobby had been pretty liberal; he made a good governor. He was... there was nothing wrong with Hobby, as I remember Governor Hobby.

Odom: I was going to ask you about the pardoning thing. I was going to get to it directly, but on...you kind of, in that article you wrote there where you were saying right at the end of the administration, "Well, we didn't let them bluff us,"...

Sanderford: Yes, that's right. (laughter) He was criticized for making twenty pardons, he came back and made forty.

Odom: I was wondering if perhaps sometime that Governor Jim's actions on something like this was due to the fact that he got so much criti-



cism for doing it. He's pretty much of a fighter on a lot of things.

Sanderford: Yeah, but he was one of the most sympathetic men you ever saw.

Odom: You say it's almost entirely because of the need for it...

Sanderford: Entirely. He pardoned some men just as likely to be subsequent governors, only they had made a mistake. He pardoned some that ought not to have been pardoned, and make a mistake in doing it.

Odom: He had a great deal of sympathy for them.

Sanderford: He did that. I'll give you two illustrations. Some more oral history. (laughter) During the first world war there were two boys who got into trouble and they killed a man. And I think they were sent up from San Antonio--I'm not sure. One of them either came clear and got a short term, and the other one got life. And one of them was just as guilty as the other. So one day while I was secretary, the phone rang and the farm manager from down at the system called up Governor Jim. Said, "I've got a man here that's a fine convict, a fine man, and he's gotten word from Indiana that his father is very low and not expected to live." Said, "Won't you give him a ten-day furlough?" Governor Jim said, "My God! You're asking me to give him ten days to get clear on the other side of the world. He's got a lifetime to serve down there." Says, "You're asking a whole lot of me." He says, "Governor, if he doesn't return the day he says he'll return, I'll resign as farm manager. That's what I think of the man." He says, "All right." Says, "I'll have him wired out right now." I sent a wire down there to give him a ten-day furlough. In about five or six

days, the ole boy called Governor Jim up. He went to Indiana. Said, "My daddy died last night." Says, "I wanna stay here with my mother another ten days and help her wind up some business and bury my daddy..." and so on and so forth. Says, "Reckon, Governor, you can give me an extension of ten days?" Says, "Yeah, I'll extend you for ten days." I sent the wire, wired the convict and wired the penitentiary, too. So, about the ninth day a very fine looking man came in the Governor's office and said, "I want to see the Governor and thank him for giving me this furlough so I could go home and see my daddy before he died." Well, I says, "I'll take you right in now." And they talked for quite a while. He had already served quite a bit of his sentence; he had been in the penitentiary a long time on good conduct, so Ferguson told him that he was glad to do it. Said for him to write him and he'd give him a full pardon, which he did.

Then another thing was pretty cute. One afternoon, there was a kid twenty-two years old. We always had a crowd in the Governor's reception office. By George, everybody wanted a job or a pardon or something, and so I shut the doors at four o'clock, something like that. The kid came in, surveyed the situation, said, "Are you the secretary?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Can you and I talk privately?" I said, "Sure we could." Came into my office, and he said, "Can anybody hear us talk in here?" I said, "No, we won't talk loud enough for anybody to hear us." Says, "I wanna tell you something." Says, "I'm an escaped convict." Says, "I ran off

from the penitentiary last night and I haven't got a friend in the world, nobody to say a word for me. And I just slipped off up here to go and see the Governor myself to see if he wouldn't give me a pardon." I said, "What were you sent down there for?" He said, "Theft. Chicken theft. I got two years." "What county you from?" He said, "Erath County."

So directly Ferguson called me in his office and says, "Who's that out there?" "There's a big bunch of pardon seekers and their kin folks and job hunters, and a special guest is an escaped convict." "An escaped convict!" Says, "Send the S. O. B. in here, and let me talk to him." I carried him in there, and they talked and they talked and they talked. And these people were getting restless out there. So I went in there and I said, "Governor, can't you bring this thing to a close?" I said, "You got a lot of friends out there that want to see you--come a long ways." Well, he said, "All right." He always kept a bunch of cards about the size of a postcard, about that high a stack, that he'd write notations on, you know. He reached over and picked up one of those cards; he said, "To any police officer in the State of Texas, the bearer of this card is an escaped convict of Texas, but he is on his way back to the penitentiary. Please do not arrest him. James E. Ferguson." Now he says, "Now, you take this card and if some of these officers pick you up before you get back to Huntsville, show them this, and chances are they'll let you go on." Says, "That's a chance you're taking." He says, "Oh, yeah." He came out of there

and that kid bounced out of that office, got back to the penitentiary, and Ferguson said, "I'll tell you what they'll do to you. They're gonna give you an awful whipping, the first thing they'll do when you get down there. You'll just have to take the punishment." But says, "You go on and face it." And said, "On the fourteenth day of April," says, "you write me a letter, I'll give you a pardon, provided you get your record clear." Well, the boy said he would, of course.

He made his way back to the penitentiary, and by George, on the fourteenth day of April, in came a little ole slouchy letter, written in pencil, like I get in the Governor's office every day, and I read it and I saw it was a pardon matter, and I just zipped it off down to the Board of Pardons that a way, you know, routine, you see. So one day he called me in there and says, "Ghent, you remember that escaped convict that was in here?" And I said, "Yes, I remember." He said, "I promised that fellow that I'd turn him out of there by the fourteenth day of April. Look up there at that calendar--it's now about the twenty-fourth day." Says, "I won't to know what's happened." I says, "I'll go find out." And I just hadn't paid much attention, just an ordinary letter. I should have read it carefully, came back to him and said, "Governor, here's your friend--get him out." I said, "Governor, I just overlooked it. That's all there is to it. I just overlooked it with so much detail around here, I just overlooked a pencil-written letter."

Well, he said, "Go out there and wire the penitentiary to turn him out--I'm giving him a pardon." So I sent a wire down there. And so, didn't see the kid any more 'til after the first of the year, when Dan Moody was coming in. So, Dan said he was gonna revoke every conditional pardon that had been granted. One day, one cold January morning, just as cold as Blitzen, this kid just comes in and says, "I've got to see the Governor." He says, "That doggone red-headed governor who is gonna be governor in a few days, he's already said he's gonna revoke every pardon." Says, "I want a full pardon, so they can't touch me." I said, "Go on in there and get it." He scooted in there and came out in a little while.

Odom: Nothing like this would happen nowadays, would it?

Sanderford: Oh, no. A fellow like that couldn't get into the capital grounds much less up in the Governor's office. That's the thing that I loved Ferguson for. He was just as good to the people as a man could be. There never was one like him.

Odom: Do you think, I just, while reading about Governor Ferguson...he seemed to be a rather impulsive kind of man himself. Do you think this was why he had so much sympathy with the people in the penitentiary?

Sanderford: He was...none of his family was ever in trouble, or anything like that.

Odom: Oh, there was another general question I wanted to ask you. I've forgotten what. Why was the big press always so opposed to the Fergusons? It generally was, wasn't it? I mean, of course, there were a lot of weeklies for him. But, why do you think that was?

Sanderford: Well, Ferguson's independent attitude, for one thing. He didn't kowtow to any of them. And he didn't take up with the big shots on the press. He didn't do this or that or anything else, he just acted himself. And I think that was one thing. Another thing, they got to where they liked to write these spectacular stories, you know, on the pardon business. These newspaper boys would come in from the press, you know, and for stories, and so on and so forth like that, and they'd always wanna get the number of pardons issued that day. Well, I had a list there that was recommended by the Board of Pardons. They'd write a story on it and there'd be ten or fifteen. And they'd headline it on the first page. The next day, Mrs. Ferguson would issue a proclamation or recommend to the Secretary of State that a proclamation be issued, and the next day they'd write another story on the same ten or fifteen men. Another time, if it got back to the Governor's office, she signed it, and they'd go back and read the proclamation and put it in a third time. I've seen stories arise that are repeated and repeated and repeated. Well, I got mad at some of them, and I told them, "By George, I'm not gonna tell you anything more about the pardon business, at all, if that's the way you're gonna do it!" They'd been doing that. And so, they went and complained to Governor Jim. And I told him what they were doing, that they were just multiplying about every pardon that was issued about three times to get a sensational story before the people about how many people, about how many pardons were being issued, how many boys were being pardoned down there. And they were. Newspaper people will try for

the thing that's exciting and readable--that's what they want, you know. A lot of people had built up that Ferguson had been impeached and had kept himself before the people until Mrs. Ferguson was elected the first time, and whipped them all, and you know that was pretty hard to take--you know that. A man without any citizenship at all get out and beat the combined press. It's something that didn't happen every election.

Gantt: Let me ask you this question here. Do you think that Governor Jim ever got over the scars of that impeachment or was this with him always?

Sanderford: Yes, I think there's more people loved Ferguson when he died than they ever did before--enemies and all. I'll give you an illustration. The most vicious enemy that Ferguson ever had, and I thought all the time the most unfair man in his campaigns and his statements he would give out, was Dan Moody. And Dan Moody was fundamentally a good man; I'm not knocking him now, but I'm just telling you the situation. And this thing happened one day. I had attended a state convention up here at the capital, and well, they were organizing, and I had a nephew in the state senate. He was made chairman of the state convention, and then Dan Moody was made permanent chairman. And while they were waiting to get down to his name, he and I were in there talking, in a sideroom by ourselves. And he brought up the question how Governor Jim was--Governor Jim was very sick. I said, "I don't know whether he'll be able to go or not, Governor. He's in pretty bad shape." He said, "I'd give a hundred dollars today if I could go down to his room at the hos-

pital and talk to him." I said, "My God, Governor, if you'd do that, he'd be the happiest man in the world!" And then he hung his head and says, "I can't do it." Guilt written all over his darned face.

Odom: I think what Fred was saying was did you think that Governor Jim himself ever got over being hurt--ever really got over that impeachment.

Sanderford: I think to quite an extent, he did. He was the most forgiving man you ever saw. He helped out many people--several Senators that had voted to impeach him. He forgave them. Senator E. A. Dechard, a fine man with a fine family who was a state Senator here, and he voted to impeach Ferguson and take his citizenship away from him. And, as time went on, E. A. Dechard had got into trouble in Dallas. He was convicted of fraud--swindling some university professor out here. And he was given a penitentiary sentence. And came out in Dallas news about Dechard being convicted. I carried it in there to his office, and said, "Governor, here's one of your friends that's got to go to the penitentiary." He looked at it and said, "I guess he'll be around to see us, don't you reckon?" I said, "Likely he will be." And so Quintus Watson, I think, had something to do with this. I don't know. You don't know Watson, of course.

Odom: Quintus Watson? I don't think so.

Sanderford: Very prominent in Texas in those days. A fine man. But he liked Dechard. Dechard was disgraced in the penitentiary and broke and everything else, and he got a hold of Ferguson and told Ferguson, says, "He's a good man and you ought to pardon him." Well, one



day Governor Jim told me to wire the Warden down there at the penitentiary and invite Dechard to come to the Governor's office. And so, Dechard hadn't been down there but eight or ten days, as I remember. And, in a day or two he came in, and I took him in to see the Governor, and he was there quite a while. He came out, went in my office and broke down and began crying--Dechard did. He said, "Ghent," he says, "that's the best man in there that God ever made." Says, "Right now, I remember when I voted to take away his citizenship. He was the Governor of Texas, and no just grounds for his impeachment and now, I'm a convict in the penitentiary with no citizenship, and he's giving me a full pardon restoring my citizenship." That's pretty good.

