

Harold Paulk Henderson, Sr. Oral History Collection
OH Vandiver 13C
Betty Vandiver interviewed by Dr. Harold Paulk Henderson (Part C)
Date: 1/22/94
Cassette #462 (88 minutes)

EDITED BY DR. HENDERSON

Side One

Henderson: We were talking about Milledgeville State Hospital. Let's continue our discussion of that.

Vandiver: Well, it, to me, is one of the highlights, as far as constructive things being done. We had heard so much about Milledgeville, and at that time Milledgeville's was the only psychiatric--they called it an insane asylum, which is, in itself, terrible, but it was a mental hospital. And there were twelve thousand people, and they had like twenty-two doctors for twelve thousand people, and all of them quite ill. Anyway, we heard how bad the conditions were and had heard it for years, but you couldn't believe it. Ernie [Samuel Ernest Vandiver, Jr.] had run on efficiency, reorganization, and economy in state government, and we went to Milledgeville, thinking that whatever we saw we might could do a little something about. Well, nobody can imagine the conditions. They were absolutely--you cannot believe. It was filthy. The food that you saw the patients eating was not fit for animals. They were fixing their own food. They were like sixty people over here in one old, rundown building with one potbellied stove in the middle of that building, and they were eating food that they had cooked themselves. If they were sick enough to be in the hospital, they were too sick to be cooking their own food. It was just something you cannot do.

People just lined up on the walls, just sitting there or else screaming horrible sounds. It was just something that you cannot believe. A lot of the press went with us because, of course, they had been writing about this for years and nothing had ever been done about it. And every now and then a reporter would write a whole series on Milledgeville conditions, but there was nothing done about it. And a lot of times it was money, and I realize that former administrations had other priorities and other things that had to be done.

It was the worst situation you've ever see. I've never seen anything affect Ernie like that, and it certainly affected me. And we came back and he started looking into it, and he transferred it [Milledgeville State Hospital] from the welfare department to the health department. He brought in a man from New York, Dr. [Irvill H.] MacKinnon, who was just a godsend. He had retired from one of the large [mental health hospitals]--he had been trained in Kansas, which was just the mecca for good mental health care, and he had worked there and had been there, and then they'd gotten him in New York, and he was just well known all over the United States in mental health problems. And he had retired, and Ernie asked him to please come to Georgia and get the mental health situation in shape.

And he came down, and between his suggestions, [and] getting more doctors We were lucky. About that time a lot of doctors wanted to come from Mexico. They wanted to come from Cuba. They were leaving Cuba by the hundreds at that time because Castro had taken over and they were unable to do their work. So we were lucky to get a lot of doctors that were just looking for places to work, and the whole situation changed. Jack Nelson won a Pulitzer [Prize] for his articles on it.

Betty Carrolton and I went down there about once a month to check and to do and to see what needed to be done, and between the M [Milledgeville] Day and just the whole thing. And then they built a central kitchen, they called it, which was probably the best thing that ever happened. They were able to cook and fix twelve thousand meals and put them in cars and send them to these different buildings where there would be seventy or eighty and three hundred over here. You couldn't believe the situation. Anyway, they could feed all the people and they all got good nourishment, good food, and that, of course, by itself was a help. So the mental health thing to me, between that and the segregation, those were the two crowning points, and I don't know whether--I guess now's a good time to talk about the chapel?

Henderson: Please.

Vandiver: There were twelve thousand people down there. They had everything. The M Day got going; things were looking up; the doctors, we were getting in enough doctors. And Dr. Louie [D.] Newton and Bishop Arthur J. Moore, all these people that you've heard about all your life, and then all of a sudden here they were. I know the rabbi in Atlanta, all these people, all of it; it was such a wonderful exercise of togetherness. They just knew that there ought to be, that there was no church. They had services in the gymnasium, but these poor people would come there and they would have church there. They would have basketball games and they'd have country singing. One night a play, another night [something else]--when they came to church it didn't mean anything because they were not able to distinguish.

And so Louie Newton and Bishop Moore and a bunch of us, I can remember the first meeting, and Louie Newton kept saying, "If every Baptist in Georgia would send in fifty cents we could build a chapel. We could build a church." Well, that's true, but getting every Baptist

in Georgia to send in fifty cents or a dollar or anything, or Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians, Catholics, and Jews. And we formed a committee, and it was the most wonderful committee in the world. I wish I had the list with me because they were all such people that all of us have heard of, because they were the leaders in the churches at that time, and they've all gone down in history now 'cause they're all gone, you know.

But we formed the committee for the Chapel of All Faiths, and Mr. [John Adams] Sibley, Judge John Sibley, he and I co-chaired it, and it was the closest I ever came to a nine to five job because, as soon as I'd get the children off to school, I'd go down to the headquarters where we hired, I know Bee [Beatrice H.] Haas . . . that's not the name of the firm, but anyway it was a firm there in Atlanta, a fund-raising campaign fund is what they were. I'll have to talk about that. Anyway, what we decided to do was buy brick, and we sold bricks, little cardboard bricks, a dollar a brick, ten dollars a brick, fifty dollars a brick. We got every Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, and that was when I first started making speeches, Hal. [Laughter] The first time I ever made it was, you know, I got me a little speech, and I could go out and ask to buy a brick for Milledgeville. And do you know that at that time, a million dollars is a lot of money anytime, but a million dollars in 1958 was more money than you can imagine people being able to give, and, of course, Mr. Bob [Robert W.] Woodruff, the anonymous, he gave a lot. Corporations gave money, and, you know, we raised one million dollars.

And when we had to give up the fund because we were out of money, we moved it out to the mansion in one of the rooms where we had a ping-pong table for the children. And the secretaries and the people who had been working on the campaign came to the mansion every morning. We counted pennies. They came in envelopes from every church in Georgia. I didn't

know there were that many churches, little churches out in the country, you know, and they would send \$9.17, and that would be their collection for the chapel. But the people of Georgia raised one million dollars, and they had the money and it's the most beautiful chapel, and I wish everybody in Georgia could see it. There's one huge one, and there's a Catholic side and a Jewish side and then a Protestant side in the middle. And around the campus there were four other little prayer chapels [that were built with] money that was left after the contract and after everything was built. They built one huge and four little chapels, and they're still in use. The best thing about it probably is that they started a chaplaincy program, and now all the seminaries that are in Georgia and surrounding states send their students to Milledgeville for a quarter, so they get to recognize mental troubles so they can stop it or help before it gets started, if every preacher sooner or later gets trained in recognizing mental illness before it happens, and that all started.

And Dr. MacKinnon came down and got so much started medically, and then Dr. John [Heinz] Venable was the chairman of the health department at that time. And he was so generous in helping Ernie. There again, Ernie would say, "In the budget we're going to do this for Milledgeville; we're going to do that for Milledgeville." And, of course, they were glad to do for Milledgeville. But that was to me the beginning of a healthy mental health program in Georgia. I think it let everybody in Georgia know about Milledgeville and that sending pennies and nickels and dimes and buying a brick, it made them aware of the situation in Georgia so that when the psychiatric hospitals--they've gotten away from the big one now. I don't think they're over two or three thousand patients in Milledgeville because there's so many--they have

a southwest, southeast, northwest, northeast, you know, Atlanta, all the big towns have the psychiatric treatment centers now.

But that was the waking up of Georgia to the mental health problem, and heavens knows if we hadn't had it back then there's no telling what it could be now because it had to be addressed. To me, I just think that was one of the things that Ernie did that was so wonderful, and, there again, I met all these wonderful people by going around to churches and going around and meeting the people that were giving money and working so hard, and everybody in Georgia has somebody that they know or in their family that has problems.

And it just addressed it to the people and the people took care of it between the state government which Ernie could have some control over and the people with their generosity. It all just kind of melded and made a wonderful, beautiful program. And then the municipal association doing that. I mean, it was just an awakening of the need of the mental health people in Georgia. I think he did just such a beautiful job with that.

Henderson: Who came up with the idea of a chapel of all faiths?

