

Harold Paulk Henderson, Sr. Oral History Collection
OH Vandiver 29
Glenn Wilson Ellard Interviewed by Dr. Harold Paulk Henderson
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EDITED BY DR. HENDERSON

Side One

Henderson: I'm Dr. Hal Henderson, and I'm interviewing Mr. Glenn Wilson Ellard in his law office in Clarkesville, Georgia. The date is July 29, 1994. Good morning, Mr. Ellard.

Ellard: Good morning.

Henderson: Thank you for granting me this interview.

Ellard: Well, I'm delighted to see you.

Henderson: Let me begin by asking you: What was your experience in the state legislature?

Ellard: I was first elected senator from this district for the 1951-52 term, that was under the old rotation system, then was re-elected in the 1957-58 term. Then in 1959 I became clerk of the House of Representatives and remained there for thirty-three years, retiring in 1991.

Henderson: Could you tell me how you became clerk of the House?

Ellard: Yessir, my term as senator was expiring. Governor [Samuel Ernest] Vandiver [Jr.] had just been elected governor to take office in January 1959, and he asked me one day, would I come over and be clerk of the House of Representatives during his administration. I thought it over and told him I'd be delighted, and Ernie said don't worry about being elected. He said, "I'll elect you." That was back in the days when the governor really elected the speaker and the clerk and all the other officers of the House even though the law then and now is that

the numbers elect the speaker and the clerk and the other officers. The governor ran it in those days.

Henderson: Have you always been interested in Georgia history and Georgia politics?

Ellard: Yessir.

Henderson: Who was the first governor that you recall taking an interest in?

Ellard: Well, I guess, Dr. [Lamartine Griffin] Hardman. My daddy was a member of the House of Representatives while Dr. Hardman was governor. He took me down there as actually a doorkeeper, although I wasn't but fourteen years old. Dick [Richard Brevard] Russell [Jr.] was speaker of the House. From that time on up, I've been interested in Georgia politics.

Henderson: So you've seen some interesting governors?

Ellard: Sure have.

Henderson: One of the most interesting, I suppose, was Eugene Talmadge. Do you have any recollections of Gene Talmadge?

Ellard: Only [that] I attended several of his speeches, one or two here in Clarkesville and one or two in Gainesville, I remember. He was a dynamic speaker. He could certainly create interest and draw crowds.

Henderson: How would you describe his speaking style?

Ellard: I'd say unique. He was the best I've ever heard in my life. I think he was the best political speaker and could coin more phrases than anybody I've ever known in my life.

Henderson: How did you become acquainted with Ernest Vandiver?

Ellard: Well, I knew him when he was adjutant general and, of course, I served under him when he was lieutenant governor in '57-'58. Then I knew his family, you know, not personally, but knew of his daddy years before that.

Henderson: While you were in the Senate, did you consider yourself a member of the Talmadge faction or the anti-Talmadge faction?

Ellard: Talmadge.

Henderson: Talmadge faction.

Ellard: Herman [Eugene Talmadge] and I were at [The University of] Georgia together. He was two classes behind me in law school.

Henderson: In 1954 Ernest Vandiver runs for the position of lieutenant governor. Did you play a role in that campaign in any way?

Ellard: Not much. I was for him and did some work up here in this county, but not beyond the county limits.

Henderson: Why do you think he was able to win that lieutenant governor's race?

Ellard: Why was he able to win? I don't really know except Ernie . . . as a adjutant general made a good impression among the voters of this state and his family background--both his and his wife's--were exceedingly good. Then he had a sound program at that time.

Henderson: Do you think being adjutant general gave him a position to launch a race for higher political office?

Ellard: I think it helped, yes. He got to know lots of people that he would not have known otherwise.

Henderson: [Samuel] Marvin Griffin [Sr.] is governor while Ernest Vandiver is lieutenant governor.

Ellard: Right.

Henderson: I want to go through and talk about some people in the Griffin administration or mention their names and let you give me your impression of them. Marvin Griffin himself.

Ellard: Marvin was a good friend of mine. I supported him for governor and his first two years in office; I think [he] did an excellent job. His last two years, I don't think, were quite as outstanding as the first two years. But Marvin, himself, I think was a good man. I really do. I think. . . and he was certainly a charming individual. He was one of the best storytellers I ever heard in my life.

Henderson: Some of his critics have charged that he had the most corrupt administration in the history of Georgia. Do you think that's a fair criticism?

Ellard: No, I really don't. There was lots of rumors and innuendos going on about that and I suppose there was some corruption, but I don't think near as much as. . . that was. . . that the media tried to bring out. I don't think there was that much. He had three or four people in his administration had he gotten rid of them, I think he would've been all right.

