

Harold Paulk Henderson, Jr. Oral History Collection  
OH Vandiver 13B  
Betty Vandiver Interviewed by Dr. Harold Paulk Henderson (Part B)  
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**EDITED BY DR. HENDERSON**

Side One

Vandiver: Said, "How's he getting along? Is he around here now?" [Laughter] She says, "Oh, you haven't heard about him"--I think his name was Fred. [She] said, "You haven't heard about Fred?" Says, "Women have just done him in." Well, it turns out he had been married three or four times, and he had had unhappy divorces from all four of them. And his aunt said, "Women have just done him in." And poor Fred had died like six months before that. But Ernie remembered being at Darlington with him, where he lived in South Carolina, all about him, and here fifty years later we found out women had done him in. [Laughter]

But anyway, we've had a lot of funny experiences, just with Ernie remembering people and something about them. And I think he has an association gap. Now we don't do it so much, but he used to be able to figure out a name or something to remind him. This is when we were meeting people that he did not already know, but he could line them up and then he'd remember them. Like right now he can tell you the representatives and the senators and so forth that served when he was adjutant general. He has them pigeonholed in the right time. We grew to love so many of those National Guardsmen, but for me they're over here in this little pocket, and then when he was lieutenant governor we loved the senators. We got to know the senators and the representatives. And then when he was governor we were still in contact with those same people but you added more and some were defeated or died, and you kind of moved them out of that category.

But I have them all pigeonholed. Ernie can tell you exactly where he knew them and something about them. But I may know some stories about a lot of the senators and representatives back when he was lieutenant governor and governor, but Ernie can tell you how he voted on a bill or what he said during one time that meant a lot or something. Ernie has them all in an individual pocket whereas I may have them in a pigeonhole as lieutenant governor and a pigeonhole as governor. He's got them. Each one of them has a file [in his mind] 'cause he remembers something about each one of them.

Henderson: Let me go back to the '54 campaign. How active was the Russell family on behalf of Ernest Vandiver?

Vandiver: Well, of course by then they all loved him as much as I did 'cause he'd been in the family, you know, seven years. And, like I say, they all loved him so. At that time, though, so many of them didn't live in Georgia. I told them they're all like elephants. They come home to die, 'cause everybody ended up back in Winder sooner or later, it seems like.

But in '54, this was right after so many of my uncles, and I will say that for those men, they all volunteered and they all went back in the service. And they were too old to go, and it was a real disruption, but that was that need they had to go, you know. And I remember Uncle Jim [James Harris Bowden]. He was in a bank in Savannah. He went back in the Quartermaster [Corps], and he said--he had lost a finger as a child-- and he said, "I just burned that thing off counting money for the government." My Uncle Walter [Brown Russell] and Uncle Bill [William John Russell] went in the supply end because they had been in grocery stores. They had been A&P buyers and sellers of stores [grocery products]. All of them went in--Uncle Alex [Dr. Alexander Brevard Russell], and he was in the Battle of the Bulge. All

those boys, except Daddy [Robert Lee Russell, Sr.] and Uncle Dick [Richard Brevard Russell, Jr.], were in World War II, which they were pretty old to go back in because I know Uncle Walter, oh, he was--well, I don't know how old but they were too old to be in compulsory service. They had to be in their forties, and if you remember, wasn't it eighteen to thirty-six? Wasn't that the age that you had to go in? They were all up in their forties because they had to be at that stage of the game.

But they all went in, but they were all just coming back. A lot of people were not in Georgia, but the ones that were . . . We had a cute post card--we thought it was cute. It's a post card with Ernie on the front, and on the back--everybody does it now, I guess--we had it [first]: "This is who I'd like to see as the next lieutenant governor of Georgia. I'd appreciate your support and all you can do for him." Well, they didn't have to do anything but sign their name. Well, I can just see Aunt Billie [Mary Willie Green] and Aunt Ina [Dillard Stacy] right now, you know, writing everybody they knew in Georgia. My mama [Sybil Elizabeth Millsaps Russell], she got out her GNI [college annual] catalogues, college, anything she'd ever done: DAR [Daughters of the American Revolution], UDC [United Daughters of the Confederacy], women of the church, everything she was a member of, she sent cards and said, "This is who I'd like to see as the next lieutenant [governor]." Of course, Mama would always say, "This is Betty's husband" or "This is my son-in-law" or something to that effect, and signed that "Sybil M. Russell." I can just see it right now 'cause Mama had a square writing.

That was about all you could do. You couldn't do anything else except do something like that because . . . no television, if you think about it. I guess . . . surely we had some

television time in '54, but I don't think so. I don't think there was any television or politics on television, was there?

Henderson: Not much.

Vandiver: I just don't believe so. Now, I know in the governor's [race] we had an hour every Saturday afternoon that was mainly radio, but if you were in Albany they would pick it up. I mean the [W]ALB, I remember it was called. They would pick it up and carry it kind of local, and Savannah . . . [W]JBL, John B. Lewis. Those stations would pick it up locally, and radio, you had a statewide hook-up, and it would go out on the Dixie station, or whatever is the one that's tied in completely with all the radio stations, or small stations. And we'd have that on Saturday afternoon.

Henderson: Behind the scenes, did Senator [Richard] Russell support Ernest Vandiver?

Vandiver: I think he did. Uncle Dick always figured somebody else's politics was their politics and the way you can be successful is to stay out of them, but I do feel, through his. . . . Well, see, I knew he [Russell] was for him [Vandiver], so I don't really know what he did, but I know he admired and loved Ernie just like he loved me. So I know if there was anything he could do, he did. And, of course, when Ernie was adjutant general, Uncle Dick was chairman of the Armed Services [Committee], and Carl Vinson was chairman of the House Armed Services [Committee], and I know one of my favorite pictures is of Uncle Dick and Ernie and Carl Vinson together, and the flags are in the background. I've got that at home. It's just a great picture of them together, and at that time with Ernie adjutant general and trying . . . and he did a great job with the National Guard in Georgia. Of course, it was right for it because of after the war and so many men wanting to stay in and, you know, keep up with their service and retire

early or with pensions or whatever they could do. This National Guard helped, and it was the right time for it because it was after the war.

But I remember Al [Alpha Alsbury] Fowler [Jr.] was the AG [adjutant general] before Ernie, and Ernie and I met him in Atlanta where the stadium is now. I don't know why I remember that, but they tore his movie house down, but Al Fowler was AG when Ellis [Gibbs] Arnall [was governor], I guess. Was Ellis Arnall before Eugene [Talmadge] and then in '48. . . ? Anyway, he was AG before Ernie was AG, and we went down and he told Ernie all about what you had to do and how you do it, you know, 'cause it was kind of a new world for us or for Ernie. I wasn't worried about him. I knew he could do it, but we met with Al Fowler down there, and they've torn his place of business down now. The stadium is where we went. I remember that.

