

Betty Daniels Rosemond Oral History
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Interviewed by Mark Cave at the Williams Research Center
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Betty Daniels Rosemond

CAVE: What is your name?

ROSEMOND: Betty Daniels Rosemond.

CAVE: And how do you spell Rosemond?

ROSEMOND: R-O-S-E-M-O-N-D.

CAVE: And I'm Mark Cave with the Historic New Orleans
Collection. It is Wednesday August 7th, 2019. We're here at
the Williams Research Center talking about your life and
your involvement in the Civil Rights Movement. When were
you born?

ROSEMOND: May 14, 1939.

CAVE: Where were you born?

ROSEMOND: It was a little place called Magnolia, Mississippi,
but it was not -- it was in the home of a aunt.

CAVE: Talk a little bit about your mom.

ROSEMOND: Well, my mom she, her sister lived in Magnolia and my
mom, so my mom had five children and my dad was David
Daniels. My mom was Ottis Daniels and she - well what can I
say? She was the best mom there ever was.

CAVE: Was she from Mississippi?

ROSEMOND: Originally she stayed there, yes. And then she brought us back to New Orleans.

CAVE: Talk about your dad.

ROSEMOND: My dad, well he was from Magnolia and he eventually left Magnolia and he moved to California and he wanted us to come move to California, but my mother -- instead we came [00:02:00] to New Orleans.

CAVE: What neighborhood did you live in when you were a child?

ROSEMOND: Well now in New Orleans? We lived -- it started off on Dauphine Street and then from Dauphine Street we went to Orleans Street, the French Quarters, in the 900 block of Orleans, 912. And we stayed there for years and then my mom, she got a house on Treme Street and we moved there.

CAVE: What did your mom do for a living?

ROSEMOND: Well, she didn't work here in New Orleans. She, as we grew into teenagers, we all worked. Our family worked for a family here in New Orleans and my brothers and my other sisters, we all worked for this family.

CAVE: What family was it?

ROSEMOND: Raymond Mullins. M-U-L-L-I-N-S.

CAVE: And did you work in domestic?

ROSEMOND: Not -- well, he had a guest house and a place on, was it Bourbon or Royal? No, down on Bourbon or Royal and we,

the whole family worked for them: my brother was his chauffeur, we worked at the guest house. He had a restaurant, a guest house and they lived in the Uptown area, but he was a very -- they were a very nice family and we worked for them.

CAVE: Did your mom remarry?

ROSEMOND: Yes, eventually she did.

CAVE: Oh, good. Talk about kind of the Orleans neighborhood when you were growing up.

ROSEMOND: Oh, I love New Orleans. When we lived on Dauphine [00:04:00] Street we lived -- she had an apartment in the 500 block of Dauphine. And we lived there for several years. he remarried and the person she remarried, well her name was changed, you know, because -- but we eventually, when they separated, we moved to Orleans Street and that's where we spent most of the years, at 912 Orleans.

CAVE: Where did you go to church?

ROSEMOND: Well, it was St. James AME and it was in back-of-town part of New Orleans. I forgot which street it was, but it was on the other side of Claiborne.

CAVE: Where did you go to school?

ROSEMOND: I went to Bell. Before Bell I went to McDonogh 41. Elementary school I went to Joseph A. Craig. Then from Craig I went to McDonogh 41. From 41 I went to AJ Bell and

from Bell I went to Joseph S. Clark. I graduated from Clark.

CAVE: Was there a movie theater in your neighborhood?

ROSEMOND: It was back on Claiborne Avenue. That was the closest theater.

CAVE: Was it segregated?

ROSEMOND: And there was -- all the theaters. (laughs) We had the Black theaters, but if you went to theater while white people were there we had to sit in the balcony upstairs. There were the theaters Downtown, or Uptown I'd say, on Canal, but you had to go in the balcony, you had to sit upstairs whenever -- there was Claiborne and there were several theaters, yes.

