

Harold Paulk Henderson, Sr. Oral History Collection
OH Vandiver 17
James Anderson Dunlap Interviewed by Dr. Harold Paulk Henderson
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EDITED BY DR. HENDERSON

Side One

Henderson: This is an interview with James [Anderson] Dunlap in his home in Gainesville, Georgia. The date is March 18, 1994, and my name is Dr. Hal Henderson. Good afternoon, Mr. Dunlap.

Dunlap: Hello.

Henderson: Thank you for granting me this interview.

Dunlap: Oh, I'm just delighted to do it.

Henderson: I understand that you and Governor Vandiver were at the University of Georgia together. Would you discuss your time in Athens with the future governor?

Dunlap: Yes, sir. I originally, of course, finished Gainesville High School and went to Davidson College, and I didn't come to the university until 1940. I had come in as a freshman law student at that time, having been to West Point [United States Military Academy] where I failed my mathematics, and I did not continue that course. So I came down to the university and entered law school. Ernie Vandiver was a Phi Delta Theta and one of the leaders in the fraternity. I had been, or was originally pledged and joined Phi Delta Theta at Davidson College, the North Carolina Gamma chapter. So I immediately became affiliated with the Phi Delta Thetas on Prince Avenue in Athens and took my meals there.

Well, Ernie was quite well established at the university, having served as president of the Pan-Hellenic Council, president of the fraternity, and many other organizations there at the law school, as well as the university itself. So I made his acquaintance as well as Jim [James Coleman] Owen [Jr.], and Bob [Robert Henry] Jordan, and several other--Bill [William Perry] Trotter--and several others. I think the thing that originally drew us together was an argument or discussion that we had about the senatorial campaign of 1938. My father had managed the campaign of Senator Walter F. [Franklin] George, who was re-elected, and Ernie's father was affiliated with Eugene Talmadge and the Talmadge group. So this caused some discussion and out of that contact we began to carry on at the meal times and so forth, and we just became exceedingly good friends.

He was in a class ahead of me in the law school, so we didn't have any classes together, but we had a lot of contacts with the fraternity and with just meeting at meal times. That basically was the beginning of our friendship, and I remember particularly Ernie sort of was on the Q.T. when I, along with several of the law students, decided that Eugene Talmadge should be hung in effigy on the capitol lawn in Atlanta. And I, along with Gilmer [A.] MacDougald, Bill [William R.] Gignilliat, Bill [William B.] Gunter, sort of led the insurrection--Wemby Milton from Griffin. We led a motorcade down to Atlanta, and, 'course, I think the whole thing was promoted somewhat by the administration [laughter] of the university, but we students took the lead, and particularly the law students. And we did call on Governor Talmadge at the mansion and told him we thought it was very much of a mistake to fire Dean [Walter Dewey] Cocking, but he didn't care to listen to us much--or any, other than to be courteous.

So the next day we had the big motorcade to Atlanta, which was quite a lark. Ernie did not participate in those meetings as he was very sympathetic with Eugene Talmadge just, I think, out of basic loyalty to the governor, as well as his friendship with his son Herman [Eugene Talmadge], who'd been at the university also. That sort of tells a lot when friends could differ so drastically on political matters and yet continue to be very close, personal friends, and socialize, and drink beer together, and date, and so forth. So that's sort of our university experience.

'Course, the war came along in December 7, 1941, and we listened to the president [President Franklin Delano Roosevelt] speak from his [Ernest Vandiver's] apartment. Bob Jordan, Bill Gignilliat, and me, and probably Gilmer MacDougald, and some others sat around and listened to the president make his famous speech in Ernie's apartment. Later, of course, we all went our separate ways and didn't see each other again until after the war. Ernie finished the university in '42. Jim Owen stayed in and finished, but I didn't and went into the army with only two years of law school although I had passed the bar examination.

So coming back to the university in '46, I got my degree, and then I think Ernest was at that time the adjutant general of the state. [Unintelligible] no, he first became mayor of Lavonia, and then he became adjutant general, and then we began to get our little group of university friends together to meet because we thought Ernie would be a natural for lieutenant governor. We had a group that we would meet at the bar meetings. That's when Griffin [Boyette] Bell attached himself to the Vandiver group [laughter]. We would meet in Savannah and each time talk about getting together on various matters and did actually form a formalized committee to promote Ernie's elevation to the lieutenant governorship.

Henderson: Okay. Let me go back to the time that you were at the University of Georgia. How would you describe his personality while he was a student there?