Odom: Who would you say here, let's say in the twenties when you were in the Governor's office, had probably more influence as far as advice and that sort of thing?

Sanderford: Ferguson didn't depend upon advice much. That's the truth. He was...made up his own mind about most everything. He didn't have any cabinet--any kitchen cabinet, nothing like that. No, he didn't have anything. He acted. I'll give you an illustration--and I think this was one of the high points of his career. I hinted at it in that little article I wrote. In 1933, this country was in a deplorable condition. Everybody was broke, and Nathan Adams from Dallas came down here and told Governor Jim about the conditions of the state, says, "I never thought the time would come when on black land in Ellis County, you couldn't loan as much as ten dollars an acre." Says, "We can't do it now." Says, "A bank can't loan ten

dollars an acre on the black land in Ellis County...Dallas County." And says, "They're drawing their money out of the banks every day." Says, "If something's not done, every bank in Texas will be broke." and says, "It's an emergency matter." And Nathan Adams and some other bankers from Houston and so forth, and they were having a conference, and they invited Allred, he was Attorney General, to come and join them, but he shied away; he wouldn't get in on that at all. That's not knocking Allred, but he was young and inexperienced. But anyhow, first thing I knew, Ferguson, on the first day of March, I think it was, maybe the last day of February, first day of March, I believe, he issued a proclamation, I say he...he dictated it, and Mrs. Ferguson signed it. I should say, the governor did. But this proclamation ordered all the banks in Texas closed indefinitely. And she signed the proclamation. And surprisingly there were only two or three banks in the state that didn't close up. Now that was, mind you, that was about three days before Roosevelt closed the banks throughout the nation, and Ferguson didn't get his idea from Roosevelt because it was too delicate a question. Roosevelt couldn't have advocated that three days before he did. So, on the fourth day, I believe, I believe that's when the President took office, that afternoon, after he took the oath of office, in the morning, that afternoon, he issued a similar proclamation and closed every bank in the whole United States. So then, I was up to the office, and I said, "Governor, by what authority did the Governor have to close these banks?" Well, said, "Go in there and read the proclamation." I went in there

and read like this, "I, Miriam A. Ferguson, Governor of the State of Texas, by virtue of the authority by me assumed, do hereby order all banks in Texas closed indefinitely." He assumed the authority and did it--didn't suppose he had the authority. President Roosevelt came along in a very few days and closed them throughout the nation.

Odom: Why on that, you know, that first campaign, why do you think that the Fergusons emphasized economy so much? You know, they promised to save the state fifteen million dollars in that first, I mean, during that race.

Sanderford: Well, in those days, fifteen million was a whole lot of money.  
(laughter)

Odom: Yes, I know. It's a lot of money, but was this because, perhaps because the tax rate had gone up in the previous administration?

Sanderford: I don't know. The tax rate, I imagine, was pretty low in those days, but that was just a gimmick. Any candidate for governor would kind of jump on, you know, and say what he was gonna do.

Odom: Of course, they turned out to be unable to save too much in that administration.

Sanderford: I don't hold that any favor against him either. If I was running for governor, I think now, I think I'd advocate the reduction of taxes.

Gantt: What do you think the general reaction to the...his announcement that she was gonna run was? I mean, was this pretty shocking?

Sanderford: Oh, yeah, it was such an unusual thing. Nothing like that had ever happened in the whole nation. At the time she announced and

was nominated, this governor from Wyoming or in Washington State, Nellie Tayloe Ross, her husband died and she went in a few days before Mrs. Ferguson took the office--or maybe a few weeks. And she wasn't the first governor in the United States, but she was the first elected woman governor in the United States, to serve as governor. Nellie Tayloe Ross was the first one that actually served as governor of any state.

Odom: You say in your article there that her relations with the University of Texas were very good, and the administration. Is this because of the problems he had gotten involved in had been solved, or did he think he had made a mistake, or why?

Sanderford: No, he wouldn't admit it if he did. (laughter)

Odom: Do you have any explanation for this?

Sanderford: Yes, I do. At that time, they had a new president; Dr. W. M. W. Splawn had become president of the University of Texas, and he was a tactful fellow, a good scholar, and he was elected president of the University. And Ferguson had appointed some outstanding men as regents, and he was president, and they seemed to play each other. Splawn wanted to get the University back in good graces, and Ferguson wanted to get himself back in good graces. I think that was the answer to that. On top of that, there were hundreds and hundreds of old shacks on the campus of the University of Texas built there during the war days, and they tore those old shacks down, and they began to put up lots of those fine buildings that you see out there now. They got along most wonderful. They were close, bosom friends, those two fellows--neither one surrendered

any principles or anything else.

Odom: I suppose there were still some of the faculty members there that had been pretty strongly opposed to him, weren't they?

Sanderford: Well, they're awful old if they are.

Odom: I meant then.

Sanderford: Oh yes, I'm sure of that. Yeah, I'm sure there were a lot of them. But they had a new president, and he took over the situation. And he...and Ferguson was a great compromiser and everything else, and so they wanted to get things going good for the University, and they did. And it has been on the move ever since.

Odom: Do you have any knowledge about this highway commission problem that came up during that first administration. I think it wound up with a couple of the highway commissioners resigning. Do you have any comments on that? Or knowledge about it?

Sanderford: Well, I have a few comments but not too much knowledge. (laughter) Ferguson appointed that highway commission. One of them was Joe Burkett, had been a state Senator and long-time district judge out at Eastland, and was a very devoted churchman. He opened his court every morning with prayer. And he had all the earmarks of being as fine a fellow as you could find. The other man was Frank Lanham of Fort Worth, and brother of a long-time Congressman up there, son of ole Governor S. W. T. Lanham. And then the other one was...I've been trying to think of his name...he was a prominent man from San Antonio, an elderly man. Nobody ever questioned any act of his at all. Those were the three highway commissioners. The Highway Commission was a new organization at that time. Ferguson organized

it in his first administration. It had been in existence for several years. And then the roads in Texas were...you didn't have the engineers in those days that you've got now. You didn't have the money or equipment or anything else; it was kind of a patchwork, you know.

There was an experimental road put in between Belton and Temple, and it became...it was given to a Temple man up there, a very prominent man, who took the contract for it. And there was more bad things said about that, and that man up there did his best to give it back to the state; he was losing money on it. He couldn't give it away, but everybody was criticizing the type of a road it was. It had four tracks, you might say, crooked in there and all like that. Nobody would travel it today with the big highways we got now, you know. It was so primitive, and that was one thing and then everything. Another thing that Ferguson did that was unpolitical: this man from San Antonio who served, and he was such a wonderful fellow. And he had two fine boys that grew up and made it big in Texas. I don't see why I can't think of them, but it was a long time ago, too. And he couldn't tend to these meetings very often, and Governor Jim would go up there and sit with the Highway Commission. Joe Burkett, Frank Cloud, Jim Ferguson sitting up there in a room attending to any business that would come along. Well, that was in itself enough to create a suspicion or something and another. And they got him accused of a lot of stuff, but there wasn't anything to any of it at all, like this pardon busi-

ness, that's about all.

Gantt: They accused him of making some money off the contracts that were awarded. Is that what it was?

Sanderford: Well, I imagine that was it. I don't recall. I know this, I was in the governor's office one morning and Dan Moody was making all these charges. I said, "Governor, if I were in your place I'd call that attorney general up here to this office, and I'd sit down with him, and I'd turn the whole thing over to him." I said, "Nothing you've got to hide." I said, "Let him have it--everything." He said, "I'm not gonna do it; I'm gonna fight him." And I said, "You're gonna lose, too." That's what I told him. And he did.  
Dan Moody beat Ferguson.

Odom: Did...about all they did in the next administration, all that Governor Moody did, was to revoke some of the contracts or something like that. I don't think there was ever anything done about it.

Sanderford: I don't think there was ever anything done about it. Wasn't anybody indicted. It was just doggone political misbehavior on the part of his critics. He did things that maybe I wouldn't have done, but I never was Governor of Texas. But perhaps I've done things that he didn't do, too.

Odom: Why did the Fergusons decide to run again in '26, you know, after they had said the second term, you know, Mrs. Ferguson wouldn't be a candidate again? All these things had gotten...had developed, or what?

Sanderford: That's when he ran for the second term? I mean, when she ran, when she ran for the second term?

Odom: Yes, when she ran for the second term.

Sanderford: Well, she had made a good governor, was the main thing. She had lots of friends and all like that. But that old Ferguson hatred still existed in Texas--it wasn't subdued by any means. But Ferguson thought that the people would elect her to a second term. That's when he made that proposition to Dan Moody if he didn't lead the ticket he'd resign, and he made the same proposition back to him. And it was a...Dan Moody had to accept the proposition or get beat, because Ferguson took that gamble and lost it.

Odom: Did you have much to do in that campaign of '26? Did you stay in Austin all the time, or did you go on any of the trips?

Sanderford: No, I was here to try to run that governor's office. It was the softest job I ever saw. Funny thing, I don't know how it got in the wind, but they'd leave town--it seldom ever appeared in the paper or anything like that--but the next day there wouldn't be anybody that would come to the governor's office. Sometime they'd be gone for days on end. Nobody would show up at all, so we had a lark up there. (laughter)

Odom: Oh, I forgot, before we get any further--I was about to move beyond that--Fred wanted me to ask you about that labor commissioner.

Sanderford: Oh, yes. We'll get to that in a minute.

Odom: Oh, that was at a later time?

Sanderford: So, one time they were gone about...they'd come in on the weekend and be gone about twenty-five or thirty days, and the governor would never show up at all. And you don't know, unless you work up there how simple it would be to make a good Governor of Texas



if you could just be governor. Just go along, and just tend to the ordinary business that ought to be tended to, and let it go at that. Why everybody, though...you see, when I explained to you why there were so many people wanting pardons because they hadn't had any. Well, when Roosevelt was running for the first term in '32--Ferguson was running in '32--Mrs. Ferguson was running for governor. And he made the fatal mistake of telling all these hundreds of people in Texas that were out of jobs and were starving to death that if, says, "Roosevelt's gonna be elected, and I'm supporting him and I'm gonna be the big shot. I'm gonna have lots to say down here in Texas about jobs," and so forth. When Roosevelt got in and Ferguson got in, the whole darned state came to Austin for jobs. You never saw anything like this in your whole life. (laughter) Oh, it was terrible. And one time, one morning, they were lining up out there in that reception...the office of the governor's on the first floor. After a while, they'd be full of people who were scrambling to get into that governor's office just like I'd scramble to get into a football game. And it just got unbearable; you couldn't do your business, you couldn't do anything. So one day, he just lost his temper, and he got up on a chair in that reception room and he bawled them out. Says, "All of you go on home. I haven't got any jobs at all." Says, "I haven't been able to place anybody. Go on home and go to work. Quit comin' down here beggin' for a job." Says, "I got no jobs for you." Made about I don't know how many hundred mad at him, of course. But...

Odom: He had been just telling them that way individually as they came in--is that what he had been doing?

Sanderford: No, he told that in his speech. Said...

Odom: I know. But I meant, what had he been doing with all these people that were coming down there for jobs?

Sanderford: Well, they hadn't...that was the first, Ferguson's first, so they had thinned out a whole lot. And so, that was a terrible situation. They were poor people; they were hungry and wanted a job, and every one of them entitled to one. Ferguson says, "Get on out home. Go on back and go to work." Talked to them as rough as everything. Sent them home. "Go home."

