

Harold Paulk Henderson, Sr. Oral History Collection
OH Vandiver 14
Jane Brevard Vandiver Kidd Interviewed by Dr. Harold Paulk Henderson
Date: 02-27-94
Cassette #463 (53 minutes)

EDITED BY DR. HENDERSON

Side One

Henderson: This is an interview with Jane Brevard [Vandiver] Kidd. The date is February 27, 1994, and this interview is taking place at Governor Vandiver's home in Lavonia. My name is Dr. Hal Henderson. Jane, thank you for granting me this interview.

Kidd: Well, we've been interested in knowing [laughter] what our part was going to be.

Henderson: Let me begin by asking you to describe your father [Samuel Ernest Vandiver, Jr.] as a person and then as a parent.

Kidd: Well, as a person he is intelligent, thoughtful, articulate. He probably has more integrity than anybody I've ever known. He's just an honest person. He's very sincere and very earnest. I mean, his name does fit. He is an earnest person. I would think that honest and courageous and strong are words that I would use to describe him as a person.

As a parent he's really the same, you know, he has always been that type of influence on us, I think, stressing integrity and perseverance. I mean, you know, we would have conversations around the dinner table about being strong and always doing the best that you can and always helping other people, and, you know, that's what life is all about, is to make your world a better place. I think in an age of very few statesmen he is one of the last statesmen-like people that I know, and he was like that as a father. He was always very concerned about us, and interested in what was going on and, supportive of the good things that we'd done, and

corrective of the things he thought were mistakes, and always wanted us to be the best we could be.

Henderson: Let me ask you the same question relative to your mother.

Kidd: Mama [Sybil Elizabeth "Betty" Russell Vandiver] is. . . . I can't think of almost somebody who's. . . . The word perfect comes to mind. [Laughter] She's just a sweet, loving, supportive person. She loves all people; she loves all things. She's never given us anything but love, and we've seen a marriage where she was totally devoted and in love with our father every moment. She's really just the kindest, most compassionate person I know. My husband [David Alexander Kidd, Sr.] and I have thought about it a whole lot, and his grandmother was a lot like my mother, and they loved each other. Mama loved her. We called her Nona, and Mama and Nona were pals, and they played bridge together some. And she was much older than Mama, but they were just strong from within, but as gentle and sweet as you can be on the outside, but very strong, she's a very strong person, probably the strongest woman I know.

Henderson: What do you see as the major differences between your father's personality and your mother's personality?

Kidd: Daddy is more serious. He takes things more seriously. He enjoys himself and has a good sense of humor and is a fun, loving person, but he is a more serious person and thoughtful in the sense of thoroughness and detail oriented and fact oriented and detail oriented. Mama is more emotional and feelings oriented, and so they're really a good compliment to each other because sometimes Daddy doesn't consider--it always comes in the end--but I think sometimes, when he's thinking through something or going through a process of decision making, he doesn't weigh feelings or how it might affect others until the end or at some later point. But

that's where Mama starts and goes back the other way, so they're a real good compliment to each other.

Henderson: Is your father more reserved than your mother?

Kidd: Oh yes. I think Mama has always been kind of the jubilant, assertive . . . well, he's always an assertive person, but as far as personalities go, he's more reserved; she's more outgoing, and that's been very good for him, you know, seeing it from a political stance and from working with a politician like I am now. I see that that's a very important side of a couple in public life, and I think that's one reason why they've been so successful, is because Mama was always the person who remembered everybody's name and remembered who their cousin was, when the last time she saw them was, and Daddy always had, you know, all the issues under hand and underway. I just think they were a good compliment to each other.

Henderson: What influence has your father had on your life?

Kidd: Well, I think probably determination and strength. I tend to be a pretty determined person, and he always told us we could do anything we wanted to. We had to work hard for it, but anything we decided we wanted to do we could do, that we were capable of anything, and I've always thought that. I mean, I've never thought any less of what I've done with my life is exactly what I've set out for myself. I never felt victimized or like something wasn't good to me. You know, I'm totally responsible for the outcome of my life because you make it what you want it to be and your totally responsible for it, and I think that strength and determination comes from Daddy. I mean, it's up to you. Nobody else is going to do it for you, and you've got to persevere and do whatever you think is best.

Henderson: Several people that I've talked with make reference to your father having a stubborn streak. Do you think that's a fair characterization of your father?

Kidd: I think he can be stubborn. In his determinedness most of his ideas and feelings are well thought out. Because of that he thinks he's right, and he will fight, you know, to prove that he's right [laughter], so I do think that he can be stubborn, but in my experience most of the time he is right. [Laughter]

Henderson: Can he admit when he is in error, that he has made a mistake and go on? Some people will never make that admission.