But what was the question, Hal? See, I get rambling. You asked me. . . ?

Henderson: Did your Uncle. . . ?

Vandiver: Oh, did he help? I'm sure he did more than he would have for anybody else, but Uncle Dick was not the person to tell somebody how to vote, and I doubt if he very actively got into it. But I suspect by innuendo, and there was enough people he could talk to that he did what he could for Ernie, you know.

Henderson: During the six years that he serves as adjutant general, this was during the Herman [Eugene] Talmadge administration, what is your impression of Herman Talmadge as a person and as a governor?

Vandiver: Well, see, it takes you a while when all your life you've wondered about the Talmadges [laughter], but we got to be very good friends really, and he and I had a whole lot of

jokes in common because he said, "Well, oh, every time I run for something Betty and Ernie have a baby and Ernie's got his mind on that baby." Well, we did. In '48 we were [laughter] pregnant, and then in '50, when he was running for his full term, I was pregnant with Beth [Vanna Elizabeth Vandiver], and so he says, "That Betty, I'll tell you what, she has a baby every time I run for something." And I said, "Yeah, we're going to [unintelligible]." Of course, we were living in Atlanta and it was not as hard on Ernie to . . . and of course he could not be the campaign manager. He could not do that much actively doing [sic] because he was adjutant general.

But Herman and Betty [Leila Elizabeth Shingler Talmadge] and Ernie and I, we got along just fine and had some wonderful trips together. See, I feel like Ernie and I have been so blessed and [have] so many memories. When Herman was governor for the six years, he always took his adjutant general to governors' conferences. That was just something you did back then. [Samuel] Marvin Griffin [Sr.] never took us. And there wasn't a lieutenant governor [during Herman Talmadge's administration], so Herman took his AG and his attorney[-general] and he took friends and so forth, and the governor's conferences hadn't gotten to be the thing like it is now, but we had some wonderful trips. I mean, there was a Southern Governors' Conference every year and a National Governors' Conference every year. And we went to the best places in the U. S. of A. for governors' conferences. And I just can think of some of the wonderful trips we had, and the four of us got along so well. You know, it was just fun.

I was trying to think. I remember the first time Herman and I had a really good long one-on-one conversation. We were on our way to Florida in the plane, and back then it wasn't against the rules to take wives. You had to be an official and [sic] a wife. You couldn't just

take whomever you wanted to, but there were no restrictions on anybody in the state government and their wives going on the National Guard plane. Now, I think you can't even take your wife. I'm not sure, and I'm sure there are a lot [laughter] of restrictions.

But we were on our way to the Florida game, and he had laughed and said, "Now bring you slacks 'cause if we have to bail out"--that was back in the days of full skirts and everything, said, "Bring a pair of slacks 'cause if we bail that skirt would act like a parachute," or something to that effect. And somehow or another, flying down there, he and I sat by each other, and I don't know how that happened either because, you know how you are, usually you just get in your seat. First time I found that you could walk around in an airplane. See, I'd never been in an airplane [laughter] but once and that was a little old one-engine plane that this boy I had dated in Georgia flew and so I went on that.

But he and I sat down and we had [a] long, good conversation, and he's as smart a man as I ever known. He knows more about more things. I think he must be just a [prolific] reader, and he must absorb it and do it fast. You know, some people, you have to read so slowly to absorb it. It [Talmadge's mind] must be like a sponge 'cause I think he remembers everything he reads and he reads good, informative, good things, you know. He's smart as a whip. He and I got along fine. Like I say, we went on some great trips with him and got to know him personally and really grew very fond of him.

Henderson: Did you have any apprehensions about meeting him the first time? Here is the son of Eugene Talmadge. Here is somebody who campaigned against your beloved uncle. Was there any reservations, any hesitations on your part?

Vandiver: I don't remember there being [any] 'cause, see, by that time I was wild about Ernie and that's the summer before, when Ernie and I were going together, before we'd married. We used to run by the William-Oliver Building and see all the people in Herman's office because Ernie knew everybody. And we'd go by, and I remember I met Bee [Walter Odum] Brooks [Jr.] and I met . . . oh, gosh, I never thought I'd forget that name . . . Steele, Mr. Bob Steele. If I do say so, I was so proud of myself 'cause that man, I know now he was sizing me up 'cause here came this girl with Ernie, you know. And I don't know what he thought about me, and I'm sure he liked Ernie. I guess he did, but Mr. Bob said "Well," said something about he was the historian and he bet I couldn't name the three signers of the Declaration of Independence from Georgia. Well, my stars, [laughter] that's was like throwing me in the briar patch. I named off those three in about whoop, like that, and he liked me after that, see, 'cause I knew that answer to that question.

But he was sizing me up. If Ernie had come in there with some little something that didn't know anything about the Constitution or something then it would have been different, I'm sure, but I knew the three signers of the Declaration of Independence so I passed Mr. Bob Steele's test. And he was always in Herman's office. I don't think we ever went to the William-Oliver building that Mr. Bob Steele wasn't there trying to teach somebody the signers of the Declaration of Independence. You know, the importance of knowing these things, they don't teach that anymore in school. Children don't know who signed the Declaration of Independence from Georgia. But Mr. Bob Steele took it upon himself to try to teach somebody every time he had an opportunity . . . something about that. I passed the test the first time so he didn't try to

teach me anything, but he and I got to be good--I have no idea. I haven't seen Mr. Bob . . . oh, I haven't seen him since that summer probably.

But there were always those hanger-oners around Herman's office, and half the time we wouldn't even see Herman. But we grew to be good friends and I enjoy every time I'm with him. We were with him a couple of weeks ago. [He] looks great. He seems so happy, and I am just happy for him, that he's happy.

Henderson: Let me go to something that you've already talked about. Your brother and Governor Vandiver developed a very close relationship.

Vandiver: The closest, you know. . . .

Henderson: Would you describe that relationship?

Vandiver: Well, it's funny, Bob [Robert Lee Russell, Jr.] was so quick. His mind just worked like . . . is it a trap you call that, about his mind? Bob was just such a quick, quick impulsive type of person, I guess is the word. Ernie is so deliberate and so serious and, when I use the word slow, it's opposite than Bob's quickness. Ernie thinks about things and deliberates, kind of like Daddy. You got to think about it three days in a row. But he's slow and deliberate, and the two of them made such a wonderful combination 'cause they both had the same end. I'd never thought about this. They both had the same end in sight, but the way they went about it was so differently. Bob had all these quick impulses. Half of them he'd discard five minutes later, but his mind was just like this, and Ernie started out slow and--it always reminded me of the rabbit and the turtle 'cause they did it so differently. But they had the same end of what was the right thing to do or the best thing to do in any sort of circumstances.