Gantt: What was your impression about how they got along with each other-- Governor Jim and Mrs. Ferguson? Were they compatible and so on?

Sanderford: Doris made a...Doris Watts, Mrs. Ferguson's youngest daughter, she's kind of elderly now, she told a historian at her home the last few months that, "There's never been a member of Daddy's family that ever heard him say a cross word to a single member of the family." She said, "He was the best Daddy that anybody ever had." Said, "Never crossed them up on anything." And, by George, I couldn't say that. (laughter) I doubt if you boys could either, if you're married with a family. But he was...Mrs. Ferguson bucked him on a few things, and he'd let her have her own way. But he wouldn't let her have her way on a big issue that he knew he knew the best on it. And I don't think he should have.

Odom: What about this labor commissioner, the story that Fred was asking you about?

Sanderford: Well, the labor commissioner then--most all these departments of the state were located in the capital, but not now, of course--had a great big old red-headed fellow from Denison that was labor commissioner of Texas. He was a graduate of Harvard, pretended to have been a classmate of Theodore Roosevelt. But he had some good labor backing in the state, and Governor Jim appointed him labor commissioner. Can't think of his name now, but he turned out to be a drunkard. He was drinking all the time, and Governor Jim couldn't stand...

Gantt: That was in the days of prohibition.

Sanderford: Yes. And so he drank a heap and that was...Ole man Jim despised a fellow that drank liquor. He had some close friends that did, but he despised it and he hated it. Hated the whiskey...as much of an abstainer as you'll find in the world--total. Well, this labor commissioner began to make some passes towards some of these nice young women who were working for the Labor Department. And it was a reoccurring situation. So one of them came down to the Governor's office, and told one of my secretaries, Mrs. Wallace, what his conduct was. Governor Jim punched a button for me and I went in there and we went out the side door and said, "Let's go straighten out this whole thing--this labor commissioner." He said, "Little bit too familiar with some of those nice girls. Let's go up and see what we can do about it." So we walked up, went in. This great big red-headed fellow had long red hair. He says, "Good morning, Governor, good morning. I'm so glad to see you. Come in and have a seat." Governor Jim says, "Don't shake hands with me. I have

come up here to talk to you. You've just been a little bit impolite among these nice girls here, and making advances that...not gonna put up with it." About that time, ole man Jim came back with his right hand this a way, and this fellow was standing up and he hit him across his face here and knocked his glasses off. And his red hair fell down over his eyes, and the prints of Governor Jim's hands were right across his face here. He stumbled and wound up in a great big wastebasket, that big, and about that tall, and he fell into it. So, he finally got out of that wastebasket (laughter) and Governor Jim says, "Sit down there, now." Says, "I want your resignation." (laughter)

This is good. He says, "Give me your resignation, there." Called in a girl, a secretary, he got back in his chair, got his glasses on, got his hair brushed back and one thing and another, and got out of that wastebasket, sat down. He says, "My dear Governor, Miriam Ferguson, to your excellency: for many years I have been a staunch supporter of your great husband." Governor Jim says, "Cut out that." Says, "I want your resignation there." And then he started again, and his secretary got to trembling, she got scared and trembling and couldn't take this dictation, looked like. I told the Governor, I said, "Just leave things like they are, and I'll go out and dictate this resignation myself." I carried the girl into the adjoining room. I just addressed about a three-line letter to Mrs. Ferguson, Governor Miriam A. Ferguson, Governor of Texas, and so forth. I says, "I hereby tender you my resignation

to take effect instanter. Yours very truly..." And had his name under the line there, and he signed above it. Handed it to the old man, and he looked at it, said, "Now sign that thing." (laughter) And so he signed it there. Said, "Give me your keys," and he reached down in his pocket and got his keys, and he said, "Get your hat there, and get out of here." Says, "Don't you ever come up here any more." (laughter)

Gantt: A private citizen firing a department head.

Sanderford: Yeah, and he said, "Ghent, go over there and tell all the women folk to go home, and have a holiday the rest of the day. Lock up. Come back tomorrow and we'll have a new labor commissioner." (laughter) Now that was an instance where a man didn't have any authority to fire anybody, but he fired him mighty quick. Governor said, "Kind of like closing the banks." But I'll never forget that picture of that fellow falling in that big old wastebasket, with his glasses down on his nose, and his hair all over his head, and great big prints...but he just knocked the whey out of that fellow.

Odom: What did you do during the interim then after Mrs. Ferguson went out of office there in '27, then ran again in '30? What were you doing in the meantime?

Sanderford: In the meantime? Well, I was offered two or three connections 'round over the state. I had a lot of friends 'cause the governor's secretary is such a good place, he could make friends. He'd give everybody their rights, and move them along, which I did in a lot of instances. (laughter) I made lots of good friends--they're

all over Texas. And so, stayed around here 'til along in March, and Governor Jim one day, he and I were walking downtown from his office in front of the Baptist Church, and he said, "Ghent, have you got any money?" I says, "Oh, yes. I'm all right." Well, he said, "I didn't want you to leave town without a dime...didn't know whether or not you had enough money to get out of town or what not." I said, "I've got enough...plenty." And at that time I had \$83.00 in the bank. That was my bank account. And so, he was gonna rustle around and get me two or three hundred dollars. He didn't have a dime either. (laughter) But, he was gonna do what he could. And so, I went to Eastland County, went up there and went into a partnership with Lonnie Llewellen. I had been offered two or three other deals that some people thought I ought to take, but Lonnie said he had a good practice, and I had done a lot of things for Lonnie when I was there and got him appointed as a special judge on the Supreme Court and everything, and we were old classmates at the University, and he begged me to go up there. He said, "We'll make plenty of money."

Well, I said, "I don't know." I said, "You needn't count on me bringing you much way off up there in Eastland County." "Aw," he said, "it'll come." Well, I went on up there and to my surprise, I brought in a pretty sizeable amount of money the first month, did pretty well the second one. Third month come along in the summertime a little later than this. Old Lonnie came in--he was a scholar, he was a good lawyer, too, well to do--propped his feet

up on the windowsill and said, "Ghent, I think we had better dissolve our partnership." "Well," I said, "if that's the way you feel about it, I think so, too." What had happened, he was just as honest as he could be, he'd make fifty dollars, he'd open the door to my office and come in and give me twenty-five dollars. I'd do the same thing. There never was a question about any of it, but it got to where on the account of his old clientele, he was bringing in a lot more money than I was, which I told him would happen. Well, no sooner had we dissolved the partnership, I said, "Now, I'm gonna stay right here." He said, "That'll be all right." By George, it wasn't four days 'til a fellow came up there and says, "You had enough sense to look after Jim Ferguson's business, maybe you've got enough sense to attend to mine." I said, "I have-- what's you got on your mind?" He says, "I've got an injury. I'm entitled to some money out of the Industrial Accident Board." I came down here and they gave me a nice award and got this order by appeal up the District Court of Eastland County to settle it, and I made about \$4,300 on the deal. And then right on the heels of that there was an old associate of mine in the oil business. He had a partner named Walter Gholson, and Walter Gholson was a good... a great geologist. He died many times a millionaire, but at that time, though, he was broke, and this other man was broke. And they came into my office one day and says, "We're on our last leg. If you can't do somethin' for me," says, "we just loose." I said, "What have you got?" That was before I got this big fee, too. He says, "Got forty acres out here about ten miles from town close to

production, and I've got to start a well. I thought maybe you had some way that you could find..." I said, "You come to the right man." (laughter) And so, I called up a fellow in Fort Worth and made a deal with him when he got there, and I made about ten or twelve thousand dollars on the deal...things like that. And I got to going good and fine. And then when the depression came on, I got broke; I had to leave. I had to go to East Texas and make a living for my family.

Odom: Do you think Mrs. Nalle was correct--or do you agree with her--that when she said that the Fergusons might have retired after that, you know, that defeat in '26 for good if the legislature hadn't gone back and revoked that pardon or the amnesty thing?

Sanderford: I think that might have been. Here's what happened. They repealed the act. They granted him, oh, let's see...oh, yes. In the Ferguson administration, they repealed the act. And then when he got out of office, somebody contested his right to run, and they filed a law suit and got it into the Supreme Court. Dan Moody appointed three judges to pass on the constitutionality of that Amnesty Act. And he had Ferguson up there before three vicious Supreme Court judges appointed by his arch-enemy, Dan Moody. And by George, they held it unconstitutional. Why, some of the best lawyers in this town--one of them had a firm here, Brooks, one of the best lawyers ever was in Austin--thought it was a valid act, but that court didn't say so.

Odom: But she maintains that it was this that stirred them up again.

Sanderford: I think it was. I think she was right about that. But I'll never



forget the sight that took place over at Temple the night they got in the returns that Mrs. Ferguson was elected. That was somethin' to behold, sure enough. Because, had no radio or television in those days, but we were getting these returns by telephone, you know, one thing and another. And when it became known that Mrs. Ferguson had been elected Governor of Texas...that was the primary. That was tantamount to election, you know. By George, ole man Jim's head was higher than everything that night. He was the happiest fellow, and people just came from everywhere and crowded in--you never saw such a turnout of ole country boys and friends in your life. He was a big man from then on, you see.

Odom: Did you get involved in that 1930 election against Ross Sterling?

Sanderford: Oh, not personally, just interested, was all.

Odom: What did they think about Governor Sterling--the Fergusons?

Sanderford: Well, they thought he was a--about like everybody else thought, by George--that he was just a joke. (laughter) He was on the Highway Commission, you know. Dan Moody appointed him on the Highway Commission, and he was a great financier. He was immensely wealthy.

Odom: He must have been a good highway commissioner, wasn't he?

Sanderford: Oh, I don't know whether any of them were any good, though. I'll say he was honest. I'm sure he was. But what he knew about building roads was about as much as I knew, anything like that. But old Sterling is a...he couldn't make a talk, and he couldn't read one if somebody wrote it for him. (laughter) He just was the object of ridicule at the hands of Ferguson, you know. They had

more jokes going around here about Sterling, and that was effective stuff in any campaign, you know.

Gantt: Well now, let me ask you this. One of the, I guess you might call it, gimmicks that Governor Jim used in his campaigning was sort of using bad English and grammar and so on, and I think you once told me that he was well-read in classics and so on. Was that just a front that he used?

Sanderford: I think he talked that way to a great extent because most of everybody in Texas talked the same language in those days. That's what I think about it. But he had as chaste a language as any fellow ever listened to when he was trying to make an appropriate speech somewhere. He was better by far than what there are in these days and times. John Connally's not in his class, but nobody but Pat Neff was, and Neff was a very cultured speaker. Ferguson--he appealed to the masses.

Gantt: Would you call him a good orator type?

Sanderford: No, I don't know that I'd call him an orator type. I wouldn't say that.

Gantt: He wasn't like a William Jennings Bryan?

Sanderford: No, he was more of a natural. He had an ability to talk the language of the people in front of him. I don't think Ferguson would have been successful if we would have had television. I don't think he could have gotten over like he did. But he just had a way of the psychology of the situation, reaching out and then clutching the people in front of him. And he made speeches. He could get ten thousand in any town in Texas, he could get ten thou-

sand here, and he could go down to Lockhart and get ten thousand more. Wherever he went, he drew great crowds.

Gantt: What about Mrs. Ferguson? Was she a pretty good speaker?

Sanderford: She was modest and unassumed...read her address.

Gantt: She would read it?

Sanderford: Yes. She would generally...most always read it.