Kidd: He will always admit if there's something factually wrong, and, you know, if something's documented and someone says, "Here, look at it. See, you were not right about that." I mean, he wouldn't hesitate for a moment. He's a little less hesitant to regret the encounter or maybe the event that went around the disagreement, but in many, many ways he lets you know that he's sorry or that he was wrong, but I can't think of many times [laughter] when he's been wrong.

Henderson: How old were you when your father was elected governor?

Kidd: I guess I was five because I started kindergarten in the fall after we went into the mansion. Well, actually I guess started kindergarten in January after Daddy was inaugurated, and started kindergarten and started the first grade the next fall. So I must have been five, and then I turned six in February and started school that next year.

Henderson: Who was the disciplinarian in the family?

Kidd: Well, Daddy had overall, I mean, he was the overall disciplinarian. I hate to say it, but I heard Beth [Vanna Elizabeth Vandiver] say this and I can't think of another way to put it,

but Mama did take care of the day-to-day kinds of things, but when it came to report cards or major offenses or issues of truth, you know, truth or things like that then Daddy was the ultimate disciplinarian. Mama was the day-to-day guiding influence, but Daddy was the ultimate, you know. If Mama said, "I'll have to talk to Daddy." I mean, if you asked her something and she said, "Well, I can't answer that. I'll have to talk to Daddy," then you knew he was going to make the final decision. 'Cause she would make the decision on the day-to-day basis of some things that we could do and didn't do and how to discipline us, but if it was going to the higher court then you knew it was Daddy, and it was a serious matter [if] he was going to be involved in that.

Henderson: What was the most serious punishment he would inflict on someone ?

Kidd: Well, I've been spanked. He would spank.

Henderson: Would your mother ever spank, or did she reserve that. . . ?

Kidd: Yeah, you know, she would. No, Mama would, and I'm sure--see, I was the little brat. I mean, I was the spoiled brat. I enjoyed every moment of being in the mansion. I mean, I took advantage of it. It was delight for me. It embarrassed Beth. Beth was shy and could not believe. . . . I probably just embarrassed her to death, and Chip [Samuel Ernest Vandiver III] was old enough to enjoy the things he could enjoy, but I think he wasn't--Mama and Daddy always treated us very normally, made an effort for Mama to take us to school every day and pick us up, and to do normal things, and have a normal childhood, and we went to public schools. We were told we weren't any better than anybody else, you know. We just didn't really feel like that, but then I've always been kind of a showboat and theatrical type, and so I got into a lot of mischief.

Henderson: Did you ever get any criticisms from your classmates because of something your father did as governor?

Kidd: You know I don't remember that at all. No, you know, the hardest part is that people assume you think you're better than they are, and they assume that if you get something, if you achieve something, you didn't earn it. You were given it. I was a big achiever, and that was always the hardest part for me. I'm like Daddy in a lot of ways. I mean, I wanted to win things. I wanted to compete. I was always competitive, and it always hurt me so badly when people would just assume that I had been given something because of Daddy when I really worked very hard for it, and sometimes had to work harder to overcome, you know, overcome those things. So that was probably the hardest part of being a child of a governor or somebody that was known or famous because you really had to work harder at being nicer, being kinder, making sure people didn't think you were a snob or, you know, felt superior to anybody. We worked hard at that. I mean, I've always worked hard at that because I've always been real self-conscious of how people just assume that you are because of things you've done or people you've known or some things you've seen.

Henderson: Is this something your parents also made sure that you did?

Kidd: They were always, I think sometimes the toughest discipline--or the times when they were most disturbed with us was when we would act like a normal child under those circumstances, that we were bigger than somebody else or better than somebody else. I mean, I was the worst. I'd ride my bike down Fourteenth Street and got stopped by a policeman, and he said, "Little girl, don't you think you ought to go home? You're a long way from a home," and I said, "I am Jane Vandiver, and my father is the governor, and I can go anywhere I want to."

[Laughter] And they promptly put my bike in their car and brought me home. [Laughter] And, I mean, I did that a lot. When I think back on it, it embarrasses me to think how obnoxious I was, but I was. I was pretty obnoxious. We did a lot of things. I don't know if Mama and Daddy told you the story where when we first moved into the mansion my cousins were staying with us from Winder, some of the Russells. Vicky Russell [Nancy Victoria Russell] and I, and I guess one other person, went down the street and knocked on all the doors and told them that a million dollars had been stolen from the mansion, and that our father had given us permission to search every house on the street. And you would not believe the number of people who let us in! I can to this day remember going up and down in people's houses and looking in their closets, and they were all standing behind us laughing their heads off. And finally this grumpy old lady down the street named Mrs. Smiley of all things called Mama and told her what we were doing, and we were sent back to apologize to everybody, but nobody was home when we went back to apologize. [Laughter] We didn't ring as many doorbells on our way back to apologize.