Even on vacations, and the four of us went together, and then we got so all of us, the eight children and the four of us took so many trips together. And we'd get a place down here [St. Simons Island] at the beach. There's a house down on East Beach we used to get when we had eight children and two grown-ups and us, two couples. And we would get that house and stay two weeks at the beach. You know, even in fun times their minds were so attuned but different directions, I mean, just completely. So I always felt like they came up with the best of everything because they hit every side of any issue before they did anything.

And Ernie just was so fond of Bob, and, of course, it was such a loss to all of us, but it was a loss to Ernie, a terrible loss to Ernie. I really think he kind of lost his heart for politics after that because you need that one somebody that you can throw it all out and get it back. 'Course, he had so many other good ones, you know, like Bob [Robert Henry] Jordan was such a great talker and discusser, but he and Ernie were too much alike. They looked at it too long before they did anything, whereas Bob would jump up, and I have that impulse to say what I mean at the time I say it, but then when I look back at it, I wish I'd waited five minutes. Then I always go back and say it the other way usually.

But anyway, he and Bob [Russell] had a very close relationship. It was so wonderful 'cause his wife and I got along so well, and the four of us would just . . . some of the best times we ever had, I guess, Bob and Bett [Betty Ann Campbell Russell] and Ernie and I, and I still can't say Bett without--it's still Bob and Bett. They were such an entity that you just think of them together like I think they thought about us, you know, Betty and Ernie. It just kind of goes together, but it was a great loss to Ernie. It hurt him so badly 'cause, see, he [Bob] was only forty, and he had those five little children, and he had so much to give. In fact, it's rumored that

LBJ [Lyndon Baines Johnson] would have appointed him to the Supreme Court. And I didn't think about that at the time. I read that the other day in something, and it was the first time I'd thought about that--oh, it's that book. Have you read *Colleagues*?

Henderson: Not yet. I want to.

Vandiver: I haven't finished it, but I may let you take it home with you, and you can send it back to me. But it's an interesting book, but that was mentioned in it. And he was just such a dynamic person . . . hail-fellow-well-met, but he really was a sincere person too.

Anyway, it did. It just crushed Ernie when Bob died.

Henderson: While your husband is lieutenant governor, Marvin Griffin is in the governor's mansion. What is the relationship between those two gentlemen?

Vandiver: Not very much. [Laughter] Well, you know Marvin was such an affable, lovely, lovable, old soul that you really couldn't help but enjoy being around him, and Miss Lib [Mary Elizabeth Griffin] was a lady of the first order. She was just lovely . . . such a lady, just a lady. And Sam [Samuel Marvin Griffin, Jr.], the son, was just so nice, and I guess I always felt so sorry for Lib because I don't think she liked one day of anything that she had to do 'cause it just wasn't her, and she'd lost that child in that fire, and you just have to know what that did to her. I mean, it just had to have crushed her.

And anyway, I never heard but one side of the story, Hal, and everything I ever heard, you know, and I saw so much of it first hand. His administration was just not good for the state of Georgia. It was just not good for the state, and whether he was mixed up in any of it or not, or whether he knew about it and didn't stop it, or knew it was going on or whatever, but there was so much scandal in his term, and Ernie, that was the main thing he frowned against, was

having to get rid of this inefficiency, and we always used to laugh. He ran on economy and efficiency, but it was the inefficiency that he wanted to get rid of 'cause there was just so much of it. There's inefficiency in government now, but it's just because of it getting so large. I don't know that it's scandalous. But it's just so large that there's no way you can handle it anymore. Back then it was inefficient because of cronyism and that kind of business, or at least that's what we always felt like, and we know it's so by the things that happened later and the people who were found guilty of just things that shouldn't happen in state government.

Henderson: Was there a social relationship between the Griffins and the Vandivers? Were you invited to social occasions at the mansion?

Vandiver: Not very much, unless it had to be, and I don't know how much they did actually 'cause I know what we did and what other administrations have done, like governors' conferences. We always went with Herman. Well, we were never invited [by Griffin]. The only one we went to was one in Georgia when the Griffins were in because they just didn't invite the lieutenant governor. Of course, we always took Garland and Gloria [Byrd] 'cause they were the lieutenant governor and [his wife]. We took them to all the--and you did have your choice of who you could take. We took the lieutenant governor. Garland and Gloria always . . . I think they went on nearly every conference because like the state would allow you ten people from your state. We never went to a governors' conference with the Griffins. I think there was one . . . well, that may not be either. We may not have gone to any with them, and that was his prerogative. He didn't have to take us, but we missed it because we'd been going for six years with Herman and Betty, to governors' conferences all over the country. I missed it because it was such grand trips, but at that time we'd moved back to Lavonia, you know, so I

was busy with children in school and that kind of business. So it probably worked out just as well that we didn't get invited.

But there was very little socializing. I remember . . . you had to go when the legislature was in session. They had the parties at the mansion, and the governor and his wife and the lieutenant governor and his wife and the speaker of the House and his wife all had to stand in the receiving line. So, I mean, there was nothing he could do about that, just almost had to do that. But I don't think there was any--like I say, he was a friendly soul, and you never knew how he felt. There was no relationship between the two of them other than just had to be.

Henderson: While he is lieutenant governor, where do you live?

Vandiver: We went back to Lavonia. Actually, we went back. . . . It was a great thing because we moved into our great big, old house and I was able to unpack wedding presents because [previously] we'd lived in small houses. And when we moved into our big old house in Lavonia we were able to unpack things that we hadn't had [the opportunity to unpack], you know, that we'd never gotten to use. We moved from the little house--I love my story about that. We bought a little house, and, of course, you have to remember this was the time, but we stayed in the Colonial Homes Apartments until I was really very pregnant with Beth, and then we saw this little "For Sale" sign about three houses up on Delwood Drive for sale, and we went by there, and the lady was selling the house, and she wanted thirteen thousand dollars. Well, that was a lot of money, but we decided we could handle that thirteen thousand dollars.

So we did, and we bought it, and we lived in it for, well, four years, I guess, three and half years, and we sold it for eighteen thousand dollars. [We thought that] we had just stolen it, you know. We had really made a killing, and we went to Lavonia and bought our huge house

and sixteen acres for eighteen. It all just worked out so beautifully, and we moved in this big old house that Ernie had really wanted all of his life. And it became available. Dr. S. B. Yow died in '52, and we went over there and looked at it, and that was something Ernie had wanted all of his life. Anyway, it's a perfectly beautiful home. We love it. We had nothing to do with making it beautiful. And the yards, we had nothing to do with it except trying to keep them, but Dr. Yow, Ernie remembers a dance that Dr. Yow and his wife had, and Ernie's mother and father went, but his babysitter, or whoever was keeping him at four or five years old, walked by the house, and Ernie said he knew that day that he wanted to live in the Dr. Yow's house some day.