Odom: She was probably a much better campaigner in '32, by the time she was elected--that '32 election.

Sanderford: Well, there wasn't much difference in it. Not much difference in it, no. She never did go for...I expect that if Mrs. Ferguson had had her way about it, she never would have considered running for governor.

Odom: I was wondering, did she ever get to where she liked politics or not?

Sanderford: Oh well, I think she did in a way. I kind of think she fell in love with it. But she has always been a home--you know--a loving mother and a wife, a companion at home--that's what Mrs. Ferguson's always been.

Oral History Collection

Ghent Sanderford

Interviewer: E. Dale Odom

Place of Interview: Austin, Texas

July 3, 1967

Dr. Odom: Mr. Sanderford, did you continue to have--to work for or work with the Fergusons in those years from 1930 up until Mrs. Ferguson ran again in 1932? Were you in private practice?

Mr. Sanderford: Oh, I was in private practice. I believe though, that I was living at that time in Eastland County. When her first administration was over with, I went out to Eastland County and formed a partnership with L. H. Llewellen, for a short time, and then I got in on my own and stayed there until Mrs. Ferguson was elected in 1932. In 1933, Governor Jim asked me if I wouldn't serve as her secretary for her new term that she had been elected to. He said I had served the first term, but wouldn't I serve the second term. I told him "yes," but he came to me one day, and he had an old time associate, Jim Davis of Temple, a very fine secretary, and knew all about the Ferguson's business and everything, and he told me that he had thought it over and that there were some things he liked about me very much that he couldn't replace me very easily, but there were other things about Jim Davis that he thought would make a better secretary than I was. And he would rather if I moved down there, I could be on the

outside and work...I'd be worth a lot more to him and he'd be worth a lot more to me, too, because a secretary in the Governor's office got a small salary. Well, I was glad to make the change. So in 1932, I...in 1933, in January, I moved to Austin and opened an office over in the Norwood Building--it's the Capital National Bank Building now--during Governor Ferguson's second administration. And then in April, Mrs. Ferguson appointed me a member of the State Board of Education, and I became President of that Board and served as President for a year and served for six years. And that wound up my official connection with them, but I was always intimate with them and visited with them and worked with them.

Odom: You said you stayed for a year on the State Board of Education?

Sanderford: I was appointed as a member and served as a member for six years. And during that time, I believe it was the last year, I was elected President of the Board, or my next-to-the-last year I served as President of the Board.

Odom: What kind of experiences did you have on the State Board of Education? Do you have any interesting experiences to relate there? What sort of routine did you engage in here?

Sanderford: I think there were nine members of the Board. I believe they were appointed every year...every two years, and our business was twofold in the main. One was we were busy investing the public school fund in bonds--buying bonds; and the other was that we were the agency designated to select the school books and distribute them in the state to the schools. And so, it was a non-salaried job; I think it paid ten dollars a day for the...each meeting that you were

in--about one meeting a month--and each lasted about two or three days.

Odom: Did you have any controversies over school book selection?

Sanderford: Oh, yes. We had...at that time, the Board of Education was made up of what could be called non-school men. The legislature conceived the idea it would not be best to put school teachers on the Board to select the school books for the students in the schools, and I think in that, perhaps the legislature had some reason for it, and then there were some reasons why they should have taken a different position and didn't. The schoolteachers ought to be better prepared to select the kind of books to be used in the schools than the Board members who were professional or businessmen. But that was the system set up, and it existed that way quite a number of years after I got off the Board. During that time, I think that the civilian board made as fine a selection of school books as could have been made by teachers or anybody else. They put a lot of time and work in on it, a lot of competition. Fact is, a lot of fine books were offered for adoption. Of course, they couldn't all be adopted, so some book companies would get a big contract and others wouldn't get very much. But then the bonds...we were criticized pretty severely about our bond investment.

Odom: Making bond investments?

Sanderford: Yes, they said we were buying worthless bonds.

Odom: This was in the midst of the depression here?

Sanderford: Yes, this was during the depression, and we were offered bonds. I remember an issue in Lubbock County, in the city of Lubbock--a small

issue of \$100,000 or \$200,000, something like that--and that was one of the issues that was contested with the legislature. Another one was in Wichita Falls and several others. Anyhow, there were one or two Senators and two or three Representatives who took out after the Board and criticized us severely. And we stood our ground, though. And during the time that I was on the Board, for the six years, and since then, I don't think the Board of Education has ever bought a bad bond issue. I think they would have been gilt-edged; the fact it, we were too careful. We ought to have gone ahead and invested all the money, even gone into debt, because it was a good time to buy bonds; you could buy bonds at such discounts. You could buy...Wichita Falls bonds for instance, offered us fifty cents on the dollar. We turned them down but we later bought them. We bought at eighty cents on the dollar. Of course, it's been paid off long since, but they would have been much higher later. The legislature didn't know anything about what they were talking about, that's all there was to it. We went before the legislature and testified before the committee, and some of the best men in the legislature were very critical of us. One was Senator Holbrook, a personal friend of mine. Another was Harry Graves of Georgetown, one of the finest fellows in the world. Another was Alfred Petch of Frederickburg. And they raised all kinds of criticism about the way we were doing our business.

Odom: Was there any investigation or anything like that?

Sanderford: Oh, yes. They had a committee investigating us. But we whipped them down so badly that most of them just came to us and apologized,

particularly Harry Graves. He was a fine fellow. He just said he was led into it. Come to find out, they were jumping on a governmental body there that was doing a wonderful job, and time has proved that we did do a good job on that.

Odom: How did the Fergusons feel about Franklin D. Roosevelt and his New Deal program?

Sanderford: They were very strong for Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. I remember in 1933, I believe it was, that was when the depression was in full force here. And so, one or two bankers from Dallas, one or two from Houston came up and had a conference with Governor Jim and told him that unless something drastic was done, that every bank in Texas would be broke in ten day's time. Said the people were drawing money out of the banks by the hundreds of thousands of dollars. And said, the money that we loan against the fine black land farms in Ellis County, we get ten dollars...the amount of ten dollars an acre. They couldn't pay it. And so they told Governor Jim, says, "Something's got to be done." And so, they talked it over, and there wasn't any legal authority for Mrs. Ferguson to do anything.

But after having a consultation, Governor Jim decided that the thing to do would be to close every bank in Texas. And so, that was on the first of March, 1933, and Roosevelt went into office on the fourth of March, 1933. Well, he issued a proclamation closing every bank in Texas. I say he did. He dictated the proclamation, and proclamations generally run like this, "I, Miriam A. Ferguson, Governor of Texas, by virtue of the authority invested in me by the



Constitution and Laws of the State of Texas, do hereby proclaim (and they set out what the action is, you know)." So I was up in his office on a Monday, I believe it was, and asked the Governor, I said, "By what authority did the Governor close all the banks in Texas." Well, he said, "Just go in there and pick up that proclamation and read it for yourself. And I read it. This should be on record too; I think it was quite a novelty. And it read like this, "I, Miriam A. Ferguson, Governor of the State of Texas, by virtue of authority assumed by me..." (and then she ordered all banks closed from that date indefinitely, setting up the conditions in the state, she just ordered every bank to be closed indefinitely.

Well then, Roosevelt came in on the fourth of March and on the afternoon of the fourth of March, Roosevelt closed all the banks in the United States, but Ferguson beat him to it by three days. I thought that was quite significant. Nobody in the whole world knew that Roosevelt was going to close them three days later over the nation, because it was something that he couldn't tell the people. Everybody could beat it if you gave that much notice. It was a surprising thing; every bank in Texas obeyed that order except two or three--every one. And I thought it was a leap in the dark and a venturesome thing, because there was no way on earth of enforcing it, and they had no authority on earth to issue the proclamation--none in the Constitution and none in the statutes. And he was just being honest with everybody concerned, he said, "By virtue of the authority assumed by me, I do hereby order all banks in Texas closed

indefinitely."

Odom: Apparently, though, they were ready to close, though, weren't they?

Sanderford: Well, I can't answer that--whether they were or not. Some of them were and a lot of them weren't. Just closing all banks, that's a pretty big order--closing all the banks in the State of Texas. And as many people as we got, especially among the bankers, some of the best banking friends in Texas came down here and said, "Do something." And it was a fine thing. And Governor Allred was attorney general at that time, and he was invited to the conference, but he wouldn't attend it; he was afraid of it. He was the state's legal advisor, and he wouldn't have anything to do with it at all. But Governor Jim just went ahead and took the bull by the horns and closed every bank in Texas.

Odom: Let's see. You were secretary for the Ferguson's there in the first year of her second term and then...

Sanderford: No, I wasn't secretary for her...that was in her first term.

Odom: In the second term, she appointed you as...on the Board of Education. Who was fulfilling the duties here that you had before, the gentleman you mentioned a while ago?

Sanderford: Jim Davis?

Odom: Jim Davis.

Sanderford: No, he was associated with Governor Jim when he was in the banking business at Temple before he became governor, but Ferguson got him down here during that second term in 1933. One thing I wanted to mention about that Board of Education--at that time, the school-teachers were getting very little money. They weren't well orga-

nized and their per capita was only about \$18.00 a year. (?) And so, they couldn't exist very well. But the teachers started a movement that raised that per capita to \$22.00 a year. And five members of the board opposed it; four of us were for it. Governor Allred (Allred became governor) was very much opposed to raising the per capita because it would increase taxes--bad politics, of course. And so four of us boys got together, and it takes six to make a quorum, but before that happened though, we set the per capita at \$22.00 because we had one margin for that. But when these other members were jumped on by the governor and other influential people, that started a movement to rescind that action, and they got after me to call a meeting of the board, and I wouldn't do it for the simple reason that I knew they had a majority and they would undo what they had done, you know. So we carried on a fight there for, oh, two months, I guess, at least. And they'd call a meeting of the board themselves so many would come, but they never could get but five members which failed to get them a quorum. Sometime or another they met at the Austin Hotel and they were coming over to my office and just sit at my door 'til they could get me to make a quorum so they could undo what had been done. Anyhow, it created lots of interest in the state--enough that the Dallas News had to editorialize on it and call me the obstreperous president of the board. All papers were cutting up, and the governor and everybody concerned seemed like. But the four of us just stayed hitched. We wouldn't budge; we wouldn't give them a quorum. Had a lot of excitement over it, and the teachers, oh, they were just unanimous

all over the state for me. I was chairman of the board and I was handling the darn thing. I didn't have but just...all I could do was keep the quorum down so they could never meet, which I proceeded to do. And so, finally though, we hooked them in line, and they set it back up. And as a remembrance of that on the part of the teachers, I was made...given a lifetime membership in the State Teacher's Association, with all dues paid for as long as I lived. I still get their paper.

Odom: Have you done any more work professionally along this line since then?

Sanderford: No, not a bit. When you get off the board, you're just off, that's all. And that's the way it should be. There are other people just as good as you are, you know. They increased the membership, though, to twenty-one members, or twenty-two members, I forget which, and provide that they be elected by the people. Well, it's a non-paying salary, so not very many people are going to run for an office...be out of a lot of money, and when there's not a bit of pay in the world, you don't. I have always thought and still think that the board members ought to be appointed by the governors, three every two years. But the argument against that is that they would be subservient to the wishes of whoever might be governor. The thing is to let them be independent. But then, we had a board that was rather independent itself. So I think that--on the whole--I prefer nine members over twenty-one because a committee gets so big that it becomes unruly lots of times, and lots of people don't do any work, but if there are just a few on there, they all work, and the smaller

committee works better, I think. Now another thing about the board, they've taken the adoption of the books almost entirely out of the hands of the Board of Education, and it's left to a committee of schoolteachers, and I think that might be a good advancement made on that. But they're doing a great work, the Board of Education in Texas is. It didn't suffer any by me not being on the board.