CAVE: Was your mom politically interested? Was she a Civil Rights advocate [00:06:00] in any way?

ROSEMOND: No. Politically she wanted to vote for President Kennedy. For some reason she always kind of wanted to make sure she voted for Kennedy and that's when she would go try to register to vote which she didn't -- she eventually got the vote, but it took a while. But she was never involved in the Civil Rights. In fact, I'm the only one that started out in my family in Civil Rights. And I had a sister, an older sister, we couldn't let her participate in Civil Rights.

CAVE: Why was that?

ROSEMOND: (laughter) Because in order to be in Civil Rights you had to go through training. You had to be nonviolent, and they trained you, we had to go through training. I'm sure Dodie and different ones have told you. And if you could pass the training then you could be a part of CORE. But my older sister, she would not promise, she would not do that, so we couldn't let her. I'm the only one that really got deeply involved in Civil Rights.

CAVE: Yeah. What were some of your first memories of the racial divide in the city? When did you first realize something was weird in New Orleans?

ROSEMOND: I have to tell you I was in school as a teenager, I had a lot of fun, I had friends, we had a good time in school. And we would ride the buses and I didn't think much about when we would have to get up and give our seat and sit behind the sign on the bus or be asked to move. There was a young man came on TV and one [00:08:00] night when I came home from school he was on and he was a college student, his name was Rudy Lombard. And Rudy was talking about FW Woolworth. He was talking about the buses, he was talking about all the segregation in the city of New Orleans, and then it really hit me. When he mentioned Woolworth and they were going to do something about

Woolworth and I thought well, I've got to help them. They were asking for help from anybody who could help, you know, with CORE, but you had to go through training. And they were going to hold a meeting at the church that night and I decided I'm going to the meeting, and I want to see what it's all about and if I could make a difference for my mom, especially Woolworth, I wanted to do that. So that's how I got involved, I went to the meeting, and I met with them and they were students and they were working with CORE.

CAVE: Did you have any like memories, earlier memories from when you were a child, of the racial divide in the city?

ROSEMOND: I was aware of it, but I didn't, you know, it didn't bother me to the extent that I got to make -- do something, help do something. When we got on the bus and sometimes people would have you move, you just did it. You got up and relinquished your seat even though you didn't -- you know, you just went along with it because this was the law, this is what you had to do. So, it really didn't start with me. It really took hold when I met and heard the broadcast about CORE and what was going -- then I began [00:10:00] to realize all the stuff that was going on. The schools were segregated, Black schools, white schools. There was a school that I always admired; it was a white school. I have to think of the name of it there out Canal and a very

popular school. In fact, Cherise graduated from there because now, as she said, it's a lot of Black students there. But they always had a good band, they were always in the parades, and they were very good, and I admired them every time I saw it. And I was in the band at Clark, but I thought, "Boy, wouldn't it be nice to be at this school," but there were no Black people at the school, so.

CAVE: Talk about your experience at Clark. It seems like a lot of Civil Rights leaders came out of Clark High School.

ROSEMOND: Well, a lot of the CORE members like Dodie, Jean Thompson and a lot of them, Jerome Smith, a lot started there, graduated from Clark. And I was very proud of them because they too had a reason to get involved, you know.

CAVE: What were some of your aspirations as a high school student? What did you want to do with your life?

ROSEMOND: I write poetry, I'm a writer, and I love James Weldon Johnson and Langston Hughes. In fact, when I was in eighth grade, I wrote Langston Hughes and I sent him a poem that I had written, and he wrote the nicest letter back. He invited me to come to New York and he would help me get [00:12:00] started because he liked the poem, but of course my mom had five kids and there was no way we could go anywhere. But my mom framed the poem -- the letter that he sent me, and she kept it until she died. So after she died