But we had a wonderful time as children there, but, I mean, we also, as fun as we had [*sic*], and we just were kind of a fun loving family, but as much fun as we had, we had the orphan parties at Christmas time. And we would all be down there. We'd have all the piles of things that went in their sacks, and we'd all get in an assembly line and pack these sacks going to the orphans, and then we'd be a part of the party and get to know them, and they come to the mansion and have parties. So it was impressed upon us all the time that Daddy's job was a public servant; he was there to help people, to do right, you know, to try to make things better

for everybody, and that we weren't any better than anybody else. And Mama wanted everything to be normal.

Mama is real, I mean, to this day [laughter]. . . . Elizabeth [Kidd], when she found out Elizabeth was going to be in this beauty pageant Thursday night, she sent her a little note that said "Congratulations! Congratulations!" but it was always "Pretty is as pretty does," and "Beauty's only skin deep." You know, there was a big message there that just 'cause this has happened, you know, what's really important in this world is to be a pretty person on the inside. That's always been a big message from both of them, that we didn't have anything to brag about other than any achievement that we'd worked hard for just like anybody else.

Henderson: How would you describe the marriage of your parents?

Kidd: Well, it's funny. I think it's really [laughter] . . . they'll think this is funny. I think it has shifted as probably all good marriages do over the years. Mama has always been supportive. They've always been totally in love with each other. I mean, I've never known a time when they weren't adoring and gracious and kind and sweet and loving toward each other, and I think Mama at a very young age accepted her role as Daddy's helper, and she would do anything to help him in any way as a budding politician and [unintelligible]. She was raised in the Russell family. I mean, everybody had been running for office all her life. She knew what that was like, and so she knew how to help him in those years. But I don't remember her being- -I'm sure Daddy has always depended on her views and her opinions of the next step and how to go and big decisions. I'm sure they've discussed it. I was never really a part of that decision making process, but Mama was always there to support him in any way that needed to be taken care of.

But I think when he was at his height of government and public involvement, Mama was more in the background and the perfect role of supporting lady. I think now they're more equal and more side-by-side companions. He gives as much to her as she ever gave to him and vice versa. She gives as much to him, and I think they've really enjoyed each other as friends in the last twenty years, you know. I guess because you have more time together after your children leave home, but I do think they've enjoyed each other a lot more as partners and friends and had time to do that over the last twenty-five years or so. And they're a real good match.

Henderson: You have already alluded to this one time, but could you come back and discuss again living in the governor's mansion. What kind of a facility was it? Was it a large, spacious mansion? Was it cramped?

Kidd: [Laughter] We called it the mansion, so it sounds like a mansion. It was a huge rock home. It was big, and I remember the first day we ever moved in. We ran around like crazy children, just up the stairs and down the stairs, and there was a front stairway that was long and flowing, and it went up and then curved all the way back around. It was the one you would see, but there was a back stairway that would come down, and you could either go into the breakfast room or come out to the living room or go back around to the kitchen, work your way back to the kitchen. There was a long hall. It was really a service area for entertaining.

There was, you know, a music room, and a big yard, and the state patrolmen were behind, were in a rock facility behind us, and they were our big buddies. We knew them all by first names. When I got report cards I'd take them down there and tell them they needed to give me a quarter for every A. We were just totally obnoxious. I think I pulled their gun on them

one time. [Laughter] They used to keep their guns on their bunk beds in the back room, and I think I just walked right back there and said [unintelligible], you know.

We were real characters. But we had dogs. We had French poodles and little Chihuahuas. We just had a real happy childhood. There was a black man named Thomas that was in the kitchen for a while and then David [Walker] was in the kitchen. We'd get dressed and come downstairs, and David [Walker] would ask us what we wanted for breakfast and he'd fix something. And he had this big grill, you know, a huge thing, and he would cook great breakfasts for us, and Chip would be learning something for school. I can remember him learning *The Highwayman* and trying to memorize it sitting there eating his bowl of cereal and talking about the "highwayman came riding, riding. . . ."

Daddy was home most nights. We ate dinner with him almost every night. I remember doing that. I'm sure there were times when they were gone, but usually when he traveled Mama went with him, and either my grandmother or my aunt or somebody would come stay with us. And then I heard Beth mention Fanny Smith was always there with us. She was like another mother. I still think about her. When she got older--well, when I had Elizabeth she came to Lavonia. We lived in Lavonia at that time, and Fanny Smith came to Lavonia and stayed with my husband and me for a week when Elizabeth was born.

She mainly cooked, and she was not ever a cook with us, but she certainly knew how to cook. It was springtime and David [Walker] had a garden, and she would make creamed corn. You know, it was just the comfort of knowing she was there with a brand new baby and everything. So Fanny was a real important part. She would let you know it if she wasn't happy with you, and she wasn't ever, ever mean or cruel, but she would tell you she was disappointed,

and she would tell you the way good girls thought and the way you were supposed to think . . . about washing your teeth. I always thought that was funny. She would say wash your teeth instead of brush your teeth.