Odom: Did you see anything very much different in the, oh, the routine, discharge of duties, and Mrs. Ferguson's part in it in the second term that was different from her first term?

Sanderford: I think there was very little difference. There's no use in dodging the question. Ferguson was the brains behind everything, but he handled it in a way that he was very courteous to his wife, but she had enough sense to know that Ferguson was a smarter man than she was a woman. The fact is, she would never have been elected if people hadn't known that Ferguson was going to be the governor of the state. That's the truth. In other words, if she had just been a widow with nobody in there to help her with the job, I don't think the people of Texas would have elected her. But they knew that old man Jim would be right there by her side, and he told them that he was, and he was, too, for the four years that she was governor. Of course, a lot of times, he was gone, lots of times, but then if anything came up worthwhile, he was there to pass on it. The truth is, from my experiences in the governor's office there and in my observations after I got out, convinced me that the governor's office should be the easiest office in the State of Texas to handle and administer. I can't see any reason why any sensible man could have

trouble making Texas a good governor. I can't see how any sensible man would worry over it, it's so easy. You've got to make some decisions, but I think the big hullabaloo of the thing...in my mind, the governorship of Texas is a less burdensome job than the mayor of Austin is--a whole lot so.

Odom: Was there any improvement in the Ferguson's relations with the newspapers in the second term or earlier?

Sanderford: Yes, they were treated much fairer during the second term than they had been during the first term. They were treated awful badly by the papers, generally speaking. The papers were all against Ferguson, all of them after he was impeached and until he made his comeback in 1924--then he began to pick up friends, of course, being back in power, and then again in 1932, Mrs. Ferguson was successful in winning her second term. She had served one term and then was out of office about three terms, and then the fourth term, she was re-elected when Ross Sterling was put in the race by Governor Dan Moody, he was chairman of the Highway Commission, a multi-millionaire, a newspaper man out of Houston. They thought he'd be one of the greatest hits in the world as governor. But he was a complete flop--both as a candidate and as a governor. We proved that by the fact that he was defeated for a second term--only man in Texas who ever was defeated for a second term. And he took it so hard that he wouldn't even attend the inauguration of the new governor, Mrs. Ferguson. When she came in, he was gone. And he faded out pretty fast, but he was just a businessman, but he just wasn't any statesman, that's all there was to it. And I expect Sterling, as far as

I know, was fairly honest. He didn't have good statesmanship about him that it takes to make a good governor.

Odom: What did the Fergusons do after Mrs. Ferguson left office in 1935?

Sanderford: Well, as I recall, I think they made one or two state races, foolishly, and she served two terms beginning in January of 1925 to January 1927. And then they were out running for office all the time until they were finally elected when they beat Sterling for his second term. Then they served that second term out; that carried them up to...

Odom: January of '35.

Sanderford: Yeah, January...no, January of...that was along in '33 to '35...that's right. Then they just coasted along and he ran his...his newspaper, until he got in bad health.

Odom: Was he in bad health in the late thirties there? In those years? Was he in pretty good health up until shortly before he died?

Sanderford: Well, he was in poor health two or three years before he died. He was a man who usually weighed about two hundred and thirty pounds, and when he died, he didn't weigh much over one hundred pounds--he was sick a long time, and unconscious most of the time, I understand.

Odom: What decided him to make that race again in 1940, you know, against Governor O'Daniel? W. Lee O'Daniel had been elected in '38 for the first time after Allred left office.

Sanderford: Well, I don't remember the campaign of 1940. Did the Fergusons make a race for governor then?

Odom: I believe he ran for...yes, he did run for office.

Sanderford: Was that the year that O'Daniel was elected the first time?

Odom: No, O'Daniel was elected the first time in '38, wasn't he?

Sanderford: That's what I was thinking. Well, he was elected a second time.

Odom: He was elected a second time in 1940.

Sanderford: 1940, in 1940. Well I don't know. Ferguson supported, when Morris Shepherd died, a United States Senator, O'Daniel announced for the United States Senate. And Ferguson supported him.

Odom: He did?

Sanderford: Yes. And that brings up the story where Coke Stevenson becomes involved. Coke Stevenson was Lieutenant Governor when O'Daniel was governor. And so, then when O'Daniel announced for the Senate after Shepherd's death, Ferguson went to work then, trying to get O'Daniel elected to the Senate so the governor's office would become vacant and get Coke Stevenson in there. So Ferguson was talking to me down in the hotel one day and said, "We want to line up behind O'Daniel." I said, "You're not talking to me; I'm no going to vote for O'Daniel." I said, "That fellow wouldn't even speak to you or me if you were to pass right in front of him" He said, "We don't care anything about that," says, "the idea is to get Coke in as governor. Then we'll have one of our friends in the governor's office." I said, "That'll have to be done without me because I'm not gonna vote for him." But it was a tight race between O'Daniel and Lyndon Johnson. And I think that O'Daniel beat him by about 1,100 votes--that's an off-hand guess on the matter. But it was a very close race. And Ferguson was the difference there. I'll comment now on just what that meant. That was Lyndon Johnson's first race for the United States Senate. And Ferguson had always been a good friend of the Johnson



family, and they had been with him. He thought more of Coke Stevenson and a vote for O'Daniel was a vote to put Stevenson in the governor's office. And so they put him in by a narrow margin. Now then, after Coke became governor of Texas, he got very cool towards Governor Jim. Wouldn't show him the least ordinary courtesy. And that looked pretty bad the way I considered it because during Ferguson's first administration in 1925 Coke was a young lawyer out there from Junction and he was in the governor's office a right smart and received a lot of favors as I recollect. Ferguson was always for Coke, and then when Coke ran for the legislature, and I don't think Ferguson was governor when Coke was elected to the legislature....

Odom: No, I think he was elected first in '28.

Sanderford: I think so. And then he served two terms just as a member, and the third term he ran for Speaker of the House. Well, that brought it up to 1933. So Ferguson was incoming governor--Mrs. Ferguson was incoming governor--so he wanted Coke to be Speaker of the House. And so Ferguson had a meeting with his political friends here in Austin and Coke and all of them laid out strategy to elect Coke as Speaker of the House. So they beat this fellow Johnson down here at Carrizo Springs by--it was either seven votes or eleven votes, I don't know which, but anyhow, Ferguson was the difference. Went on then and Coke was elected. And then the Fergusons went out of office in '35, and Coke was Speaker of the House and running for re-election as Speaker. And so Ferguson had another meeting and he had had two years to cultivate the friendship of all the members of the House,

so he could control lots of votes. And he just told them; he said, "Here's our man. We want to put this man in here as Speaker to succeed himself." And Bob Calvert, who is now a member of the Supreme Court--Chief Justice of the Supreme Court--was a member of the House at that time, and he was running for Speaker. And so, Coke beat him by seven votes. And Ferguson did that, so he put him in Speaker of the House, two terms unprecedented, two terms in succession. And then his influence in the O'Daniel race against Lyndon Johnson was sufficient to make him governor of Texas. But after Coke got the governor of Texas, he just gradually withdrew from Governor Jim--didn't seem to need him or want him around any more.

Odom: Was there any explanation for that?

Sanderford: There never was a word. So I talked to John Lee Smith about that--he was Lieutenant Governor at one time--and John Lee said he went down--getting ahead of my story--it's a tradition in the governor's office that when an ex-governor comes to the governor's office regardless of who's there, you're supposed to take in the ex-governor to see the governor. So one day Ferguson called me in and said, "Was Governor Colquitt here yesterday?" I said, "No." He said, "I saw where he was in town." I said, "I did too," I said, "He didn't come to the office." He said, "Let me tell you something. Whenever an ex-governor comes here, I don't care who it is or who I've got in here, how important it is, you come in and announce it because he has preference over everybody." And that's a tradition of the office.

So John Lee Smith told me one day that he went down to see Coke-- Governor Coke Stevenson, and there sat Governor Ferguson there in the reception room just waiting his time. He said he stayed there quite a while and went back to his office, and then two hours later he came back to see Coke about something else, and Governor Ferguson was still sitting there. And he said he let the old man sit there that whole time and said that he didn't know whether he ever got in or not. Anyhow, Coke was very cool towards Governor Jim, not because Governor Jim wasn't the best friend he ever had in the world, because he was! He made him what he was. So I was over to see Governor Ferguson one night, and he was getting old and his health wasn't too good, and he told me about a conversation over the phone he had had with Coke. And he called the governor up and says, "Governor," says, "My wife and I would appreciate it very much if you would come to see us sometime. You select the hour, and the day." Said, "We'd be awfully glad to have you." Said, "It's getting to the point to where I can't get around like I used to. I just can't go over there and wait to see you or talk to you." Said, "If you'd come over here, we'd appreciate it very much."

"You just select the day and hour, and we'll be ready for you if you can come at all." He said, "Well, how about tomorrow night at nine o'clock." Governor Jim says, "That's just fine." Says, "We'll be glad to have you. I just want to talk over the past with you again, and talk things over." They got dressed up and everything-- got out on the front porch and waited for him, and nine o'clock came and Coke didn't phone them, didn't come and never did show up or

anything--never did hear from him at all. And then when Governor Jim died, everything in the capitol closed down and they had the funeral out at the Ferguson home. Everything closed down, courts and all. I came down to the funeral and the flags were at half mast. But there was one fellow who didn't show up. And that was Coke Stevenson. He got in his pick-up...Governor of Texas...went to his ranch at Junction, didn't give out a single statement about Ferguson's life and what he had accomplished or anything else, didn't send them flowers, paid him no respect whatever. But the other fellow in the picture was Lyndon Johnson whom Ferguson had brought about his defeat prior thereto. And Lyndon heard about it on his way to Dallas; he took a plane and came back down here and was at the funeral. Although Ferguson had not supported him, was the cause of his defeat in 1941, in his first race for the United States Senate, and...but Lyndon, he was too big a man, too smart a politician to get mad. He didn't get mad at Ferguson. He might have got mad, but he didn't let them show it. He didn't ever show it to them. But a sweet day of revenge did take place. When Coke was running for the Senate against Lyndon Johnson, and Lyndon Johnson beat him eighty-seven votes, you know, Mrs. Ferguson wrote hundreds, thousands, of letters to her close friends over the state telling them to vote for Lyndon Johnson. And this...Ovida, the girl that wrote this book...she was as active as everything, and she and her husband had some money, too. And they spent what money they could, and Mrs. Ferguson had...made some radio speeches. And she swung that election in favor of Lyndon Johnson...elected him United States

Senator over Coke...over Coke Stevenson.

And they can say what they please about box 13 down yonder in the Valley, and that eighty-seven votes. It was the Fergusons, the ones that defeated Coke Stevenson for United States Senator. And if they hadn't taken a part in that, Texas history'd been very different because Lyndon Johnson wouldn't have been elected to the United States Senate. He'd have been a statesman without a job, you might say. And he'd never been vice president of the United States. He'd never have been President of the United States if he hadn't have won that election, and he owes that election today to three women. That's Mrs. Ferguson and her two daughters. And it was sweet revenge that those women took out on Coke.

Odom: Do you have any exclamation for this? Is it just...