Henderson: But you don't think that he himself was personally corrupt?

Ellard: No, I don't. I certainly don't.

Henderson: Cheney [Robert Alwyn] Griffin was his brother.

Ellard: Right [laughter].

Henderson: Discuss Cheney for me.

Ellard: Well, Cheney is a likeable individual and has a lot of charm himself. But Cheney, during his time in the governor's office, I don't think, was interested in Marvin's welfare as well as his own. I think he was a little bit more interested in Cheney than he was in the governor and then too, I think at that time in his life, he was somewhat of a playboy and not too serious.

Henderson: Did you ever have any indication that he was personally benefiting from being close to the governor?

Ellard: Personally no.

Henderson: Roger [Hugh] Lawson [Sr.]

Ellard: Roger was a good fellow. He was highway director. That's correct, isn't it? I think Roger was an honest man. He probably was influenced a good deal by some of Marvin's people, but I went to college with Roger and I think he was an honest man. I honestly do.

Henderson: Let me go back to a statement you made earlier. You said there were two or three people that you thought the governor should've gotten rid of. Do you recall their names?

Ellard: Yes, but I'd rather not mention them.

Henderson: How about T. V. [Truman Veran] Williams?

Ellard: I . . . just will maybe put it this way. I believe that Governor Griffin could've had a better revenue commissioner.

Henderson: Roy [Franklin] Chalker [Sr.]

Ellard: Roy, I think was an honest man and I think he tried to do well.

Henderson: How would you describe the relationship between Marvin Griffin and Ernest Vandiver?

Ellard: Well, I would think that maybe the first two years of Marvin's administration the relationship was pretty good. The last two years, it was not.

Henderson: Why do you think the relationship deteriorated the last two years?

Ellard: I think probably because of some of the people around Marvin was urging him, you know, to move away from Ernie or maybe Ernie's people wanted him to move away because of this. . . the rumors that were spreading around about corruption and so forth, you know.

Henderson: Is it pretty well understood that Ernest Vandiver as lieutenant governor has higher ambitions, he wants to be governor?

Ellard: Would you repeat that please?

Henderson: Do you think that when he became lieutenant governor that he had the higher ambition of later becoming governor?

Ellard: Oh yes, I think so. I don't know, but I think so.

Henderson: One of the major fights in the legislature is in the 1958 session and it was over the rural roads issue.

Ellard: I remember it very well.

Henderson: Would you discuss that fight for me?

Ellard: Well, it was a very heated fight and, of course, when the Senate voted against the rural roads bond issue--that was the issue, the rural roads bond issue. When the Senate voted against it, that elected Ernie governor. He won that fight 'cause it was a heated fight between the Griffin forces and the Vandiver forces and when he won in the Senate, I think the

governor's race was decided right there. [Editor's Note: The bond issue vote occurred in the House rather than the Senate.]

Henderson: Why did Marvin Griffin propose that fifty million dollar bond issue?

Ellard: I can't answer that, I don't know.

Henderson: Why did Ernest Vandiver fight it?

Ellard: Well, this is solely my opinion, but I think that the Vandiver forces fought it for two reasons and one is they doubted the proper use of the funds if it passed and another reason, I think, is they thought politically it is better to oppose it than it was to favor it.

Henderson: Did you see any lobbying activity as far as Vandiver forces or the Griffin forces? Was there any intense lobbying going on in this fight?

Ellard: Well, I don't know whether "lobbying" is exactly the word or not, but there was a lot of. . . intense persuasion on the part of their forces.

Henderson: On the part of both sides?

Ellard: Both sides, yes. Oh, it was heated.

Henderson: Did the governor himself get involved in this?

Ellard: Yes, sure did.

Henderson: To your knowledge did either Senator [Richard] Russell or Senator [Herman] Talmadge get involved in this fight?

Ellard: I don't know.

Henderson: Why do you think Ernest Vandiver eventually prevailed in this fight?

Ellard: I think because of the fact that there would be taxes to repay the bond issue and I think at that time the people had lost some faith in the Griffin administration.

Henderson: In the 1958 campaign, William T. [Turner] Bodenhamer [Sr.] runs against Ernest Vandiver. Discuss for me William T. Bodenhamer.

Ellard: Well, I really think he was just put in the race by the Griffin forces. I don't think they really thought he could win. He certainly didn't. Bill was a pretty good fellow. As I recall, wasn't he a part-time preacher?

Henderson: Yessir.