of course I wasn't living here when they cleaned out her house and everything so I don't know what happened to the letter from him. But I'm a writer and that's my aspiration today, I want to get books published. I got over 250 poems that God has given me and I want the books out there. He even gave me titles of the books, so I have no reason other than getting busy trying to find the right publishing house to get my books out there. And there are people who are waiting, there are people who call, ask about a poem for this or a poem for that, but they're really good. They're mainly inspirational poetry. And there were some about freedom. There were some about my life and I wrote about my life as a teenager when we were going out partying and having fun and it's called *The Vessel*. It's before my life changed. When God really came into my life everything changed because you can go to church all your life and still not be where you're supposed to be with God, you know what I mean. Anyway, this one's called *The Vessel*.

"The Vessel was worn and broken.

It was chipped on every side.

It laid by the side of the highway of life
until a savior was passing by.

He carefully picked up the pieces

and then with a gentle [00:14:00] touch

he put it back together
because he loved the vessel so much.
He molded and reshaped it.
He looked at his vessel and then
he put it back on the highway of life
to do his bidding again.
I was a broken vessel,
lost in a world of sin
until a savior picked up the pieces
and put me together again."

CAVE: That's beautiful.

ROSEMOND: That was my life. And the reason that one came, one of me -- two of my best friends, they were here in New Orleans all their life and they got married. It was a young man named Pylie and Gerald and we went to Clark together. When they got married on a weekend and on a Thursday night the same week -- they lived back around, not far from City Park -- someone broke in their home and Gerald got killed. A young man stabbed him to death, and he died before the ambulance got to their home. So that was a wakeup call for my life because I realized that it could have been either one of us, it could have happened, that we're not promised tomorrow. It's one day at a time, you know. But it changed

my whole life and it made me realize that I needed the Lord even more to be with me in everything I do.

So, I have plenty of poetry. I have over 250 poems. God gave me titles and the Holy Spirit would go into you and you have to write it when he gives it to you. You've got to write it right then or you lose it and it doesn't come back. So, you've got to grab something. You've got to be ready at all times. (laughter) Like one night I [00:16:00] woke up 4:00 in the morning and I love the sound of a mourning dove. Not morning but mourning, when you're in mourning for somebody. And I heard one outside my bathroom window so I rushed to the window and I listened and then the poem -- when I listened to it and when it stopped I went and sat down and I started writing. And it's called *The Mourning Dove*. A lot of people request this poem.

 "Little mourning dove, oh so sad,
 what are you trying to say?
 I heard you outside my window
 just at the break of day.
 The sound was sad and lonely.
 Little dove, are you crying?
 Did it start at the cross of Calvary
 when Jesus hung his head in dying?

Little dove, I know you came down
from heaven up above
when the father sent his only son
and he confirmed his love.

Little mourning dove, oh so sad,
tell me your secret plan.

I'm mourning for this wicked world
who rejects the king of Kings."

People ask for that all the time. Sometimes they try
to buy it. (laughter) Oh, God.

CAVE: So talk --

ROSEMOND: So, my inspiration, I still -- I haven't retired and I
still walk to get the books out and if people can't afford
the books they could have the books because if God is
gracious enough to give me over 200 poems they need to be
out there for people to get them.

CAVE: Talk about -- you told the story of meeting Rudy
Lombard on the bus and talking [00:18:00] to him and he
motivated you to become a member of CORE?

ROSEMOND: He was on TV.

CAVE: He was on television?

ROSEMOND: He was on the evening news. I came from school and
there was -- oh, he was handsome. (laughter) I shouldn't

say that. Dodie will probably tell you that, but every girl, really when they saw Rudy they wanted to join CORE anyway. He was a very handsome young Black man, a student, and very intelligent. And he was talking about CORE. So that's why I wanted to go to the meeting and see what it was all about. So, and that's when I met, you know, the ones, Dodie and some of the others, Jean and them, people who had went to the meeting and you know we all joined CORE. But we went through the training first. The training, you got pushed around, you got slapped around, you got to be sitting on a chair and one of the trainers maybe will push you out of the chair. They did things that would totally make you angry normally, but we didn't get angry. You had to tolerate that. If you could tolerate that then they knew that you would be able to tolerate what we would be facing in the future, you know.