Sanderford: I don't have the least...never...never...I don't know what it was. Ferguson never did know what it was. But he couldn't get in there to see him. And Coke would make a date with him to call some time and talk with him and he wouldn't call him up and tell him he couldn't come or anything. Wouldn't come to his funeral. And so... but they got even with him in a fine way. They defeated him for United States Senator, elected Lyndon Johnson who in turn was elected President...ah, Vice President of the United States then on the death of Kennedy became President of the United States. That's shaping history pretty fast, isn't it?

Odom: Yes, it is. Was Mrs. Ferguson active in any other campaigns, you know, after Governor Jim's death in 1944?

Sanderford: Well, there was only one.

Odom: This was the only one?

Sanderford: That's the only active part...only one, so I recall. I don't think she ever gave out a statement for anybody. I don't recall it...or took any part. But she was very active in that campaign.

Odom: Did she retain an active interest in the...in politics...in the elections?

Sanderford: Oh, yes. I think she was always interested in who was going to be elected. One thing about it, she had a personal choice--no doubt about it. That that she was doing...doing in her work...it...not in...not in a campaign; the campaign of 1948, I think, wound it all up, as far as they were concerned.

Odom: Did you continue to visit Mrs. Ferguson on up to her death?

Sanderford: Oh, yes. I went over to see her two nights before she died. She got up out of bed and we talked quite a while, and she died two nights later. Talked about old times and how much fun we used to have, such stuff as that, you know.

Odom: How have things changed in Texas government since the days you were a part of it?

Sanderford: I don't know, they've changed so much. For instance, we had in our office...you might say we had two governors in the same office (chuckle), and I was chief secretary--executive secretary. And I had a fellow named Earnest Franklow as my assistant, and had two ladies--a bookkeeper and a secretary. Then I had a file clerk, Hugh Green, a Negro file clerk had been there ever since Tom Campbell's day, and a porter named Bill Valentine. And every one of those that

I've mentioned...there was Mr. and Mrs. Ferguson are both dead, Franklow's dead, Mrs. Guinn, my office secretary's dead, Mrs. Wallace, another secretary, she's dead. Bill Valentine, the Negro porter...he's dead. The whole works are dead except myself, with the possible exception of a few weeks at a time other people came in and worked...maybe two or three months at a time. So I'm the only one left of that first administration. Now there's some from the second, but his two secretaries in the second administration... they're both dead. One of them died recently, and Charlie Golkus of Houston died about a month ago. And Jim Davis has been dead a number of years. But the point I'm making is this that we had such a small force, but they worked and they worked hard...and the number of callers was unbelievable. We had ten callers where Allan Shivers or Coke Stevenson or Jimmy Allred had one, because Ferguson had a lot of promises out when he was running for office. He told them that President Roosevelt was going to be elected. He said there'd be a lot of offices to be filled, federal offices. He said, "I want...he'll listen to me on a lot of my recommendations. I want... I'll not forget you boys if you get me votes." Well, he said it that a way. Well, Mrs. Ferguson got in and Roosevelt got in. And you never saw such a doggoned mob of people that came down to the governor's office in your life. They came...the office was on the first floor, and they'd be crowded out in the hall waiting their turn. And, one day old Governor Jim lost his patience and went out in the reception room and got up in a chair and told them all to go home. He said he didn't have any jobs for them. (chuckle) He

said, "I'd give you one of them, but we haven't got any of them, so go on back. I'm sorry we can't do anything for you."

Odom: You ran the governor's office with a much smaller staff than than it's run with now.

Sanderford: Oh, yes, not a tenth as large. And the salary...my salary was \$3,000 a year, and I think the fellow that's got my salary now gets about \$20,000, maybe more. Oh, they...it's...I don't see how they get around so many doggoned secretaries scattered around all over there. They ought to run over each other. You don't need them.

Odom: You're familiar with Parkinson's law, though, aren't you? A fellow, C. Northcote Parkinson...he says...he formulated this law that in federal or in government beaurocracies particularly, that the amount of work always increases to meet the number of employees that you have.

Sanderford: Well, I don't know, but officially the governor doesn't have as much to do now as he did in Ferguson's day because a lot of the detailed stuff is done by heads of departments. I understand now that a lot...all that is not done in the governor's office. I don't know because I haven't been to the governor's office in a number of years. I don't know anything about it. I couldn't...I'm not in a position to criticize, but I don't see why...how in the world they can have thirty or forty or fifty employees of the governor's office, and we got by with four or five.

Odom: Are there as many appointments to make today, or more than there were then?

Sanderford: Well, we've got no more departments. We've got the same number of



highway commissioners. We've got insurance commissions, all sorts of these commissions the governor appoints. Well, we had those commissions in that day, too. And Ferguson...they appointed them and let them run their business. But it's different now. It's... of course, there's more volume to every department than there was in those days, but it wasn't twenty times as much by any means. The cost of governors' office, I haven't got the figures, but it's tremendous compared to what it was back in the Ferguson days. Then the governor got only four thousand...four thousand dollars a year. I don't feel that...I think twenty-five is enough, but I think they ought to get that much. The Governor is paid forty thousand dollars per year against four thousand dollars in Ferguson's days.

Odom: Are you in sympathy with this new move to rewrite the Constitution?

Sanderford: Well, I am, and I looked at one way I am and then view it from another way, and I'm not. I'm just afraid that you let the politicians get to dickering with the Constitution now, they'll come up with the biggest mess that ever was. That Constitution as it's written now, is the basis for hundreds and hundreds of court decisions. And if you change the thing up, you don't know what's going to take place. If...of course, if they could write a good, sensible Constitution, I think it ought to be brought down to date because there are more amendments now than there were...than there is Constitution. Of course, they all have equal dignity, but it's in the form of amendments, and some of them are just straight out legislation instead of constitutional revisions, too. You've got a legislative statutory law combined with the Constitution--written into it as an

amendment. The way they amended is a very poor way, and I think it would be a good idea to have a constitutional committee to write a constitution...or a constitutional convention. But I certainly would...be awful fearful of such a movement because I think they'd come up with something that is long as a moral law, in the first place, instead of being short and concise like the federal Constitution, like any Constitution ought to be. I think it would be too voluminous and too contradictory. If you had some real lawyers, real patriots, and non-politicians to sit down and devote a year or two to writing a constitution, I think it would be the finest thing in the world. But to leave it up to, like the...compelled to make it...to write a new Constitution...I think it's a big risk. I don't know what we'd have...no telling, not a bit in the world.

Might have...it might be that Governor Connally'd be the very man to supervise the writing of a new Constitution. He might come up with a good one, but I sure would be afraid of him on some things. I don't favor this business of this coordinating board--educational coordinating board. You know what I'm talking about. We had a board of regents for the University of Texas. We had a board of regents for several other colleges, and they ran their schools...they became individualistic. The schools did, they stood out on their own. Now then, it's the University of Texas at Austin, University of Texas at Arlington, University of Texas at Canyon, University of Texas at San Marcos, University of Texas at Houston, University...two of them down at Houston...and the University of Texas. Well, now, it lowers the prestige of the main. In the first place,

what it lowers...the University out here, its prestige, I think, very much...it doesn't raise the prestige of these other schools any. That's what I don't like about it. And everything the board of regents does is subject to veto by this Coordinating Board and what they do is subject to a veto by the governor. (chuckle)  
That's what I don't like about the Connally Administration...this coordinating board. I don't like it at all.

Odom: That's your main objection then.

Sanderford: That's my main objection, yes, because I just...I think there ought to be a board of regents out there like they've always had it run and let it stand out as the University of Texas, not at Austin but the University of Texas, located at Austin but don't say at Austin.

Odom: Mr. Sanderford, how would you describe yourself in political philosophy? Would you describe yourself as a conservative, a liberal, a middle of the roader, or how have you thought yourself?

Sanderford: Well, I'll tell you, of course my standing in the political life of Texas is so insignificant it doesn't make much difference how I stand, but I have got my idea and it is as big as anybody else's. I think my...that these liberals call me a conservative but some of these wild conservatives say I'm a liberal, so I don't know. I am a liberal on some things and I'm very conservative on others but that's the way it ought to be, too. There is no such thing...a label doesn't amount to a doggone thing. Just be a Democrat, that's all you need.

Odom: Have you always been a Democrat?

Sanderford: I've always been a Democrat, I've never voted...never have bolted

a ticket at all, never. Never will, either. I'm not going to.

Odom: Did you play any part back in 1952 in the big race the Democrats ran for Eisenhower?

Sanderford: Furthermore, I fought the Eisenhower Democrats as hard as I could.

Odom: You fought them, then, did you?

Sanderford: Yes, you bet...yes. I've just been a straight right-down-the-road Democrat...that's all. Voted for the Democratic ticket and if they nominated somebody that I didn't like, I voted for him anyhow. I won't vote a Republican ticket because I'm just a...just a Democrat, period, when it comes to politics. And I'm a Baptist as far as church affiliations are concerned.

Odom: How did Mrs. Ferguson feel about that 1952 race? Do you recall?

Sanderford: Oh, they were all for it, they didn't take much interest in it, as I recall. They were all for voting the Democratic ticket in Texas... yes. They all did that. They never voted a Republican in their life...wasn't one in that family ever voted the Republican ticket. None of them.

Odom: Well, I take it then that you don't particularly look with great favor on the development of a two party system in the State of Texas...a Republican...a stronger Republican party.

Sanderford: No, I don't and I'll tell you why. I'd rather see it the other way. I had rather see a great majority of them all on my side naturally. But aside from that it takes a very rich man in this day and time to be governor of Texas. In the first place he has got to spend...multiplied thousands of dollars to get the Democratic nomination. Then he has got to spend just as much money to get

elected in the general election. You take Waggoner Carr, he spent lots of money...according to the statements to be even nominated when he didn't have any opposition, scarce at all to be nominated. And then he spent a whole lot more to be elected and he was defeated. And so, I don't know of any poor man that has a chance in the world to be Governor of Texas. It costs a tremendous amount... too much money. A man's either got to sell his soul to raise the money from special interests to be obligated to them for the whole term of his office, if he is elected, or else if he is a millionaire he'll slip off a couple of million dollars and run for governor and perhaps be elected and then he is on the ball. But how many millionaires want to give up that much money to be governor of Texas.

Odom: How much money did Ferguson spend back, oh, we'll say in Governor Jim's race in 1916, 1924, 1914?

Sanderford: In 1914, he astonished the people, subjected himself to a lot of criticism by announcing that he had laid aside thirty thousand dollars to make the race for governor. (chuckle) Just about enough to pay for one night's state-wide television...thirty minutes.

Odom: That wouldn't pay for it, would it?

Sanderford: I doubt it, I doubt that it would. Yes...they thought...

Odom: A short statement, maybe five minutes or something like that.

Sanderford: No, they thought he was trying to buy the office because he said he laid aside thirty thousand dollars to be governor...to run for governor of Texas. Oh, he made lots of campaigns on nothing; he passed the hat around, nickels and dimes, two bits, four bits, a dollar, such as that. He couldn't get traffic from one town to the other in some

of these races he was making. Of course, when he got to the winning column in the run-off where he had a good chance, then he had a right smart...

Odom: It was almost hard-to-mouth was it?