She finally told me one time that she had her feelings hurt when Mother's Day came around and I didn't send her a card. Well, it had never occurred to me that that would mean, you know, that that was something that would mean something to her. So the last years of her life I always sent her a Mother's Day card, but it was really something I had never thought of. You know, in college I ran into a man, a young boy, who Fanny had worked for too, and he was one of eight children of a Catholic family in Atlanta. And we met each other. Somehow we were sitting next to each other after class, and I said something--I was reading a paper, and I said something about "I used to have a nurse or a nanny that took care of me, and I just loved her so much. Her name was Fanny." And he said, "Well, mine was too." And we got to know each other because of this common bond of having Fanny Smith be a real important person in our life.

Fanny loved soap operas and she loved her family. Sometimes I'd get the characters all mixed up. I didn't know who were her children and who were the characters on the soap opera. She was something else, and she would tell you. You would never call her a name. If you slipped and introduced her to one of your friends and called her a maid, she would say, "I am not a maid. I'm a nurse." It was very clear that she was there to take care of us and not the house. But she was a strong, wonderful person. I can't think of a better influence than Fanny.

That's a long answer to a simple kind of question, but it was a pretty, what I would think of as a normal childhood. We each had a bedroom. Well, Beth and I started off rooming

together, and then we fought too much, so they separated us, and then they made a bedroom out of an upstairs den for me. But we had an adjoining bathroom. And Chip was a little bit down the hall, and there was guest room across the hall and an ironing room. That's where Fanny would watch her shows and iron. Then Mama and Daddy's room was down at the end of the hall. Their room was here and a big bathroom straight ahead, and then there was another guest bedroom. And they had put together a king-sized bed and a queen-sized bed together with one bedspread. It was the biggest bed you've ever seen.

Of course, that became our trampoline, and we called it the sick room because that was the room next to Mama and Daddy. If you were sick you'd go in there, and you'd lay in that bed with, you know, more bed on either side of you. You just didn't want to fall in the crack. When we had friends to spend the night, we'd all sleep in that room. After we jumped on it. And off that room was what we called the upstairs playroom, and that was where our TV was, and sofa, and where we played a whole lot.

We lived in every room of the house. I mean, it was never a museum until people would come, and I would show them around for a quarter. I would take them upstairs. I mean, Mama was so embarrassed. Many times I would sit down, and I would meet her in the kitchen with three people in tow, and I'd already taken them upstairs, shown them all the rooms, and then ended up down in the kitchen and said, "Mama, look who's here." I was, oh, I was precocious. But we lived in every corner of the house. There was no museum. There was no historical type facility. There weren't people tromping in and out to view anything. It was our home, and the den was our den, and the living room was our living room. I don't remember eating in the dining room very often. We had a breakfast room that we ate in most of the time.

So it was spacious, but it was not like it is today, you know, with the new mansion and with it being a public facility, which I can see merits to that. But this was really a home, and we had friends spend the night, and we had parties, and we had a real pretty normal childhood.

Henderson: What did the Vandiver family do for rest and relaxation?

Kidd: We used to bowl. After Daddy had his heart attack they wanted him to exercise, and so we would all go bowl sometimes. We had a boat on Lake Lanier, and almost every weekend--it's hard for me to imagine Daddy being able to do this, you know, being able to break away and be gone on Saturdays and Sundays, but we would pack up on Friday afternoons and everybody had their job and everybody knew what they had to do. And we'd load up the car, go to Lake Lanier. Everybody would unpack the car, go to the boat, and get on that boat, and we'd go out and dock out on a little buoy and stay overnight and ski. We had a little runabout too, so we would ski off that and swim off that and do that almost every weekend. It seemed to me that--and we'd get to take friends. Somebody would get to take a friend one weekend. Somebody would get to take a friend, so we did that. The bowling, Beth and I were really small, and we would sit at the end of the aisle of that alley and just push our balls. Beth was good at that. She could get a strike just pushing better than anybody I know.

Henderson: Was there ever a question about security when you went to Lake Lanier or when you went anywhere? I mean, did state troopers follow along behind you?

Kidd: No, I don't remember them ever going to the lake with us or bowling. There were a couple of times. . . . I never felt in danger ever, but a couple of times some people would come up the front, walk up the front--there were steps that just went forever from the street. It was on top of a huge hill with a boxwood hedge all the way around it. It had little places where we

could creep through, and it crept out over the sidewalk so much that the sidewalk was very little. And I will tell you about the Klu Klux Klan. Mama may have told you, but they were marching in front of the house one day, and I was coming home from a friend's, and she called back and said, "No, tell Jane not to come." And they said, "Oh, she took off a minute ago."