Vandiver: Well, I think really, if you get right down to it, I think Mr. Baptist, Louie Newton. His faith in the Baptist--he just knew that if you could get--I can just see him right now: "We can get them." He used to come by the mansion, oh, one night a week. I think he just kind of self-appointed himself as our pastor, you know. He'd come by about once a week and get going talking about it, and then he was able to call on an awful lot of people to give money. He had a lot of people in his church and in the churches where he'd been before, the people that he was associated with, that could give big money.

And he got it out of them, and Bishop Moore, all these people that we--I think it's Rabbi [Harry H.] Epstein, I'd have to get my notes out for that, but they were all such wonderful leaders in their. . . and Clevin [Clairborne], he was Episcopal, Clevin C-l-a-i-r-b-o-r-n-e, I remember that. And then the Father Somebody from Christ the King Church. And they called on all of their people, and it was just such a statewide thing that it just worked. And opening those little letters and pennies rolling out every morning, I tell you, it was really something to see the people. [It] shows that things can be done if you get everybody working together. So I just have to get that in there.

Henderson: One of the most difficult questions your husband had to deal with is the desegregation issue. Discuss that issue with us.

Vandiver: Well, that's one of those subjects you never get through talking about. You always wonder, you know, "What if?" or "If we had done. . ." or "If he had done. . ." or "If it had turned out this way. . .?". I myself know what he went through making all the decisions, and I know what it meant to him, but I just have always been thankful Ernie was where he was at the time. I just think him being there helped Georgia. I think he was able at that time, if he had wanted to, to set Georgia--not want to, but if he had done what he could have done, it could have set Georgia back so many years. I think about Alabama and Mississippi and Louisiana. These states had trouble, and they stood in the doorways. It didn't accomplish anything except hurt the image of their state throughout the nation. And Ernie could have done that, and I think if he had done what he really felt, deep in his heart he felt like that time would take care of some of these problems, but he wasn't given the time to take care of them. So, I'm just glad he was

there. I'm glad that he was there at that time so that there was a levelheaded somebody who gave it an awful lot of serious thought before anything was done.

Henderson: Did you and he discuss what he should do as far as this issue?

Vandiver: Oh, so much. Well, as you say, it was the biggest decision I guess he had the entire time, as to whether to stand in the doorway or to block it or to be defiant or what. I've heard in the South, heard other people say, "Well, you know, you just committed political suicide." Well, he did. He felt like he was because at that time and that age in the stage of our life that's where it was, and so many people wanted to just close the schools. They had no regard for the education of the children, and Ernie just knew that you cannot cut off education for that many children. You can't have that many children walking the streets everyday. You close the schools and all of a sudden you've got all these thousands of children walking the sidewalks with nothing to do, and there are an awful lot of things out there that they can get into or that could happen if they are not in school and being disciplined and taught something.

So I've really never been as proud of him as I was though it was hard thing for him to do. That night that he went before the legislature, I guess that was one of the hardest times we ever had [to do], and we had talked about it, we had prayed over it, discussed it, and I'm just glad that he was the one who was there 'cause if somebody else had been there they might not have done the same.

Henderson: Do you remember the atmosphere that night when he speaks before the legislature?

Vandiver: Yeah, but I can't put any--it was just this feeling of. . . it was kind of dreaded gloom because everybody knew what was coming. Ernie had talked to all of them. You know,

he had tried to talk some of them into it, some of them out of it. They had tried to talk him into it, or out of it, or whatever. They all knew what was coming deep in their hearts. He has lots of examples of people who would tell him one thing for the press and the people back home and tell him something else, the way he really felt, knowing that you couldn't do this, you couldn't close the schools.

And yet politically some of them had to be, I mean, against it, but deep down they knew it was wrong, and they could almost make that clear in talking to him. It was a horrible time. The people cannot realize that. It's the way I feel about World War II. Unless you were there, you cannot read a book about World War II and know what it was, the . . . I say sacrifices, but the happenings, you know, the sugar coupons, the shoe coupons. I tell my children and they can't believe it about a tube of toothpaste. They can't believe you had to turn in a [empty] tube of toothpaste to get a tube of toothpaste, but that's the way things were, and you're where you are at your time, and you have to live it. And Ernie was there at that time, and somebody had to make the decision to save the schools. If Ernie hadn't, then they would've had all sorts of trouble break out, and then somebody down the road would've had to do the same thing he did. He did it knowing he was bypassing an awful lot of trouble, because it would have been trouble if he hadn't done what he did. He was strong; he could stand it, the pressure. Somebody else might have given in, and somebody else might have hurt Georgia for years to come.

Henderson: Did he lose any friendships because of this decision?

Vandiver: Well, I like to think if he lost friendships over that they weren't good friends to begin with. I hope that's the situation. I hate to think he lost any friends. I'm sure there were some people who never felt the same about him because they had to go back home and talk to

the people who elected them who were against it. He probably made as many admirers by doing what he did, if he lost many admirers or friends. He probably made as many by doing what he did because he knew everybody, you know, deep-down they knew it was a matter of time, and they knew it was something that had to come sooner or later.

Henderson: There's some speculation that your husband would become secretary of the army in the Kennedy administration. Did he ever seriously consider becoming secretary of the army?

Vandiver: You know, that was the funniest situation. That all kind of came up, happened, and was over before [laughter] you knew what was going on. There was so much going on at the same time that it all just kind of came and went, and, there again, I'm still messed up with buying groceries and taking children to school, you know, so some of these things just kind of. . . . I don't think I ever thought he was really going to take it. I don't think we ever even really made any heady decision as to whether, if it was ordered, you know, if it was asked, would we go or that kind of stuff. I don't think we ever had any big discussion on that, but we might have. I just don't remember.

Henderson: Let me run through. . . .

Vandiver: Kind of a threw the state of Georgia into a mess for a while there. There were enough folks that were ready to step up and step in.

Henderson: Let me go through some people who were associated with your husband during his administration, and just give me your impression of these people. Let me begin by listing Peter Zack Geer [Jr.].

Vandiver: I always called him one of the Tarleton twins. I thought Peter Zack strode in and [laughter] he looked like one of them, the twins in *Gone With the Wind*. He was a smart person. Peter Zack's smart. There's no doubt about that. He's flamboyant. I liked ol' Peter Zack. I suppose he was executive secretary. I'm sure he must have been a fairly good one. You know, he was elected lieutenant governor when he ran, so I'm sure he did. A lot of people liked him, or thought he could do a good job. Peter Zack and I got along fine. He and Bob [Robert Lee] Russell Jr. were good friends too. I think they were more alike than Ernie and Bob or Peter Zack and Ernie. I'll put it that way.

Henderson: How 'bout Carl [Edward] Sanders?

Vandiver: Carl was one of Ernie's good leaders, and you have to have good leaders on the floor of the Senate, and Carl did Ernie a good job of it. I read in his book that one of his good friends says he was not, uh, what was the word? He was not. . . overfilled. . . overcome by modesty? I would think that would kind of size him up. You know, I'm really crazy about Betty [Foy Sanders] and Carl. I enjoy them both. We went on some good trips together 'cause they went on a couple of the conferences with us, and, of course, by just being where he was we were thrown together a lot. We enjoyed being with them. Betty and I fished some together. But there again . . . I believe that's going to do it on that.

Henderson: Garland T. [Turk] Byrd.

Vandiver: Garland Byrd. We had a good time with him because we were all kind of [contemporaries]. I believe Garland may have been in the House or the Senate when Ernie was AG [adjutant general]. I think we had a long time with him. He may have been in the House when Ernie was AG, and he was in the Senate or House when Ernie was lieutenant governor,

and so then when he was elected lieutenant governor and we were elected governor, we had a long happy relationship. Garland and Gloria, we haven't seen Gloria in a long time, but we see Garland from time to time. But they were nice, fun people to be with, you know.

Henderson: Was the relationship that Governor Vandiver had with his lieutenant governor much better than the relationship [Samuel] Marvin Griffin [Sr.] had with Lieutenant Governor Ernest Vandiver?

Vandiver: Yes, by a long shot, 'cause, see, really Marvin didn't take Ernie into any counsel of any sort. Ernie never had any input into an administrative decision. He could get his bills in and out, I mean, and Marvin recognized that. So there was a civility that he had to be nice to him because he wanted to get what he could pass, and yet there was so much that Ernie wouldn't help, and it's up to the lieutenant governor to speak at the Senate, to put it out there. You know, the governor does have so much influence, but, no. They had a much better relationship between the lieutenant governor and governor than with the Griffin administration.