Sanderford: Oh it was too, they already...they weren't mistaking things about that, that was actually the truth. I passed the hat around to a few audiences. I lived in Eastland county in 1932, and Governor Jim wrote me and he wanted to speak at Eastland on a certain night, say Thursday night, or three or four nights after I got the letter, or a week I don't know how long. Well, I got in my car and I carried...I had a bunch of circulars printed and I carried them down to Cisco, Eastland, Desdemona, and Ranger, and some other towns scattered circulars around, went back to Eastland. And so a friend of mine and I went to Fort Worth to get Governor Jim that morning. He was to speak at night that day. So we brought him down and carried him to the hotel there at Eastland and put him in a room, he went and took his nap and I went on home. Meantime, we had erected a platform out on the square for him to speak from. And so about six or seven o'clock I went over to his hotel room to see how he was feeling and one thing or another. In that little old dead town there wasn't anybody there. And I was the bluest fellow you ever saw. I went up to him and said, "Now Governor this is going to be a flop tonight, there's not anybody in town." "Oh," he said, "I guess they will come in." And I said, "Well, I don't see any sign of it." Well, that night as I got out to go to the platform on the opposite side of the square, I never saw such a mob in all my born days as there were

that night was over there. There were over ten thousand people lined up out there standing off down that highway and it was the darnest things you ever saw, the like of people there. They just came from everywhere, bought out every drug store there was, every cold drink, ice cream. (chuckle) They had a big time and when the speaking was over with, they all went back home, of course. Everybody was happy but it was a...that's the way he gathered them all the time. He didn't have...those circulars I got out...got the word around and everybody came to Eastland that night.

Odom: Did you put out a lot of pictures on the telephone poles and that sort of thing?

Sanderford: No, no, no. Didn't have any pictures, didn't need any pictures for old man Jim. All that was needed was must the word--Ferguson will be in town tonight--and they would all come in. I mean he was a crowd drawer. Of course, O'Daniel was a bigger crowd drawer through curiosity than Ferguson was. You know that.

Odom: Well, he had his hillbilly band, though, didn't he?

Sanderford: Oh, yes. He had his hillbilly band and one thing or another and...

Odom: What did they think about gimmicks like that?

Sanderford: What did the people think about them?

Odom: What did the Fergusons think about such gimmicks as that?

Sanderford: Oh, I don't know, they didn't criticize it, they saw he was getting results out of it...(chuckle) they didn't have any...criticism about it. Neff made the most apt comment about Roosevelt...I mean about O'Daniel. O'Daniel spoke in Waco one night and had one of these tremendous crowds. Governor Neff went out there and standing in the

crowd and viewing the situation, looked around and he said, "This is not a political movement, this is a revolution." (laugh) People... did you, of course you never did hear O'Daniel did you?

Odom: No, I don't recall. I might have but I don't recall.

Sanderford: He would speak a while and then they would set down and they would have music a while, and then he would get up and speak again. The most unorthodox way that you ever saw in your life. That son of a gun...that first race he made, he beat some doggone good men, Ernest Thompson...Ernest Thompson, Bill McCraw, there's two good follows. He just ruined them and O'Daniel won the whole...beat them all the first election.

Odom: That was the one on the old age pension...that was the big issue wasn't it?

Sanderford: I think so, I think that was it. Yes, he had somebody to give the right ideas, he already had a radio audience, selling that flour, I believe it was. He would have there good programs on and every woman in Texas would listen in on it. He already had his radio audience built up, that booger did. But that's getting off on something I don't know much about. I don't know much about anything. It's been so long ago, it's been thirty or forty years. (chuckle)

Odom: Well, these sort of things could be valuable to give somebody a flavor about how things were anyway, in your time and they can...

Sanderford: But the thing that I could never understand politically was, Coke Stevenson's attitude. I always voted for Coke Stevenson, always did, except in the last race when he ran against Lyndon Johnson. I voted for Lyndon Johnson what year, when Coke was defeated. And...it



seemed like it was the greatest act of ingratitude I ever heard of that Coke had turned the back of his hand to the man that had absolutely made him and he did that, too. And Coke's an intelligent, able man, a very competent fellow, a very successful man. It wasn't ignorance. I don't know what it was. He is a great lawyer.

Odom: He's always very economical minded, wasn't he in spending money?

Sanderford: Oh, well, they all talk that. Most all governors talked that.

Odom: Do you think there's that much difference in them when it came down to spending it or recommending programs that would spend it?

Sanderford: Well, most every governor has cut back the appropriations, has voted a lot of them. One thing, though, even John Connally, as much money as he's spent, has vetoed a lot of them--of appropriations. It just costs more money to run things now than it used to.

[Added on March 29, 1968]

Odom: Mr. Sanderford, one last matter to comment on--do you think that Ferguson ever forgave the senators that voted to impeach him?

Sanderford: That question is not easy to answer. Many senators asked favors of Ferguson after he was impeached. And he extended favors to many of them. As an example, Senator Lattimore had a son, Hal, that was making the race for the Supreme Court of Texas. Hal was a school mate of mine and I was fond of him. The Senator asked me to write a letter in favor of his son, Hal Lattimore, and have it published in the Ferguson Forum. This I did, and I asked Governor Jim to publish it in the Ferguson Forum. This I did and my letter being published in the Forum made Hal Lattimore a lot of votes, I am sure. Governor Jim and I were walking through the capitol one morning

thereafter and we met Senator Lattimore face to face. Governor Jim extended his right hand and they greeted each other. Ferguson said, "Senator, I understand that Mrs. Lattimore has a fine son running for a place on the Supreme Court and I am supporting him." Yet, Senator Lattimore was author of the clause in the impeachment judgment that barred Ferguson forever from holding office in the State of Texas.

Another Senator that voted with the majority that impeached him, this was Senator Cofer, a very fine man and one of my teachers when I was in the law school. While I was secretary the Supreme Court disqualified itself on a certain case. A Court had to be appointed and Governor Jim gave me the privilege of naming that Court. One of the three that I suggest was Senator Cofer. He was appointed and notified. Senator Cofer called me and expressed his appreciation. He expressed his appreciation and said the act was very magnanimous on the part of the Governor, but he would be much happier if his son, John Cofer, would be substituted in his place. This I agreed to have done. But before the appointment was made public, I discovered that the son was only twenty-nine years old. A person must be thirty years old to qualify on the Court. I called Senator Cofer and mentioned this fact. His answer was that the fact that John was only twenty-nine years of age could be challenged only by a direct proceeding and not collaterally. I went ahead and had John appointed. Ferguson did not only proceed to appoint a person who was by his age disqualified and in appointing

him he honored the son John and elated the father Senator Cofer, who voted to impeach Governor Jim and bar him forever from holding public office.

Another Senator that voted to impeach Ferguson and bar him forever from holding public office was Senator E. A. Dechord. This unfortunate man was sent to prison as related heretofore and Ferguson pardoned him after he had served only ten days. Other Senators that voted to impeach him were favored by Ferguson. He was indeed a forgiving man.

Odom: Tell us about the impeachment judgment.

Sanderford: The impeachment judgment was the most unjust and cruel judgment that was ever imposed. If I have my history right Ferguson and a New York Governor are the only Governors that were ever impeached. It was unjust and cruel for the reason that it attempted to bar him forever. That provision of the judgment was too unbearable. The word "forever" was more than Ferguson could take. He left the mansion and began his long fight to erase that word "forever." In a legal sense he failed. But there is a higher law than a "legal" judgment. His effort to erase that word went through the Courts. It reached the Supreme Court of Texas. The Supreme Court disqualified itself and left the decision with a bitter anti-Ferguson Court to pass upon. This Court was appointed by Governor Dan Moody. Good lawyers appeared on both sides. Ferguson had hopes that the agonizing word "forever" would be erased but it was not.

Ferguson appealed to a higher Court. He ran his wife for Governor and while she was the legal governor, Jim Ferguson was de facto Governor. The people took the case in hand and Ferguson became the real Governor, thus setting all Senate and Court decisions aside and Ferguson was immortalized "forever." The word "forever" in this judgment by the people had a sweeter tone.

THE FOLLOWING MATERIAL WAS FURNISHED BY  
MR. SANDERFORD WHO SUGGESTED THAT THIS  
BE BOUND WITH THE INTERVIEW

Room I  
Academic Center  
July 8, 1965

Honorable Ghent Sanderford  
Attorney at Law  
Littlefield Building  
Austin, Texas

Dear Ghent:

Thank you for your letter of June 29 enclosing a typescript copy of your article: "The Ferguson Era--1914-1944"; a copy of your letter of April 23, 1955 to Dr. Ralph Steen, his reply, and an original letter from Walter P. Webb to you, dated April 26, 1955--all the above containing much of historical interest. As requested in your letter, I return herewith the copy of the article and the letters you forwarded to me. I also enclose two extra zerox copies of all the material for your files.

Copies of the above material are being filed with Dr. Llerena Friend, Librarian of the Barker Texas History Center and also with Mr. Chester Kielman, Archivist of the University.

I am also placing copies of these in the Collections I am working on--The University Writings Collections. We are all greatly indebted to you for making this valuable historical material available, and I know that in future years it would be of prime interest to many scholars.

It was great to see you and the other fellows at the Bar Meeting at Dallas and I only hope that I will have the pleasure of seeing you personally before too long. We have much to talk of and I might also induce you to bend an elbow. Again our thanks and with all good wishes, I am,

Sincerely yours,

Richard T. Fleming  
Founder and Volunteer  
Collector and Curator,  
University Writings  
Collections

mbb

Enclosures

12-28-59

Dear Ghent,

I read the "Ferguson Era" with a lot of interest. You did a great job in getting so much into the limited space. The roll of achievements of the Ferguson administrations is highly impressive.

You ought to write a book not with this title but with this theme, "Jim Ferguson as I Knew Him." You have a fine story to tell and you are the only one who can tell it.

Best Wishes,

Boyce

The Ferguson Era  
1914 to 1944

James E. Ferguson, Governor January 18, 1915 to August 25, 1917

Miriam A. Ferguson, Governor - First Term January 20, 1925 to  
January 17, 1927

Second Term - January 17, 1933 to January 25, 1935.

James E. Ferguson was born near the old town of Salado in Bell County, Texas, on August 31, 1871. The son of a Methodist preacher he was born of poor parents. At his birth his mother was 32 years of age and his father 47. The day after his birth his preacher father arose before a Methodist Conference, then in session at Salado, and announced the arrival of the baby. He said "we have named him Jim. He weighs 13 pounds and some day he will be Governor of Texas." A prophesy that came true 44 years later.

Miriam Amanda Ferguson was born in Bell County, Texas, June 13, 1875, the daughter of Joe Wallace a wealthy land owner. Both James E. and Miriam date their ancestry back beyond the early colonial days of America. She attended Salado College and later Baylor College at Belton, Texas. They were married on December 31, 1899. To them were born two children: Ouida who married George Nalle of Austin, Texas, and Dorrace who became the wife of Stuart Watt of the same city.

In his early youth Jim Ferguson attended school at Salado College, a private school that taught the classics. Not only was he a student of American history and literature, he studied Latin and Greek. He studied Caesar's Gallic Wars and he read the orations of Cicero and Virgil's Aeneid. At this school seeds of culture were planted. Samuel Palmer Brooks, late president



of Baylor University on one occasion described him as a cultured individual. At this small college his individuality asserted itself and marked the outlines of this extraordinary character, the most extraordinary, perhaps, in the history of Texas.

At the age of 16, a mutiny occurred on the campus. He was ordered to cut some wood and attend the fires. The students' parents had contributed funds for this purpose. Jim Ferguson and Will Hair, who later became a great lawyer, led the mutiny. For this act both were expelled from school. Jim was told if he would apologize he would be re-enstated in school. But he refused to apologize.