Ellard: Think he was and I knew him, but he had no chance of winning from the beginning.

Henderson: Why do you think a stronger candidate did not come forth to run against Ernest Vandiver?

Ellard: Because I think, as I said a moment ago, the race was decided when the rural roads fight ended.

Henderson: In 1958 Ernest Vandiver runs for governor. Did you play a role in that campaign?

Ellard: Yes.

Henderson: What was your role?

Ellard: Here in this county is all. Well, I didn't do anything much statewide, but here in this county [I did]. See, Ernie had some good strong old-time people backing him, like Frank [Starling] Twitty, Jack [Bowdoin] Ray, George [Leon] Smith [II], Roy [Vincent] Harris. They didn't need newcomers like me, but I was for him and I was close to all of those people that I've just mentioned. They led the fight and they also were the spearhead of the campaign.

Henderson: What were some things you would do in this county to promote this campaign?

Ellard: We didn't have to do much; this was a Vandiver county from the very beginning so we didn't have to do anything much. We raised some money and contributed to his campaign. Other than that, just general local politicking is all.

Henderson: In that campaign he makes the "no, not one" promise.

Ellard: I heard him make it down at Dublin. That was his opening speech and I went down there.

Henderson: Why do you think he made that statement?

Ellard: Well, at that time that was the feeling of the people of Georgia. The majority, the vast majority, at that time felt that way.

Henderson: Do you think at that time it was a mistake for him to make that statement?

Ellard: In retrospect, yes, but at the time it certainly didn't hurt him any in his campaign for governor. It probably helped him some.

Henderson: How would you describe Ernest Vandiver as a campaigner in that election?

Ellard: He was a pretty good campaigner. He really was. He was a good hard hitter and a pretty good campaigner. Ernie was never the charming speaker like Marvin Griffin or even Herman Talmadge, but he was adequate.

Henderson: What contribution did Betty [Sybil Elizabeth Russell] Vandiver make to his campaign?

Ellard: She made a great deal, a whole lot. Betty was a real campaigner. She really was.

Henderson: Did she spend a lot of time with him out campaigning?

Ellard: Yes. Everybody wanted Betty to come along, yeah.

Henderson: When Governor Vandiver assumes office there is a financial crisis in state government: The state is spending more money that it's taking in. How does Governor Vandiver correct this situation?

Ellard: Well, first of all, I really don't know, but I do know that he corrected it. I think I'm correct when I say that Ernie never raised taxes the entire time he was governor and got the state in good financial condition. How he did it I'm not sure. But I didn't care too much about the fiscal part of it; I was more interested in the political and such as that.

Henderson: One of his first laws that he gets passed is what's called an honesty in government bill. Do you remember that bill?

Ellard: I sure do.

Henderson: Talk about that bill for me.

Ellard: Well, at the time it was a great bill, a lot of favorable publicity, and there was demand for it, but like many of the ethics bills it really didn't do a whole lot. For the time, it was adequate and good, but from the practical, you know, bottom line, it was. . . . I'll retract that, I'll say it did do a lot of good, but there's no ethics bill you can pass that will cure that situation. I think a man is either honest or he's dishonest and he'll forget the law when he wants to be dishonest.

Henderson: Governor Vandiver has a new criminal division set up in the state attorney general's office, and the purpose of that is to investigate alleged corruption in the Griffin administration. Do you remember anything about that division of the attorney general's office?

Ellard: No, I don't. I just remember it was set up and that's all.

Henderson: Let me go through and mention some people who were associated with the Vandiver administration and you give me your recollections of these people. Griffin B. [Boyette] Bell.

Ellard: Yeah, I remember Griffin real well. He was Ernie's chief of staff, as I recall. Frankly, Griffin at that time didn't know much about politics, at *that* time. The other people sort of led Griffin along at that time. Later on, he became great, you know, but at that time--I'm going to mention this I hope it's not anything you don't want--but he was Jack [John Fitzgerald] Kennedy's campaign manager in Georgia and the campaign wasn't doing very well, just sort of drifting along. They made George L. Smith co-campaign manager in Georgia for the Kennedy election and ole George L. was a good wily politician and the campaign got to moving pretty good then. But Griffin at that time was sort of inexperienced and I think George L. had a lot to do with the Kennedy election in Georgia that Griffin didn't play a part in, but he got all the credit, Griffin did.

Henderson: Since you mentioned the 1960 campaign, what role did Ernest Vandiver play in that campaign for Kennedy?

Ellard: Well, none to begin with. We were for Lyndon [Baines] Johnson. I was a delegate to the convention and went to the convention in L. A. [Los Angeles] and we went out there pledged to Lyndon Johnson and then you know the result. We were pledged to Lyndon Johnson.