Henderson: Speaker George L. [Leon] Smith [II].

Vandiver: He and Sally [Frances McWhorter Smith], see, there again, we'd all been together for so long, and you certainly weren't going to agree with all of them on everything, and yet they were nice people. They went on a trip or two with us, and we had [unintelligible]. We still see Sally. I haven't seen Sally now in several years, but we enjoyed all those people.

I remember Sally and I, we ended up in one receiving line when Ernie was governor. I bought the prettiest dress I thought I'd ever seen for the reception that afternoon, and when the receiving line lined up there was Sally in the same dress but in another little different color. Well, it just embarrassed her to death, [but] didn't bother me at all. I told her [that] I thought

she had excellent taste, but it bothered her. We've had a lot of fun. You know, gosh, you're in government that long. They had been in the House for so long also, and then when he was made Speaker, that was, you know, he really had so much power. These speakers of the House, they have it [power]. If they want to use it, they've got it, 'cause they've got it.

Henderson: John A. Sibley.

Vandiver: Oh, God bless him. He was one of my favorite people in all the world, and he meant so much to Ernie. He meant so much on the chapel. A lot of mornings he and I'd meet at the front door at nine o'clock at that office building, and he was there to help do all he could, and then he'd leave and go to his law office, and I'd stay and help count money or write letters. And it was, you know, an organized campaign. [A] fund-raising campaign is something to behold. They've got lists and names that you can't believe, and they can pull them out, and now I think about with a computer. If we'd had a computer there's no telling what we could have done, but we didn't have computers. You know, everything was done by hand, and every letter was stamped by hand, and that's what you'd end up doing half a day is stamping letters that were going out to all these churches. And now, you know, it sounds like the Dark Ages and it practically was as far as things like that go, but that Bee Haas and, oh, I can't think of his name. He would be so hurt if I couldn't--I mean not hurt because it was me but hurt because I can't think of his name. [Unintelligible]

Anyway, if . . . oh, I can see him . . . anyway, Ernie could tell me his name, but, anyway, it was a thing to behold, to see that money, and John A. Sibley, what he's meant to the state of Georgia in more ways than one. Nobody'll ever know. He was Mr. Anonymous' right hand man, I think he, more or less, must have written out the checks, and Mr. Woodruff signed them

for so many worthwhile projects. And Mr. Sibley was just the finest [person]. I can't say enough words about him.

Henderson: Griffin B. [Boyette] Bell.

Vandiver: Griffin Boyette Bell. He's a character. We loved Griffin and Mary [Bell], and Mary's one of the loveliest people I've ever known, and Griffin is as capable a person as I've ever known. We've had some wonderful trips with them. They've went [*sic*] on a lot of governors' conferences. And he's smart as a whip. They make an interesting couple, you know, to have as good friends.

Henderson: Henry G. [Getzen] Neal.

Vandiver: Well, Henry, gosh. I told Henry one time he might as well move in the other bedroom. I can remember Henry and Ernie working, pouring over bills. Henry's a hard worker, and he meant a lot to us because he was the one that had to read, and help write, and reread the bills as they were written to be sure that what Ernie was signing was what Ernie wanted to sign 'cause, you know, the wording, that small print that you have to watch out for, Henry watched out for it to a great extent for Ernie. And I remember so many nights during the legislature and for that thirty days after the legislature, when you had that time to sign, either veto or sign the bills, Henry would be out there every night until ten-thirty or eleven working on bills and, you know, being sure that everything was exactly like it was to get Ernie to sign or veto.

In fact, the night before Ernie's heart attack I remember being in bed, and Ernie had not been feeling well, and he had stayed home that day, but it was the last day he could either sign or veto some bills. And we brought a card table up to our bedroom and put it at the end of the bed, and Ernie got up and sat at the table with Henry. They were trying to decide what to sign,

what to veto, you know, being sure everything was just right to sign it. The next day was the day, and Ernie was going to speak to the teachers, and that was the day before he had his heart attack. And he was up at--I don't know what time it was, but I know we got him out of bed and he had this crick in his neck. Henry was there. Henry wasn't married at the time so it didn't matter to him whether he was at our house or where all hours of the night. I spent a lot of time with Henry. [Laughter] He was good for both of us. He was a nice person.

Henderson: Roy V. [Vincent] Harris.

Vandiver: Institution. I have to tell you: my mother [Sybil Millsaps Russell] knew Roy Harris before I did. My mother was a charmer back in the days of the. . . I don't know. My mama was cute as pie. Daddy [Robert Lee Russell] would admit she had folks running all over Georgia to court Mama. She was so darling. And, you know, back in those days Daddy said she had a chest full of fraternity pins when he met her [laughter], and it took him time after time [laughter] to get rid of one a week.

But anyway, Roy [Abit] Nix and Roy Harris and that crowd all were--it was when Uncle Dick [Richard Brevard Russell, Jr.] was Speaker of the House, and that was back before Mama and Daddy married. And they all ran together and played in the [unintelligible]. Anyway, he was a fun person to be with. I think he . . . [was] vindictive. I think he was one of those who couldn't forget, and he had a purpose that was not exactly a purpose I liked. But, you know, he made you always feel good. All these people make you feel so good, and Roy Harris, he and Uncle Dick, you know, he wanted to be Speaker of the House when Uncle Dick was elected. I think that's right, Hal. I'm pretty sure that's right.

So, see, he was more one of those. . . . Like I say, so many of the people that we were not running with, but we had to deal with, were much older than we were. Roy Harris was much older than Ernie. So a lot of these people you'd heard about all your life. If you didn't like what they were doing you thought [*sic*] a little bit disrespectful. You now, these people you've heard of all of your life, you're not supposed to disagree with so fully, but that's interesting. I hadn't thought about my real feelings toward him. He and Ernie got along sometimes, and I know I've heard Ernie say the biggest mistake he ever made was putting him on the Board of Regents. You know, those are the kind of things I remember now.

Henderson: How 'bout Mr. Jim [James Lester] Gillis [Sr.]?

Vandiver: Oh, I love Mr. Jim. Mr. Jim was such a good right-hand man to have. He was a good right-hand man for Ernie. He managed the campaigns; he knew what he was doing; he knew the right people in the right counties. You know, Mr. Jim was, to me, the epitome of a good politician. Mr. Jim knew, as I've heard Ernie say a dozen, many times, he knew where the bodies were. He knew who was good and bad to be for you in different counties. He knew who had done right, who had done wrong, who would give money, who wouldn't give money to help you, who would expect what after you got in, if you got in, you know. Mr. Jim was just the epitome of a politician, and I think he was good and honest, that's what I mean. He's one of those that really served his state well.

Henderson: Did Governor Vandiver ever get angry at a legislator or upset with a legislator?

Vandiver: You mean individually?

Henderson: Yes.

Vandiver: Yes. I can remember, and I can't give you the names because I don't remember them that well, but I can remember, you know, he'd come home and he'd say, "You know, he came in there and he told me he was going to vote for the bill, and he went right back upstairs and voted against it." You know, Ernie just couldn't stand that. If you were going to vote against it, tell him, but don't tell him you're going to and then don't or vice versa. Don't tell him you're going to vote against it and then vote for it. That didn't make any sense at all to Ernie. So Ernie got upset, yeah, with people who expected a lot.

I remember Ernie giving campaign money back. Of course, you have to depend on the people to help you run your race, they'd give you money, and then they would come and ask him for something. And they would remind him of like eighty-five hundred dollars, and I've heard Ernie open that drawer and write out checks more than once and give them back to them, you know, and say, "Well, if that's what you gave it for, forget that." And he'd give it back to them because that's when he'd get upset, you know, if they didn't do what they said they were going to do. They didn't have to agree with them and they didn't have to do what he wanted them to, but he wanted them to tell him he was going to so he'd know where he stood with them.

Henderson: If he got angry with a legislator is he the type of person that keeps it to himself, or does he let the legislator know that he is upset with him?