Dunlap: Well, I thought he was--for a person coming down from another college who hadn't had the benefit of going through the university up until law school--I thought he was extremely friendly, nice, fun-loving, attractive. I thought he was just an outstanding person, and I liked him very much. I was attracted to him, and he was a natural leader. Any group that he was in long he became the president or the spokesman for that particular group. I just thought he was an outstanding person. I do not think he was any particular outstanding student intellectually that I remember, but I, of course, didn't have any classes with him. But he did have a real knack of handling people well.

Henderson: Does he have an outgoing personality, or is he reserved or somewhere in-between?

Dunlap: Well, he's not an extrovert in that he--to be objectionable. He was not aggressive to the extent of running over people to obtain his objectives, but I think he was outgoing enough to make his views known, so I would say that he was sort of in the middle. He wasn't a show horse. He was just a regular fine person.

Henderson: When do you have some indications that he has higher political aspirations?

Dunlap: Oh, I think when I first became acquainted with him. I think he was sort of a marked man pretty soon after I became acquainted with him in law school, that this was going to be his--well, he was so closely attached to the Talmadge organization. His father had served on the State Highway Board as a Eugene Talmadge appointee, and [he was] president of the Pan-Hellenic Council and these other things at the university. It's hard for me to say when I first

realized it, but Ernie was going to be a leader, particularly after he became adjutant general and got interested in the lieutenant governorship. We all began to promote him for governor. We thought he would make a wonderful governor.

Henderson: While at the University of Georgia, do you recall any amusing incidents or situations involving Governor Vandiver?

Dunlap: Well, I don't right off the bat. [Long pause] I had a cousin at the university, Byron Mitchell, and Ernie used to tell a lot of stories about Byron. Byron was a very attractive boy who was sort of a clown, and who did a lot of strange things, pranks, like when the circus came to town, he'd get in with the animals and all of this sort of thing. Ernie would tell stories about that, but they wasn't on Ernie. Ernie never did do anything, to my knowledge, of that type, which would degrade his stature as a leader.

Henderson: Okay. Politicians generally are very good at storytelling. Was he a great storyteller?

Dunlap: He was. He was a great storyteller, particularly telling on some of the pranks of his fraternity brothers and friends and some stories about the various professors. No, I think he was a most attractive person. He is most attractive.

Henderson: When does he discuss with you his running for lieutenant governorship?

Dunlap: Well, of course, I don't remember exactly, but it was somewhere in that era after . . . probably sometime in the early fifties. He came over here. It may have been when he was mayor of Lavonia. My father was very much interested in supporting Eugene Talmadge in 1946 against M. E. [Melvin Ernest] Thompson, and he wanted to make a speech in behalf of Governor Talmadge. So he asked Ernie Vandiver to come over and introduce him on the radio.

So Daddy had Ernie, as a young mayor of Lavonia, to introduce him to speaking [*sic*] for Talmadge. I thought it was very interesting, having been such an integral part of the insurrection of the university against Talmadge.

When I came home from the army, and this race began to develop between M. E. Thompson and Eugene Talmadge, I came home, and I said, "Dad, who're you supporting?" He said, "I'm going to support Eugene Talmadge." I said, "Good God. I busted [unintelligible] neck to help beat him, and now you're for him." He said, "Well, I'll just tell you son, I've had enough of Ellis [Gibbs] Arnall. He didn't turn out worth a damn, and I think Gene Talmadge tells you the truth, and I'm going to support him." I said, "Well, I guess I will too." That's when Ernie came over and introduced him. He was mayor of Lavonia then, which was rather strange other than the fact that this long time Talmadge supporter--family--was introducing Father who had supported Dick [Richard Brevard] Russell [Jr.] against Talmadge in '36, who managed Senator George's campaign in '38 and beat Talmadge, then turned out that he was promoting Talmadge in '46. It was an interesting turnabout. [It] shows how politics change.

Henderson: He was adjutant general prior to running for lieutenant governor.

Dunlap: That's my recollection.

Henderson: Right. Do you see that as a steppingstone to higher political office? Did he see that?

Dunlap: I'm sure that he must have because, with the various National Guard units around the state, it gave him an opportunity to go around, meet people, and really to serve the people of the state. At that time, with civil defense and the red menace and all of that, he felt like he was

doing a real job, and it's one of the most important positions in state government. It was appointive, and I think Herman Talmadge appointed him.

