

# SOUTHERN LITERARY REVIEW

A Magazine for Literature of the American South

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## ALLEN MENDENHALL INTERVIEWS F. DIANE PICKETT, AUTHOR OF "NEVER ISN'T LONG ENOUGH"

MARCH 19, 2015 BY [ALLEN MENDENHALL](#) [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)



F. Diane Pickett

**AM:** Hi, Diane. You were born in Atlanta. So was I, in Piedmont Hospital. And you live in Destin now, where I spent many weeks of my childhood. We've probably crossed paths at some point. Where do you do your writing down there at the beach?

**FDP:** I was born at Emory University Hospital. I do my writing at my little cottage in Sandestin which I have named Magnolia Manor. That may give you an idea of just how Southern I really am.

**AM:** I have here in my hands your novel, *Never Isn't Long Enough*. You state in the "Author's Note" at the beginning of the book that you "set about recreating the lives of two Southerners and their individual journeys in an attempt to reveal who they started out to be and who they actually became." Could you elaborate on this?

**FDP:** The two main characters are a young farm girl and a wealthy, sophisticated older man. The young girl left the farm behind and all of its remnants. The older man morphed from a carefree single life into a model of responsibility. Neither started out on either path.

**AM:** I find it fascinating that you thought writing the book was easier than publishing it. How could that be?

**FDP:** The writing came naturally, but the publishing was a *huge* and continuing learning curve of frustration. "Never" is my first novel and I have everything to learn about the book business. Hopefully, I have learned something as I am now working on a collection of short stories titled "Never Tell a Tall Tale (Keep 'em short)" to be published later in the year.

**AM:** When did you first decide to write *Never Isn't Long Enough*? Where were you when you wrote the first sentence?

**FDP:** I wrote the book while I was recovering from some surgery and was at my cottage in Sandestin. There I was bored to tears with endless time on my hands, thinking about my father. I recalled something he said to me when I was a little girl. So, I just got out of bed and went to the computer and wrote that down. That prompted me to continue and next thing I knew, I had written a book.

I hadn't intended to write a book and had no idea at the time that was what I was doing.

**AM:** Explain your decision to reference scholarship in the book. For instance, there's a reference to Eugene Genovese and Phillip Shaw Paludan.

**FDP:** Since I am a novice at writing and certainly no historian, I thought it pertinent to interject some learned words that would give credence to my statements and observations. I have no writing experience and have never had a creative writing class of any sort. I was just winging it.

**AM:** You also incorporate actual documents, like a 1900 excerpt from the *Atlanta Journal*.

**FDP:** That was a true story about my grandfather and a family archive.



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**AM: What's your writing process? Did you have a routine, a regiment?**

FDP: I have never written anything on a regular basis except thank you notes. Having been married twice, I *did* have some experience there. However, I just write when the mood strikes me. Sometimes it actually hits me in the face and other times it goes right over my head. I don't really have a routine. But, when I am in the mood, I am very disciplined and try to finish a train of thought—which usually means a chapter.

**AM: Were there any authors you were trying to mimic when you wrote the novel?**

FDP: I am not experienced or vain enough to try to mimic anyone, but 'sis a good idea. Any suggestions?

**AM: You're doing just fine on your own. There's a lot of history in your novel. How much research did you have to do?**

FDP: Well, at my age I have already *lived* a lot of history, so some of it was just recall. It was also helpful that my own father was born in 1900, so I had stories from him that were recalled. It was also useful that my own grandfather actually fought in the Civil War. However, I did do a lot of fact checking on dates and such.

**AM: Thanks for your time and for sharing these great insights.**

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#### About Allen Mendenhall

Allen Mendenhall is a writer, attorney, and educator. His book *Literature and Liberty* (Rowman & Littlefield / Lexington Books) was released in 2014. He blogs at The Literary Lawyer. Visit his website at [AllenMendenhall.com](http://AllenMendenhall.com).



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