

Interviewee: Madeline E. Daniels
Interviewer: Brenda Finley
Transcriber: Sarah Lavender
Date of Interview: February 23rd, 2008

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(static and papers rustling)

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BF: I am Brenda Finley and today is the 23rd of February, 2008. I am interviewing Madeline E. Daniels. Ms. Daniels, when and where were you born?

MD: I was born in Roanoke Virginia on Salem Avenue July the 4th 1926, I know I was. And then we moved from Salem Avenue to Norfolk Avenue when I was three years old. And we've been there ever since, my family. (laughs)

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BF: Tell me a little about your parents and your brothers and sisters.

MD: Well I had two brothers; Leroy and James. Leroy was two years older than me and I'm three years older than James. (coughs)

BF: (talks while MD coughs) Describe your house.

MD: We had a little wooden house. About four or five rooms at the most. And it was normal to us because that's all we knew. (both laugh) And (pauses) And then later on when I, I remember building some more on to the house but I was (pauses then whispers) I don't know. (pauses) And where there's –

BF: (starts to speak over her) What kind of activities did you participate in when you were living in Roanoke?

MD: Well not too much because there wasn't too much to do at that time, when I was 11 and 26, 27, 28. (speaks in a lower voice) is it, is it doing anything?

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BF: What kind of work did your family do?

MD: Well my father was a railroad man. He worked on the railroad all his life until he retired, many years ago.

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BF: Ok, how about your school life? Where did you go to school?

MD: First it was a little wooden, a little wooden church when I first got to school on Arthur Avenue. I went there and from there to Harrison. And I went to the seventh grade. And then I was loosing sight in my eyes, but they didn't completely go, thank God! They, and then I left school and I started to work in Roanoke, put to work, was not too much work (pauses) and so I left and went to New York in '47. And I was there until '92. And then –

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BF: Ok, did, did anybody in your family ever go to college?

MD: Not that, none of my immediate family, my –

BF: What did you do at home at night, did you ever listen to the radio? Or?

MD: That was all we listened to was the radio. Yes, we listened to the radio and uh

BF: (speaking over her) Did you remember when you got your telephone or your refrigerator? Do you remember things like that? (MD says yes in assent several times during this sentence)

MD: Yes I do. We had, first we had lamp light, I remember when we first got our electricity. And then refrigerator, and a washing machine, and that was the happiest day of my mother's life. (laughs) And uh -

BF: What kind of chores did you have to do?

MD: My main thing was washing dishes and to help, to help keep the house clean. And my brother, they used to take out the garbage and whatever else they had to do.

BF: Were there any stories or recipes or anything like that that were passed down through your family?

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MD: Not really, really, because back then, then they cooked by a little pinch of this and a little pinch of that. And so I'm still doing that little pinch today. (coughs/laughs)

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BF: Alright

MD: So -

BF: Did, um, your spouse or any of your children or your siblings ever serve in the military?

MD: Hum, no where I, I - I was married in '47. In New York and I (clears throat) And I was married thirty one years before my husband died in '89. And um - then I lost my father also in '89. And then I moved to Roanoke, back to Roanoke in ninety, in '92 (pauses) to look after my mother. And then she passed in '96. And I've been here ever since.

BF: What are the, what's, what are your fondest childhood memories?

MD: Leaving Roanoke (laughs)

BF: uh huh

MD: None that I can, I think, yeah, leaving Roanoke.

BF: What kind of work have you done throughout your life?

MD: Well, let's see, I worked when I went to New York. I worked for a pharmaceutical. And the people that owned the pharmaceutical I worked for them for forty, forty-three years, until I moved back home.

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BF: Did you ever use the public library when you were in school?

MD: Yes I did. Which was normal, I did a little while I was here.

BF: What kind of cultural things, activities, happened around Roanoke while you were here? Did any musical events or bands or that kind of thing come in?

MD: Yes they did.

BF: While you were living here?

MD: Yes they had bands and things that come in whilst I was living here but I was rather young so I didn't participate in that too much.

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BF: How has Roanoke changed over the years?

MD: Oh it's changed an awful lot because back there then (pauses) hum, we had the street cars, we had the dairy, we had the (pauses) back then we had lamp light. (speaks in

a low tone) Already said that didn't we? (in a louder voice) It changed a lot! And awful lot!

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BF: What kind of jobs were available?

MD: It was not too many jobs available, that's why I left, going to New York to find (pauses) well work. And which I did. Ah um –

BF: Was there anything else that you'd like to share that maybe we didn't cover?

MD: Well, the churches! That was my biggest things in Roanoke when I was coming up. We went to Sunday School every Sunday morning. We had to be in Sunday School, we had to go back to church at twelve o'clock, and then in the afternoon we had to go back to church to BTU and then we also had a night service. And after the night service we had two little churches right down the street from where I lived and we went from one to the other. Mrs. Fanison's church, we would go there until they turned out. And then we would go to Reverend Cole's church and it would last maybe another hour, half and hour longer, we went there until it turned out, and then we came home! And so that was about it. But our biggest thing Sunday was church day, won't no missing no churches.

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BF: Well we thank you very much for participating in our oral history event here.

MD: Why thank you, thank you. (in a low tone) Oh it was so much –

[end of track]