Henderson: Did Ernest Vandiver handpick those delegates?

Ellard: I really don't know. I went down and asked to be a delegate. Ernie and I were real good friends and I went down and told him that I would like to be a delegate and he said fine, so. . . .

Henderson: How was it decided that delegation would be first for Lyndon Johnson?

Ellard: He told us that's who he wanted [laughter].

Henderson: Okay. William R. [Redding] Bowdoin.

Ellard: Bill Bowdoin. Bill was a good, strong person and I think he was close to Ernie. Was it the Bowdoin Commission? Wasn't there such a thing as the Bowdoin Commission? I forget exactly what it was supposed to do, but. . . .

Henderson: I think that really came along during the Sanders administration to improve government efficiency and so forth.

Ellard: Maybe so.

Henderson: He was in charge of the purchasing department.

Ellard: Bill Bowdoin was? I didn't know that. I'd forgotten it. Well, he was a banker, you know.

Henderson: Yes.

Ellard: I believe I do remember now that they got him from the bank and that he went back to the bank.

Henderson: Right. He didn't stay very long in his position.

Ellard: No, right.

Henderson: How about Peter Zack Geer [Jr.]?

Ellard: Peter Zack is a likeable fellow and had he looked after his business, he could've been governor and about whatever he wanted to. He had the ability, the charm, the intelligence, but Peter Zack hadn't quite matured at that time. But he had terrific ability, Peter Zack did. . . as a speaker and [had] just plain old good sense to go along with it. But he just wouldn't settle down and look after his homework and so forth. I'm a great admirer of him and he was a great speaker. I think he would've done well practicing law in Albany.

Henderson: Governor Vandiver made him his executive secretary. Do you have idea why?

Ellard: Well, he played a pretty good part in the campaign, Peter Zack did, as a young man. I think he did it because he thought he would be a good one and he was. As executive secretary, he was pretty good.

Henderson: Mr. Jim [James Lester] Gillis [Sr.].

Ellard: Mr. Jim, there's never been a better one. I was real fond of him and he did a good job. Completely honest. He'd play a little politics but he was completely honest and I think did a good job.

Henderson: How much power did Ernest Vandiver or any governor back then have over the highway department?

Ellard: Well, virtually 100 percent. No kidding, about 100 percent.

Henderson: Now, if they. . . .

Ellard: Let me tell you one short story here.

Henderson: Yessir.

Ellard: This wasn't under Vandiver but there was a fellow in politics and somebody may have mentioned him to you during some of your interviews named John [C.] Lewis from

Sparta. John was personnel director under Marvin Griffin in the highway department, he was personnel director. He was investigated by the Fulton County Grand Jury for corruption and so forth, and they called John over there and the D.A. [District Attorney] or whoever was handling it before the grand jury started telling him that he was under investigation and anything he said could be used against him in the [court of law]. He says, "Ask your damn questions, I'll answer them." That's exactly what he said and when he got through [laughter], the foreman of the grand jury said, "Well, Mr. Lewis, if I had a business, you'd be the first man I'd hire" and I think the reason he said that is that he asked John, the Grand Jury foreman did, said, "Mr. Lewis, what if Marvin Griffin called you up and said, 'Fire John Jones down in Wilcox County'," he said, "what'd you do?" He said, "I'd fire him just as quick as the receiver hit the hook." [Laughter] So he had a little influence.

Henderson: If one were a state representative or a state senator and wanted a road paved in his county, how would the process work? Would you go to the governor first? Would you go to Mr. Jim first?

Ellard: Go to Mr. Jim first.

Henderson: Mr. Jim.

Ellard: Then if you got delayed, well, you could go see Ernie and then you'd get some action. . . or not only Ernie, but, you know, whoever might be governor at the time.

Henderson: Now, you know there's been some criticisms of governors in the past, that they would swap roads and jobs et cetera in return for votes in the legislature. Was that a pretty common practice?

Ellard: Frankly, in my four years I never did any of it. I was never asked to. Frankly, I probably would have done it, had I been asked to if Jim Gillis, for instance, said vote for so-and-so and I'll pave that road out in Habersham [County]. If I didn't conscientiously oppose it, you know, I'd probably say, "You made a deal." But yes, there was a good deal of that going on.

Henderson: How about Walter O. [Odum] Brooks [Jr.]?

Ellard: Bee Brooks. Great speechwriter, but not a whole lot of good common sense. That's about all I can tell you about Bee. I knew him well. He could write a speech, but if you put him out and then let him make the critical decisions, I don't know where you were going.

