

Interview with **John Daniels**

1979

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Interview gathered as part of *America, They Loved You Madly*, a precursor to *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years (1954-1965)*. Produced by Blackside, Inc. Housed at the Washington University Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection.

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Note: These transcripts contain material that did not appear in the final program. Only text appearing in *bold italics* was used in the final version of *Eyes on the Prize*.

00:00:02:00

John Daniels: My name is John H. Daniels.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: THANK YOU.

INTERVIEWER: I WANT TO KNOW—

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: —REALLY IS, WHAT WAS IT LIKE RIDING THE BUSES BEFORE THE BOYCOTT? NOT SO MUCH THE PROCESS—

Daniels: [coughs]

INTERVIEWER: —HOW DID YOU FEEL? HAPPENED TO GET ON AT THE FRONT, YOU KNOW—

Daniel: Well, we felt, to a certain extent, humiliation. Of not having a chance to ride the bus or enter in the front. If it was so kinda loaded, you know, course we had to go to the front of the bus and put our nickel in or reach it in to the driver [coughs] and we'd go to, then, the rear of the bus and to try to get on. And the thing that made it though, to a certain extent, harassing was sometime [coughs] the bus would be loaded. And we would, we would not be able to get on and the driver would pull off and leave us and have, have our money in the meter. Well, we've had that to happen several times. But—

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INTERVIEWER: DO YOU REMEMBER ANY SPECIAL INCIDENT THAT HAPPENED TO YOU THAT MADE YOU REALLY ANGRY?

Daniels: [laughs] Well, this is one that I just related to you that, that really kindled my anger because, at this particular time, I was a dining car waiter [coughs] and I had come in tired of—from all three heading in. Running out of Cincinatta [sic] into Montgomery at Tumble or New Orleans. And you could see I'd been out six days and I worked on a six and four basis. So I'm tired and I want to actually go to sleep and rest, because I've been out working for six days. I comes [sic] up to—actually come up to [coughs] Lee and Montgomery Street and that's about two blocks I had to walk to get a bus that would carry me directly home. And I caught Washington Park. I wanted to catch Washington Park, but I put [laughs] my nickel in the bus and I went—goes to get to the rear the driver supposing, I guess, that I was on this so pulled on off. That actually made me kind of angry. And then I had to go over to one of the bus stations and get me a taxi, 'cause I really didn't want to wait. So I had to pay double fare. [coughs]

00:02:24:00

INTERVIEWER: DID YOU DO A LOT OF WALKING DURING THE BOYCOTT?

Daniels: I done a good little bit of walking all during the bus boycott. Not too much either, because I was working for the Veterans Administration out on Prairie Hill Road and I had to ride to work. But I did work with the people who were walking, because I served as one of the drivers. From Maxwell Field in the afternoon I had a shift then. I was actually going to work at six o' clock in the morning [coughs] and getting off at two o' clock. And that evening I would enter the little car that I had into the pool. And we would drive off from Maxwell Gate to downtown Cromwell Street. So I could actually see a lot of people who were walking, but I didn't walk, you know, too much because I was helping those to get a ride who were walking.

00:03:19:00

INTERVIEWER: AND HOW DID THAT WORK? I MEAN WHAT DID YOU DO WHEN YOU GOT OFF AND PUT YOURSELF IN THE CARPOOL?

Daniels: Well, we had a carpool set up and it was oh on Monroe and, I believe, in McDonough Street. And if you were able to drive you would go by there and give Mr. Rufus Lewis your name and he would assign you wherever you was to drive that afternoon. So sometime—it—mostly was my lot to drive from Maxwell to Downtown, but other areas I did cover too.

INTERVIEWER: AND DID YOU SOMETIMES PICK UP PEOPLE WHO WERE WALKING?

Daniels: If I had room for 'em we would pick 'em up. But we had to be very careful about

stopping because we'd get a ticket. Oh, now, the police here was really desperate on giving us tickets in this drive. You had to really, really be careful. Sometime you'd get a ticket if you came up to a stop sign and you didn't quite come far enough and then you pulled off from where you was or if you pulled up too close he'd say you've come too far out into the traffic and he'd give you a ticket for that.

00:04:34:00

INTERVIEWER: AND HOW MANY HOURS DID YOU WORK ON THE CARPOOL?

Daniels: Well, I worked on the carpool from two o' clock. I had—I would already have my lunch because I eat on the job where I work. And I would work in the carpool from two o' clock until something like six or seven. Sometime it was a little bit later, but we all were dedicated to this bus boycott to a certain extent. We wanted it to work and sometimes we went a little bit beyond what we said we would do [coughs].

INTERVIEWER: OK, I APPRECIATE IT. THAT'S VERY NICE.

Daniels: All right.

[cut]

[end of interview]

00:05:11:00

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