

Harold Paulk Henderson, Sr. Oral History Collection
OH Vandiver 04E
Samuel Ernest Vandiver Jr. Interviewed by Dr. Harold Paulk Henderson (Part E)
Dates: 09-14-93, 09-15-93
Cassette #447 (90 Min.)

EDITED BY DR. HENDERSON

Side One

Vandiver: Speaking of the highway board, a vacancy occurred on the State Court of Appeals, I appointed Bob [Robert Henry] Jordan to fill that vacancy, and that left a vacancy on the state highway board. And Sonny [Clark W.] Duncan from Buena Vista, Georgia was president of the [association of] county commissioners of Georgia at that time. I appointed him to succeed Bob Jordan. Most of my appointees had real good, pretty good judgment. Mr. Jim [James Lester Gillis, Sr.] had been on the highway board so long he'd already paved all the roads in his county, [laughter] so he didn't have to worry.

Henderson: Mr. [Samuel Marvin] Griffin [Sr.] had some problems with some of his appointees. They had problems with the law. Did any of your appointees ever have difficulties with the law?

Vandiver: I don't think there was a single man that I ever appointed to any position that had any difficulty with the law. I'm real proud of the people that I was able to get to serve. Some of them you had to beg to serve. You give up your job; you stop your law practice, leave it for a year or two. It's a real sacrifice to serve in any kind of government, state or national. But most of them did it as a public service and were glad to do it. And I think I was real fortunate in having good people to serve in almost every department. I did leave [Harry] Guyton DeLoach there until I found out about what he had done. And then he resigned. And

I'm not sure whether he was ever prosecuted or not, but it was not for something he did in my administration; it was something he did in Griffin's administration.

Henderson: Now, you are a product of the county unit system. You grew up in the county unit system and in 19

Vandiver: Last governor elected under the county unit system.

Henderson: And the federal courts take on the county unit system.

Vandiver: Yeah, looks like all the roofs fell in on me. They said it was unconstitutional, so And one of my good friends, Griffin [Boyette] Bell, was a part of it. He was on the federal court. I had asked [John Fitzgerald] Kennedy to appoint Griffin to the federal court, so he was one of them that ruled on the county unit system. And we had to try to save it, so we called a special session of the legislature and tried to make it more equitable and did the best job we could do, the best thing we could get through the legislature. And then they said that wasn't enough. And so the courts pretty well had to decide what to do. We tried to do it ourselves like we did with our school business. We wanted to keep it in our control and try to do it more equitably, but the courts wouldn't agree to it, so we lost the county unit system completely.

Henderson: What was your role in that special session to save the county unit system? Did you play a major role?

Vandiver: Yes, I made major recommendations to them, about bills. We had some of my close friends to draw up different plans that would give more strength to the different areas, tried to remove some of the inequities that we had and still keep the power out of the cities altogether. Atlanta now has about thirty-five or forty representatives because of that big

population. And most of them are black. And all of the, practically all of the cities have been abandoned by the whites, and they've moved to the suburbs, and your city legislators are black. It's gotten so that the cities are pretty much in control of the legislature now. [Unintelligible] Your liberals.

Henderson: After that special session there is a need for another one to deal with reapportionment. Now what was your role in that session?

Vandiver: Well, there was a case in Tennessee that ruled that we had to reapportion our districts according to the rules that they set down, so we called a special session and comply [sic] with the ruling of the court to which we didn't have any choice.

Henderson: Did you play a major role in that session?

Vandiver: Well, the only thing we could do is what the courts had told us we had to do. So I did what we had to do like we did in other cases, like the county unit system. We tried to do something about the county unit system, but the apportionment was pretty well laid out. We knew what we had to do.

Now they have gerrymandered the congressional districts now. You can't believe what they've done. They've gerrymandered them so that you've got to have at least three or four blacks in the congressional delegation. And I don't know how they can scream reapportionment when the way they demanded that our legislature do that.

Any change in voting rights under the Voting Rights Act has to be approved by the Department of Justice. And they wouldn't accept anything except What they did was they made it so there would be at least three or four blacks and that Republicans would have a good

chance of being elected. The Republicans were in power. They were in control of the Department of Justice at that time.

Henderson: Let's talk about the 1962 governor's election. Marvin Griffin wants to make a comeback. Carl [Edward] Sanders enters the race. Do you support Carl Sanders for that election?

Vandiver: Yes, I did. I did everything I could to help Carl Sanders get elected. Carl had been my friend. We had been friends over a long period of time. The only reservation I had was that--I told Carl that Senator [Richard Brevard] Russell [Jr.] had been in office for a long long time and that I wanted him to promise me that he would never run against Senator Russell if I went all out to help him. And that's, I told him that's the only promise I'm asking. And he did tell me that he would never run against him.

And so we went all out. I did everything I could to help him. I helped him raise money; I helped him The schoolteachers hadn't had a raise in a good while, and we'd saved up some money into surplus. About the first of September, before the school year started, we were able to give them a nice little raise, which helped Carl tremendously. And everybody in my administration that I had appointed supported Carl.

At one time during that campaign, it looked like Marvin Griffin was going to be elected in spite of everything. I talked with Herman [Eugene Talmadge] about this, and Herman said, "[Unintelligible] Marvin's going to be elected." He said, "I've talked to enough people to know that Marvin's going to be elected." I said, "Well, I hope not, Senator." But I said, "I'm going to do everything that I can to try to help Carl get elected and beat Marvin."

And things were getting in pretty bad shape in Carl's headquarters. So I called Mr. Jim Gillis over, and I said, "Mr. Jim, Carl's in trouble. He needs some help. Can you go over there and take charge?" He had Wyck Knox, who was a fine person, as his campaign manager. And had been a long-time friend of mine and Carl's. But he didn't know what he was doing in a political situation. He'd never been in a political campaign. And I said, "Mr. Jim, will you go over there and help Carl?" And he said, "I sure will." So he went over there, and from that time on--this was about four weeks before the election--from that time on, things just smoothed out. He was able, he was able to beat him

Henderson: Garland [Turk] Byrd enters the race and eventually has to drop out. When he's in the campaign, are you supportive of Garland Byrd or Carl Sanders?