Vandiver: Well, I don't know in all instances, but I know some instances that he let them know. And then, you know, later they'd tell me about it, [laughter] the next time I saw them, about how Ernie got upset with them. You know pretty well where you stand with Ernie. You know where he stands, and if those legislators disappointed him or expected something

that they shouldn't have expected or something, then a lot of it's disappointment, but a lot of it's hurt, and then that turns to anger if you really, you know. . . . Just tell him where you stand. I think that would be the [unintelligible]. I can't think of any [examples] right off the bat, but he could pull them out of a hat in a minute and tell you who it was that let him down or said they were going to do and didn't or something 'cause, like I say, he doesn't forget either.

Henderson: How would you describe your husband's personality? Is he easy-going or did he get wound up?

Vandiver: Well, he used to go like a wound-up clock, you know, back in the old days, get up running and just go like a house on fire. He's easy-going. I think one good thing you can say about him: if it's not going to help to worry, don't worry. I mean if it's not going to accomplish something, but if it'll help to worry and to think about it, do it. But I don't consider him as a worrier. I think he gives everything a lot of thought and then, when he makes up his mind, that's it, after he figures it out, and I don't consider it worry when he's thinking about it. It's more of a consideration. He's considering it from every [angle]--kind of like my daddy. It gets back to that taking two days to make up your mind, but you've given it every thought and when it's over, it's over, and then we don't worry about that anymore. But he doesn't forget. It's hard to forgive 'cause I think he thinks that everybody ought to be as sincere and as serious and as so forth as he is, and if they're not then it's kind of hard for him to forget that they weren't at the time. I'm not putting that very well, but he doesn't forget those who don't. . . . Well, a lot of times he doesn't forget if they don't respond like he thinks they should respond, and that's not always good because so many people are different, you know. No, I think he's easy-going to a point.

Henderson: Would you classify him as an introvert or an extrovert or a combination thereof?

Vandiver: I think he's a happy combination. I've always said Chip [Samuel Ernest Vandiver, III] was a happy combination 'cause Chip has a lot of introspectives [*sic*]. I mean, he's a deep thinker but he splashes a lot on top. You know, he could have more fun than anybody. Ernie is a happy medium. In fact, it's real funny, just a couple of months ago. . . . I've always been the loud one, you know, the loud one is the way I put it. I talk all the time and don't say much of anything, but Ernie, there again, he's so serious. He says what needs to be said and he's not much of just idle talk.

But Ernie and Chip went somewhere together, and Chip came home and he says, "You know"--this was really in the last six or eight months, he said, "Daddy is really a friendly, friendly person." And I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "He really enjoys"--and I don't even know now where they were, or what they had done or what, but he said, "He really enjoys seeing all those people at the" wherever they were, and he said, "He could come up with more small-talk than I thought Daddy knew." And, see, maybe it's because I've been the talker all these years, but if I'm not there and he's in a normal situation, he is the extrovert. He can talk on any given subject, maybe he is, and that was in the last couple of months Chip said that, which I found very interesting.

Henderson: While he was governor, what did he do for rest and recreation?

Vandiver: He played golf if he could, and when you're governor you get invited on an awful lot of great fishing trips, great hunting trips, you know. You get invited down to the plantations in south Georgia to go quail hunting, duck, dove, and deer. And you get wonderful

fishing trips, and everybody seems to want to be with the governor. But it's a funny thing: four days after you go out [of office] all of those people are taking the next governor. You don't realize that at the time.

I remember the first Christmas after Ernie was elected lieutenant governor. I thought the North Pole had moved to the house. It hadn't occurred to me that people did things like this. You know, we exchanged Christmas presents with who we wanted to exchange Christmas presents. Well, it looked like Christmas, sure enough, and it was just amazing to me. And then for eight years it was just something you couldn't believe, and then the next Christmas it was just like all of a sudden nobody was there, you know, which suited us just as well. You could get cynical if you wanted to because, like, the hunting trips dried up, the fishing trips. He'd take one or two a year, but then it got down to, you know, they had other people they could take that did better. And that's why I love for him to get to go on these fishing trips now 'cause there's nothing he can do for them, but they really invited him for himself, and he gets to go fishing. I love that, boy.

Henderson: Governor Vandiver has had some health problems. Could you discuss those with us?

Vandiver: He has, and, I don't know, I always go back to that old saying, and it's trite, but it's true that a heart attack is a young man's best friend. If at a time in your life that you are young you have not a horrible heart attack, of course, but a heart attack like he had, you find out what you can do and what you can't do, what's good for you to eat, and you start taking better care of yourself. After he had his heart attack they sent us. . . [laughter] somebody said as far away as you can get and be in the United States. They suggested we go to Key West because, if

you remember, it was in January and it was cold in Georgia. They said go to Key West and sit in the sun, "eat Fleischmann's," that's a commercial, but eat Fleischmann's, at the time that was the only one that had cut out a lot of fat in the oleo. And eat Fleischmann's and go sit in the sun.

And we did. There again, Mama and Berthine [Osborne Whitehead] came in and stayed with the children, and Betty Smith. And we went to Key West and sat in the sun and ate [laughter] stone crab until it came out of our ears, played gin, and stayed down there for three weeks and went fishing off the pier and came back, and it was just like he had never had it. And he really, knock on wood and thank God, has not had any serious [problems]. He has had two warnings since then, two bad warnings, that tell him he's doing too much or going too fast or slow down again. And he's really in good shape right now. In fact, right now I'd suspect he weighs about what he weighed when we got married. It's taken strenuous dieting, but he's probably in better shape right now than he's been in a long time. His feet hurt him so, but I told him we all wore our feet out running [for office] years ago.

Henderson: From your vantage point, what do you see as the stresses and strains on the governor?

Vandiver: Well, I think the disposition of the governor has a lot to do with that. It's maybe how seriously they do take the responsibility, or how seriously they take every little decision. For Ernie, well, he had stressful times. And I think the teachers' situation in '60, when he had his heart attack, I'll always feel a little bit like that the teachers, when the GEA [Georgia Educators Association] voted to not thank him, I mean, they didn't have to thank him, but they didn't have to vote to not thank him.

And he had done what he could do for the teachers and had tried to explain to them that it just wasn't there, and then for them to vote not to thank him. I think that hurt him so badly, and he was going to speak to the teachers the next day when he had his heart attack. And I don't condemn them all; I just think that voting to not thank him was just an unnecessary thing. I think those are the kind of things that hurt you, when you knew you were doing what you could do, and then, of course, the school situation was so stressful. And that trip to Milledgeville was just so horrible.

I know, when he was adjutant general, they had a lot of, one time they had four National Guard planes that just plowed into Duluth up there around Marietta. They were landing and they were a thousand feet off and they plowed. And then about a week later Skinny Goodrum, who was one of his pilots that flew him around a lot, he died in a crash, and I think that was the time in Ernie's life that was so stressful 'cause those National Guard boys, and Skinny was in the National Guard, but there was five of them just in a month, you know. He was wiped out about that. But things like that, and then you get personal, and you're losing friends along the way too, which is . . . on top of everything else you've got that.

Henderson: Does he ever complain about the daily grind of being governor, knowing that people want to contact him and call him and wanting things?

Vandiver: No, I don't think that bothered him so much. I think it was the big thing 'cause Ernie, he could shut that out if he wanted to. He just wouldn't do it if he didn't want to. It's funny, I think he was able to stop a lot of that, and we had such good people in the office, you know, and they knew when he could and couldn't, or he could just tell them, and they could take care of it. He had such great help.

I mean, Christine Lee was with him--not Christine Lee. Christine was with him from part of his [*sic*] adjutant general and his lieutenant governor and some of his governor, but Dolly Azar was with him from the time she was eighteen years old until Ernie left. She married; she had three or four or five children. Dolly Azar was with him, and she was such a charming person and able to handle any situation. You know, we had the best help. In fact, when Ernie was seventy years old we had a party and invited all the old staff back, and they all came and we had the greatest time. We hadn't seen some of them in twenty years, or thirty years, I guess it was. And he had the best, like Henry Neal Moore [unintelligible] kept the back office. [Laughter] We called him "Under Control." As I said, he wasn't married. He was just kind of an old maid as far that back office goes.