Henderson: Did he do more for Governor Vandiver than simply write his speeches? Was he an advisor as well?

Ellard: I don't think a real advisor, no. He was around it, you know, and knew what was going on, but I don't think he was an advisor.

Henderson: Let me move over to the legislature and mention some people there, and you give me your impressions of these people and their relationship with Ernest Vandiver. Lieutenant Governor Garland T. [Turk] Byrd.

Ellard: Well, Garland and Governor Vandiver I think were compatible and got along well, as I remember.

Henderson: So there was not that adversarial relationship that exists between Vandiver and Griffin?

Ellard: I don't recall it that way, no.

Henderson: What kind of person was Garland T. Byrd?

Ellard: Garland's a good fella. He really was . . . and at one time he thought, and all the rest of us did for that matter, that he was going to be governor because they thought Ernie was going to be appointed secretary of the army, you know, and he even had a group down at his house, Garland did, [laughter] to plan what they were going to do when he took over. Then it didn't happen.

Henderson: Senate President *Pro Tem* Robert H. [Henry] Jordan.

Ellard: Bob Jordan was a good fella, really good fella, close to Ernie and Ernie did a lot for him, made him judge and so on. He's dead now, as you know. But Bob Jordan was a good fella.

Henderson: Carl E. [Edward] Sanders.

Ellard: Carl, you know, Carl was a great governor, one of the best, and had a lot of ability and still has as a lawyer.

Henderson: What was his relationship with Ernest Vandiver?

Ellard: I think very good, really do.

Henderson: House Speaker George L. Smith II.

Ellard: They were real close, and this later sort of break, you know, which I'm sure somebody's told you about the time that the House kind of rebelled a little. I know George L. suffered greatly during that, but all in all George L. was a Vandiver man.

Henderson: Now, when you say "suffered," what do you mean by "suffered"?

Ellard: Well, here he was with his friends Frank Twitty and several others, you know, wanting to go one way and Ernie the other, and he was there in the middle. Frankly, I suffered a little too 'cause my best friend in the political world or any other place was Jack Ray, the state

treasurer. He was the best friend I ever had, and he was one of them that wanted to go against Ernie, you know. I tried to keep him out of it [laughter] but I couldn't.

Henderson: We're going to come back to that fight later on--it was an interesting fight.

Speaker *Pro Tem* George T. [Talmadge] Bagby.

Ellard: Did you ever know George?

Henderson: No, sir.

Ellard: One of the most interesting fellows that you'd ever know, great fella, and a lot of ability. But just an interesting, pleasant man to be around, fun loving but serious when it was necessary.

Henderson: Floor leader. . . .

Ellard: Let me tell you this quick story about George.

Henderson: Yessir.

Ellard: I was up in Maryland goose hunting with him, and the way you hunt up there, they put three people in a blind, and you designate one person to tell the others when to start shooting when the geese start to come in. If you don't do that, see, somebody'll jump up and starting shooting too quick and the other two won't get a shot and so forth, so on. Elliot Levitas and George and I were in this blind and George was designated to be the one to let us know when to start shooting. He had a double-barreled shotgun. These three geese start coming in. George finally says, "All right, let's take them." So we all stood up and started shooting and all three geese fell. Without even smiling ole George turned around and said, "I got three. Did y'all get any?" [Laughter] He just had a double-barreled shotgun.

Henderson: Floor Leader Frank S. Twitty.

Ellard: Had a lot of ability. I mean, he was a good one. He was probably [unintelligible] the best floor leader that I knew except for Judge Bob [J. Robert] Elliot, who was floor leader under Gene Talmadge. But Twitty was a good one.

Henderson: How effective was Governor Vandiver in dealing with the legislature?

Ellard: Oh, I think fine except this one fight. I think everything he wanted he got except this one break, and he didn't really lose it. I think the legislature liked Ernie.

Henderson: You mentioned this previously. How much influence and what kind of power did Ernest Vandiver or any governor back then have over the legislature?

Ellard: He had a great deal. He really did. All the governors back then used to call the legislators down there in his office and say, "I want you to vote for so and so," and most of them said, "Yes, sir."

Henderson: Now, Ernest Vandiver handpicked the speaker?

Ellard: Yes.

Henderson: Did he pick the committee chairmen?

Ellard: He had some influence but he didn't pick them.

Henderson: He did not pick them.

Ellard: No, if he had any special friend he wanted to take care of or something like that, he'd just call up George L., the speaker you know, and say, "If you can, I'd like for you to put so-and-so on such-and-such a committee and make him chairman," or something like that. The speaker would go along with it.

