

Interview with John Raitt

Date: March 8, 1999

Interviewer: Rick Tejada-Flores, Judy Ehrlich

Camera Rolls: 73

Sound Rolls:

Interview gathered as part of “The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It: The Story of World War II Conscientious Objectors.” Produced by Paradigm Productions. Housed at the Washington University Film and Media Archive, Paradigm Productions Collection.

Interview with John Raitt, conducted by Paradigm Productions on March 8, 1999 for “The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It: The Story of World War II Conscientious Objectors.” Washington University Libraries, Film and Media Archive, Paradigm Productions Collection.

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 “The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It: The Story of World War II Conscientious Objectors.”

00:00:00:00—

Interviewer #1:

Okay John whenever you're ready give us the introduction.

John Raitt:

Right. In the mid-seventies, I spent about three years of my life traveling from Maine to California performing in a, a country musical “Shenandoah.” It was highly successful. I played the role of Papa Charlie Anderson, who's a widower with a large family, tries desperately, and without success, to keep his five eligible sons home on the farm, out of the civil war. In the first scene, at the breakfast table, he runs into a confrontation with his sons, and sings this song.

00:00:48:00—00:02:56:00

John Raitt:

[sings] "Stand and show your colors, Let's all go to war. The Lord will surely bless us, I've heard it all before. I've heard it all, a hundred times, I've heard it all before. They always got a holy cause to march you off to war. Tyranny or justice, anarchy or law. We must defend our honor, I've heard it all before. I've heard it all, a hundred times, I've heard it all before. They always got a holy cause that's worth the dyin' for. Someone writes a slogan, raises up a flag. Someone finds an enemy to blame. The trumpet sounds the call to arms to leave the cities and the farms. And always the endin' is the same, the same, the same, the same. The

dream has turned to ashes, the wheat has turned to straw. And someone asks the question:
"What was the dyin' for?" The livin' can't remember, the dead no longer care. But next time it
won't happen upon my soul I swear. I've heard it all, a hundred times, I've heard it all before.
Don't tell me it's different now. I've heard it all, I've heard it all, I've heard it all before."
[stops singing]

00:02:57:00—00:02:59:00

Interviewer #1:

Bravo!

[applause]

Unidentified:

Fabulous.

Interviewer #1:

Okay we need—

[cut]

00:03:00:00—00:05:17:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Okay.

Camera Crew Member #2:

I'm ready.

John Raitt:

[sings] "Stand and show your colors, Let's all go to war. The Lord will surely bless us, I've
heard it all before. I've heard it all, a hundred times, I've heard it all before. They always got
a holy cause to march you off to war. Tyranny or justice, anarchy or law. We must defend
our honor, I've heard it all before. I've heard it all, a hundred times, I've heard it all before.
They always got a holy cause that's worth the dyin' for. Someone writes a slogan, raises up a
flag. Someone finds an enemy to blame. The trumpet sounds the call to arms to leave the
cities and the farms. And always the endin' is the same, the same, the same, the same. The
dream has turned to ashes, the wheat has turned to straw. And someone asks the question:
"What was the dyin' for?" The livin' can't remember, the dead no longer care. But next time it
won't happen upon my soul I swear. I've heard it all, a hundred times, I've heard it all before.

Don't tell me it's different now. I've heard it all, I've heard it all, I've heard it all before."
[stops singing]

[applause]

[cut]

00:05:18:00—00:05:34:00

Interviewer #1:

Okay John, whenever you're ready.

John Raitt:

I've always felt that we've needed to help the United Nations in more ways than one. And, at many functions I've sung for them, and this is the song that they seem to enjoy the most.

00:05:35:00—

John Raitt:

[sings] "I saw the people gather. I heard the music start. The song that they were singing. Is ringing in my heart. No one is an island—" [stops singing]

Accompanist:

One more time.

Interviewer #1:

[unintelligible]

Accompanist:

It was "no man"

John Raitt:

No, I—

[cut]

00:06:01:00—00:06:23:00

Interviewer #1:

Okay, go ahead and introduce the song again.