And when it came on the market--see, there again, I'm telling you, everything just works for me. I have so much to be thankful for, but he wanted that house. And I was used to a big two story house because that's what Mama and Daddy built, when they built their house, was a two story house with four or five bedrooms upstairs and two baths and that kind of stuff. That's exactly what this house has, so it suited me fine. And Ernie and I have talked about moving to a small something, and we know neither of one of us could live in a small house permanently because we're so used to having a big house. It would be hard.

Down here [St. Simon's Island], this is wonderful. I can keep this place [laughter] great, but at home it's a different matter 'cause it's getting bigger than all of us. That's what he wanted, and I remember that was one of the things that I love about my house is Daddy and Mama came to see us and brought as many grandchildren as they had then, and I think they probably had, oh, three, six, eight, and I had everybody over to the house, and by that time I think they had eight or nine grandchildren. Everybody was over there for a good day, and I have a good picture of

Daddy out on the front porch, and that was the only time he ever saw the house 'cause then he became ill and died before he could come back.

But he loved knowing that we were in that big old house, and Mama loved the house. You know, when she came over, she helped me and enjoyed it so much, but we lived back in Lavonia, and the children started school. Well, Jane [Vandiver Kidd] was nine months old, I say [when she] started school. She didn't start school. She was born in February of '53, and we moved home in December of '53, and Chip [Samuel Ernest Vandiver III] started the first grade and Beth, they had a little play-school, and she went to play-school for two days, maybe three days a week. I don't know what.

But anyway, we settled in living in Lavonia and loved every minute of it, and Ernie would go in for legislature. 'Course, back then they didn't make a 365 day job out of [being] lieutenant governor. You know, it wasn't that much state government, I guess. I don't know. But he could stay home and run the businesses 'cause in the mean time Daddy Vandiver [Samuel Ernest Vandiver, Sr.] had died in '52, and Daddy Vandiver had quite a bit of land and he had businesses and so forth that, of course, Ernie, being an only child, he had to take over and start running all of his father's interests.

And so he had a busy time at home, but the legislature, he would go in one or two days a week all during the year as lieutenant governor, and then, you know, now he was running for governor. So he was making speeches. He calls it the ham and English pea circuit. You had ham and English peas [for dinner]. [Laughter] But you had that quite a bit, and he was on that circuit too. So the children and I were in Lavonia and living fairly normal lives. I guess his was different. I didn't think about it then, but he'd be gone a day or two, three days a week making

speeches and working on being governor, you know, and then working as lieutenant governor. He had an office, but it's not like it is now. I don't think. We all settled in at home.

Henderson: When do you begin discussing the possibility of him running for governor in 1958?

Vandiver: I doubt if it ever just really got discussed, Hal. I think it was just something that you assumed, and it was just kind of like you could go from grammar school to high school, if you were lieutenant governor, and that was a whole kind of a new job, you know. There hadn't been that many. Melvin [Ernest] Thompson and Marvin Griffin were the two lieutenant governors before us, and then Ernie got elected, and it was the natural step 'cause M. E. Thompson was governor, Griffin was governor, and you just kind of graduated. In fact, I think Garland [Turk] Byrd's the first lieutenant governor that did not become governor, and he didn't, but everybody else, it was just you know. I guess it would be according to who came out and ran against you [laughter] as whether you made it, but Ernie had a good solid foundation, and he had done a good job as lieutenant governor and he had his base of National Guardsmen too.

You remember this six years that he had made friends and done a good job, had built armories. I've forgotten. I think it's twenty-five or twenty-six armories he built, and when I say he built, the government was furnishing--I've forgotten now what that percentage is. I can hear them talking about it now: the percentage of the national, the state, and the local government would build these armories. I think there were twenty-five or six maybe built in Georgia. I've forgotten now how many, but it was a nice amount and it was good income for the cities and the National Guardsmen were respected. You know, they were a good, basic bunch of boys. We

loved all of them. I don't think it ever just got discussed: Shall we or shall we not? I think it was always you just knew that where you were heading. I doubt if we ever discussed it. If we did I don't remember, and I think it probably was just never discussed as such. It was just an accepted fact.

Henderson: What role did you play in the 1958 campaign?

Vandiver: Well, Mama moved in and I moved out, I guess is a good [laughter] way-- Ernie and I stayed on the road most of the whole time, the whole summer. By then, see, he could give good speeches. I remember the Dublin rally was just great, you know. It was the big one. We flew down in a plane. It was the biggest rally I'd ever seen, and then we had a Saturday rally, I think, all summer. I remember we had one in Valdosta. I think we had one in Tifton. I know the last one was in Gainesville, and, I can see, Uncle Dick came and sat on the platform and Bob Russell was there. It was a big, big deal. That would be something that Uncle Dick did 'cause back then, if you appeared on the platform and were introduced, it was the same as an endorsement.

We had the last rally on the square in Gainesville, and it was just a tremendous day, and, of course, the children were at that one. They didn't go to a whole lot of those rallies. We tried not to involve them much. If they wanted to go, they could; if they didn't, they didn't, just 'cause a football game might be more interesting that Saturday than going to a rally, especially if you'd heard what he was going to say the Saturday before that. But they were good troopers, and it's interesting, there again, Ernie's sister's husband [Hiram Whitehead] had a stroke the night of the kick-off, and he never recovered consciousness and died a week after the election, and that

made Berthine [Osborne Whitehead] available for babysitting 'cause she had no children and no responsibilities that she had to do.

And so she was able to come, and between Mama and Auntie [Berthine] and camp, 'cause Chip was old enough to go to camp by then, went to Camp Dixie, where his daddy had gone for so long, and so I feel like I've led a charmed life because things have always worked out. And it brought sadness to some people, I mean, like Berthine losing her husband, but she became available full-time practically, and she was good with the children. And Mama was always there, and you never had to worry about the house. You knew the house and the children, everything were [*sic*] in better hands maybe than if you were there, and so I never had that worry. Everything worked out.

Henderson: Georgia is a large state. What is the difficulty of campaigning for governor where you feel like you have to go all over the state?

Vandiver: Well, you know, that's funny 'cause you did. You felt like you had to get to all 156 counties [*sic*], and that was always something we had to do. It's not easy, and if you were lucky you could campaign, you could stay in one section for a while. Like you could go in the northeast section and hit six counties, or you could go in the southwest and hit--down there, you know, the [laughter] county seats are pretty far apart. You would hit county seats, but you would also hit those little towns in between the county seats. And you could go in, and you could hit a little town. In an hour and half or two hours you could have gone into every store and given your folder and told them who you were and what you were doing.