Henderson: He did. What was your role in the 1954 race for lieutenant governor?

Dunlap: Well, I imagine mainly up in this northeast, north Georgia area. I was county attorney at that time I think, and we were just rather active in political matters. We just worked in his behalf, but also getting a group together in Atlanta from all over the state, maybe twelve or fifteen. I forget how many, but among those were Griffin Bell, Bill Trotter, myself, Howell Hollis [Jr.] from Columbus, Bob [Robert Claude] Norman from Augusta, and John Miller from Savannah, and we would have dinners at the Capital City Club in Atlanta. I'd arrange for the dinners. They'd come up and we would sort of plot and scheme to try to get up some sentiment and some money, not a great deal of money as money's judged today, but we thought it was. [We] just created an *esprit-de-corps* and gave Ernie confidence that he had a nucleus of friends that would help him under most any circumstances. I think my role was just to try to call them together.

Henderson: Being in the lieutenant governor's race, I would suspect that the governor's race is by far the most important and that's where most of the attention was directed. How do you get Mr. Vandiver's message across to the voters?

Dunlap: Well, he did that. We were mainly supporters, and this group of ours that was such close friends of his, I think he sort of kept this group separate from some of his legislative strategies, particularly after he became lieutenant governor, because that group was Peter Zack Geer [Jr.], Bobby [Robert Lee] Russell [Jr.]. Some of these people that served in the legislature, they advised him much more on the actual politics than our group. Our group was

more or less financial support, as well as among the people that we had contacts with. We had a corporate law practice and [were] business oriented. I had never run for public office, never wanted to, and we had different people that had confidence in our views than some of his other friends who really knew more the pulse of the state, or they thought they did [laughter].

Henderson: You mentioned campaign finance. I know this had been a long time ago, but do you have any rough idea of how much money was raised for his campaign?

Dunlap: No, I really don't know, but when he had his last speech in Gainesville of the campaign, he had his last speech, and he had motorcades from Atlanta and Athens and some of the other cities around. We met in front of the courthouse. We had a big platform built, and we went all out for it. My law office, our law office, was opposite the courthouse on the second story of the Gainesville National Bank. Senator [Richard] Russell came over. They had gotten him to sit on the platform with him at the last meeting because of Betty [Sybil Elizabeth Russell Vandiver] Russell being his niece, and so we were very close to Senator Russell.

So he [Senator Russell] came up to my law office and waited 'til the meeting started, and we were just talking. He was sitting in front of the window, and he said, "Jim, y'all are putting on one hell of a meeting here." [Laughter] He said, "God, y'all are doing it right." He said, "How much money is this costing? This must be costing an awful lot of money." I said, "Well, Senator, it is. It's costing approximately seventy-five hundred dollars." He said, "God, you're spending that much money?" I said, "Yes, sir, that's what it costs." He said, "Let me tell you something, Jim. When I ran for governor in 1931"--I think, anyway--"When I ran for governor my whole campaign didn't cost more than that." [Laughter] So that shows you how

[much the expenses of] politics have accelerated because it [has] accelerated a hell of a lot more since then.

Henderson: That's right. That's right. Now that speech you're making reference to, was that . . .

Dunlap: "No, not one."

Henderson: But that was in the governor's race?

Dunlap: Yes, that was in the governor's race.

Henderson: Let me go back to . . .

Dunlap: He was running against [William Turner] Bodenhamer [Sr.].

Henderson: Right. Lieutenant Governor Vandiver serves with Governor [Samuel] Marvin Griffin [Sr.].

Dunlap: Right.

Henderson: What was their relationship? Was it close or was it adversarial?

Dunlap: Well, it became adversarial, but at one time I think it was at arms length, but because of Griffin's friendship with the Talmadges at that time I think it was reasonably cordial until Ernie began to realize what the Griffin crowd was doing. I think he soon realized that they, Cheney [Robert Alwyn Griffin] and the Griffin group, were just a bunch of crooks, and he began to separate himself as much as he could from that, but at the same time being cooperative with the, a sitting governor, but not wanting to go to bed with him. We all realized that Ernie didn't have a whole lot of respect for Marvin except as a storyteller. He could tell one of the best stories, you know, of anybody. When Ernie saw how they had abused the Rural Roads Authority, how he had issued these bonds on rural roads, and how they spread it around for

political gain and financial gain also on the asphalt and this sort of thing, it's my opinion that Ernie became very careful in his dealings with that group.