I rode down the street and saw them, and I remember, I mean, the sidewalk was only about this big 'cause of that hedge, and I just went "Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!" And they all ran off into the street. I had no idea who they were. I didn't know. I just got up to the house and said, "Mama, these funny people are out there." But I do remember once when a man came up to the front door, and Mama, she opened the big door, but she didn't open the screen door. He wanted to talk to General Motors, and he was mad with General Motors and he wanted to talk to him. And Mama sat there, and I remember, you know, as children are, I wanted to know why she didn't let him in, and, you know, I wasn't listening to him. But I watched her put her hand up on the door and lock the screen door and latch it while she was talking to him.

I don't remember now whatever happened, whether we called the State Patrol. She may have said, "Wait just a second," and told me to go get them or something. I don't remember that, but that is the closest I ever remember anybody getting that close to the house or intruding. But security was just not a factor. We walked home from school. We stopped in at the drugstore on the way home. We rode our bikes everywhere 'cause in Ansley Park there are all these little parks in between neighborhoods, and we knew each one. We had friends in each one. We stayed out playing in the circles that are in the middle--they're huge streets and they have these little islands of grass and bushes, and we would play headlight. You know, you wouldn't want the cars to get you at night. I mean, I just never thought about security ever. If

there were state patrolmen around I just thought they were our friends, you know. I mean, maybe they were taking care of us, but I never felt threatened or thought we were in any danger.

Henderson: Your father was a politician. What did you like most about politics and least about politics?

Kidd: About politics. I'm not sure I separated it. You know, or thought of it as politics. I do think that. . . . I was young. I was really young to understand what was going on, so I liked most of it. I liked the attention when we got attention. When the circus came to town then they would bring an elephant over to the mansion and I'd get to ride it, and then my picture would be in the paper. You know, like I said, I benefited. I was right at the age to enjoy it at the most, and so I enjoyed it a lot.

Mama never let us feel like Daddy was not around. You know, I know he was busy; I know they used to come over at night and bring boxes of bills, and he and Henry [Getzen] Neal would go over bills. Mr. Neal was just like a buddy, and he played this joke with me, quarters and [George] Washington crying crossing, you know, the river. He would have a piece of Kleenex with water in it, and he'd squeeze it and water would drip from the quarter. He'd be telling this story about the cold and the snow, and they had no shoes, and they were hungry, and they were crossing the river, and the snow, and Washington would be crying [laughter] from behind this quarter.

But, I mean, I remember being there. I mean, they obviously didn't kick me out of the room, but they worked at night. But I never felt like he was too busy, you know, for us. I think Mama kind of finessed that because I can't imagine him not being as involved [as] I remember. So I think she did that pretty well. I think she masked that pretty well. But I didn't think of it as

politics. I was real confused when the school integration issue came up. I do have one memory of asking, you know, what was the big problem. I didn't understand why colored people couldn't go to school with us, and, of course, that's what we talked about then. So I was confused about that because we'd always been taught that everybody was the same, and we had Fanny, and the Russells always had Modene [Thomas] and other blacks around, and we loved them all and they loved us. I was confused a little bit toward the end with all of that ruckus, but that's the only really unpleasant part of it, and it was kind of a childish reaction, you know. I mean, it was a child-like reaction to just everybody didn't seem real happy, you know, at that time. Things were troubled and things were not easy.

Henderson: Your mother is a member of one of the most influential families in Georgia history. What is it like growing up in the Russell family?

Kidd: It's wonderful. It's total acceptance. I wish you could come to the reunions because everybody loves each other. You're so glad to see these people that you hadn't seen, most of them for a year. I mean, our immediate family is very close, and we used to be closer 'cause Mama and Daddy and Aunt Bett [Betty Ann Campbell Russell] and Uncle Bob [Robert Lee Russell, Jr.] and Uncle Richard [Richard Brevard Russell III] and Aunt Pat [Patience Russell Peterson] all had children of the same age. We all kind of had our cousin. Beth had Ann [Campbell Russell Parker], and then Bob [Robert Lee Russell III] was a little younger, and then Trip [Charles Trapier Russell] was my age. Julie [Julia Brevard Russell] was little younger. Those are the Bob Russells. Vicky was a year older than me. So really Vicky and Trip were my cousins, and then Beth and Ann stuck together.

Then we all played all the time. We played war, and everything. At the Bob Russells they had two barns that faced each other. It was usually the girls against the boys, and we would spend the entire day gathering ammunition: pinecones, manure [laughter], whatever you can . . . oh, what's the--chinaberries. There was a chinaberry tree out there, and we would spend the entire day garnering ammunition, and then have a war. The boys would come over and try to take over the barn until, of course, someone got hurt, and then somebody would cry and run back to the house, and that would kind of end it 'cause somebody would get hurt.