And Bee [Walter Odum] Brooks [Jr.], you know, Bee was always there keeping things, and his office went smoothly. I've always just thought how lucky we were to have such good people in the office with Ernie, taking care of all of that. We've been so lucky 'cause I've mentioned Ben Garr and T. A. [Thomas Allen] Smith and then Fanny [Smith] and David [Walker]. I couldn't have done without them. The troopers out in the thing, they were always so great. And friends in the [unintelligible], in Ansley Park, without them I was--this morning you mentioned your children on the swimming team.

Our children, they were on the Jewish community center swimming team because one of my friends down the street's children were on that team and asked our children if they'd like to join. Well, they made the team, and then they had that interest; they met friends there. Spring Street teachers were the best in the world. They had the Deacons next door. We had so

many good friends and the [unintelligible], and the children had a music teacher and a dancing teacher, and. . . . [Cut off]

End of Side One

Side Two

Henderson: In 1963, when Governor Vandiver leaves the governor's office, do you anticipate then four years later that he is going to run for the governorship?

Vandiver: I don't know. I don't think it was because I wanted to stay in Atlanta. I know it wasn't because I wanted to stay in Atlanta, but I always felt like that there was always so much that a governor could do if he could hang on, you know, could do one more [term]. There's no telling what Ernie could've done if he'd had four more years in a row like they can now. There's no telling 'cause he got so many good things going and so many things that needed--well, a lot of things were finished, I will say that, but a lot of things he started got finished, but a lot of things that never got started that he would have loved to have done never got done. I've always thought that if he had had four more years that there's just no telling.

And I guess we talked about '66, but I don't remember us talking about it. I guess we did because I guess Ernie knew he was running, or he wanted to run again because he never got out of that ham and pea circuit, and [laughter] you don't stay in it unless you have some intentions. But, you know, you never know where you're going in politics. You got senators and congressmen that are in office. You don't know whether they're going to be living. Who gets elected next has a lot to do with what your future might be. You never know. I don't know. I guess we did both know we were going to be running in '66.

Henderson: In 1966 he's the leading candidate, and then he has to withdraw. Can you discuss that episode in his life?

Vandiver: Of course, to me, it's always just panic when he would have his heart troubles. We'd gone to a powder-puff football game, and our daughter was the quarterback or the running back or whatever's supposed to be on this girl's football [team] against the teachers, the varsity, or something. Anyway, whatever it was, we went, and he started having pains, and by the time we got home they were very severe. Well, that's enough to scare you right there, and you always hope it's not bad, and you hope it's not the worst kind, but you never know. And our doctor lived next door to us, and we called him over, and he said, "Well, I think you'd better go to Athens," which was the closest hospital.

And so we did and I know what it did to Ernie. . . and then too, see, this was the year after Bob died. I think it scared Ernie. I'm sure it scares a man to have a heart attack 'cause you don't know what's coming, and I'm sure it makes you so. . . well, afraid of everything I guess. I don't know how it does. I know what it does to the wife; I know what it does to me to think that this might be a serious heart attack. But we went to Athens and he stayed over there a pretty good while, you know, for observation more than anything else, and then they dismissed him, but then it got down to this could happen every time you get--I mean, you can't keep this up. You can't do this.

And so it got down to, he just says, "You just ought not to run." And so he withdrew, and I guess you always wonder what you would have done if you'd run. Would you've won? And I think he would've won because I think there was nobody 'cause Carl [Sanders] couldn't succeed himself. I mean, you know, it works out that the man that had the most power right

then couldn't succeed himself, which might be a good reason not to be able to succeed yourself because you're certainly in power and can use the state government to get re-elected, I'm sure.

Henderson: What is the mood in the Vandiver family when he announces that he will withdraw?

Vandiver: Well, I was sad for him 'cause you knew he wanted to do it. By that time, see, the children had gotten used to be back in Lavonia. [Laughter] So there again, you would've gone through that business of "Oh, got to go to Atlanta again." I guess the children, you know, as much as they wanted Daddy to do what he wanted to do, I think they were. . . they weren't relieved, because by that time they were all getting old enough to understand all these things, but I'm sure that there was some relief there 'cause everybody had gotten back down in that rut of Lavonia and schools and that kind of business. So I think it probably was "Well, thank heavens we're not going to have go through that again, but I'm glad Daddy's all right. If he'll take care of himself, he certainly ought not to run," because they've always been very supportive, even at little ages they've been supportive.

Henderson: It seems that a lot of governors, when they leave the governor's office, and if they are attorneys, they hang around in Atlanta and become prosperous attorneys.

Vandiver: It happens a lot.

Henderson: Did Governor Vandiver ever think about doing that?

Vandiver: Well, you know, he never thought about going to back to Atlanta to live, and he never thought about going . . . well, he never thought about going back to Atlanta to live. He did, however, go to Atlanta every Monday morning and spend Monday night and come home Tuesday, and then maybe go back Thursday morning and stay 'till Friday afternoon for a couple

of years. Cook Warwick, one of our old friends, who's gone now, Cook and Jane [Warwick's wife], Cook, he and Alec Wilson had a very successful law business in Atlanta, and they asked Ernie to join it and he did.

And he enjoyed the fellowship, but he had never been into day-by-day case[work], and a former governor, what they're good for is who they know, really. It's who they can contact for clients, and that wasn't Ernie's kind of business anyway. Ernie never had enjoyed the trying to raise money to run for things. He had never enjoyed asking people for favors. He couldn't do it; he didn't want to do it. I mean, if he couldn't do it, he didn't want to ask somebody else, and it was a matter of if he had contacts in Washington, could he go see them. And he had some successful clients and some successful ventures, but it wasn't his kind of thing really, that asking somebody else for their help or asking them to do something for a client, was not his cup of tea. I don't think.

Henderson: Was it your preference to go back to Lavonia, or would you have been satisfied staying in Atlanta?

Vandiver: Oh, no, no, no. I would not have ever been satisfied staying in Atlanta. We wanted to go home, and we did, and I've never regretted it. In fact, [laughter] now I'm so excited because we didn't stay in Atlanta. It's just a rat race and not one that we want to be in.

Henderson: In 1971 Senator [Richard Brevard, Jr.] Russell dies. Jimmy [James Earl] Carter [Jr.] is governor. Was there an understanding between your husband and Governor Carter that, in the event of Senator Russell's death, Governor Carter would appoint him to the Senate?

Vandiver: Well, Hal, you know I was not anywhere with any of them, but I will tell you that if Ernie said there was an understanding, I would believe there was an understanding.

However, there could have been a misunderstanding about an understanding because it didn't happen. That was one of the most frustrating weeks I have ever spent in my life. Jane [Brevard Vandiver Kidd], our baby daughter, had been elected Miss Junior Miss in Franklin County and had been elected Miss Junior Miss in the Ninth district, and she was in the state contest for Miss Junior Miss. And I'll throw in this: Kim Bassinger was her roommate and they lived out in somebody's house in Decatur. I was trying to get Jane dressed and keep her in the Junior Miss contest. Uncle Dick had died the week before. The speculation was running hot and heavy as to whether Ernie would be appointed, and we thought he was. It was a matter of waiting to be appointed.

I mean, and we were living at a hotel in Atlanta, so we would be up there for her [Jane] in her thing, and we were kind of out of pocket at home trying to live out of a suitcase in a motel. It was just the most horrendous week, and fully expecting any minute to be [called], but never got a phone call. Well, you could imagine dozens of things: "We're not in Lavonia so he [Carter] doesn't know where we are," because I feel like there really had to be an understanding, and if Ernie says there was then. . . . I don't think he would have gone back as adjutant general if he hadn't thought that there was an understanding and he thought he could, you know, serve Jimmy Carter as adjutant general.

And let's face it: he [Carter] didn't know beans about being governor. I mean, you know, it really takes a while to get to know and you needed somebody. Here I am selfish. It was a bad week because Uncle Dick had just died, and, well, of course, we were all shaken by that. It had been a heady experience for [Richard Milhous] Nixon to come down, and all of us be exposed to all of that business, and then Jane in her Junior Miss and waiting any minute to

get the call from Jimmy Carter and never getting it and seeing Ernie waiting. And then it was over. It was, you know, quite a letdown. I hated Ernie being hurt like that.