When the time came to--Marvin wanted to have the Rural Roads Authority continued, and that's when he gathered up his forces, and they decided that this was a terrible thing, wasn't good for the state, and also if passed would probably perpetuate Griffin's power in the state. That's when they defeated it, his friends Howell Hollis and Bill Gunter and others, and they seduced Howard [T.] Overby, who was Marvin's floor leader, and some others--convinced them that it was a bad thing to do, to allow to continue this type of thing, and they defeated it. I forget the little fellow's name. He was a little, short legislator who got up on the floor and said that he was going to vote against the governor on this, that he realized that his brother was employed by the state . . .

Henderson: Was that [George Talmadge] Bagby?

Dunlap: Bagby. George Bagby. George Bagby got up and made this speech, and that he had plenty of corn in the crib, pork in the farm, and so forth, and that they could survive, and he, by golly, was going to vote against it. Before the day was [laughter] ended Marvin had sent him a telegram that said "Dear George: Tell your brother Joe"--or whoever it was--"that I'm glad he has corn in the crib, pork in the farm, and so forth because his ass is fired," [laughter] or something like that. That was a great story.

Henderson: Did you play an active role in that fight?

Dunlap: To a small extent. 'Course, my sympathies were with it, but I was not in the General Assembly. From my observations Bill Gunter, who was legislator from here, played a very important role.

Henderson: Mr. Dunlap, in the 1958 election, what was your role in that campaign?

Dunlap: Well, I expect I was one of the, sort of the inner circle group that was meeting periodically to help finance the campaign and just to give him support and encouragement. But as I say, he had several different groups. This was the college classmate group that I was involved in. We got up the money to pay his entrance fee, and we made a big deal out of that. The committee of all [his classmates] participated, and I had a picture in my law--and I do have a picture on my wall in my law office of the committee that paid the entrance [fee]. So if you need a photograph for your book, I'll lend that to you because it shows George [Daniel] Stewart, who was secretary of the Democratic party of the state, and it shows me delivering him the check for Ernie's entrance fee.

Ernie was sitting at the head of the table. It was at a downtown hotel in Atlanta. These various people were standing around. I have made the comment many times that these were the unselfish friends of Ernest Vandiver who didn't want anything out of the campaign or his election as governor. However, Griffin Bell was appointed to the United States Court of Appeals after Ernie's friendship with John [Fitzgerald] Kennedy. [M.] Cook Barwick was there. Bob Norman wound up chairman of the Ports Authority. Jim Owen [was] appointed to the Board of Regents. I was appointed to the Board of Regents. Bill Trotter [was appointed] the head of the State Patrol, and each one of these unselfish friends got the choice positions in his state administration. That's supposed to be a joke [laughter].

Henderson: In that election Lieutenant Governor Vandiver makes the statement "No, not one."

Dunlap: He made that statement in Gainesville for his final speech, and we've often said later that that was so unnecessary. It probably didn't reflect his true feelings, but his advisors, political advisors, felt maybe it was necessary and he made it, no doubt about it.

Henderson: Did he discuss prior to making that statement whether he should make that statement or not with you?

Dunlap: Not with me, but he probably did with somebody, or somebody may have helped him write the speech. I would presume that Peter Zack Geer was of that persuasion, thought it was necessary. Bee [Walter Odum] Brooks [Jr.], and Herman Talmadge, and a lot of these people really sincerely believed in the segregation point of view. I always considered Ernie as very much of a moderate. Roy [Vincent] Harris may have had something to do with it because he and Charlie [Charles J.] Bloch, all those people, were supporting Ernie, and they all believed very heartily in segregation.

Henderson: At that time did you look upon that statement as a mistake?

Dunlap: We felt like it was a mistake. It was just unnecessary. Up in this area we didn't feel as strongly on segregation as the people in the other parts of the state, some other parts of the state, such as middle Georgia around Tifton [laughter], Moultrie, those places.

Henderson: Do you recall the candidate that he ran against, Mr. Bodenhamer?

Dunlap: I remember who he was. I did not know him personally. I heard him. He was a Baptist preacher, I think, and he was just going on. He ran a "nigger, nigger, nigger" campaign, and I guess Ernest thought that it was necessary to counteract some of his comments with saying that he did not believe in integration, integrating the schools, and in order to make it

impressive he said, "No, not one." But our crowd up here sort of felt it was a mistake, but not terribly so.

Henderson: Do you have any indications that Marvin Griffin is playing a role in the '58 election?