But the Russells are just close people, and I have just always been so proud of that. I loved Uncle Dick [Richard Brevard Russell, Jr.]. He was a sweet man. He loved me I think because he loved Mama so much 'cause, see, Mama grew up around him and she was one of his favorites. When I would achieve things in high school, he would write me a letter and congratulate me, and I have those letters. I really felt very close to him, and as close as a high school senior could be. He died when I was a senior in high school, and I've always regretted that I wasn't older so that I could've had more adult, mature conversations with him and asked him about what was going on at the time. And I am reading this book now called *Colleagues* about him and Lyndon [Baines] Johnson.

But the Russells are very special, and they love each other very much, and they're intelligent people. You would listen to Uncle Fielding [Fielding Dillard Russell]. He was an English professor at Georgia Southern [Georgia Southern University]. There was poetry; there was art; there was music. These were people who didn't waste a minute of time. [They] were always doing something productive, always doing something helpful, or courteous, or loving, or religious. It's just a very loving family. I'm very proud of it, and I remember it a lot. I think it's

a source of strength for everybody because you can get wrapped up in day-to-day things and just wonder if it's all worth it, and then you do something like go back to the Russell reunion, and you hear about these people, and you know that they had faith in themselves and their brothers and sisters, and they still have faith in you. And, you know, we do strive to do a lot of interesting things. I've got cousins who are all over this country doing interesting things.

So I think we're hard working, determined, and adventurous [and that] would describe the Russells. It's a real proud feeling I have to be a Russell, and Mama shows all those strengths. She reminds me more and more of my Aunt Billie [Mary Willie Green] and my Aunt Ina [Ina Dillard Stacy]. She's beginning to look like them, and they all lived to be in their nineties, and they're strong, and they're funny, and they're cute, and vivacious, and peppy, and Mama's just like that. I mean, it's just amazing to see all of that passed down. I like to think that I'm like [laughter] that, and that I'll be like that someday.

Henderson: How would you describe your father's personality? Is he easy-going, reserved? How would you describe it?

Kidd: He's reserved and more serious. Sometimes I think I'm--I don't know. I've always thought I was more like Daddy than any of the other children. Maybe it's because I was the baby, and I was at home and I heard a lot, but I tend to be more serious and take things more seriously. Chip appears to have more fun and be more fun loving. I envy him because you have to pull me out and make me have fun. I find myself being real serious about things, and I think that's a characteristic that I kind of get from Daddy. I take things people say seriously. I think about things seriously. I really do think I'm a lot like Daddy in the sense that. . . . I'm outgoing and aggressive like Mama, but I'm determined, and stubborn, and headstrong, and

serious like Daddy, and [unintelligible]. That's how I would describe him: determined, and serious, and headstrong, and goal oriented, and. . . .

At times I have been very tunnel visioned, you know, I mean, determined in the sense that I didn't see anything else, and undistractable, and I think Daddy's like that. Once he puts his mind to something you cannot distract him from that purpose. That is what he will do, and I kind of tend to sometimes run over things like that myself and look back and think, "Oh, I didn't mean to do that." [Laughter] But it usually is because I decided I wanted it or decided to do it, real purposeful, and I think that's the way Daddy is, very goal oriented, achievement oriented, competitive.

Henderson: How would you describe your mother's personality?

Kidd: She's really . . . strong. You know, we've talked about loving, and sweet, and kind, and gentle, and caring, and all of those things that she is, but there's an inner strength there that I think comes from that Russell family, and that Russell heritage, and those women. I mean, she was raised around those Russell women who were determined, and would have the strength to go on after losing children and having heartache and illnesses in the family, their men losing political races, and break-ups in church life, and half the children were Presbyterian and half of them were Methodists. I mean, there was a lot of turmoil, but you look at those women. You look at Aunt Pat, and Aunt Ina, and Aunt Billie, and all those other women. I mean, they're just strong women, and I think they typify, not the stereotype of the Southern woman, but the term "steel magnolia," you know, fits. She's as gracious as anybody could ever be, and loving, and giving, and would never hurt anybody, but there is an underpinning strength there that she would give her life to save any of us. I mean, there's just no doubt. She wouldn't think twice to

take care of any of us. Strong, when I really think about it, I think she overcame her cancer because she decided this was not going to be the way she went, and she wasn't going to miss out on her grandchildren. I really do think that a lot of her recovery was just sheer strength and determined nature. I mean, it was just not in her--she wasn't going to let it happen. You know, it just wasn't going to get her, and I think she is 80 percent of her success in overcoming that cancer was just her way of thinking about things, her attitude toward life and all of us. I mean, that was her sheer motivation. She wasn't going to leave Ernie, and she wasn't going to miss out on grandchildren. I mean, she's determined to be there when they marry and graduate from college and everything else. I just don't think she considers not being there.