Vandiver: I hadn't made any statement as to who I would support. I was under some obligation to Garland because he had been so cooperative to me. I appreciated the way he stuck with me on everything I ever asked him to do, but I hadn't . . . when Carl jumped into the race, I didn't know he was going to run. I thought he was going to run for lieutenant governor. And Peter Zack [Geer Jr.] jumped into the race. And so Carl decided well, heck, he'd just run for governor. And I was, I was not glad that Garland had sickness, but it sure did make my path easier. [Laughter] To pick out Carl rather than Garland. He withdrew, you know.

Henderson: What would have happened if he had not withdrawn. What would you have done?

Vandiver: Well, it would have been a tough decision, really. They were both my friends. And Carl was more able than Garland. There wasn't any question in my mind about that. He had more ability.

Henderson: If those three had stayed in, do you think there's a possibility that Griffin could have won?

Vandiver: Griffin could very well have been elected. That was one thing that we certainly wanted to accomplish, is to keep him from being elected.

Henderson: Did you ever discuss with Garland Byrd the fact that maybe it would be good if he did drop out?

Vandiver: No, I didn't. I never asked Garland to drop out. I felt like that was a decision he had to make. I think there were a lot of people who did, but I didn't ask him to, because I didn't feel like that, as cooperative as he had been with me, that I could ask him to do that. But I was glad he did because it worked out so that Marvin Griffin didn't get reelected which would've been a disaster if he had come back. [Cut off]

[The following portion of the interview took place on 09-15-93]

Henderson: Good morning, Governor.

Vandiver: Good morning. How're you, Hal?

Henderson: Let's continue our interview. Today, let's talk about the 1966 governor's election. When did you decide to enter the 1966 governor's election?

Vandiver: Well, as you know, I never did actually announce for governor in 1966. A lot of my friends had urged me to run. I frankly had it in my mind to run. I was practicing law in Atlanta at that time. For a period of about a year before the election, I spent most of my time getting ready to run for that election in 1966.

I found out, however, that I had gotten a little older, and I had to look after myself better. I would try to go from one end of the state to the other, and I wasn't eating right. I was

eating barbeque and civic club food and ham and peas, and losing sleep. And I just found out that I couldn't run the kind of race that I wanted to run. And really I had some angina, which I talked with my doctor about, and he said, "If you want to see your children graduate from college, you'd better take it easy." And for that reason--my children were fairly young at that time--for that reason I decided that I would not make the race, didn't ever announce. Now, what I did do, and I think this is general knowledge, when I talked with my doctor and asked him about the possibility of running, and he gave me that answer, I flew to Washington and discussed it with Senator Talmadge. I had heard rumblings that he might want to come back to Georgia, that he was pretty sick of the Washington scene. And since I was not going to be able to run, I thought he might change his mind and come back to Georgia.

We had breakfast together early one morning. Senator Talmadge fixed breakfast, had some ham and eggs and discussed it. And he did indicate a real interest in coming back and thought that he might make the race in 1966 because he was so tired of Washington. He felt like he was just one of a hundred people, whereas in the state he would be able to accomplish more. And for, when I left Washington, I was under the impression that he might run.

I came back and announced that I was not going to run, and, as we had planned, about an hour later Senator Talmadge announced that he was interested in running. And so every political, every politician in the state became aware of the situation at that time and didn't know what to do and what direction to take.

Ellis [Gibbs] Arnall had been accusing me of all sorts of things, as well as Lester [Garfield] Maddox, and as soon as they thought Talmadge might run, they started talking about that dictator in Washington that wanted to come back and run the state. And they had a lot of

mean things to say about Talmadge--Governor Arnall did and so did Lester Maddox. But as the thing settled down, Senator Talmadge's friends realized that Senator Russell was getting old and that they needed a strong voice in Washington. People like Judge [John Adams] Sibley and old friends that had supported him in the past persuaded him that it would be best for him to stay in Washington because, in the event that Senator Russell died, we needed a strong voice in the Senate. And he determined that he would not run. But what happened to me was [that] I was in Albany [Georgia] taping my opening statement, and I left Albany about midnight and flew to Rome [Georgia] and met with a group there, got up the next morning at about five o'clock and spoke at a breakfast meeting in Ellijay, and I hadn't been eating right or sleeping right, and really I was having rather difficult angina.

And that was when I went to see my doctor, and he took an EKG [electrocardiogram]. He found that there had been some difference in the one that he had taken before. For that reason I decided not to run. I wanted to run. Really, I'd like to have served the state again. But at the same time I felt an obligation to my family and to my wife and my children, who were quite young at that time.

Henderson: Governor Arnall conducts a very vigorous campaign against you. Discuss your relationship with Governor Arnall. Did you respond to his charges?

Vandiver: Yes, he ran a very . . . he was talking really viciously about me, making allegations which he really knew were not true. 'Course that was not the reason that I got out of the race 'cause I've had vicious things said about me before. And I knew that it was political talk. Governor Arnall had supported me when I ran for governor [in 1958]. And then, for some

reason, I guess some of his friends urged him to run in 1966. Then was when he started making all these allegations about me.

Later, when he and I were together and discussed it, he was telling me that his wife Mildred [Slemons Arnall] just couldn't believe that we were such good friends after all the bad things he'd said about me. And he said he told Mildred, "Aw, that's just politics. You know how politics is." But I don't think she really ever understood how politicians say things about each other sometimes that they don't mean just to make issues. I'd had enough said about me by [William Turner] Bodenhamer [Sr.] to last a lifetime. [Laughter]

Henderson: One of the issues he raises about the routing of I-85, would you respond to that?

Vandiver: Yes, well, I-85, the original route of I-85 was to go exactly where it is today. We had on the Highway Board at that time a man named John [E.] Quillian, who represented the northern district of the state, and John told me that he lacked about two or three months before he could get his retirement and asked me if he could stay on until he could get his retirement. And I said, "Well, of course, John." He had been my friend, and he was a friend of Joe [Joseph Dillard] Quillian, who was my law partner.