Dunlap: Oh, I think so. I think he was the man behind the scenes and Bodenhamer was just his puppet. Yeah, that's the way I felt.

Henderson: During the 1960 presidential campaign Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is arrested in Georgia, and Governor Vandiver plays a role in getting him released. Were you involved in that episode in any way?

Dunlap: No, I was not.

Henderson: There is some talk that President-elect Kennedy will nominate Governor Vandiver to be Secretary of the Army. Governor Vandiver eventually asks his name to be not considered. Were you involved in that episode in any way?

Dunlap: No, but I heard that he was going to be Secretary of the Army, and I was so delighted and proud that this would be the case. I thought that because of the fact that Senator Russell was chairman of the Armed Services Committee and Ernie had played a vital role in Kennedy's nomination that he would go ahead and do it. Do you know why he didn't?

Henderson: No, sir [laughter]. In the 1960 legislative session the Sibley Commission is created. What was the purpose of the Sibley Commission?

Dunlap: I think Griffin Bell was the mastermind who thought that it was going to be absolutely necessary to change the laws about closing the public schools if they ever integrated.

He felt like that--and there were many people who felt the same way--Griffin felt like that if

this was carried around to the state and it was made clear to the people in each sector of the state, that the people, when they understood the consequences, they wouldn't allow it to be done, and that the governor could then propose a change which wouldn't ruin him for the future.

I think that he picked John [Adams] Sibley as being the caliber of man who could chair such a committee, and then on the committee there was appointed people such as Bob [Robert O.] Arnold, who was chairman of the Board of Regents; Howell Hollis, who was from Columbus and who had served in the state senate; and people of that caliber. When they had the hearings in Gainesville, the commission sat in the jury box of our courthouse, courtroom, and Judge Sibley, John Sibley, sat up with the judges--we had had a United States Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals judge, federal court, by the name of Samuel Sibley, and the next they knew, a lot of these old people associated him [John Sibley] with him [Samuel Sibley], and they started calling him Judge Sibley. Anything Judge Sibley said from the bench was taken with a great deal of respect, and most of the people testified that they did not want integration, but they didn't want their schools closed, and if they had to choose they'd keep their schools open. That was a result of the hearings that were held in Gainesville. I think many of that point of view were expressed all over the state, but, anyway, it softened the opinion to where the governor could act with much greater leeway.

Henderson: What was your impression of Judge Sibley?

Dunlap: John Sibley, I just thought he was an outstanding person, just outstanding person.

Henderson: You were on the Board of Regents during the desegregation crisis at the University of Georgia. Did the governor seek your advice and counsel as to what he should do during that crisis?

Dunlap: Well, first let me say that when Ernie appointed me to the Board of Regents, which was in 1960, I wasn't at home. He called my law office and [spoke] to Eleanor [Dunlap] and asked if it'd be all right to submit my name to the Senate as a nominee, and Eleanor said that she was sure that I would be delighted since my father had served on the Board of Regents. As it turned out, he did reach me on the telephone that day after he had already submitted my name for confirmation. I said, "Now, Ernie, you know how I feel about this integration business. I'm not like Roy Harris. I don't have that point of view at all." He said, "I know it, and that's why I'm appointing you." So he understood that because he appointed Roy Harris at the same time he appointed me, and I suspect he had in mind that one would off-balance the other, although he had first considered appointing Ivan Allen [Jr.], and Ivan Allen, it was pointed out, was selling a lot of stuff to the state schools. It would be a conflict of interest.

I don't remember Ernie--at the time that I remember--being involved in the school [crisis]. It was a Sunday night, the key legislators, and the Board of Regents, and our chancellor and all met up in the regent's room at 244 Washington Street and had a big confab [confabulation]. I think that's when Ernie--that night--made up his final mind about it. I may have had a slight input on it, but I was not one of the dominant forces, I don't guess. I just expressed my views to him, personal input. I think he lined these folks up pretty well.

Henderson: All right, who was present at that meeting?

Dunlap: Well, it's my recollection that there was a number of the legislative leaders, and the members of the Board of Regents, and the chancellor, and a whole big group. He may have been exploring the possibilities at that meeting, and he may have actually decided later that evening, but that was a meeting that I was in on.

Henderson: At that meeting was there anybody advocating closing down the university?

Dunlap: Well, I'm sure Roy Harris was. I'm not sure whether Charlie Bloch was there. I don't think he was. I know at the Board of Regents meeting later, and it's all written in the *Atlanta Journal*. Have you seen the *Atlanta Journal* for that time?