Henderson: Your father runs for the governorship in 1958. Did you play a part in that campaign?

Kidd: I was a member of the family. I guess I was that cute little girl. I remember sitting up on bandstands. I remember hearing the song, the record about Daddy: There's a new election coming in Georgia. [Sings] Vandiver for--I'm sure they played that for you, haven't they?

Henderson: I don't think so.

Kidd: It's a red record and it's upstairs and it's a song, and "When I said they called him Ernest and it fits [sings] vote for Vandiver for governor." Da-da-da-da-da-da-da, and it would--[sings] "There's a new election coming in Georgia." It goes on and on and on. I remember the song. I remember riding in cars. I remember being up on the stands. I remember eating a peach one time, and nobody told me not to just bite into it like an apple, and so I remember my whole mouth being inflamed and being miserable at some rally because I ate a

peach that way. I remember watching TV the night of the election and watching returns and saying, "Well, I know he's going to win. I think I'll just go to bed."

And I did. I went to bed and said, "I know he's going to win," and woke up the next morning, by durn, he had won, and so it was just never much of a doubt in my mind. You know, I just enjoyed it basically, but I do remember some rallies and some crowds, and coming to the American Legion in Lavonia for a big rally, and dedicating the bridge over I-85. I'm not sure exactly when that was. I think it was right before Daddy was governor or right after or something like that. So I remember snitches of events, but I don't really remember being up on that podium the day of the inauguration. I've seen the pictures, and I think that's what I really remember, but I don't really remember that day specifically.

Henderson: Do you have any ambitions to get into politics as far as elected office?

Kidd: [Laughter] Well, I have been on the city council on Lavonia. I did that for five years when we lived here in Lavonia, and I had thought about it. The past three years of my life have been a real interesting time because I was campaign manager for a congressional candidate, and we won. And then I've been his district director now for a year and a half. It is a different world for politicians now, I think, and I think in some very unfortunate ways. We will not get some quality people running for office because of the problems, the personal invasions of privacy. The cynicism toward public officials now is so hard and so awful that everybody hates--I mean, I get phone calls every day and their expectations are so low. [Cut off]

End of Side One

Side Two

Kidd: I have thought about it, and I wouldn't say that I would never run for office. I don't think I'm interested in a federal office. I don't think I'd be interested in being a congressman. I'm too close to it right now. It is a hard life, and it doesn't really matter what you do. There are a lot of people who don't like it, and I'm not sure it's worth it. I am not sure you can make a difference like you used to be able to really make a difference because of the pressures of the interest groups and the general cynicism about political life. I'm grateful Daddy was governor when he was 'cause I think he was governor during a time where it really mattered that there was a strong leader and someone of integrity and strength because I think it meant a lot to the state of Georgia.

I have some deep concerns about how things are going to go in the next ten years politically and as a society. I'm just not convinced that you can make a difference, you know, being a good person and an intelligent person, and doing your best. I mean, it used to be that you could do those things and, if you were smart, and had integrity, and had intelligence, you could really make a difference. I'm pretty cynical about that. I think increased communications has led to a lot of misinformation and a lot of hysteria almost from issue to issue to issue. It's just really disappointing. There's just not a lot of faith in public officials, and it's thankless.

I've really kind of moved into a time in my life where I'm enjoying my children; I want to be with them. I would think if I ran for political office it would be ten years from now when Alex [David Alexander Kidd, Jr.] has gotten out of high school, is in college, and has his life, 'cause I want to be a part of it, of his life now. I don't think you can do both at this point. Maybe some day I might be interested, but no time in the near future. It's too thankless; it really is. I want to go home on the weekends and just be home, and be with my children, and

do those family type things. I watch, you know, the congressman get up every Saturday morning and go somewhere, and get up every Sunday and do something that is an intrusion into his family life, and leave every Tuesday morning to go to Washington and come home late every Thursday night or Friday morning.

I really think we've got to get--I hope we can get back to a time where we trust our public officials, and good people will run, and the majority of them will be honest, good thinking people, and I think so many of them are, but our impression of government officials now is so cynical and tainted that I'm just not sure that anybody can be very effective. I think if George [Herbert Walker] Bush had been reelected, we'd all hate him by now if we didn't before. Something would have happened or, you know, the Bosnia situation or something would have happened. I think [William "Bill" Jefferson] Clinton actually has done about as well as he could do. He's made a lot of mistakes, but he's certainly--they haven't been overlooked. He's not been given any chance to make a few mistakes. Everything's been scrutinized to the point where we're all sick and tired of it. He's disappointed me in some ways, but it is tough, you know, and you've got human beings around you who are making mistakes and taking steps for you. I do it everyday. I say things for the congressman everyday; I write letters for the congressman everyday. I'm his stand-in in many ways in the district everyday, and you have to hope these people have your best interests in mind and are smart and intelligent and articulate because one wrong move and it could just blow up in his face. I mean, it's a really tough job.