In the governor's race, now, it was kind of different because it looked so good. I mean, you know, there were a lot of places you'd better not go because it looked so good, if you went,

you'd get messed up. [Laughter] It was always hard and hot, but actually, and I remember one of the state troopers, he took a leave that summer, or maybe they--I don't know, but Ben Garr was with us every second of the way, and [we] loved Ben Garr so. When Ernie was elected, he was the one who was with us just all the time and drove for us, drove for Ernie all the time. And he just became a member of the family, and T. A. [Thomas Allen] Smith. [We] just loved both of them. They're both gone now, but, anyway, we loved both of them so. They were just like members of the family.

Henderson: What did you like best about campaigning and least about campaigning in 1958?

Vandiver: Well least: I always hated being away from my children. I don't like to be away from them right now, and that's ridiculous at this age and stage where they've all got their own families and children. But I enjoy touching base with my family. I enjoy knowing what's going on day to day. I try to stay out of it. I don't try to tell them what I'd do, but I thoroughly enjoy, without prying, knowing what they're doing 'cause I'm so interested in everything they do. I love the way Chip comes by at night, a lot of nights, and tells me what's going on in the law office and what he's done and who he's seen and what he's heard. We all sit there and talk about it, and then he goes home, but it's fifteen minutes that's a joy to me 'cause I enjoy knowing what's going on. I enjoyed my girls in Athens. I talk to them . . . [laughter] as Ernie says, just talk and talk and talk, but I do kind of know what they're doing, and I feel blessed that they want to tell me, in the first place, and in the second place I'm really interested, so what are you going to be interested in if you're not interested in your children and grandchildren when you get at this age? Not that I'm old. [Laughter]

But that was my least thing, but they were all happy. I didn't have to worry about them. They were happy while we were gone, but, you know, I missed those days with them. I missed being with them 'cause you were gone so much. The things I loved about them [the political campaigns] were all the people we met and seeing how good people, how basically good people are. How they wanted to help, and they didn't want to hurt your feelings. You could tell somebody wasn't going to be for you. You could tell they'd already made a commitment. They wouldn't tell you that, but they would skirt the issue, and you'd know that they weren't going to vote for you, but they didn't want to hurt your feelings, so they wouldn't tell you.

I remember the last day of the campaign--no, that was in '72. But anyway, that's typical though of the '58 campaign. We were with this lady and just talking big about [unintelligible], and she was voting absentee in the courthouse in Echols County, and she didn't say she was going to vote for us, but she didn't say she wasn't going to vote against us, or that she was going to vote against us. And she folded her ballot that she was voting, and she had voted against us. And I just happened to see it. You know, I wasn't looking, but you happened to see 'cause Vandiver's down here at the bottom always and this was up at the top. So you knew she hadn't voted for you. But she wouldn't have told me that, but she was sparing me, you know, but you get false ideas about whether you're going to win or not. But anyway, she never told us she was not going to vote, but she never told us she was going to, so she was sparing your feelings. She knew what she was going to do.

Gosh, and the people that helped us. We had the best people, I mean, the lawyer, the butcher, the candlestick maker, those people. And they're still such good friends, but that's what I like the most about it. And then I was with Ernie full time. I've never, never not enjoyed

being with him full-time, you know, especially when you're doing something, I think, like this. It's going to be with you, and it's going to affect the way both of you do. You better know what it took to get there. You better know how hard he worked because if you think it's going to be all gravy--you know it isn't because of what you've done. So I really think it's good for the woman to know what hard work it takes for their husbands to be in politics.

Henderson: Do you ever make any suggestions as far as campaign strategy or what to put in his speech or maybe not to put in his speech?

Vandiver: I guess I probably did because we used to ride along and he would read his speeches and we would talk about them. I guess I did, but I don't know that I did. If I did and if he took them [suggestions], I don't know. I'm sure he was listening because we just do. We just do listen, but I don't know that I made any concrete statements or any suggestions that got, you know, that got put in, but I may have changed something by something I said, or maybe the next time it was changed a little bit, but I don't know.

Henderson: Did you ever make a speech on his behalf?

Vandiver: No. I can't make speeches. For somebody that talks as much as I do, I can't make speeches even by heart [unintelligible]. I remember the first time I really started making speeches was after he got elected, and then they weren't speeches. They were just, you know, glad to be here, and commend you on what you're doing, and that kind of thing. And I remember the first time I made a speech, and I was scared to death. I still cannot make . . . my voice starts shaking and I lose my place in what I'm trying to read, and then I just kind of feel like [laughter] I'm falling apart. I got finally so I can be the program at the UDC in Lavonia and I can be the program. I can read something, but I'm still not a speaker, not for a long way. I

don't make speeches. I just call them talks, the little things I do have to say, and then the shorter the better.

End of Side One

Side Two

Henderson: In 1958 William T. [Turner] Bodenhamer [Sr.] runs against your husband for governor. He says some rather harsh things about your husband. How do you and the governor feel about what Mr. Bodenhamer is saying? Are you thin skinned? Thick skinned?

Vandiver: Well, that's funny 'cause we almost are the same. I can laugh and think it's funny that he would say things like that. It makes me mad for Ernie because it upsets Ernie. It really bothers Ernie when people. . . . Political banter, he's not at his best because he does not appreciate. . . . He's so honest that if somebody says something ugly about him then he thinks they mean it just like he would mean it if he said it. Now, he's not going to say anything that he doesn't really mean, and I think some of the things that go on in political races are just said, you know, for the way they'll sound when they come out. I really don't think that they mean it the way it sometimes comes out, but, there again, Ernie thinks it because if he says something, you know he's thought about it, and he wouldn't say it if he didn't mean it. So he thinks everybody thinks that way.

Me, I'm the other way around. I say a lot of things that I wish I hadn't said, and I don't mean that they don't mean to say them. They mean to say them, but I remember in the Ellis Arnall [race]. Ernie just, oh, it hurt him so. Ellis Arnall talking about--he always said Tugaloo instead of Tugalo, [laughter] and that started it all, but it was one of those things. If Ernie said it, he would mean it so sincerely that you know he meant it. If Ellis Arnall said something

about Tugaloo, which he said . . . that's exactly what he said 'cause I've got a full memory about that too. I can forget those things. Ernie doesn't forget them because to him they're serious, but I think that he [Bodenhamer] was saying things just for the political effect. I don't think he really deep down in his heart thought Ernie had done anything 'cause by that time you know, you've sized up everybody and you know what they can do and what they can't do. I feel like. I don't know.

Henderson: Did he ever forgive Mr. Bodenhamer for making those strong comments against him?