Henderson: Why do you think that Governor Carter did not pick your husband?

Vandiver: I don't know. I've heard lots of reasons maybe why, and I'd like to believe that those aren't so. And then I've heard other reasons that, you know, he wanted his own man, and Ernie's just not somebody else's man. There's so many things I can think of. You know, like, if he had wanted to be senator, it's so easy to appoint somebody, and then you just kind of inherit it, and you don't really know. I'll never know really. Like I say, I've heard lot of things, but I don't really know. I hate to speculate.

Henderson: Did Senator Russell ever indicate to you, if something happened to him, he would like Governor Vandiver to take his place?

Vandiver: Yeah, he was so proud of Ernie. I don't know. I think he was so proud of what--he and Ernie had so many good, long conversations about "when I was governor." I mean, you know, when you get to his age, Uncle Dick, was at an age where "when I was governor we did such and such." And Ernie would say, "Well, now, good Senator, you just can't believe." And they'd discussed the budget. The budget now is, you know, like four times more than the budget was when Ernie was there, and, when Ernie was governor, it was like four times more than when Uncle Dick was governor. The budgets are just something you can't believe, how they've grown. [Laughter] And so I know we used to go up to Bob and Bett's [Betty Ann Campbell Russell] lake, and we'd all sit around the lake and we'd talk politics and talk people. And that's when they would discuss the different things, and I think Uncle Dick always did feel like that Ernie would have been. . . . He would have loved to have left it in

Ernie's hands, 'cause I think he knew Ernie well enough. Gosh, Uncle Dick died in '71, and we'd been married thirty-four years by then. He had been at every Christmas, every Thanksgiving. You know, we'd been together so much 'cause everybody kind of adopted Uncle Dick, not being married and not having a wife to do. Everybody kind of adopted Uncle Dick.

And they had been together so much, and I remember the funeral was such a . . . 'cause all the political writers, most of them, thought Ernie was going to be appointed. And they were all there to cover the funeral, but, if you realize, we still knew all them so well from the elections and the campaigns. We knew all the political writers. And it was a wild week. It really was.

Henderson: Why does your husband enter the Senate race in 1972?

Vandiver: Heaven knows, I don't, but he did [enter it], and I know it was nothing in the world except to really. . . . Maybe it's that vehement man's pride. You know, he really thought he could've been a good one, and he wanted to. And that was one of those things on that list that his daddy--when he was a young man, a young boy, Daddy Vandiver [Samuel Ernest Vandiver, Sr.] had had him make a list of what he thought he would like to be some day, and he had wanted to be the best camper, and he had wanted to be the president of the fraternity, and this list we have at home, and it was all the things he wanted to be. And he had wanted to be governor of Georgia and then he had wanted to be a U.S. senator.

Well, this is the only thing not on the list, Hal. So I guess, deep in his heart, he may have felt like he had to try for his daddy 'cause he was very loyal to his daddy. He may have felt like he had to try, and who knows why you do something like that, why you run, and especially after he'd known he couldn't run in '66 for health reasons. The '72 race was not easy on Ernie

because you can imagine he wasn't the young, young, young man that he had been in '60 and '66. But he gave it a good shot. [Laughter] We've had a lot of last hurrahs. We laugh all the time about last hurrahs, you know. Well, that was the last, last [laughter] hurrah, and I think Georgia missed out on a good bit. I think he would have been a good senator.

I don't think he would have liked it. I think it would have been so hard on him, and I know I wouldn't have liked being in Washington. And I know, bless his heart, the Christmas after the '72 election, I don't even play the organ, but I'd always thought, "If I ever get a quiet time in my life and have nothing else to do, I believe I'm going to take up the organ lessons." And I talked about that, and I'm a good one to talk about things like that all the time just on and on. And, bless his heart, for Christmas after that '72 election he gave me an organ.

Well, needless to say, I haven't learned to play it, but I had said, "Well, if we get to Washington, I know I'll have time to take organ lessons, and so I'll just get me an organ and learn to be an accomplished organist." [Laughter] Just what I was going to do. Well, he gave me an organ, and, of course, I've never learned to play it, but we both tried the best we could. And we worked hard, and enjoyed it. We enjoyed the '72 campaign, really did.

Henderson: The decision to enter the race, was this a joint decision?

Vandiver: Oh, yeah. But that was a goal, and we've always more or less worked for the same goal. And just, I guess, 'cause I feel like he can do so much, and if it takes me to help there so he can do so much, then I love doing it. I mean, it was a labor of love, but it was also something I enjoy doing. We got in that bandwagon and we hit the road.

Henderson: Talk about the bandwagon a little bit. How did that work?

Vandiver: That was an experience. It was fun. We had a kick-off at the capital, and the children and everybody was there, and we got in that van and we rode down I-85, and we started trying to hit every county in Georgia. And we did. That's where I ran into that lady that was voting, and I just happened to see that she voted for Sam [Samuel Augustus] Nunn [Jr.] after she had been so solicitous and nice. I wasn't trying, but I did see that she had voted for Nunn after she was so nice, and, you know, complimentary and so forth.

Henderson: Going back to the decision just for a moment, did you have any reservations because of health reasons whether he should run or not?

Vandiver: Yeah, I was not sure that we ought to do it, just because it's more strenuous, and even though it had changed and you used television a whole lot, it was still strenuous. A campaign is a strenuous thing. You don't eat right; you may take the right kind of exercise, but it's interspersed with stress. But it is a tiring experience, just the walking all day 'cause, see there, we'd go to a town and park around the courthouse, and then we would hit the stores, and in 1972 it wasn't half as easy as it was in 1954 and '58. As you remember, he had to get out in '66 before it got cranked up good. So we don't know how stressful that would have been, how tiring the '66 campaign would have been, but in '72 here we were ten years away from a strenuous time.

Henderson: How does campaigning, or how did campaigning change from, say, '58 to 1972? Did you do anything differently?

Vandiver: Well, we had the bandwagon and that was fun in a way. We had Keith Allen. He was a lovely little boy, lovely boy, and he drove. That was one thing that was nice

about the '72 campaign. Chip and a lot of his buddies had a lot to do with that, and they were at the headquarters, and it was something they believed in, you know.

No, it's real funny 'cause we had so many young people working with us that time. It was like a second go-around because Chip and a lot of his friends, I can just see them right now, they manned the headquarters, and Jane was up there. They all moved to Atlanta and lived with friends or family. And they were in Atlanta during the day and we were on the road. And we had this fine young man, Keith Allen, who drove the bandwagon. He was fun to be with. He and I . . . I don't know, we just kind of got along so well because he just admired Ernie so. And that's what I loved about those young people. They worked hard for Ernie because they believed in him, you know.

Bob [Robert Lee] Russell [III] was up there, Bob Junior, Chip and George Woelper and Keith Allen and--I won't name names because I'd leave out somebody, but there were a lot of young people up there, and Ruth [Read] and Big Ruth and Ruby Wimberly, and you know, all these people that--Ruby Wimberly had been one of the ones without whom I couldn't have moved in the mansion. She came in with fresh hand towels, you know, and pimento cheese sandwiches those first days we were in the mansion when I didn't know where the kitchen was, much less how to make the pimento cheese in the kitchen. But, anyway, all these people rallied around the '72 election, and it was a heart breaker to lose because there were so many people that rallied around.

Henderson: Why do you think your husband lost that election?

Vandiver: Hal, I've said this so many times. I guess it's what I believe, but it was one of those things you say, and, as you know, I have a tendency toward saying. . . anything I say, I say

over and over again, then I get to believing it. But I think actually the first couple races we had such a good nucleus of young people. These are just my ideas strictly, and I've thought about it a lot, but we had a lot of older people because Georgia needed a good, young governor at the time, and people like Mr. Sibley, who helped so much, and Louie Newton. I can think of so many older people who helped in '54 and '58. And then by '72 those people had gotten too old. They were at the prime in '58, and then fifteen years later they were too old.