So maybe someday, but I'm not interested right now or see that as something I'm looking toward. I certainly didn't start out like Daddy did as a young man and know that my life was in politics and in government life. I guess that I've gone in and out, maybe thinking that in

younger days, but it's not a part of me now, and I have not paved the way and laid the groundwork for a political career. I don't think, in that I would have had to, for the last ten years, to move into it now, and I'm forty-one. You think about people. Don [Johnson] is almost forty-five, forty-three, forty-four. So he was a state senator for five years. He set about plotting his course, and I'm not plotting a course. I guess that's what I can say. I'm not making plans or setting the stage for a political career. I'm not saying it wouldn't happen, but not any time soon.

Henderson: Let me ask you my final question: Is there anything that you would like to say about your parents that I haven't asked you?

Kidd: Mom and I were talking last night about the particular closeness of my Uncle Bob and Aunt Bett, and I told her, I said, "You know, David [Alexander Kidd, Sr.] and I don't have, we don't have relatives that are as good friends in our life as y'all were together." I think that was a lot of support for Daddy. He was an only child; his parents were elderly and basically gone early on in his career, and I think the Russell family meant a great deal to him. There was a lot of support and a lot of friendship and a lot of compassion and love that. . . . He had quality of all of that, but not quantity just of sheer numbers, being basically an only child. Auntie [Berthine Osborne Whitehead] and H. P. [Henry Pitchford Osborne] were his half-brother and sister, and then so much older than he was. So I do think the Russells had a great influence on him and helped him.

I think his relationship with Uncle Dick and Uncle Bob and Uncle Richard and all of the uncles in that family were, they've always been inspirations to all of us, and I think they were to him too. So I would say that sometimes I tend to forget that not only is it a big influence on me,

but it probably was on Daddy too. You know, you could think about, well maybe he thought about it when he fell in love with that Betty Russell, and married her, and had some political motives, but I never have ever had that in my head. I think it was just fortuitous. I think it worked, you know, and it turned out that way, but I think it did help. I think it was an important part of Mama's being able to be such a complement to Daddy, having her background, and being around politics, and being an aggressive social person was an asset, and she had seen women be assets to politicians before. It just came naturally to her, but I do think the Russell influence was important.

Henderson: I want to thank you for granting me this interview. It's been most informative, and I've enjoyed it.

Kidd: Well, thanks. Too long. [Cut off]

End of Side Two

END OF INTERVIEW

Name Index

- B**
- Bush, George Herbert Walker, 23
- C**
- Clinton, William Jefferson (Bill), 23
- G**
- Green, Mary Willie (Aunt Billie), 18, 19
- J**
- Johnson, Don, 24
Johnson, Lyndon Baines, 17
- K**
- Kidd, David Alexander, Jr. (Alex), 22
Kidd, David Alexander, Sr., 2, 24
Kidd, Elizabeth, 8
- N**
- Neal, Henry Getzen, 15
- O**
- Osborne, Henry Pitchford (H.P.), 24
- P**
- Parker, Ann Campbell Russell, 16
Peterson, Patience Russell (Aunt Pat), 16
- R**
- Russell, Betty Ann Campbell (Aunt Bett),
16, 24
Russell, Charles Trapier (Trip), 16
Russell, Fielding Dillard (Uncle Fielding),
17
Russell, Julia Brevard (Julie), 16
Russell, Nancy Victoria (Vicky), 7, 16
Russell, Richard Brevard, III (Uncle
Richard), 16, 24
Russell, Richard Brevard, Jr. (Uncle Dick),
17, 24
Russell, Robert Lee, III (Bob), 16
Russell, Robert Lee, Jr. (Uncle Bob), 16, 24
- S**
- Smiley, Mrs., 7
Smith, Fanny, 10, 11, 12
Stacy, Ina Dillard (Aunt Ina), 18, 19
- T**
- Thomas, 10
Thomas, Modene, 16
- V**
- Vandiver, Samuel Ernest, III (Chip), 5, 10,
12, 18
Vandiver, Samuel Ernest, Jr. (Daddy), 1, 2,
3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19,
21, 22, 23, 24, 25
Vandiver, Sybil Elizabeth Russell (Mama),
2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18,
25
Vandiver, Vanna Elizabeth (Beth), 4, 5, 10,
11, 13, 16
- W**
- Walker, David, 10
Washington, George, 15
Whitehead, Berthine Osborne (Auntie), 24

Richard B. Pinner
Library for Political Research and Studies