Henderson: If you were a representative and if you voted against Governor Vandiver, would he let you know about that? Would he call you down to his office to discuss it with you?

Ellard: Well, I never was a representative under him. I was clerk of the House, but I suspect he did not.

Henderson: Do you ever recall him getting angry or upset with a lawmaker?

Ellard: Oh yeah. He could get mad [laughter]. He really could. But I never had any experience along that line because, to repeat again, I was clerk, and if he got angry with a legislator or senator, he'd call them down to his office and talk with them, and I wouldn't be present and so forth.

Henderson: Now what does the clerk of the House do?

Ellard: Well, I guess to sum it up as briefly as possible: he's the administrative officer of the House. All bills are filed with the clerk's office. All the records are kept by the clerk's office. All the printing and the distribution bills are done by the clerk's office. He acts as parliamentarian to the speaker, and generally he just runs the thing . . . literally, the mechanics of the whole thing.

Henderson: Why would Governor Vandiver pick you to clerk the House? Do you have any idea?

Ellard: Yes, he never told me but I frankly think one reason he did and the main reason I think is my friends, Jack Ray and George L. Smith and Frank Twitty, I think went down and asked him to. But Ernie and I were close friends also, now, but I think they suggested it to him. I don't know this. I'm just talking off the top of my head now. I don't know that, but I think they suggested it to him. He liked the idea and then he called me and asked me if I would take it. I told him yes.

Henderson: Does he ever call you down to his office or on the telephone or wherever and say, "What's going in the House?" or "What's the mood of the House?"

Ellard: No, umm-umm, very rarely. He would do that with the speaker, you know, or with his floor leader, Twitty, or Jack Ray.

Henderson: Governor Vandiver has to deal with the issue of desegregation. In the 1960 session the legislature creates the Sibley committee. Do you recall the Sibley committee?

Ellard: I sure do.

Henderson: Tell me why it was created.

Ellard: Well, at that time, as you know, this was a real serious, critical issue in Georgia, segregation was, and . . . it could have been explosive like it was in Alabama and Mississippi. But Ernie, I think, handled it great. I think he did a magnificent job, and it was difficult; it was tough. Some of his closest advisors, I know, felt like he ought to close the schools. Some of the others [who were] equally as close, as you know: "Don't do it." It was a tough question in those days, and the sentiment of the people, I think, was, in the beginning, was slightly in favor of continuing segregation, and nobody knew exactly what was going to happen. It looked like at times there'd be bloodshed really, but Ernie did a magnificent job and that commission helped a lot then. Of course, John [Adams] Sibley, at that time, was one of the most respected people in Georgia, and the commission was a great commission, people that were, you know, highly regarded and respected and so forth, and that commission helped a great deal. I'll tell you, a member of that commission still living that you might want to talk to is [James] Render Hill. He's still living. He was on that commission. He was a senator at the time. No, he was a House member at the time. He lives in Atlanta and I can give you his phone number.

Henderson: Okay. I'll get it from you.

Ellard: He was on that commission and they traveled the state, you know, had hearings all around the state. He was on that commission. Let me just give you his phone number. [Cut off] Render was on it.

Henderson: You mentioned hearings that the committee had. Did you ever attend any of these hearings?

Ellard: No, I felt as clerk I'd better stay away from those things.

Henderson: The committee adopts the majority report and then there's a minority report. Do you remember anything about the majority report or the minority report?

Ellard: No, I don't.

Henderson: Basically the majority report was local option, that each county determined whether it was going to have segregated or desegregated schools or whatever. In January 1961 Governor Vandiver addresses the legislature in a night session. I think this was the first time a governor had ever done that. Do you recall that night session?

Ellard: Just vaguely. I don't remember much about it. I really don't.

Henderson: Governor Vandiver eventually decides that he will keep the University of Georgia open, instead of closing it down. Why do you think . . . Governor Vandiver who was a segregationist; who was a good, close friend of Senator Russell, a segregationist, and Senator Talmadge, a segregationist; who [Vandiver] had campaigned on "No, not one;" why do you think he made that decision?

Ellard: Of course, this is an opinion. Only the governor knows, but I think he saw that ultimately segregation couldn't continue. I think he really had that foresight, that there was no

way it could continue, and he thought the best thing he could do [was] to follow this course which he followed and try to avoid bloodshed and to keep the schools open. I think it was his honest decision that he made, and fortunately, some people may disagree, but I think it was the right one. [Cut off]

End of Side One

Side Two

Henderson: In the 1961 session there is a major fight between the governor and the legislature over the budgetary process.