Henderson: Yes, sir.

Dunlap: Roy Harris and I had a conflict on the board when he wanted to fire O. C. [Dr. Omer Clyde] Aderhold, and I stood up for O. C., and we had a big confab about that. This fellow, I forget his name, he was a reporter who later left the *Journal* and went to NBC [National Broadcasting Corporation]. He wrote a big story about that conflict between Harris and Dunlap on integration of the schools--I mean of the university and the firing of O. C. That's what Harris was just adamant [about]. He just wanted to fire him, just get him out.

Henderson: Going back to this meeting, was that the only meeting to your recollection that the governor had with the regents to get their input, or were there any more meetings?

Dunlap: No, I just remember that one. I think he had all the board there, but I know he had a good many of the legislative leaders, George L. [Leon] Smith [II] and some of the key folks, and I think Bob Norman. I imagine Griffin was there. It's been almost forty years ago [laughter].

Henderson: Right. Did he ever contact you on the telephone or in person besides that meeting and try to get your feelings about which direction he should go?

Dunlap: I don't remember any specific occasion.

Henderson: He addresses the legislature in a very historic session; it's a night session in January 1961. Do you recall that speech that he gave to the legislature where he states that the schools were going to be kept open and the university was not going to be closed?

Dunlap: I'm sure I do, but [unintelligible].

Henderson: Okay. Why do you think Governor Vandiver, who campaigned on the slogan "No, not one," who had a reputation of being a segregationist, decided not to close down the university?

Dunlap: Well, I just think, one, he loved the university, loved the university terribly much, and I just think he came of the opinion that it would just be a mistake, that the law of the land had been decided by the Supreme Court, and that he just thought it'd be a mistake to close the university and the schools. I think Betty [Vandiver], his wife, I think, had a tremendous influence on him. I think several of his close friends, he knew how we felt about it, about, you know, calling up. I just think that he realized that that was the wrong position that he had assumed, and he was going to set it straight.

Henderson: Do you think this is the most important decision he has to make as governor?

Dunlap: Well, I think on the future of the state it had a tremendous impact. It's hard to convince some people that he made it, but he did, and I think he just did this himself. In the final analysis it was his responsibility, and I'd like for you to talk to Gene [Eugene] Patterson about that 'cause I think Gene Patterson did stay in pretty close touch with him. Gene is an

ultraliberal, I say ultraliberal. He looked like an ultraliberal at one time. Now he looks rather conservative, but he . . . [Cut off]

End of Side One

Side Two

Dunlap: The people at this time that probably were his closest advisors, on a day to day basis, an hour by hour basis, would have been Bob [Robert Henry] Jordan, Griffin Bell, Gene Patterson, Bobby Russell, and these people. I was on the periphery really. He knew my views and all, but he knew I wasn't a real politician. I was for him and all, but I didn't know the pulse of the people or how to manage the legislature or anything like that.

Henderson: At that time did you look upon his decision as the possibly ending his political career?

Dunlap: No, no, I didn't. I didn't.

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

Dunlap: I think the main thing that Ernest did was the moral improvement, I mean, associating with honest government. He made an earnest effort to cut out waste in government, clean out the crooks, prosecute the wrongdoers--he prosecuted Cheney [Griffin] and a bunch of them, you know, authorized it. When he saw anything done wrong he didn't put up with it two minutes. A prime example was Abit Massey, who was one of the fine people of our state now. He was made chairman of the department of commerce, of industry and trade or whatever [it was called], and right there out of the bag Abit decided it'd be good to spend maybe a thousand dollars or two thousand, a relatively small amount of money, by hiring a press agent to publicize

the state for the Jaycee convention or something. It violated the rule, and Ernie just called him and fired him. Whereas that type of thing had been put up with, and it wasn't--I don't remember the specific facts, but I do remember that Ernest wouldn't tolerate any waste or any free spending or things like that.

He had economy in government, so I think that was a lasting thing, plus the fact that when the time came to stand up and protect the laws of the state, the public schools, he did. In the final analysis that's what he did, and he has been hurt immeasurably by that "no, not one" statement because all his enemies remind him of that every time he raises his head, particularly in this race for the Senate, you know. He would've been a tremendously fine senator.

Henderson: How would you describe his stewardship as governor?

Dunlap: I think excellent. He was just an honest, straight-shooting fellow.

Henderson: How would you describe his political philosophy: conservative, moderate, progressive?