Well, John Quillian spent those three months, most of it, in Washington trying to change the route of I-85 from where it was to go originally to go by Gainesville. Well, interstate highways are just what they say--they're highways between states. You don't go up around by Gainesville or up around by, down by Athens just to help those cities. They're supposed to connect states. And the direct route from Atlanta to Greenville, South Carolina, which was the main city in South Carolina, was the way that the route had been set out

originally. And after John had gone to Washington and told them he wanted it to go by Gainesville, then I told the Highway Board to run it as straight as they could from Atlanta to Greenville. And that's what they did.

And, of course, a lot of people in Gainesville were unhappy about it. Mainly the ones who were unhappy about it had bought some property where they thought I-85 might go. And when they found out that I-85 was not going through that property that they had bought, then they began to raise Cain, and that was the big brouhaha that developed. And I could give you the names of those people because I had deeds where they had bought this property where they thought the road was going, and they were the main leaders and the ones who disagreed with the route I-85.

I-85 goes as straight as possible from Atlanta to Greenville. They would have gone up through the mountains where the cost would have far exceeded what it was built for, if they had gone by Gainesville and up through the northern part of the state. The most economical route, the most direct route was the way it went, but Governor Arnall seized upon that because it came reasonably close to my hometown; he seized upon that as that I had done it just because of that. And it was done because it was the most economical and was the straightest route. And that's the way interstate roads are supposed to be built.

Henderson: Now, some critics contended that the routing of I-85 was beneficial to you financially. How do you respond to that?

Vandiver: It was not. I made certain that it didn't go through any of my property. I told them to make certain that it did not touch my property. And I found out later that they cut just an edge of a little piece of my property, and I think the county sent me a check for three hundred

dollars which I gave to the chapel at Milledgeville. But it did not benefit me financially. I did not have any property that was of any commercial value that it touched.

Henderson: All right. Now, Governor Arnall also accuses you of, while governor, being beneficial to the railroads. I forget the exact details now . . . that during your administration that you did not collect taxes from the railroad or that your administration favored the railroads.

Vandiver: That's, yes, that's absolutely false. Of course, after I left office, I started practicing law again, and one of my clients that hired me was the old railroad that goes through the capitol grounds there, the L & N Railroad, I believe, was the name of it. And I did represent them just like Ellis Arnall represented the big interests up east and Walt Disney in Hollywood. I did what any lawyer would do. If they asked me to represent them, and they were honest and good clients, I did represent them. Otherwise I would not have. And there was nothing done during my administration that was beneficial to the railroads at all.

Henderson: When you are thinking about running for governor in '66, do you go as far as picking a campaign manager and setting up an organization?

Vandiver: No, I never got that far. In fact, I hadn't picked a campaign manager. I was, I had an office staff, and I had several secretaries and old friends who were donating their time to me, but I had not picked a campaign manager, so I did not have to As I say, I didn't ever announce for governor. People just assumed that I was going to run, and I'm sure my actions indicated that I was interested because I was.

Henderson: In September 1965 Lester Maddox joins the campaign. He announces that he's going to enter the race. At that time did you view him as a serious candidate?

Vandiver: No, not really. Lester Maddox had run for mayor of Atlanta, I think, maybe two or three times and had lost miserably. He'd gotten very few votes, and I really didn't consider Lester as a formidable candidate.

If Arnall ran, I knew he would be a formidable candidate, but at that time I didn't consider him, nor did anybody else. What happened in that race was that Lester in the Democratic primary was able to get enough votes to win the Democratic primary. And after he won the Democratic primary, beat out Ellis Arnall and all the other candidates that were running

A lot of the Republicans had voted for Lester, figuring that he would be the easiest man to beat by Bo [Howard Hollis] Calloway. But after Lester won the Democratic primary, his stature increased, and a lot of the people that voted for him, that didn't vote for him the first time decided well, we'll just vote for a Democrat rather than a Republican. We never have had a Republican governor, so we'll vote for a Democrat. So he had the benefit of that vote.

Georgia has always been a Democratic state, or it had been up until that time. We'd only had one Republican congressman, and that was Bo Calloway, who was also a candidate. And the legislature was overwhelmingly Democratic. And even though Bo Calloway got more popular votes than Lester did, he didn't have a majority. And, of course, under the same law that the legislature elected Senator Talmadge when he was running for governor, they elected Lester Maddox. When no governor has a majority, then the legislature elects, and the legislature was overwhelmingly Democratic. And there wasn't any way that Bo Calloway could carry the Georgia legislature, so they voted for Lester.

Lester was an honest, sincere sort of fellow. He didn't always tell the truth to me. I know when I ran for the Senate in later years, I, it was at a time when he was lieutenant governor and was very popular, after he had been governor. I had lunch with him, and asked him if was going to take any part in the race for the Senate, because I didn't want to have to run against Lester, too. And he assured me that he would not take any part in that race and that he was going to be completely unbiased and wouldn't pick out a candidate. And so as we get to the Senate race, I'll tell you a little bit more about what happened in that instance.

Henderson: Let's go back to the Democratic primary in '66. After you decide not to get in the race and after Senator Talmadge declines to enter, who do you support in that campaign?

Vandiver: Really I didn't get too active because physically I was not in very good shape at that time. But I did vote for Jimmy [James Harrison] Gray [Sr.]. Jimmy Gray had been chairman of our Georgia party. I had picked him to be the chairman. He'd been a friend of mine. He had always supported me. And I felt an obligation to vote for him. I didn't really get involved in the campaign 'cause I was physically unable to get actively involved. But I did vote for Jimmy Gray.