Vandiver: Probably not, but he, in some instances, see, I guess it's . . . I don't know. I don't really know whether he did or he didn't. He did make some strong statements, [laughter] but then, there again, see, I'm one of those, I forget them, and I can't really right now--I bet Ernie can tell you everything he said. But, see, I can't tell you what he said. I can tell you on the rim what it was about, but I couldn't tell you what he said.

Henderson: In that campaign, probably the most famous statement that your husband made was the "No, not one."

Vandiver: And we've lived with it for so long that now it's gotten to be. . . . We say it and laugh now, but it was so serious at the time. I think the after-facts prove that it was not that true a statement that Ernie could make, but I remember at the time that he said there was a huge discussion as to whether to be that strong about it or not among the people that were helping him write 'cause, you know, folks, you make the same speech by and large, over and over and over, and this was the basic speech. What are we going to say, and how are we going to say it, and what are we going to stand for?

And there was a huge discussion. I remember Ernie talking about that, and I remember that he--I don't even know which side who was on or what. Well, there again, I've forgotten. He knows. I've forgotten who was on what side, and who said we ought to say it, and who said we ought not to, but it was brought on by headlines. So then it was try to counteract what had been said in the paper, which everybody read every word of it every day. Now, you know, they probably didn't, and television, they might not have even picked up on it, but there it was in black and white.

Henderson: Did he ask you before he made the speech whether you thought he should make the speech or not, or make that statement?

Vandiver: I don't think so. I doubt it. He may have mentioned it, and, of course, I always--not always--but more or less . . . what's the word, Hal? Not give in, but I thought he was right. I always usually, you know, could say if you think that's what you ought to say, say it. And you don't give in and you don't give up or something, but you agree that what he's going to do is right, whatever it is, you know, and I can't think of the word.

Henderson: Acquiesce?

Vandiver: Not exactly. You just kind of know that he's going to do what he thinks is right at that time, and, especially back when it was something you knew that you were going to have to face, you were going to try to face it as long as you could, and you know that's what it was for years. It was a matter of holding off, and you hoped that you could hold off, and by making that statement maybe you thought that would help give the state six months or a year to work out its problems, rather than immediately, you know. Plus, you had to get elected first. If you thought you were going to do something you had to get elected so you could do some thing

about it, whereas if you didn't get elected it wouldn't matter what you'd said. If he hadn't been elected it may not have ever come up. It probably never would have been mentioned again.

Henderson: Why do you think your husband wins such an overwhelming victory in 1958?

Vandiver: Well, I think he had proven that he could do well. I think by being lieutenant governor and adjutant general he had proven for ten years that what he said he meant, and he was really doing everything he could for Georgia. I mean, you know, I think it showed that he had tried, and, of course, he was running against inefficiency and just spending money like mad, and he was running against a lot of bad things, and he was running for good things, I guess. I guess that's why people could . . . and he's just honest, just sincere, and it shows, and I think if anybody had . . . they would just have to know he was sincere, and that too.

And then, of course, I always thought, you know, well, we just didn't have that much opposition. There was nobody that was forceful; nobody that was strong. You just kind of felt like you were going to win all the time 'cause I felt like it couldn't be any other way because he was the one for the job, and he really was when you get right down to it. He was the only one that was running that had had statewide experience, wasn't he? I mean, he's the only one that knew the government in and out, and had been on the administrative [sic] and been on, like, the National Guard, that was being on the end of doing for somebody else and everything. Well, you know, those whole ten years had just been leading up to being in charge of it himself because he had just been at different stages. Everything he had done he had done it and done it well. See, I'm real prejudiced. [Laughter] You know that, and so therefore I just think that people could tell that he was the best man for the job, and it showed, and his past actions showed that he could do what he set out to do or what he wanted to do. For the National Guard

he knew exactly where he wanted to go in getting the National Guard one of the best in the forty-eight states--forty-eight states at that time--fifty states. He wanted his Air Guard in Marietta to be the very best, and Savannah and Marietta were the two places where they had superb, just superior Air Force service.

They always had excellent summer camps. He'd go to summer camps, and he'd be so proud of how well they had done because they always sent those advisors from the United States Army and National Guard to check on how the troops were doing. And all of our boys, they always got superiors. I mean, they just rated so high, and so I knew that the National Guard was coming along like it ought to come along. It was getting stronger and stronger. And then in [the office of] lieutenant governor he took care of the bills that I felt like should be handled right, and he did them like they were supposed to be done. So it kind of showed that he could do it, if he could get in the job.

Henderson: How 'bout describing for me how it was to live in the governor's mansion with small children?

Vandiver: We loved it. [Laughter] You know, Hal, it's really funny. See, I, as a child, remember when Uncle Dick was governor, and Grandmother [Ina Dillard Russell] was his hostess, and, of course, then I got to go spend the summers with Grandmama because I'd never gotten to do that before, if you remember. And I was five and six, seven years old when Uncle Dick was governor, and Grandmother loved having us visit. She hated leaving Winder, so she loved having all of her grandchildren and so forth come.

So we'd go and we'd spend a week of time at the mansion, and the room that was the den, the family room upstairs when Ernie was governor is the grandchildren's room when Uncle

Dick was governor. She had double-decker cots, you know, just old steel double-decker beds, and all the cousins could come, and we just kind of like have a house party every summer. And we didn't stay all summer. I don't mean that, but you'd go and you'd be there with your favorite cousins in all the world, you know. And I can remember playing in that front yard, running around. I can remember so much of a child. I went to the hospital to have my tonsils taken out from the governor's mansion so I could start the first grade. And, you know, those kind of things you remember. Grandmama gave me a little book satchel because I was going to start the first grade, and I had to have my tonsils out before I could go, and those are the kind of things.

I felt like, in a way, it was . . . I don't mean to say grand, but I didn't feel like I was coming home, but I felt like I knew that place. I'd been there before, you know, and we loved it. I felt like I didn't have to worry about it, and I had three little children. Now, when you get down to it, I had six, eight, and ten, or five, eight, and ten really, and it could have been real heady if we'd had a whole lot of fine, fine things. As it turned out I didn't have to worry too much. The Griffins had had two big dogs, and they were not very well house trained so our little dogs didn't cause any problems. We went to the mansion with two dogs and a cat, and those little dogs didn't cause any trouble because any trouble they could've caused would not have been anything like those two big dogs.

And we laughed about it because I remember Mr. Ben [Benjamin Wynn Fortson, Jr.] saying, "We can't get all the stains out." So my little dogs couldn't [laughter] cause much more trouble. But then we had the cat, and we lost old Sooty at the mansion. There were two kinds of insect spray. They had one to do something and one for something else, and Sooty got them

on her hands [paws] and licked, and we lost our cat at the mansion, which was one of the worst things that happened to us up there. But it was fun. We didn't mind it. We enjoyed it, and the children loved it. I can see right now: in the family room, they could make tunnels. They'd turn chairs over, you know, and the sofa over, and--not hurt anything--but then crawl around underneath them, and it wasn't hurting anything, and it certainly was little enough that those children could do. They enjoyed it.