Dunlap: I would say conservative/progressive. I think in monetary matters he was most conservative. He always handled his own money--he's tight as a tick. [Laughter] [He] never did waste any money or overspend, anything like that, but progressively I think his intents were good. Sometimes he didn't have as much imagination as I would like to have seen in spending money on new innovations and all, but in the time that he was governor, and for what he was coming behind, I think he was quite progressive. He improved the state's highway system tremendously with his bond issue and improved all the main thoroughfares, and the contracts were let by public bid and in accordance with the rules established by the Bowdoin Commission and that sort of thing. [I] Just think he was an exceptionally fine governor.

He never, when he came up here to Gainesville, and, we often kidded him about this, we'd have a private party for him, a little barbecue or something like that. He would drive up in his little Pontiac automobile, he and Betty. We'd all say--I said, "Why in the hell don't you bring your chauffeur and the limousine? We want a fellow that looks like a governor." But he didn't want to waste the state's money, and he was that type of fellow.

Henderson: Some of his friends and some of his critics characterized him as being very frugal in nature. Do you think that's a fair assessment?

Dunlap: Absolutely. [Laughter] Tight as a tick.

Henderson: Did he have a laid-back style of dealing with people or was it an aggressive-type style?

Dunlap: Well, it depends on how you define laid-back. If he thought a fellow was encroaching on his domain, he would bow up and not let that happen, but he wouldn't be arrogant or overly aggressive. I would say he was quite relaxed most of the time. He had confidence in what he was doing.

Henderson: Some of his critics said that he had a streak of stubbornness in him. Did you ever see that?

Dunlap: Oh, yeah, hardheaded [unintelligible] something that he didn't want to do. But now one thing that he's gotten credit for, wrongly so, was the location of I-85 as it went from Suwanee. When Griffin went out of office, I-85 had been brought up as far as Suwanee, and it ended there. The point that it was supposed to meet in South Carolina was a little town by the name of Fair Play, South Carolina. The people from Gainesville, my friends, principally Charlie Smith Gaul and a group, W. L. Norton was in it, wanted it to come to Gainesville.

Some of them even wanted it to come through Gainesville, and Ernie finally decided that the best way to handle that would be to put a string directly from Fair Play to Suwanee.

Then he told this group he was going to follow that string as much as he could. That was the most economical way to build the road, and they got awfully upset because it came closer to Lavonia than they thought it should. It possibly went through some friends' property near Winder. I don't know exactly what they criticized him for, but he honestly believed that it ought to go on a straight line, and that's what it did. Bill Gunter and me and others, principally me and Bill Gunter, decided that we ought to go down and talk to Jim [James Lester] Gillis [Sr.] and Bob Jordan about this. It would've hurt him terribly politically with the Gainesville people if it didn't come certainly within five or six miles of Gainesville.

We did, and we thought we had--we did have a commitment out of Bob Jordan, who was on the highway board. We went over and talked to Jim Gillis, and they all agreed that they would move it from the straight line down to within five or six miles of Gainesville. The last thing they said to us, said, "Now, don't say anything about this yet because we haven't cleared it with the governor. The governor had said he wanted a straight line, but we think y'all have got a real point, and we hope it can be moved. We feel certain that it can be." Well, in that group was W. L. Norton and . . . yeah, W. L. Norton.

So after we left Bob Jordan and Jim Gillis' office at the highway department we said, "Now, don't say anything because you heard what they said." And W. L. said, "Well, I think I'm representing the newspaper in this, and I think I'm going to tell them. They're entitled to know." So he told the newspaper, and Sunday morning the big editorial came out: "Gainesville flexed its political muscle and road has been changed over governor's opinion," or something like that,

some damn fool's editorial. People along the first route read the paper and, of course, immediately got in touch with the governor and said, "What's this business about changing? You told us last week it was going to be a straight line." He said, "Hell, it is going to be a straight line." [They] said, "Well, they say that Gainesville has flexed its political muscle, and you've changed it." He said, "Hell, it ain't been changed." So to make a long story short, the damn road wasn't changed. Now, talking about hardheaded, he wouldn't change that for a damn. Now, had those boys gotten to him, if our crowd had kept their damn mouths shut and let Bob Jordan and Jim Gillis handle it with him, they could've convinced him that it was all right to change it within five miles of Gainesville.