I'll tell you another little side story there. I had a law school friend named Bill [William B.] Gunter. He was from Gainesville, Georgia. And Bill and Jimmy [James Earl] Carter [Jr.] were good friends. And after I got out of the race, Jimmy Carter, who had planned to run for Congress against Bo Calloway, decided he'd run for governor. And Bill Gunter called me up as an old friend and asked me if I would give Jimmy Carter some advice, political advice because he was a complete neophyte. He had run for the state Senate, and that was all he had ever run for. And because Bill asked me, and he was a friend, Jimmy Carter came to my home here, and

we spent about half a day. I was telling him what I thought it would take for him to run a viable race for governor and that he had to go the hard route, and that's to speak to civic clubs and go to courthouses. And really he didn't have time to do that during that period, but he did run a fairly creditable race. I think he came in maybe third, second or third, in that race--to Lester Maddox in the Democratic primary. Was he second or third? I don't remember.

Henderson: He was third.

Vandiver: Third, yeah.

Henderson: Umm hmm. He was third.

Vandiver: But I did vote for Jimmy Gray, and I told Jimmy Carter I was going to, about how I was obligated to. But I did advise him about how to run his campaign.

Henderson: Did you vote for Lester Maddox in the Democratic [primary]? Well, no, you said you voted for Jimmy Gray. In the general election, which candidate did you support?

Vandiver: I voted for Bo Calloway. I thought he was the best man of the two to serve. I vote for a Democrat. I am a Democrat. The Democratic party has honored me. But when I look at the two men that I think, that are running for office that are best qualified, I vote for that man that is best qualified. And I didn't vote Democratic in that case; I voted for Bo Calloway. Because I thought he was better qualified.

Henderson: When you say better qualified, what were the major differences between Bo Calloway and Lester Maddox?

Vandiver: Bo Calloway, unfortunately, was the son of a very wealthy man, which worked against him. But he had been, had a supreme, great education. He had gone to West Point, graduated, I believe, from West Point. At least part of his education was at West Point.

And he was a very personable man, had done well in business on his own, had a superior education. And Lester was a high school dropout, although he had a lot of friends. I still thought that Bo was the best-qualified man.

Henderson: Do you see at this time any major differences between the Georgia Democratic party and the Georgia Republican party?

Vandiver: Well, the Georgia Republican party now is a great deal like the old Democratic party in Georgia. It was conservative. You know, Senator [Richard] Russell was one of the more conservative men who ever served in government. So was Walter [Franklin] George. Both were very conservative, and they were Democrats.

And the Democratic party today has pretty much changed its face. You have the liberal element; most of the black vote goes Democratic; and a great deal of the conservative vote goes Republican, as evidenced by the last election, where we elected a Republican senator again, where he was the second Republican senator we've had from Georgia. And the man he was running against was a longtime Democrat, very liberal, fine person, I think. But everybody knew that he was a liberal. I think the fact that the Republican candidate was conservative let him defeat the incumbent.

Henderson: Let me go back to your administration for a couple of more questions. Your administration was very much involved in mental health. Would you discuss that?

Vandiver: Yes, I'd be glad to, Hal. As lieutenant governor, I had talked about Milledgeville [State Hospital] and heard a little about Milledgeville, but I really didn't know what the situation actually was.

One of the reporters for the *Atlanta Constitution* went to Milledgeville and made a study and wrote a series of articles about Milledgeville. And after I read those articles, my wife and I decided we'd go down and just make an inspection and see what Milledgeville was really like.

And we did. And it was one of the experiences in my life that I'll never forget. It was a human warehouse, really. There was no real treatment for mental illness. You had twelve thousand patients that were just locked up in these buildings. And you had only twelve doctors to treat twelve thousand mental patients. Sanitary conditions were horrible. They had the patients helping with serving the food, and it was scattered all over the floor. It was really a horrifying experience for my wife and me.

They had an old auditorium that they used for a church, but they used the same auditorium for dances and other entertainment that they had down there. And people really had no place to worship, the inmates didn't. And the food sanitation was just outrageous. I wouldn't have fed it to my dog.

So I determined that we were going to change the mental health program. It had been neglected, really. And other things that administrations had felt were more important had been dealt with rather than Milledgeville.

And so we moved the, asked the legislature to move [the administration of] the state hospital in Milledgeville and the mental health program from the welfare department, where it had been, over to the health department, where it really should have been in the first place. And then we set out to find some fine doctors, first to administer the hospital and then to treat the patients.

And we found this doctor in New York who was interested in coming to Georgia. He had headed up the mental health system in New York and was close to retirement, and he was in good health and wanted to continue to work. So we were able to get him to come and head up the hospital. We had a mental health committee, which I appointed, headed by a Dr. Bruce Schaeffer in Toccoa, Georgia, and they had made recommendations to us as to what needed to be done to make it a viable mental institution.

And so we spent a great deal of my administration trying to improve mental health. We set up a central kitchen where all the meals were prepared, and we went to New York and saw how they served the meals in containers that would allow the food to remain hot and edible for the patients. And the patients were not allowed to help in the serving of the food. And we served them all from one central kitchen. We had one of the finest central kitchens in America at that time. We were able to give the patients their three good hot meals a day, which they had not been able to have before.

Then we started a plan to try to remove the hospitals out of one central place, where they were under the domination of local political leaders, and try to have one section of the state where the patients would be closer to their families.

There were people in Milledgeville at that time who had--their families had sent [them] there and had been there for years and hadn't seen their families. The families were unable to come to Milledgeville. And back at one time people were ashamed if they had somebody in the family who had mental problems. And it was just a human warehouse. And we did try to take some of the patients that were in Milledgeville and put them in local areas, like Rome. And we

had one hospital in Atlanta and in other parts of the state, so they'd be closer to the families, and the families could come to see them.

As I said, they had no place to worship. And we started something with the help of a lot of good friends that I don't think has ever been equaled by any state in the United States. We asked the [people of the] state and the churches to volunteer to raise the money to build a church for the people, these patients in Milledgeville. And we raised through efforts of my wife and a lot of other great and good friends almost a million dollars in volunteer [contributions]--it wasn't tax money that build this church. These were all volunteers.