Ellard: Yeah, I remember that.

Henderson: Discuss that fight a little bit more for me.

Ellard: Well, in retrospect it was a fight over nothing, to tell you the truth, and I don't really know why it arose or--and there was no reason for it, really. But it did arise and it was a right bitter fight between his closest people like Twitty and Ray and people like that on one side, who were real close to Governor Vandiver and liked him, and why they took off on that tangent I don't know. As I mentioned before, Jack Ray was the dearest friend I ever had, and I tried to talk to Jack, but nobody told Jack anything once he made up his mind. I just don't know why it ever developed.

I really don't, but there are a lot of side issues to that thing in that I know the reason that Charlie [Charles Adams] Pannell wound up on the Court of Appeals was the fact that Twitty, you know, was the governor's floor leader, and when that thing happened, he didn't have anybody to represent him 'cause his floor leader was on the other side [laughter], so he got Charlie Pannell to sort of carry the ball for him, and Charlie wound up on the Court of Appeals

[laughter]. I don't think he would have ever been there except for the fact that he carried the fight for Ernie, and, of course, Ernie had to wait 'til later on to appoint him, but he did. But that was a fight that never should have occurred and never accomplished anything.

Henderson: After the election of President John Kennedy there is some speculation that he will appoint Governor Vandiver to the position of secretary of the army. Do you have any recollections of that episode?

Ellard: Yes, I have. . . well remember it, and everybody thought it was going to happen, and as I said earlier, Garland Byrd had a meeting down at his house to plan the takeover of the governor's office and so forth. I never did find out why . . . the president changed his mind, if he ever changed it. Maybe he had never decided to do it, but if he did change his mind I never knew why. But it didn't materialize. We all thought he was going to, and I think Governor Vandiver thought so.

Henderson: What would you say were the major accomplishments of the Vandiver administration?

Ellard: I would say no new taxes; the handling of the segregation issue, which was the most explosive thing that had occurred in Georgia since the Civil War, I guess; and absolutely no rumors of any corruption or dishonesty. I think those were the three paramount things.

Henderson: Do you see any shortcomings of the Vandiver administration?

Ellard: No.

Henderson: How would you describe his stewardship as governor?

Ellard: I'd say excellent, one of the best.

Henderson: You said you had served under nine governors, I believe, as clerk of the House.

Ellard: Yes, sir.

Henderson: If you were ranking governors, would you rank Governor Vandiver in the category of average, above average, or below average?

Ellard: Above average. . . because of these problems that he had. Some other governors who came out of office with a great reputation, anybody could have done it--literally. I'm just going to mention this and he was a great governor, but Governor [George Dekle] Busbee for instance, he was governor during a time of the growing economic conditions. Every time he turned around he had surplus money to put here and there. He had nothing to do with it himself, but everything broke in his favor. I could have been governor at that time and done a pretty good job. Ernie didn't have any breaks. He had tough breaks and handled them well.

Henderson: How would you describe Ernest Vandiver's political philosophy? Conservative, moderate, or liberal?

Ellard: Conservative. Conservative. Real conservative.

Henderson: Some people say he was on the frugal side as far as money.

Ellard: He was. Ain't nothing wrong with that.

Henderson: Some people would also say that he had a streak of stubbornness in him.

Ellard: Had a little bit of that in him, but that's--again, stand up for your convictions.

Henderson: Would you consider him a strong governor, a weak governor, or somewhere in-between?

Ellard: Strong.

Henderson: Of those nine governors that you've had the privilege of serving with, which one do you think came across as the strongest governor?

Ellard: I guess probably Herman, Herman Talmadge. He was a good strong governor.

Henderson: Now, why would you classify him as the strongest of all these nine?

Ellard: Well, he wasn't too far ahead of Ernie and a few others, but. . . he just--I don't know how to describe it. He pretty much ran the show.

Henderson: How would you describe Ernest Vandiver's style of dealing with people? Was he laid-back? Was he aggressive? Somewhere in-between?

Ellard: I'd say somewhere in-between, and something I never understood too well, and maybe I'm wrong about it, but I never did think the news media gave Ernie the credit he was entitled to. I never did. He's, for some reason, not the type of man like, well, take for instance Jack Kennedy, he had that charisma running out his ears, you know, and Ernie didn't have that. He just had that plain old solid stuff, and I guess that's the reason the papers never praised him too highly and so forth.

Henderson: How would you describe him as a politician?