I think they all enjoyed it. Beth, as I've said somewhere along the line, she didn't enjoy it as much as the other two 'cause she hated to leave, but I will say she hated to leave the mansion to go home, as bad as she hated to leave Lavonia to go to the mansion when we did. So she's one that's happy--when she gets where she's going, she's happy, but she doesn't want change. She's kind of like her mom.

But they were happy in school, and I don't know whether you were going to ask me about that or not, but we had the best relationship with the Spring Street school. We loved them and they loved us, and I think my children all got a wonderful, basic foundation educationally wise. They got a great foundation at Spring Street. They were the nicest people, and we had three Miss Francises. Gosh, we had people that would come to the mansion and help me entertain children and so forth, and I could call on Spring Street for anything and everything. And so I really feel like it was an education for my children. We enjoyed it. You asked me how we enjoyed it. We enjoyed it.

Henderson: Who was the disciplinarian in your family?

Vandiver: Well, Ernie is really the disciplinarian, but I had to be because he was gone quite a bit. But to my credit, I never said, "Wait'll your daddy gets home." I think that's the bad

thing to do. I can remember being the disciplinarian or being the punisher if they needed it, but Ernie--see, there again, it's that firmness. He says something; he means it. And me, I can say "Don't do," and if they did it then we could talk about it, but if Ernie says "Don't do," then they all knew he meant "Don't do." So he didn't have to discipline much. It's just knowing that Daddy said "Don't do." They knew he meant "Don't do." So that took care of that right there, but he was the better disciplinarian. I'll put it that way 'cause I was hot and cold, and he was . . . but I think a lot of that has to do with him being gone an awful lot. You're with them twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, thirty days a month, it takes a lot of tempering. You can't be ... all the time. You know, you got to give and take even with children.

Henderson: Do you have a staff to help you run the governor's mansion.

Vandiver: No. In fact, I think I could do a much better job now because they do have staff. They figured out that she's as much of a part of this as--back then, I had Fanny Smith, who was my nurse when Beth was born, and I could not have done without Fanny Smith from the day Beth Vandiver was born until the day we all left the mansion--well, after that, until the day Fanny Smith died. I always knew I could count on Fanny Smith. She'd come to Lavonia. She came over there when my first grandchild was born and was with Jane because she felt like Jane was her baby. She had been my nurse with Beth and Jane, and she always was there when I needed her.

And then she just kind of moved in the mansion with us, and she lived in Atlanta, and her husband Slim would bring her to work, and she'd stay for four or five days and then she'd go home for a day or so, and then she'd come back. And Fanny Smith was my love. She helped raise an awful lot of people in Atlanta that you would know the names of, but when Ernie was

elected, I called Fanny and I said, "Fanny, what're we going to do?" And she said, "We're going to work it out." And I said, "Fine and dandy. You come on over." And she came, and she was the laundry [person]--she took care of my children and that's what was important. She kept their clothes up. We did not have a staff. We had a cook and had Fanny, and Fanny and I and the cook--well, David [Walker], he could just do everything. So we all three cleaned, cooked, kept house, and did laundry because that's what we were there for. So the three of us did it, and we didn't have any sort of staff. I wish now I had had somebody to help me with the mail 'cause I felt like I was always behind with the mail. I really wanted to be. . . . I love mail right now. I love writing a letter and I love getting mail, and if I had had somebody to help me with my mail I think I would not've ever felt like I was running behind, but I always felt like I running behind because I always had mail that I needed to take care of.

Henderson: How does the size of the old governor's mansion compare with the size of the new governor's mansion?

Vandiver: I hate to tell you, Hal. I don't know. I've only been in the new mansion once, and I've only gone through that, what I call West Room, or whatever that long room that runs this way, and then that little dining room that's behind it. I don't know. I imagine it's--the house was big. The mansion was big. I don't have any idea how big either one of them were square footage wise, but I feel like the new one must be bigger because I know they have other rooms that you can [unintelligible], and you've got family living quarters. Well, that was not. . . . They just took the upstairs, and I suppose it was Mrs. Griffin that made the den the room we all lived in.

Upstairs was that old sun parlor and the sunroom is what Grandmother Russell would have called it, but the room that ran all the way across the back, somebody made into a den, and that's where we lived. The children lived in the Blue Room, we called it, and Ernie and I, just for a family living room, Ernie and I used the den downstairs quite a bit, and, you know, just for personal use. The children had the Blue Room, and that was where the television was, and they played up there a lot. But somebody had added on a breakfast room, and that was nice. It was not the ideal situation for a lot of things, but we enjoyed it. It was home to us for four years, and so, you know, you lived with what you got, I guess. But we thoroughly enjoyed it, and the children, we never had to worry. I always could have the Boy Scouts in and it never bothered me that they were going to hurt anything 'cause there was nothing there that fine to hurt. So that was okay.

Henderson: How active a social life do you and the governor live?

Vandiver: Then?

Henderson: While governor.

Vandiver: We did what had to be done. We did what was expected of us, but we didn't do a whole lot because we, there again, we enjoyed our time together. We still felt like the five of us ought to have as much time as we could, and unless it was something that really had to be done or should be done--we had a lot of friends that would come in, you know, two or three or four couples at a time, just us, but we lived about as normal a life as you can live and still live in the governor's mansion.

I feel like for the children it was most important to me that they didn't feel like they were in a museum or a place, you know. And we did all the legislative parties and we did all the,

gosh, we did a lot of football--you could have a football buffet, you know, before the Tech games or before the Georgia games. People you had to entertain, they loved that. We'd have bird suppers for small groups, but we never did any big, extensive entertaining, and we didn't do a whole lot of socializing except like that, because that's the way we wanted it. You can kind of get away with doing what you want to [laughter] up there, if you want to, you know.

We did like birthday parties, and then with big families, come holidays, it was wonderful 'cause then I could have everybody and everybody could come, and, of course, my brother wanted his children's pictures taken on the mansion steps because we had pictures of us all taken on the mansion steps. I mean, he felt like he had returned of some sort or other, and, of course, Bob Russell would drop by. He'd be heading out from the law office and court and so forth in Atlanta, and he'd swing by the mansion, and that was wonderful for both of us 'cause we'd get to see Bob. I remember one time he came by and he said--he had a little old Volkswagen that he ran up and down that road. One time he came by and he said, "We've got small car warnings out. I've got to get home." [Laughter] And that's when Volkswagens first started being, you know, everywhere, and he and that little bug and the wind was blowing hard. [Laughter] "We got small car warnings. I got to go." It was home for four years, and so that's all you can say about it.