And we had people who would send a dollar a week. We had one man who was traveling over the state, and he'd send two dollars every week, and it'd come from different parts of the state where he happened to be traveling. We had children who were giving their allowances, churches that were taking up special offerings. It was really a project that every Georgian could take part in, and we were able with that million dollars that was raised voluntarily to build a beautiful chapel in Milledgeville.

And we had enough money left over to build some in areas where the patients were unable to get to the large church. And we built five smaller churches and one large church. And we had the cooperation of the Catholics, and we had the cooperation of the Jewish community. This was a chapel of all faiths because all faiths are represented in that hospital. And we wanted a place where each of those patients could worship in a part of the church that was dedicated to their faith, and so there was a Catholic section; there was a Jewish section; there was a main church. Georgia is mostly Protestant, and so the large part of the church was Protestant.

Dr. Louie [D.] Newton, who was one of the great Baptists in Georgia, was a part of it. The Methodist bishop at that time was tremendously cooperative. The Catholic priest, the head of the diocese in Georgia, was cooperative.

And we set up also, in addition to having a location where the patients could go, we set a chaplaincy [*sic*] training program, where we could train men who were going into the ministry to spend some time and learn about mental health. And when they went out to their churches, they would be able to recognize maybe early signs of mental deterioration and get treatment that they would not ordinarily get until they were in such a position that they had to go to a mental hospital. We were fortunate in that we were able to get some federal funds, and we built as an adjunct to Emory University, the state mental health center [Cut off]

End of Side One

Side Two

Vandiver: We had been a leader in this change of the mental health program. I'll have to say this: we made a great start during this program, with this program during my administration, and we accomplished a lot of things. And Georgia came from about last up to where they were about, among the middle of the states during my administration. But each succeeding governor carried on this program--Carl Sanders, Lester Maddox, George [Dekle] Busbee--all of them had a real interest in this mental health program and carried it forward. And today I think that we are the equal of any state in the United States in our mental health program and our treatment facilities. Georgia is truly a leader, and we've had people from other states who come and look and try to copy the programs that we've started. And I am most proud of that. And my wife worked so diligently with our committee that she deserves a great

deal of the credit, particularly on the Chapel of All Faiths. And she, I was a little older than my wife; she wasn't but about twenty-eight when she became Georgia's First Lady--twenty-eight or -nine. And she had a lot of energy and a lot of compassion, and I'm proud of the job that she was able to do to help in this overall program.

Henderson: Okay. Let me ask you something else about your administration. How actively was your administration involved in industrial recruitment?

Vandiver: That's another facet of my administration that I am proud to talk about. Georgia was the first state to make an industry-seeking tour of Europe. Under the auspices of the Georgia Ports Authority we got a group together of the leading businessmen in the state, and we made this trip and met with the industrial leaders of all of the countries that we visited. And we visited Holland [and] Belgium. We went to Italy. We went to Germany and back to Great Britain. And in each of these countries we had arranged to meet with the people who were doing business or wanted to do business with the United States, and we particularly wanted them to know that here in Georgia we had a port, too.

We found that when we went to Europe that they didn't realize that there was but one port in the United States. They thought New York was the only one. But we did tout our Savannah facilities, which are great and are adequate and not nearly so crowded as New York.

And we received from the business trip, I think, a great benefit. We were the earliest state to seek industry in Europe. And I know that we got, spread some good will, gave them some knowledge that they did not have about the South and Georgia, in particular, and now we have one of the finest port systems in the whole country. In Savannah we have unequalled facilities.

During my administration we were able to acquire what was known as the Whitehall property. It was close to where the port facilities were. We expanded there. During the latter part of my administration, I was able to get a little money out of my surplus fund and buy Colonel's Island, which is south of Brunswick, and that has proved to be the jewel of the Ports Authority.

They process more than a hundred thousand foreign cars a year [that] come into Colonel's Island there at Brunswick, and it has meant a tremendous boost to the economy of that area. And I think that our port system in Savannah and in Brunswick doesn't have an equal anywhere. I think we're better than Charleston. 'Course we're not nearly as big as New York, but we have wonderful facilities, and it gives me a great deal of pride.

I have a little place down in Brunswick at St. Simon's [Island]. It gives me a great deal of pride to look out my window and see these great ships from all over the world coming in to that harbor. They were kind enough to name the Colonel Island facility after me. It's known as Vandiver Point. The Georgia Legislature last year [1992] renamed the port. Instead of being Colonel's Island Port, it's now Vandiver Point. And I appreciated it very much. I'm so happy that we were able to get something started that other states did later. South Carolina did it later. North Carolina. All of the states around us saw what was happening and that if we were going to have new industry, that we had to go get it and had to let them know what we had available for their, that would be beneficial to them. About the only big industry we had in Georgia at that time was Lockheed, which was a great industry and still is, but we have had unequalled industrial development.

And another thing that we started in my administration, which I'm proud of, is the vocational education program. We had two places in Georgia where they could go to study, that had vocational educational programs. One was at Clarksville, Georgia, and the other one, I believe, was close to Americus. During my administration, we built twenty-one new ones, new schools. I think you've got one in Tifton that was one of those that was built during that period.

We could tell these people that we contacted in these big industries that if they'd come to Georgia we had a school close by that we could train the labor and [sic] to go into their factory and their industry almost as soon as they would get the facilities built. And we were able to bring in many many programs--TV repair, electronic repair, beauty shops, almost any kind of vocational program that would fit into industry we were able to work with them and help them out with their labor problems, training their labor.

And later we built twenty-one, and I think we finally now have twenty-six of these schools. And we set out to have one within fifty miles of any person in Georgia, so they could commute and go to these schools, and now we do have I think within fifty miles a vocational school that any Georgian who wants to can go to.

Now that's a program that we were proud that we were able to get started under my administration. And I think it has meant a great deal to our industrial development in Georgia that we were able to work with industry and train the labor before they came into the state.

Henderson: While you were governor, state taxes were never raised, but state services were expanded. Can you tell how you were able to do that?