John Raitt:

For many years I've been supporting the work of the United Nations, and many times I've sung for their functions, and this is one of the songs that I have sung with that group. That's not very good of a start again.

Interviewer #1:

Okay, try again, okay. Yeah, you sang it for the United Nations and the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

John Raitt:

I shall do that, you're right.

Interviewer #1:

Okay, go ahead.

00:06:24:00—00:06:52:00

John Raitt:

For the past, oh, forty years or more, I've been singing th-, this song for the United Nations and for the Fellowship of Reconciliation—

Interviewer #1:

That's right, one more time.

John Raitt:

That's—

Interviewer #1:

Okay, take three, go ahead.

John Raitt:

Right. For many years I've been a supporter of the United Nations and the Fellowship of Reconciliation. And, this is the song, I feel, that can exemplify what they really mean, what the work we need to do, to make it, this world a better place to live in.

00:06:53:00—

John Raitt:

[sings] "I saw the people gather. I heard the music start. The song that they were singing. Is ringing in my heart. No one is an island. No one stands alone. Each one's joy is joy to me. Each one's grief is my own. We need one another, so I will defend, each man as my neighbor, each man as my friend." [stops singing]

00:07:53:00—00:08:14:00

Interviewer #1:

Okay, let's just keep going. Let's do the close up.

Camera Crew Member #2:

Yeah.

Interviewer #2:

What's that from? What's that song?

John Raitt:

Just written, the song, you can look in the music, I didn't even look.

Interviewer #1:

We'll have to 'cause we've got to clear it [laughs]. Okay, so, whenever you're ready, let's run through it one more time.

Camera Crew Member #2:

No introductions, just go—

Interviewer #1:

Yeah, just start—

00:08:15:00—00:09:18:00

John Raitt:

[sings] "I saw the people gather. I heard the music start. The song that they were singing. Is

ringing in my heart. No one is an island. No one stands alone. Each one's joy is joy to me. Each one's grief is my own. We need one another, so I will defend, each one as my neighbor, each one as my friend." [stops singing]

Interviewer #1:

Good.

[cut]

00:09:19:00—00:09:41:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

We're rolling.

Interviewer #1:

Go ahead John.

Camera Crew Member #2:

Oh, sorry.

John Raitt:

In the early forties—

Interviewer #1:

I'm sorry. I, I stepped on the line. Start over.

John Raitt:

In the early forties, a song was written by Sy Miller and Jill Jackson that said a lot of what we wanna p-, promote today in the world. I sang it on the steps of Los Angeles City Hall. I'd like to sing it for you now.

00:09:42:00—00:11:11:00

John Raitt:

[sings] "Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me. Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be. With God as our Father, neighbors all are we. Let me walk with my neighbor in perfect harmony. Let peace begin with me. Let this be the moment now. With every breath I take let this be my solemn vow. To take each moment and live each moment in

peace eternally. Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me." [stops singing]

00:11:12:00—00:11:22:00

Interviewer #1:

Let's keep rolling. Just [unintelligible]. Okay so you can start [unintelligible].

00:11:21:00—00:12:24:00

John Raitt:

[sings] "Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me. Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be. With God as our Father, neighbors all are we. Let me walk with my neighbour in perfect harmony. Let peace begin with me. Let this be the moment now. With every breath I take let this be my normal vow—" [stops singing] Bobby, stop it, I'm sorry.

Camera Crew Member #1:

That's okay.

Interviewer #1:

Wanna take a break—

John Raitt:

Let this be my—

[cut]

00:12:25:00—

Camera Crew Member #1:

[unintelligible]

Camera Crew Member #2:

Rolling.

John Raitt:

[sings] "Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me. Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be. With God as our Father, neighbors all are we. Let me walk with

my neighbour in perfect harmony. Let peace begin with me. Let this be the moment now. With every breath I take let this be my solemn vow. To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally. Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me." [stops singing]

Camera Crew Member #3:

[unintelligible]

[cut]

[end of interview]

[13:58:00]