As it was, later Bob saw what it would've done to Gainesville, and before Ernie went out of office he put on a leg coming up to [Interstate] 985 that you came up today. So that came off of that straight line up to Gainesville, and, of course, it's been the finest thing that's ever happened to Gainesville was the fact that we were not directly on I-85, but yet we have access on 985. That illustrates when Ernie once made up his mind and was convinced what he wanted to do hell couldn't move him.

Henderson: How would you describe him as a politician?

Dunlap: I think he's--with people that believe in honesty in government and give a fellow high points for being sincerely interested in what he's doing and sincerely believes that he's working in the public interest, I think he was a reasonably good politician. But for a politician to be a manipulator and a sleight-of-hand artist, he was not. He was always open, and I think from that standpoint he was not too good a politician.

Henderson: How would you describe him as a speaker?

Dunlap: I always thought he was excellent. He may've appeared sometimes a little oratorical, but in that day and age I think he was--he was an excellent debater at the university and won some speaking contests and things like that. Yeah, I think he was pretty good.

Henderson: How would you compare his style with, say, that of a Marvin Griffin?

Dunlap: Oh, well, I think Marvin is an old-fashioned stump speaker that could tell a story and was a great speaker, he and also Ed [Eurith Dickinson] Rivers and some of those. I don't think Ernie was of that type. But I'm not a very good speaker so I thought he was pretty damn good [laughter].

Henderson: In 1966 he enters the governor's race or at least is considered a major candidate, but he withdraws due to health reasons. Prior to his withdrawal were you supporting him for the office?

Dunlap: Oh, absolutely, like to bust a gut for him, and I remember very clearly calling him on the--somebody had told me that he was going to withdraw from the governor's race, and Herman Talmadge was going to run in his place. I called Ernie on the telephone, and I said, "Ernest, I just heard the damndest story that these people are telling. They're saying that you're getting ready to withdraw from the race, and Herman's going to run in your stead. I guess it's Bo [Howard Hollis] Callaway telling the story." I said, "Now, isn't that a hell of a note." He hesitated for a minute and he said, "Jim, I am getting ready to withdraw from the race, and Herman has agreed to run for governor, resign from the Senate." I said, "Goddamn, why?" He said, "Well, my health. I need to, and I went to Washington last week, or a couple of days ago. I've just gotten back from Washington, and Herman has agreed to run." He said, "Things'll

work out." I said, "Well, damn." I was never so shocked in my life. I believe that's the way it happened.

Henderson: Why do you think Senator Talmadge declined to get in that race?

Dunlap: I think the business powers of the state realized that he was going to have to resign from the Senate Finance Committee, and we'd lose that seniority in the Senate, and they just told him that he couldn't do that, that they had made him senator over Senator [Walter] George's dead body, and that if he did this, he was a complete son of a bitch. [Laughter] I think that he realized then that he shouldn't do it. That's what I think. I've always thought that Bob [Robert W.] Woodruff or Hughes Spalding or some of these real powers in the state realized--John Sibley--these people realized that it would be a terrible mistake for Herman to come back and run for governor. I think from Herman's standpoint, when he thought about it and it was explained to him, I think he agreed.

Henderson: In 1972 he [Vandiver] runs for the U.S. Senate. Did you play a role in that campaign?

Dunlap: As much as I could. I supported him and was for him and attended one or two meetings. I was not as active as I would like to have been, but I was for him.

Henderson: Okay. Why do you think he was not successful in 1972?

Dunlap: I just think that he had been out of politics; he had not finished his term as--I mean, when he was running for governor. His health was precarious then. People sort of attributed that, plus the fact that it was ten years later or whatever. Jimmy Carter had been the governor. He appointed David [Henry] Gambrell. It was a race between Ernie, David, and Sam [Samuel Augustus] Nunn [Jr.]. Sam Nunn probably appeared better on television, and they brought up

this "No, not one." That's what I think, but I think probably the real thing was that Ernie didn't-- he withdrew from the race. What have these other people said about that?

Henderson: Something very similar to what you've said.

Dunlap: That's what I think.

Henderson: Final question: what is Ernest Vandiver's place in Georgia history?

Dunlap: Well, I think he ought to have a very good place in the history of the state for what he actually did to keep the public schools open against overwhelming public opinion at that time. As it turned out he was able to corral public opinion in the final analysis, but that was unknown at that time. So I think Ernest ought to have a good place in history. He would have made a marvelous senator, I think.

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

Dunlap: Well, that's good. I hope I hadn't distorted anything.

Henderson: No, sir. Thank you.

End of Side Two

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