Vandiver: Yes, and it was one of the most difficult things we had to do because every county and every city in the state has needs. But when we came into office, we had enough money in the surplus fund to run the state about a day and a half. We were that close to being almost bankrupt. The previous administration had spent all of the surplus that we had down to just a very small amount.

So we had to economize, and that was one of my campaign promises--that we would economize, and we would try to reorganize government and cut down departments that were overlapping and where the employees were doing the same thing. You'd have an employee in one department doing the same thing that another employee in another department was doing. So we had about a hundred and fifty boards and bureaus, and a real clutter had been set up over the years to benefit some particular section or part of the state, and we consolidated those and cut it down to a more workable figure.

As I said, we'd moved the mental hospital to the health department, and I think Jimmy Carter took a cue from my administration and tried to reorganize the state government when he was governor several years later. And I had taken a cue from the Russell administration which had served many years before.

So we, the government has expanded so tremendously it's almost incredible. I was talking with Senator Russell one time, and he asked me, he said, "Ernie," he said, "what is your state budget this year?" I said, "Well, Senator, we have a budget of three hundred million dollars." And he said, "My goodness." He said, "When I was governor, our whole state budget was thirty-two million dollars." And we in four years spent three hundred million a year for a total of 1.2 billion. And I looked at the last budget, and since I left office the state has grown

from one billion two to almost nine billion dollars, the budget each year. So it's, we've grown a whole lot faster than inflation. We had about twelve thousand employees, state employees. The last figure that I heard was close to a hundred thousand. And so there's been a tremendous growth and inflationary spiral since we were in office.

Henderson: During your term there were demands from some legislators that there should be a tax increase. Why were you opposed to increasing taxes?

Vandiver: I had stated in my campaign for governor that I would oppose any tax increase. We'd try to live within our means. And it was extremely difficult the first two years until we could build up a little surplus to help a lot of cities and counties that needed help.

We were the first administration that gave state money to cities. The cities received nothing; the counties were the ones who were getting all of the state funds to help. We gave--it wasn't a large amount compared to what they do now--but we gave a million dollars to the cities of Georgia. [We] divided it up according to their population so they could have little projects that they could do with this state money. The county had been doing that for years, but with the death of the county unit system, the cities took on more importance and really had more expenses and became centers of government more than the counties had.

We had rural counties that really had small populations, that had lost their populations to the metropolitan areas. And, of course, the state is under an obligation to help all the subdivisions, the counties as well as the cities, but our administration was the first one that gave any money to the cities under its budget. And so the Municipal Association gave me a large key which I have upstairs, and they said that that was a key to any city in Georgia since I was the first governor who'd given the cities any money.

We helped out Atlanta. I know Atlanta had been sort of a stepchild of state government, mainly because of the unit system. And we were able to help Atlanta with their plan of improvement. I know at the end of my administration, then-Mayor Ivan Allen [Jr.] invited me over to express their appreciation for what we tried to do for Atlanta and what we tried to do for other metropolitan areas.

Henderson: Let me go back just for a moment to the county unit system. I know politically you could not come out against the county unit system as it was set up then, but did it ever occur to you that the county unit system was unfair . . . and should be done away with?

Vandiver: Well, the county unit system had been the law in Georgia since I believe about 1916, and they had set up the way that the votes would be counted. The largest counties in the state had six unit votes. The middle-sized counties had four. And even the smallest counties had two.

The rural areas took on a disproportionate amount of the power, really, because of the county unit system. And you could see, any fair-minded person could see, that it wasn't fair for a little county with a population of two thousand to have one-third as much political power as Atlanta had with six hundred thousand people. But that was the system that was in office when I was elected. In fact, I was the last governor elected under that system, and when the courts began to challenge the county unit system, I called a special session of the legislature of Georgia, and tried to make it more equitable.

And we drew up plans that would have made it more equitable, although it wouldn't have been one man, one vote. But the courts threw that out and said that it had to be on a popular vote basis, which, I guess, is more democratic. I'm sure it's more democratic than the

way it was set up before. However, the rural areas had more power than the municipal areas for that reason. We had a rural dominated legislature, and we dealt with things as they were and had to. And I don't know whether I would ever have been elected governor. I came from a small county. I hope that I could have been elected without the unit system, but I was one, my county was one of the benefactors of the unit system, and I had hoped to preserve it.

It's really set up pretty much like the national government is set up. You have electoral votes. If Georgia has two million people that are voting and one candidate has just one more vote than the other, then all of Georgia's electoral votes go to that candidate. It was patterned after the national electoral system, which has not been changed. It's still the same way.

But I think our founding fathers were trying to disperse power rather than have it all accumulate in the cities. And that was the reason that was adopted, and I think that was the reason we had the county unit system in Georgia. Rural areas had no power, voting power, but the county unit system was, any fair-minded person would admit that it was not equitable to all of the citizens.

And, as I say, we tried to change it, and the courts wouldn't allow us to change it. They changed it themselves. The court system took over government, state government, pretty much during that period that we served as governor.

They, of course, had the school case, the segregation cases; they had the one man-one vote cases that applied to us; they had reapportionment--looked like all the problems that had grown up over the years seemed to centralize in my administration. [Laughter]

And, of course, I hoped that I'd be able to get by like some of the others had, but when the problem arose and you had to meet it, you had to meet it. And you had to live in your time. We lived in a changing time. I hope Georgia's better off for what we did.

Henderson: Let me go back to campaigning. You campaigned in '58 under the county unit system, and then later on you would run for the Senate on the popular vote basis. What's the difference as far as campaigning between running under the county unit system and on the popular vote basis?

Vandiver: There's a great deal of difference in running for office now and the way it was under the county unit system. The politicians or the candidates who were running spent a great deal of their time in the rural areas, and today you have to, it's a different kind of campaign. Most of the folks are in the metropolitan areas, and if you want to get elected, you've got to spend your time and your money and your efforts in the metropolitan areas. And it's an entirely different situation.

When Carl Sanders was elected, I think the people still sort of felt like they were under the county unit system. Although they were not [on the county unit system]. It had been changed by the courts. But it has become increasingly liberal, the politics of Georgia since that time.