It wasn't that they didn't care. It was they didn't have the energy and the burning desire for a new Georgia that they had in '58, which they needed. Somebody had to take over the state in '58 that could do it and do it right. And I've always said we were just before our time because all of our helpers got too old to work. You know, they were for Ernie and they were more able to send him fifty dollars or a hundred dollars than they were to go out and tack up posters, which they had done in '58. And then, you know, by the time you ran in '72, a lot of that was so.

Plus, I'm sure the segregation issue had something to do with it because that was the deep issue that people. . . . And there's still people in Georgia, you know that, that think it was a mistake that shouldn't have been done. And every now and then you'll get a letter from somebody that'll just be ticked off about "no, not one," and it'll start that hurt over again. You know, just every now and then somebody [unintelligible] come, and, well, the flag issue has hurt me 'cause Ernie is sincere in that the flag is not anything racist. It's not anything ugly. It's just the flag because of the centennial, and he knows that and it hurts him. Well, anyway, those are the kind of things I think he defeated him in '72.

A lot of people worried about his health. They thought, "Well, he's older. He couldn't run in '66. How can he run now?" So I think that's a lot of that. I don't think it had anything to do--I never shall forget saying, you know how they said, "Jimmy who?" I says, "Sam who?" 'Cause Sam Nunn, I had never even heard of Sam Nunn when he announced, and in my heart Ernie was going to win, and, whether we liked it or not, we were going to Washington. And Sam Nunn appeared on the scene, and I know we got to be really good friends with Sam. I didn't get to know Colleen [Nunn] 'cause they campaigned differently. Ernie and I have never campaigned separately. We were together everyday, but Colleen went one way and Sam was at another end of the state, so I never did get to know Colleen, but I got to know Sam real well.

It's really funny. Ernie's sister and Sam Nunn's mother knew each other at Wesleyan [College] back in the early twenties, and she could talk about, you know, Sam, that little boy. We really grew fond of Sam, and I think it was kind of a mutual understanding that whoever got in the run-off, which we kind of fully expected to do that, but whoever got in the run-off with Dave [David Henry Gambrell], that the other one would help do what they could, and that's the way it turned out.

Henderson: Please describe your husband in the following categories.

Vandiver: Oh, Hal.

Henderson: As a politician.

Vandiver: Sincere to the point of it not being a whole lot of fun for him because he's so sincere with it that it's hard to laugh at some of the things that happen.

Henderson: As a speaker.

Vandiver: I think he's really good. He does better off the cuff than he does trying to follow. If he knows what he's got to say it's harder for him to say it than if he just gets up and says what he's feeling about something, but I think he's a good one. You know, I think you met Louise Wilder.

Henderson: Yes.

Vandiver: Oh, she's still asking when the book's going to come out. [Laughter] "And I want to be sure and have one." Anyway, she was one of his expression teachers and Mrs. [Marshall] Allison was one, and then he did the debating team at Darlington and at Georgia and so forth. And I think he has a forceful, forceful way of speaking. He's doesn't throw in much levity. It's not natural for him to bring in a whole lot of levity in his speaking, but, I tell you, during '58 he was a real good stump speaker.

I can remember one funny story. Sam Shineman, whom we loved dearly, he was the PR [public relations] man for the firm in Atlanta that handled all the radio hook-ups and so forth. Sam had a heart condition. It was a bad one, and he died about a year and a half after Ernie won [in 1958]. But Sam was the one that was there and was supposed to synchronize everything and get everything down. And he would be reading the speech and Ernie would be making it, and Sam would decide that Ernie wasn't going to get through in time, and I would look back and Sam would be popping nitro [nitroglycerin] because it would upset him so, and Ernie would end right on the nick. Ernie had it down pat and he never missed a cue. The last word of his speech got on, but Sam back there popping nitro because he didn't believe it. We used to kid Sam all the time about how if Ernie had had one more barbecue we would have lost Sam on the stump because he absolutely just knew Ernie wasn't going to make it, and he would panic

because he would think the last two lines were not going to be on radio or something, you know, were going to get cut-off. And Ernie would get through every time. I never doubted that Ernie would get through on time. But he's a good speaker.

Henderson: How would you compare his speaking style with, say, Marvin Griffin's?

Vandiver: Oh, all the difference. You know, that levity I'm talking about. Marvin Griffin could make anybody laugh over anything, great storyteller, and his speeches, as I remember them, and I will have to admit I was trying to shake hands when he was doing more of his speaking, but he had just a levity about him and a lightness that Ernie could not have. Ernie could never get light, and you sometimes wish he could have enjoyed it a little bit more. You know, that's the way you are.

Marvin Griffin was a light [speaker]. I mean, I know he meant well with what he was saying, and he thought he was saying the right, but it's till a lightness because he could always flip back on to something light and airy about something that may've made you forget what he was trying to say. I don't know. You know, I just wasn't use to the light speakers, I guess.

Henderson: How would you compare Governor Vandiver's speaking style with Herman [Eugene] Talmadge's?

Vandiver: Well, there again, Ernie's not that old stump [speaker]. I think of Herman as the old . . . my grandfather [Richard Brevard] Russell [Sr.] used to talk about "orators" [orators], and you talk about an "orator" and he was saying o-r-a-t-e-r. But there was some joke, and I won't even try to tell the joke, but it got down to the "durndest orators" he had ever seen, but it was an "orator." But I think of Herman as an old stump [speaker]. He gets going and he gets that cadence and that. . . . He's [Ernest Vandiver] no "orator" is all I can say about him.

[Laughter] He's no "orator," and I'll try to remember that joke someday and tell you. But it was something about the "durndest orator" he had ever seen. That was my Papa Russell who was quite an orator himself, I think.

Henderson: One more comparison, Governor Vandiver's speaking style with Walter [Franklin] George's?

Vandiver: Oh, now, Hal, I'm not old enough. [Laughter] I did not hear many of Senator George's speeches, I'll say that. I do remember him. I do remember. Well, I would think that his was. . . I don't know what the word was. I started to say a statesman, but, see, I feel like Ernie was a statesman. But his was a polished, statesman-like approach to any speech. I didn't hear but one or two speeches of his so I don't really remember, but it was more of a polished lesson rather than a wild speaker. Now he may have been a speaker on the stump when he was younger, but, see, he was really old when I got into all of this. In fact, gosh, see, what, Herman went up in what?

Henderson: '56.

Vandiver: '56. Well, see. I wasn't thirty years old, and I wasn't interested in Senator George. I was doing Ernest Junior, doing Ernest Vandiver. But I guess I never heard a whole-- see, he never had opposition the whole time I knew him. If you heard him he was making that ham and pea circuit. He wasn't running for anything 'cause he had it. 'Course I'll always love him because he sponsored Daddy in the face of Uncle Dick's opposition just 'cause Uncle Dick didn't think he could do it. But Senator George was an old-timey statesman, you know. He was what the Senate was made up of for years and years.

Henderson: Well, I cannot pass this by, compare Senator Russell's speaking style with Governor Vandiver's.

Vandiver: Well, you know, it's real funny 'cause, there again, Uncle Dick, after the '36 campaign, he never really had any opposition. I remember him speaking in '36. I remember him speaking for governor, and, see, I was a young, young girl then because I was born in '27 and Uncle Dick went in in '30 but then in '33, I mean, it's all along there, so I was four or five years old. But I can remember the victory celebration in Winder, and Uncle Dick thanking the people from Winder and Barrow county, Grandmother and Papa being there, and all of us in the middle of the street, and it was the biggest thing that had happened in a long, long time. And I guess as a child that's why I remember it 'cause I was four years old, I guess. And that's one of my earliest memories, is that hullabaloo in the main street in Winder, Georgia, under the red light, the only red light we had, and I guess that's why it impressed me so. I never heard Uncle Dick make many speeches that were campaign speeches because after '36 he never really had any big opposition. He had beaten the Talmadge machine and that kind of took care of that. I mean, you know, if you beat that machine then you didn't have to worry for a while. So he never did really have any--who was that? Somebody ran against him one time. I've forgotten. I'll have to look that up too. But anyway, he never had another hard race, and so I never heard him make [speeches] except when he was running for president.

Henderson: Did you ever hear [Eugene] Gene Talmadge give a campaign speech?

