

Tim McDaniel

History

Dr. Bigham

The Depression Era

An interview Of Mr. William C. McDaniel

By

Tim McDaniel

Question: Tim---Mr McDaniel, what do you remember about the depression?

Answer: Mr. McDaniel---My first remembrance of the depression: I was borned in 1924, and was about six years old when the depression really hit.

I can vaguely remember the talk about the closing of the banks. I was about seven years old, ~~about~~ about 1930-31-32 when I can recall the hardships. Everybody thought the depression hit all at once, but I remember the depression hitting when I was seven and eight years of age. Some of the things I remember happening are as follows: For instance, when we wanted heat, I would take a little wagon made out of wooden crates, and go along the railroad tracks; and also groups of men would all head for the train Depot where the coal cars were. They all would climb on top of the coal cars, and as the train was moveing we would throw coal off the cars onto the tracks. All the women and Children would take there wagons and pick up the coal on the tracks also. Just about that time the railroad Detectives would be chaseing everyone away; but no one ever got hurt are arrested by them, and that is how we would get our coal.

Sometimes we would carry the coal for many miles, and policemen on the beat would know what was going on. Everyone would seem to cooperate and no arrests were made, even though all this was illegal.

The railroads raised the most cane, but I think they tolerated it, because they knew we needed heat. We would go to the grocery store, packing stores and go to th railroad cars that wheat was shipped in and take the thick wooden planks home, and chop the wood up, and use them for starting the coal, and also make different items out of this; such as a shed or a dog house, and even a tree house.

Question: Tim---What was your social Position?

Answer: Mr. McDaniel---We had no income but my father worked

not verbatim

for the W.P.A. and made a little. Also he worked at the C.C.C. camp, called the three C's. He would hop a freight train, and go to the camp for three or four days. What little money he earned went for essentials. We rented. It was an old brick house, two bedrooms and solid brick walls, and it had a fireplace for heat, running water and even an inside bathroom which was unusual. It cost about eight dollars a month.

I earned money by selling half pint liquor bottles for a nickel, that I took to the local bootlegger, and sometimes even found a half gallon jug and got fifteen cents for it.

We had very little cash on hand. The women couldn't find a job, but sometimes they were lucky enough to get a sewing job.

Getting food to eat was the big problem. I remember I ate a lot of oats. Sometimes I would eat oats three times a day. We would also take our wagons and go to the food distribution area, and get the food the government passed out after Mr. Roosevelt got in. Nothing was done for the poor people until President Roosevelt got into office. After Roosevelt got into office we thought that was the greatest thing that could have happened. Immediately after Roosevelt was president, he started doing something for the people. If Roosevelt had not done something there would have probably been a revolution of some kind.

Question: Tim---What was the political situation at that time?

Answer: Mr. McDaniel---The Country was uneasy and on the verge of a civil revolution. Communism was mentioned quite often, and the Politarian Party was around. This party was quite active and would pay children or anyone a nickel to pass out literature for the Party. This Party preached a overthrow of the government locally, but when things would get real bad then Roosevelt would give one of his fireside speeches, and everyone would calm down.

Question: Tim---What about the world's situation? Hitler's in particular?

Answer: Mr. McDaniel---The Catholic Schools brought up the question of World Politics quite often. They would mention Hitler, but the Nuns would tell me how terrible and cruel he was and that Hitler's party was going to start an upheaval in the world, which turned out to be true.

Roosevelt was admired and he was the one thing that saved the United States, and even the world.

Question: Tim---What did you do for transportation?

Answer: Mr. McDaniel---The main transportation was walking. I do remember that you use to get three street car tickets for seven cents, and could transfer to different cars any amount of times. Thus we went all around Evansville. Very few automobiles were around.

Question: Tim---What was Roosevelt's competition for President?

Answer: Mr. McDaniel---One candidate that I can remember that ran against Roosevelt with any degree of chance was a man called Townsend. His platform was called the Townsend Plan. The Townsend Plan was that everyone would get paid the same wages, and a minimum wage of a dollar, and everyone would retire at sixty five years of age. But when election time came everybody voted for Roosevelt, even here in Evansville.

Question: Tim---What was the governor and Mayor doing for the people at this time?

Answer: Mr. McDaniel---First Governor that I can remember was Paul McNut. he had the same platform as Roosevelt. McNut^[t] told people to join the National Guard and C.C.C.Camps in order to have some money. He attempted to get roads rebuilt and water mains fixed, and sewer lines fixed, and visited Evansville very often. When McNut came to Evansville he drew huge crowds.

Two Mayors that I remember were Bosse and Dress. I think Dress was the most popular. He was a teacher and had a close relationship with the people, and did a very good job during depression.

Thank You.