Most people who lived on farms and worked on farms and Georgia was an agricultural state back until about the '40s [when] it began to change. And so the power was with the conservative agricultural interests, but it has changed 180 degrees since that time.

Henderson: Looking back on your administration, if you had to list several of your major accomplishments, what would you put in that category?

Vandiver: I guess I would say that I'm proudest of what we were able to start and do in the mental health field. That's where more people were helped than any other part of the program that we did. I'm proud of the vocational education program that we were able to start and get underway because it has helped greatly with industrial development. I'm proud of our Ports Authority and what it's accomplished and what we were able to do to get them on the road to making great progress. I'm proud of the fact that we didn't raise taxes. We lived within our income; we didn't do everything that we would like to have done, but we lived within our income at that time and didn't raise taxes a dime.

And I think that was one of the hardest things I had to do because people who had supported you and wanted to have something done in their county and their city, they expected it. That's the way it had always been, and we had to, the first two years, especially, were difficult because we didn't have the money to do what we wanted to do.

Another thing that I think that I would place in the category is the fact that we were able to almost rebuild our primary road system. The previous administrations had, because of, largely because of the county unit system, I guess, had concentrated on rural roads and had neglected some of our primary roads. And we were able to allocate a hundred million dollars, which at that time was a lot of money, to rebuilding our primary road system.

And people used to say that they could tell when they came in Georgia because roads were bumpy as soon as they crossed the state line. But we were able to change that, and I don't hear very many complaints now about our road system. Another thing that we were able to change was, we changed the Purchasing Department completely. Whereas in the past it had been utilized as a political plum to your, to the victorious candidate and only his friends could

bid on state business, we opened it up. We put a fine man of great integrity in charge of it, and we changed the laws.

We made it possible for anybody to bid who was a legitimate business on any of the state business. [Laughter] I know one man who, rather amusing, who under the previous administration had been getting all the business at the state hospital for uniforms and that sort of thing that they wore, who had contributed to my campaign. When we opened up the Purchasing Department and let everybody bid on it, he came to me and wanted his campaign contribution back. [Laughter] And I told him unfortunately it had already been spent, but he had the same opportunity to bid that anybody else did. If he could give the low bid, he'd get the business.

Henderson: Let me ask you, did you see that you had any failures in your administration?

Vandiver: Yes, I think that we did have failures. We were so busy with all of these federal suits that hit us at one time, we were not able to do much to help our prison population, the Department of Corrections. We realized there was a problem there; we wanted to do something about it; we didn't have the funds to do it. And I would say that I failed to do the things that I wished I could have done in the Department of Corrections.

They have, since that time, with additional funds, they've been able to build prisons [in] all different parts of the state. And as I go down to Brunswick now I see two or three brand new prisons that have just been built around Claxton and over in Tatnall County.

And in other parts of the state I know they have prisons, but there's nobody in them. They haven't been able to finance the cost that would put people in these prisons. They're

empty. They're finished; they're complete; they're built, but they haven't been able to go ahead with their program.

I know that Governor [Zell Bryan] Miller has stated on many occasions, particularly on first offenders, that he would like to have a program sort of like a marine boot camp, make it tough on the first offenders. And which I think is a good program. You don't want to put a first offender in the same prison cell or area with a hardened criminal. If you don't [separate him from hardened criminals], he'll come out a hardened criminal even though he went in after his first offense. And I think it's an excellent idea to separate these first offenders from these hardened criminals. And I think that's one of the plans that he has which I would commend him for.

Henderson: Besides the prison situation, were there any other shortcomings that you can think of?

Vandiver: Yes, you never have all of the money that you need to do the things you'd like to do. I had pledged that I wasn't going to raise taxes, and I had intended to carry it out if I could, and I was able to.

One thing that had happened over the years was that power had pretty well centralized in the governor's office. The legislature had relinquished a lot of their powers to the executive department. There was not a balance between the legislature and the executive and judicial [branches].

I, in my campaign, said that I hoped to restore some of that balance, and what I did was to set up a fiscal department, which was in the executive department itself, have the department of audits which at that time was headed by a very fine gentleman, B. E. Thrasher [Jr.]. He

worked with the legislature, and we tried to look at, set up a mechanism for looking at each bill to see exactly what it would cost and whether it was necessary or not.

I know I would send my budget bills, after I'd worked on them, to the legislature, and it, within forty-five minutes, it would go right through. We never, nobody every objected to the executive budget, which is prepared by the governor. That's not true today. We restored some of that power to the legislature.

So we've taken a look at these various departments themselves and determined what the budget should be--that's the governor and the legislature working together if they can. Many times you have a situation where the executive and the legislative [branches] do not work together.

One prime example of that was when [Jimmy] Carter was governor. Lester Maddox was lieutenant governor. There was constant bickering between the executive and legislative departments of government, and very little was really able, was accomplished because of that. They were both running for political office, Carter hoping for higher office, and Lester Maddox hoping to get elected again, I guess. But they just fought

I had great cooperation from the legislature. Most of my administration was very pleasant. There was a period of time when some of my friends feared that I might resign and take a position in the [John] Kennedy administration, which had just been elected. And we had some legislative fights that we were able to resolve, finally, when they found out that I meant what I said when I said that I was not going to take a position in the Kennedy administration. That was really the only ripple of discord that we had between the executive and the legislative departments. We worked together extremely well.

I think [Carl] Sanders was able to work very well with the legislature. He'd been a part of it. He knew what it was. And it was very difficult for Maddox to work with the legislature because he didn't even know who they were. He had never run for office; he'd never had any contact with members of the legislature. He didn't know them, and so he was absolutely dependent on his staff to work with the legislature because he had no knowledge of government. He'd never been elected to He'd run for mayor three times and got beat, and he had never been elected to office.

And so he was in a terrible situation, and then when he found out he couldn't run for governor again because of the law at that time, he ran for lieutenant governor and that confused the next administration because there was constant fighting between those two.

Henderson: Let me go back to education. How did the public schools and the university system fare under your administration?