After he was expelled from school he disappeared into the far west, as far away as the State of Washington. On his western sojourn he worked at hard labor on tough jobs. After two years of total absentia, during which time no one heard from him, he returned, and in time took up the study of law, was admitted to practice, and his first political job was that of City Attorney of Belton, Texas. After his marriage to Miriam and a successful period of law practice he drifted into the banking business, and in time organized and became president of the Temple State Bank. He soon became a wealthy banker, business man, farmer and rancher. At the age of 43, he startled his neighbors by announcing for Governor of Texas, and further stunned them by stating that he had laid aside \$30,000.00 for campaign expenses. With this announcement began a political history for 30 years. The unknown candidate was elected governor by defeating Thomas H. Ball a well known Texas Statesman.

He campaigned vigorously throughout the state on a platform advocating a better school support on all levels, support of eleemosynary institutions,

public warehouses for the farmers, a law forbidding usurious rents by landlords. A better and more businesslike management of the penitentiary system, and to stop the argument over prohibition that had divided the people of Texas for so long, he promised to veto any liquor legislation, pro or con. He was inaugurated Governor January 19, 1915.

During his first administration he made good on his campaign promises and was elected to his second term without serious opposition. At the end of his tenure in office he could point with considerable satisfaction to his accomplishments.

A law had been passed making it unlawful for a landlord to charge a bonus rent over and above the usual  $1/3$  of the grain and  $1/4$  of the cotton produced. The banking laws of the state were amended to better secure depositors. A law was passed making pipeline companies common carriers and subject to the laws applicable thereto. A workmen's compensation law was enacted, the Industrial Association was setup. The Highway Commission was created and its first members were appointed. The Governor's management of the prison system was outstanding. The system not only was selfsustaining it actually made a substantial profit over and above all operating expenses. No administration since his has done so well with the system.

The eleemosynary institutions received liberal support. The tubercular hospital at Carlsbad was expanded and the Blind Institute at Austin was Modernized. The blind children were taken out of fire traps and placed in commodious fire-proof buildings.

His accomplishment in the field of education was outstanding.

The first rural aid law was passed and during his tenure three million dollars were appropriated for this purpose. A law permitting the consolida-

tion of elementary rural school districts was enacted. Rural high schools were created throughout the state and many rural high school buildings erected. To guarantee a better financial support of the school system throughout the state he advocated and secured the passage of a resolution through the legislature providing for a constitutional amendment raising the ad valorem tax for the support of the schools to thirty-five cents on the one hundred dollar valuation of property, and also providing free text books for all school children. This amendment was adopted by a vote of the people in 1918.

The existing state colleges were better supported and several new colleges were established throughout the state.

Early in the beginning of his second term trouble started. The story got out that he owed the bank at Temple too much money. He was having trouble with the University of Texas and finally vetoed its appropriation. He had borrowed \$156,000.00 from sources he would not reveal. There were other charges of less degree which in the main have been forgotten. The House of Representatives conducted a lengthy hearing and preferred Articles of impeachment against the Governor, including 21 charges of misconduct. In the trial in the Senate the Governor plead not guilty to each of the charges and maintained he had done no wrong.

It was admitted by the prosecution that no one of the twenty-one charges was sufficient within itself to justify impeachment. Mr. Harris, one of the prosecutors said: "On general principles we are going to say the Governor of this state ought to be impeached."

The Senate voted on each of the charges separately and found him guilty on ten of the twenty-one. It further entered a judgement that barred him forever from holding office in Texas.

Ousted from office he returned to Temple with his family, impeached, forbidden forever from holding public office, his fortune gone, he was, indeed, a political exile.

The Ferguson Forum, a weekly political paper, was founded, published and edited by "Farmer Jim". He had one purpose in mind: To redeem the Ferguson name. Like a great champion who had lost his crown he set about to regain that crown. The Forum, his good health, and the hard core of his personal followers all combined to keep alive the Ferguson name.

He ran for Governor in 1918 and was defeated by W. P. Hobby. He organized the American Party and ran for President on that ticket in 1920. In 1922, he was defeated by Earl B. Mayfield for U. S. Senator, but polled a very strong vote. In 1924, the long awaited opportunity arose. The Ku Klux Klan was riding high in Texas. Ferguson was anti-Klan. He entered the name of Miriam A. Ferguson as a candidate for Governor. In the runoff she drew as her opponent Felix D. Robertson of Dallas, a well known District Judge and a Klansman. The Fergusonites stood solidly for her - for vindication. Thousands who had never supported a Ferguson rallied to her cause. A dramatic and spectacular campaign was on. "Me and Ma" stickers appeared on thousands of cars. The cry of "Two Governors for the price of one" was a campaign slogan. Across the state the campaign raged with intensity. The sight of a woman campaigning for Governor was something new. The thought of her being elected was thrilling. When it became known that Miriam A. Ferguson had been elected Governor, James E. Ferguson's head was high that election night. Pandemonium broke loose in Temple, Texas. His old friends wept with joy, new ones rejoiced also. Congratulations poured in, by wire, telephone and letters from all parts of Texas. His friends were legion now. Napoleon was back from Elba.

Miriam A. Ferguson was 49 years old when she took the oath of office. Her famous husband was by her side at the oath taking and remained there throughout her first term, and the second to follow. Dr. Splawn was President of the University of Texas. He and the Fergusons cooperated beautifully. The University of Texas needed many new buildings to replace the wooden shacks on the Campus. The Board of Regents, the Legislature and the Governor cooperated fully in meeting the financial requirements of the University. A law was passed appropriating all the income from the University land and the interest from its permanent fund for the purpose of erecting new building on the Campus. The building program began with the passage of that act and today the University is equipped with most ornate and beautiful buildings.

A bill known as the Amnesty Act designed to remove the disqualification of her husband to hold public office imposed by the impeachment judgment was passed. The law was later declared unconstitutional by a special Supreme Court appointed by her successor in office, Governor Dan Moody, the arch political foe of the Fergusons. The legislative session during her first term was one of the shortest in history, and one of the hardest working. The brevity of this session of the Legislature attested the wonderful cooperation that existed between the Executive and Legislative branches of the government. It lasted only sixty days.

However, her first administration ran into stiff winds. The press was always against the Fergusons. Much was made of the Governor's pardon policy. It was a front page article in every issue of the big dailies. The people were lead to believe that the Governor was pardoning most of the prisoners in the penitentiary, and especially the worst ones. In fact many were pardoned. The Fergusons argued that the question was not the number that was being par-

done, but the number that ought to be pardoned. Her predecessor in office, Governor Neff, had adopted a policy of pardoning no one. Naturally, there was an accumulation of convicts in the pen that justly deserved a pardon. The record actually shows that there were fewer convicts pardoned under her administrations and there were fewer repeaters, than under the administrations of some of her successors. The newspapers have never noted this fact, however. The press is a powerful force and the manner in which the pardon question was portrayed, was unfair, indeed.

A violent storm began to brew over highway contracts and it became so intense that two of her Highway Commissioners were forced to resign. That ever present and lingering desire to "get old Jim" never died, and in the campaign to succeed herself she was roundly beaten by the 33 year old Attorney General, Dan Moody. On the last day of her administration, about 10:00 P. M. her husband came to the desk of her private secretary and remarked that "they did not bluff us after all. When we were criticized for pardoning 20 prisoners we answered them the next day by pardoning 40." "Don't worry," he said, "it will all come out in a washing," and it did. In 1932, Miriam A. Ferguson defeated Ross Sterling for a second term by a narrow official count of 3333 votes.

In the campaign of 1932 there was no Ku Klux Klan issue to divide the voters. Her husband's plea for vindication had been answered. The campaign was pitched upon the fitness and qualifications of the two candidates for the office of Governor, and the plea for a second term for Ross Sterling could not stop the woman candidate. As Sterling was the only Governor to be denied a second term his humiliation and chagrin was so great that he refused to attend the inaugural ceremonies.

The second administration of Governor Miriam Ferguson came into power

during the throes of great depression. Millions were out of employment, banks were failing throughout the state, and homes were being foreclosed. Franklin Roosevelt had just been elected President. The problem was to save the state and the nation from revolution. The cooperation of the Governor of Texas and the Democratic Administration at Washington was complete. The reforms set up by the President were of necessity to be set in motion by the Governors of each state. All the social and economic reforms became a problem of each state. There was complete cooperation between the legislature and the Governor. In line with the unusual reforms of the government at Washington, upon her recommendation, the legislature voted break bonds in the amount of \$20,000,000.00 to feed the hungry people. To save property from foreclosure a moratorium act was passed. The Ku Klux Klan was outlawed. Thousands came to her office seeking jobs and as the pardoning power still remained with the Governor no one wanted to stay in prison. There were more callers at the Governor's Office during her two administrations than had ever been before, and most of them were seen by the Governor. The revolutionary reforms initiated in Washington and carried out in Texas started the state on the road to recovery, under this woman Governor. Many good laws were enacted during her second administration and it met with general approval.

In closing this chapter a few words might be written about the personality of these two interesting people. Miriam Ferguson is a modest woman and was a devoted wife. She had dignity without conceit, and poise without affectation. He possessed an engaging personality, handsome, confident and courteous. She in her evening gown and he in formal suit were the honored guests at balls and banquets. This courtly couple could have graced the chancelleries of any nation, and they played their part in becoming manner in any society, however

elite. They mixed and mingled with the common folk, without hypocrisy. They enjoyed the touch of humanity on any level. Contrary to the idea of many he was sympathetic and forgiving. A state Senator who voted to impeach him was sent to prison and became a felon. Governor Jim recommended his pardon and Governor Miriam Granted it.

Ferguson had no ghost writers. He wrote his own speeches and they were good ones. He had no kitchen cabinet to advise him. He was his own counsel, for good or bad. He was daring and decisive. When depositors were withdrawing their accounts so fast, and banks failing throughout the state, to save the state from economic disaster on March 1, 1933, upon his advice and without statutory or constitutional authority whatever, she ordered the banks in Texas closed indefinitely, and they obeyed her proclamation. Four days later Roosevelt followed suit and closed the banks throughout the nation.

The two governors were people of liberal minds. This is evident through official acts and public utterances over a long period of years. His last political speeches were for the re-election of President Roosevelt for a third term. He died on September 21, 1944.

The man who had shaped the political history of his state for so many years, he who had resided in the stately Governor's Mansion longer than any other person, died without the right to hold public office, financially poor, but rich with respect of the people of Texas. He was buried in the state Cemetery in Austin.

The year 1948 marked the end of the political activity of the Ferguson family. In the race for U. S. Senator she wrote letters to her old friends, 5,000 of them, and make radio addresses for the election of Lyndon Johnson. That was more than enough to tilt the scales in favor of Johnson. Thus it



can truthfully be said that the Ferguson era in Texas covered a span of more than 30 years.

Governor Miriam Ferguson is enjoying life and good health at the age of 77. She resides at the Ferguson home on Enfield Road, Austin, Texas.

The question arises: Will history repeat itself and again will a husband and wife be elected Governor of Texas four times? That one is left for time to answer. Will there ever again be another Jim and Ma in the hearts and minds of the people of Texas? The answer is definitely "No".

This article was written by Ghent Sanderford in 1955 at the request of Winston Publishing Company which company was publishing a history of the Governors of Texas. It was published in full with the exception of a few minor deletions.

Ghent Sanderford  
Private Secretary to  
Governor Miriam A. Ferguson  
1925-26