Ellard: As a politician he would not be one of my top candidates, by that I mean in ability. I don't think Ernie was a politician in the order of Dick Russell or Herman or even Marvin. Marvin was a good politician, Marvin Griffin.

Henderson: How would you describe him as a speaker, say, compared to Marvin Griffin?

Ellard: Marvin was a more interesting speaker because of these one-liners and so forth he could come up with. Ernie just laid out the facts and there they are, but Marvin could inject the humor and stuff like that and just absolutely thrill a crowd. Let me just tell you one of his stories, and he was full of these sort of things. Somebody asked him one day, said, "Marvin, do you remember 1934?" Marvin said, "Yeah," says, "That's the year I broke my arm eating

breakfast." And they said, "Well, how in the world did you do that, Marvin?" He said, "I fell out of a persimmon tree [laughter]." He could come up with those sort of things in his speeches and keep everybody dying laughing.

Henderson: Did you ever have the opportunity to hear Ed [Eurith Dickinson] Rivers speak?

Ellard: Yes, he was good. He was good.

Henderson: How would his style of speaking differ, say, from Ernest Vandiver's?

Ellard: More emotional and such as that than Ernest. Again, Ernie was "Here are the facts."

Henderson: How would you describe Ernest Vandiver's personality?

Ellard: Well, to his friends warm, but to people who were not close to him he seemed just a little bit distant.

Henderson: Would you consider him in the common sense a backslapper?

Ellard: No.

Henderson: Suppose here's a room of people and Marvin Griffin walks in and then Ernest Vandiver. What'd be the different style as far as going around and dealing with people?

Ellard: Oh, Marvin would, of course, shake hands with everybody and have a big grin on his face and some amusing clever remark. Ernie would do the same handshaking but it'd be, "How are you?," "Glad to see you," or something like that. And it's Ernie's nature. It's not that he didn't want to be warmer to them. It's just his nature that he's not that type of man.

Henderson: In 1972 Governor Vandiver runs for the Senate and he is unsuccessful in that effort. Why do you think he failed to win that Senate seat?

Ellard: Well, I supported him, and I don't really know why except I think maybe it was . . . and I kind of--let me put this off the record just a minute and [Cut off]

Henderson: I've got one more question. Before I ask you that question let me ask you: Is there anything that I should have asked you that I didn't?

Ellard: I don't think so. I think you pretty well covered it. I'd just like to say that I think of all the governors I've served under certainly Governor Vandiver's one of the best.

Henderson: Well, that's my final question. It is: What do you think is Ernest Vandiver's place in Georgia history?

Ellard: I think as time grows his place is going to be recognized and appreciated more than it is now. I really do.

Henderson: Mr. Ellard, I want to thank you for granting me this interview. It's been most interesting and informative. Thank you.

Ellard: Thank you. [Cut off]

Postscript

Ellard: He said, "Marvin, how did you realize that the Depression was over?" He said, "When I saw a rabbit crossing the road and only one man chasing it. I knew the Depression was over [laughter]." He had thousands of those little ole things, and he'd tickle the life out of me. I just get the dangedest. . . . They're good clean stories, you know, and I get the best bang out of them. I was pretty close to Marvin. I spent several weekends in the mansion when he was governor. He'd invite my wife and me down there, and we'd go to a Georgia Tech [Georgia Institute of Technology] football game or something, sit in the president's box and ride in that

Cadillac that they used to have at that time. I think all the governors have a Mercury now instead of a Cadillac. Then he and I drifted apart because I didn't support him in the second go-around. I got a little scared of this corruption that you, you know, the rumors and so on.

Henderson: You campaigned under the county unit system.

Ellard: Yeah.

Henderson: Umm. . . . How was campaigning under the county unit system? Did you have political bosses that could pretty well determine how the county went, or . . . ?

Ellard: Yeah. Well, I had an added advantage in that I was at that time secretary of the Democratic Party in this county. In those days the party conducted the election, not the probate judge, like it's done now, you know. The party itself paid for having the ballots printed and hired the election managers and paid them and all that stuff, and I'd always deliver the ballots the day before the election myself to the managers we'd picked out in the precincts. When I got back from delivering those ballots I knew who was going to win. I'd ask the precinct managers and they could pretty well tell you. So I could pretty tell who was going to win the day before. When I was senator we didn't have but three counties in my district: Stephens, Franklin, and Habersham, just those three. Fortunately I never had any opposition, so I didn't have to campaign [laughter] much. I never ran an ad in the paper, never had a card printed, and I just paid the qualifying fee, and I said, "Well, when the opposition develops, I'll do something." Never did have any. [Cut off]

End of Side Two

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