Vandiver: We gave them all that we could. I realize the importance of education, and under the situation that we were in at that time, we had two recessions during my four years in office. We did all that we could for our teachers and for our school system and for the university system. But there was a lot left undone, and I would have to say that that was one of the things that I wished I could have been able to do more.

We were able to raise the teachers' salaries some, and we were able to build a few buildings over at the University. The Coliseum was one of the things that we were able to accomplish during our administration. We built a new pharmacy building and a new art building. We were able to build a few buildings but not as much as I would have liked to have done. I would have liked to have done more for the other parts of the university system.

Georgia Southern and Valdosta and the other parts of the university system that were, some of them were very new. They had just been set up and were not adequately financed, but I think now we've settled down and all of them are at least fairly well financed.

Henderson: Some of the teachers' organizations differed with you over salary increases for teachers. Would you like to discuss that?

Vandiver: Yes, that was one of the tough parts of my administration. You had to raise taxes, which I had pledged not to do, in order to give the teachers the raise that they wanted. And in the first two years of my administration we were not able to do as much as we wanted to do for the teachers, and they complained very bitterly. And they were underpaid. I know that is true.

But the last two years we were able to accumulate a little bit of surplus and were able to help with the university and with the teachers, with their salaries. When I came in office, I said I had a million and a half dollars to run in my surplus fund, which I could use for various projects that would benefit the state. When I left office, I left sixty million dollars in the surplus fund so that my successor didn't have the same problems I had when I went into office.

And I think now that they've changed the method. They've got what they call the governor's emergency fund, I believe they call it, which they use. Each legislator is entitled to a certain amount of it in his district, and they use that for political purposes. We didn't have that kind of set-up in my administration. [Laughter] And I'm not sure that it's the best thing for the state to have it that way.

Henderson: You mentioned a few minutes ago about reorganization. How extensive was the reorganization? And did you receive some opposition from those high level bureaucrats who were not pleased with changing their system?

Vandiver: Absolutely. There are people that have been in state government, the bureaucrats that have been there for a long time that don't want any change. They want things to stay just like they are.

And we did away with more than a hundred boards and bureaus and commissions. And each one of them had their people who were their defenders. And that was a difficult thing to do. We tried to cut out certain programs, and then I'd have delegation after delegation to come up and tell me how important it was. And it was to them, I'm sure. But to be efficient and to have an economical administration, a lot of them were unnecessary, and we cut them out. We were able to cut them out in working with the legislature.

Henderson: Was there any bureaucrat in particular that comes to mind that gave you strong opposition to reorganization?

Vandiver: I think you'd have to say that most of the bureaucrats were opposed to any change. [Laughter] But you find out really a whole lot about state government that you don't know. You don't know that these little boards and commissions exist until you get in there and take a look at it. And, as I say, each one had its advocate.

The bureaucracy is really the third estate of government. They are entrenched. They've been there. They know all the ropes, and if you don't know a little bit about how they operate, you're in trouble. That's where Governor Maddox found his trouble. He had no experience whatsoever, and so the state actually was run during his administration by the legislature, which

took over most of the responsibilities that he had . . . that had been the responsibility of the governor.

Henderson: I'm sure as governor humorous incidents have happened to you. What do you think was the most humorous incident that occurred while you were governor?

Vandiver: Oh, I had very many things that were very humorous. On this trip that we took to Europe, we went over on KLM [KLM Royal Dutch Airlines], which is a Dutch airline. And we landed in Holland at the airport in Amsterdam. And my name is "Vandiver," which originally was "Van de Vere." It was shortened to "Vandiver" because the scribes didn't know how to spell the name, and they spelled it the way it was pronounced and so it became "Vandiver."

My PR [Public Relations] man, who set up this tour working with the Ports Authority, since I was of Dutch descent, thought it would be a good idea if I had the opportunity to have an audience with the queen of Holland, who was Queen Juliana [of the Netherlands] at that time. And much to my surprise he did set up a meeting with Queen Juliana and the prince consort, her husband. And so I went out to the summer palace, which was about forty miles--rented a car and went out to the summer palace, where they were at that time, and the prince consort met me at the door and invited me in, and he said, "Come in to our study here. The queen is busy right at this moment, but she'll be through, and she'll join us."

So we sat there and talked about Georgia. He was familiar with Georgia. He had been to Georgia. He was, I think, at one time chairman of the World Wildlife Fund. And so we sat there and talked, and the queen came in and he introduced me as the governor of Georgia who was visiting Holland.

And she said, "Oh, Georgia. I just love Georgia. I think Georgia is one of the greatest places in the world." She said, "I have visited Sea Island down in Georgia, and Mr. Jones, who owns the Sea Island Hotel, was so nice to me and to my husband. And we traveled around in that area of Georgia, and it was just a beautiful area, and I love Georgia. It's one of my favorite places."

And I said, "What did Mr. Jones do to entertain you?"

She said, "Well, he carried us out to his plantation, Altamah, which was a little ways out of Brunswick, and we had an oyster roast." And she said that the Negroes would take the oysters off of the tin where they were roasting. "They would open them for us. And we would dip them in the butter and eat the delicious fresh oysters."

And then she said the Negroes sang such beautiful old spirituals, that we enjoyed that so much. And they were so nice. And then she stopped rather suddenly in her conversation, and she said, "Do you know what the Negroes called me?" And I said, "No, your Majesty. What did they call you?" She said, "They called me `Miss Queenie'." [Laughter]

And I enjoyed telling that story. The black population around Brunswick has been there for hundreds years and they have a great tradition, really, but she had never been called "Miss Queenie." Most of them came from the islands and came into Brunswick and that area, and they speak with a different accent, as you know, the old ones do, than the newer generation.

I had a friend, Jimmy [James Allen] William, who was mayor of Darien, Georgia, which is one of the oldest cities in our state, but it's not a very big city. It's a small town, maybe six, seven hundred people. But Jimmy had been elected major of Darien and had been the mayor for a good many years, and he'd been one of my friends, personal and political.

End of Side Two

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