Henderson: Did Governor Vandiver leave his work at the office or did he bring it home?

Vandiver: He was really good about leaving it at the office. Of course, but you see, there again, so many of his aides were good friends, so when they came home with him, they would continue to think and mull and so forth, but we'd all been doing that for years anyway. So it wasn't any different. He could bring his aides . . . aides, we never thought of them as

aides, his advisors or his best friends and that kind of stuff. He could bring them home and eat supper. That's what I'm talking about. We would eat supper just like they do in Lavonia now. People come in for supper. But it wasn't a grandiose thing. It was the friends and the people you wanted to be with, and so you were with them when you wanted to, and I just as soon give them eggs and grits and sausage as, you know, a big meal.

So they would come home with him, yeah, and after supper they would sometimes go upstairs. I can remember them going upstairs, and there's a room upstairs. . . . I don't know how to tell it. Anyway, we finally had to put one of the girls in there, but it was a good place to go and talk business. And so they would go upstairs and finish the day's work. You'd never know it because I was putting the children to bed. You know, doing things like that. But really we enjoyed our years, and he did not bring . . . when I say he didn't bring it home, we had always talked about the business. So if it was bringing business home, yeah, I guess he did, but we had always discussed what was going on in the day and who was doing what and why and so forth. It wasn't like bringing worries home, but it was stuff he knew I was interested in. The children grew up acquiring a lot of that interest 'cause they'd hear who you were talking about, and what they had done and what they hadn't done.

Henderson: What were your responsibilities as first lady?

Vandiver: I thought they were to take care of my family, and I did the best job I could. I always took them to school myself. We all got dressed and we got to Spring Street on time. I didn't want them singled out as anything different, and they were not. We went to school, and we were in the plays, and we had Parents' Night, and we went to PTAs [Parent/Teacher Association]. I guess it's what you want it to be. Talking about the help: David and I made out

the grocery list, and I bought the groceries 'cause I loved--that was what I was doing when I came up. I really don't make it sound like Pollyanna. I was doing what I wanted to do selfishly. I was doing exactly what I wanted to do running the house and being Mama.

You know, this is what I wanted to do. I went to luncheons. I was honorary chairman of so many things you can't believe, and every drive would want to have the first lady for a luncheon. Well, it was fun to go to a luncheon, you know, get dressed and go to one of the clubs or somebody's house or something and go to a luncheon for the Heart Association, the Mother's March one year, and they picked out three names in the phone book, and I remember that we got in the car that afternoon. It was going to be Mother's March, and we picked out just like this three names in the phone book and took me to those homes to get the Mother's March headed. You know, I remember going to the muscular dystrophy luncheons, and they would have patients in wheelchairs and multiple sclerosis. I can remember a lot of the luncheons, and then, of course, visiting [unintelligible]. Every convention that came to Atlanta would invite you to [a] luncheon. I didn't have anything else to do. The children were gone [laughter] to school. I could go to the luncheon and get back, you know, and so I did. And I thoroughly enjoyed those kind of things. So you can do what you want to. I mean, you can go as much or stay at home as much [as you wanted], and I've always been kind of one that I kind of went where I wanted to in the daytime, but I'm always home when Ernie got there.

So, now it's a matter of, we're both there all day, but you can do what you want to, pretty much. And I did. I had a lot of good times, and we had some great governors' conferences while Ernie was governor. That's always good travel, you know, and we like to travel. So you go to these conventions and these conferences and you'd meet the other governors. You know,

Georgia was fourth being admitted to the union, so they put you according to where you were admitted, and so we were always fourth to come in. Like if they had two tables, you were at the top table because you were the fourth to be admitted to [laughter] the union. And I read the other day--like I say, my crossword puzzles, I work them all the time. The first state was one of them, you know, Connecticut, the first state. Was it Connecticut? Delaware. Delaware was first, and they would come in first. You know, all those little rituals. We had great trips, and we always took good friends: Bob and Bett went on a lot of them, Ruth and Henry [Getzen Neal], the nieces and nephews, the staff. At one time or the other in that four years we took nearly everybody. The last one was in Miami, I remember. We took the whole office force, and we had a ball. You know, all those people that had worked so hard: the husbands who had put up with the secretaries being gone, you know, and that kind of stuff. We had a ball in Miami because we took all the office force.

Henderson: Was there ever an issue that you were interested in, and you felt compelled to lobby the governor about and say, "I think you need to do this," or "I think you need to do that"?

Vandiver: Well, it didn't come out that way 'cause he was so interested in it too, but Milledgeville [State Hospital] of course. You've talked to him and you know, but Milledgeville was it. I guess that was the one that I felt the closest to, and I really did put in a lot of good hard work with that 'cause it was a long way from Atlanta to Milledgeville, and I used to drive down. I remember one time--Betty Carrolton was a reporter, and she's mentioned in this book, but she must have continued that because she would ride down there with me. I remember one time we gave out of gas on the expressway coming back from Milledgeville because I was driving. I like to do that.

I feel like I'm--but, anyway, I like to drive, and so Betty and I would leave first thing in the morning, go to Milledgeville, and we would work and see what needed to be done, talk about what was being done, see the improvement. And I was always happy to go down there with anybody like Betty, a reporter. Any reporter could help you get your story out more than you could do it by yourself, and so we'd get in the car and head for Milledgeville. And then we would do all we could do down there and then drive back.

Now, then I got so once or twice I got to go in a helicopter down there because it would be something that had to be done in a hurry and get back or so forth. Then when we started the M Day. The [Georgia] Municipal Association took up this great drive, which is still going on thirty years later. I think they had their thirty-fifth one maybe the year before last. But anyway, then it was a matter of going on a regular basis more or less, but the Municipal Association took it upon themselves in conjunction with the governor's office to start carrying gifts to Milledgeville. And that sounds like something everybody does now because everybody in Georgia knows about M Day, which is so wonderful. But at that time there were twelve thousand people down there, and they estimated that over half of them never got a Christmas present. They didn't even know it was Christmas. I mean, it was just a regular day for them.

It was a great thing. They decided every town in Georgia could send gifts, and that first year I cannot tell you how high, how many hundreds, just thousands of wrapped presents [there were], you know, in a pile on the gymnasium floor. And they came from all over Georgia, and the mayors brought them. Now they're divided up. They go to Atlanta to the psychiatric place and they go to Rome. You know, you take them to where the closest place is, but then there was only one, and that was in Milledgeville, and there was twelve thousand patients.

[Unintelligible] that picture is wonderful. You cannot imagine those gifts, and it's still happening. It still goes on. The first Wednesday of every December is M Day.

End of Side Two

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