Vandiver: I really can't say I did. I really cannot say that I did. I remember the adjectives that were used to describe him and his speeches. I remember reading so much, and Ernie and I talked so much about the tree climbing Haggards and the people in the back. I can

think "campaign speech and voices from the rear and people in the trees," but it's all mixed up with Uncle Dick and Herman and Gene and Ernie and all the speeches I've probably heard and heard about in my life. I've heard of tree climbing Haggards all my life, and I really don't know whether I've ever heard or seen a tree climbing Haggard. I know they were from over in northeast Georgia. I know that they were real people, and they're still some Haggards over there that probably were big Talmadge people. And, of course, Ernie had an awful lot of Talmadge support just by being Herman's AG [adjutant general] for six years, you know. He had a lot of Herman's support, and you realize that and you have to appreciate that.

Henderson: How close were Herman Talmadge and Ernest Vandiver?

Vandiver: Well, Herman was in our wedding. Let's see, we married in '47, and that was in between all that mess, and he and Betty [Leila Elizabeth Shingler Talmadge] came to the wedding and he was in it. Ernie and Herman had been good friends because Ernie's father and old Gene had been such good friends. Herman's a little bit older. Well, he said he was eighty the other day. We were talking and he had had his eightieth birthday in November. So he's older than Ernie, but they had grown up in the same atmosphere because of Daddy Vandiver being such a Talmadge person. I would consider them close friends. It's not like we get together once a month. We go for three years without seeing him, but we're always so glad to see he and Linda now, you know. It's just a whole new ball game when we get together.

Henderson: What would you consider the major accomplishments of the administration of Ernest Vandiver?

Vandiver: Well, when he ran, he ran on efficiency and economy and honesty in government. And I really believe he accomplished all that. He wiped out so much bad doing,

and he got the state going on a good even level spending-wise. He got rid of a whole lot of extra jobs that they didn't need, extra departments, that kind of stuff that he didn't need. He did that: honesty, efficiency, and economics, economy. But I think saving the schools in Georgia, [that's] number one, 'cause that's something that really had to be done, and then I think his mental health program meant the most.

There was so much highway building. Gosh, see, you can't get going. There was highway building; there was National Guard building; there was school buildings, hospitals. Somebody used to say your daddy built this and built that, and they knew he didn't build it. This was in age where, if you built it, you did it with hammers and saws, you know. But he had built--my mama used to say, "I've been waxing floors all day," and my mama never waxed a floor in her life, but she would say, "Oh, we've just waxed all the floors in the house all day."

Well, Ernie just built, but he had armories that were built during his administration; he had hospitals. I think one thing he did that's so great was he either did, or built, or had built, or whatever all the trade schools. I think it was like twenty-four trade schools that were started or contracted for and so forth. Look at the trade schools now, what all this vo-tech [vocational-technical training] has meant to Georgia getting industry, and we can train them, you know, and all those kind of things that are kind of heady and serious for me to talk about, but it happened.

And I start thinking about all the highways that were built and the airports and the so forth 'cause it was a turning point in Georgia's history. It was after the war. The economy was booming. I say the economy was booming. The federal government had started sending money down for anything and everything, and states were crazy not to take it and run, you know, take it and run bills [?], whatever they were building.

His trade mission. You have to think about now we sit down here in St. Simon's and watch these boats come in, and I know that because Ernie had that first trade mission they went over there and it started. They let them know that Brunswick and Savannah had ports, and now we've got thousands of [imported] cars coming in here [Brunswick] weekly. These kinds of things, I just feel real proud of them, and I think schools and mental health and getting the government going again on an even keel 'cause he was so lucky with the men that chose to work with him 'cause all the good men that he has came and. . . . It's a sacrifice to work for the state if you do it right. It was back then. I think the salaries now are, you know, commensurate to other jobs, but back then it was a loss to work for the state. If you had a good job in Atlanta in a bank, or you had a good law firm with making pretty good money, it was a sacrifice or at least a loss of income to go to work for the state. Mr. [James Lester] Gillis [Sr.], [Curtis] Dixon Oxford, Bill [William Redding] Bowdoin, all these people that stopped in mid-life, mid-stream and came and gave a year or two or three or four to the state just to help. And that's what I call is a good politician or a good statesman.

Henderson: Do you see any major shortcomings or failures with the Vandiver administration?

Vandiver: Oh, I'm sure there are some, and I'm sure there are a lot of people who didn't get what they want, who think that that should have been done during the--the teachers, they never were satisfied. They probably didn't get what they wanted. If you couldn't give everything to everybody. . . . I'm sure that there are a lot things that could've been done. The teachers, as I say, they always wanted more money, and they were underpaid. They're still underpaid, as far as, you know. . . but there's so many of them and it's such a--you start, and I

won't get off into that, but you start giving a raise, you've got so many people to give it to that it gets into being a tremendous amount of money. It's not like if you could pick and choose, but you can't pick and choose. All teachers need a raise. Everybody knows that, and I think they're going to get some of them through this lottery, whether you--I heard from my daughter they're going to get a 3% raise this year.

Now whether they do or not, we'll wait and see, but, I mean, you know there were a lot of things. You know, the dentists would have liked to have a gotten another bill through that let them do the. . . . The chiropractors, everybody wants a bill through the legislature. It's amazing to me. You don't even know. There're boards and bureaus. Every beautician in Georgia wants to be on the beauty board. [Laughter] Every chiropractor wants to be on the chiropractor board. You know, there's always those kind of things, and I'm sure that there are a lot of people that didn't get what they wanted that would've liked to.

Henderson: Final question for our interview: what do you think is the place of Ernest Vandiver in the history of the state of Georgia?

Vandiver: Well, you have to realize I'm prejudiced from the very beginning, but I do think. . . . I wish I had a way with words so I could. . . but I think he was such a wonderful beginning for a new Georgia. I think there was a turning point there where Georgia could have become just another Southern state, but I do think that he was governor at the right time to start. He was willing to take the hurt of the whole state to get us on an even track, and it did. It hurt him; it was political suicide some people say, but he was willing to do it for Georgia and for the children of Georgia. And I feel like the things he did started Georgia on a whole new beginning.

It gets back to that politician and statesman, and old time politics and new time government rather than political state--I just think he was the right man at the right place to get Georgia going on a new path. I look around and see so many things he did, and so many things that got started. Now, he was not able to finish a lot of things because he--that four years in a new world 'cause there was so much to overcome actually, and I don't mean that to slander anybody, but there was a lot to overcome, and I think he was the person to get it started on the right track.

If you think about it, we have not had any horrible scandals in Georgia politics. I mean, the revenue department hadn't been under surveillance and all that kind of stuff. Of course, there're going to be some slip-ups. If you're dealing with people, you going to have some. But actually I feel like he was there at the beginning of a whole new Georgia. I think if he had closed the schools, if he hadn't worked on the mental health, if he hadn't, you know, built the highways and that kind of stuff, or if they hadn't been built during his administration, then Georgia could be just another Southern state.

But as it is, I think the whole United States knows that Georgia is more or less the leading state in the South as far as industry. Atlanta has become a mecca for the whole world. I mean, we've got embassies up there now, and a lot of that is because of the trade that was brought in, because it's recognized [that] it didn't close--it's amazing the things that happened because the schools were not closed and because the vo-tech schools were started, and we could train the people to do the things that they wanted done.

The airport in Atlanta, I don't think Ernie had anything to do with that, but that airport is something that brings the whole world. You know, they say you can't go anywhere without

going through Atlanta. That's about the truth, and I really, as I say, I know I'm very prejudiced, but I know Ernie had so much to do with keeping the state of Georgia on an even keel at a time that it could have just gone back down to nothing and have [had] to start completely over again. And a lot of the Southern states had to start over completely because of that, just because of the integration/segregation trouble. I just think that he was the right man at the right time to do the right thing to get Georgia going.

Henderson: Mrs. Vandiver, I want to thank you for granting me this interview. I have certainly enjoyed it.

Vandiver: Oh, Hal, I'll tell you, I've enjoyed it so much. Don't put it on tape. I have enjoyed it so much and you are a joy to talk to. [Laughter] You really are. You bring out my best thoughts I think, because it's really been a joy.

Henderson: Well, thank you.

End of Side Two

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