So, I did really well. In fact, the one thing though, Rudy -- there was one of the trainees, she was Rudy's girlfriend and she knew all the girls had their eyes on Rudy but nobody -- you know. But I guess I must have been looking too hard because when she slapped me one day, boy, it almost knocked me out the chair. (laughter) And I wanted to hit back, but I couldn't do that because I wanted to be in

CORE. So, it was nice. Rudy was our president for a while and then when he died -- [00:20:00] when he left, he left and went to Yale in New York and graduated. He was an attorney. But Oretha Castle Haley became our CORE leader and she's the one they've named the street after her here and I'm so proud of that because she worked hard with us. And her sister Doris, they all worked hard, and her mom let us meet at her house so we had all our meetings there.

CAVE: Where did you have the meetings again?

ROSEMOND: At Miss Castle -- Oretha's mother's home. It was back on the street across from AJ Bell school, one of the side streets. It's still there. In fact, I think they're honoring that house, yeah.

CAVE: Did they -- when Rudy was president did you have the meetings at a different place?

ROSEMOND: We met at the church.

CAVE: Do you remember which church?

ROSEMOND: St. James.

CAVE: St. James, okay.

ROSEMOND: St. James AME.

CAVE: What was your first protest that you were involved in?

ROSEMOND: FW Woolworth. My mom loved going down to Canal Street and she always stopped at Woolworth because there was -- she used to like a certain sandwich and she never went to

Canal without going to Woolworth. So that was my first project, to-- I wanted her to be able to sit at any lunch counter.

CAVE: How did that go? Kind of walk us through that protest.

ROSEMOND: Oh, God. (laughter) That protest, we -- oh, I have a poster for you. It's in the car. You can't keep it, but Woolworth, a [00:22:00] picture's on there. Oh my God, when my daughter come back we can have her bring it in. I wish I had it now and you could see us at the lunch counter, and you could see a lot of that. But we would sit at the back lunch counter only we wouldn't order any longer because we wanted to sit at the front lunch counter. You would get arrested at first, it started out, if you did that. Eventually they did let you go to the white lunch counter and, but I wouldn't order anything to be served because you couldn't do that. Because you couldn't trust that, you know, especially when you're not seeing your food being prepared, so. But anyway, it went on for a while, Woolworth, and we would picket outside every evening after school. And there were still a lot of people crossing the picket line. There were people, Black and white, still going in Woolworth. Some of them we recognized so what we had to do; we called the newspaper. The *Louisiana Weekly* came and took pictures of people crossing the picket line

and they put it on front page and that helped us a lot. But there were still people who were harassing us on the picket line. I was picketing one day, and I had two young white boys, maybe 13 or 14 years old, block my path. We definitely couldn't answer or do anything. They blocked my path, they began to harass me, they called me names, they spit in my face, both of them did. And I stood there, and I looked at them and I started [00:24:00] crying, but the Lord told me, "Forgive them, they know not what they do." And I knew that even hatred and segregation -- you're not born that way, it's a learned environment. Those kids, they truly didn't know the effect of what they were doing, of often, I say this when I talk because that's what the lord said, they know what they're doing. And there was a preacher standing nearby on Canal Street. He came over and wiped my face and encouraged me and he said, "Keep on picketing. You're doing a good job." And we kept on no matter what they did, not matter what you had to continue. So that was the most hurtful experience for me. I don't think it could have hurt any more if they had knocked me down, but to be spit on in your face, that was very hurtful.

[00:25:00]

CAVE: Were there any arrests at that protest?

ROSEMOND: No.

CAVE: No?

ROSEMOND: The police came, but there were none that I remember of them because it was, would have been peaceful, we were peaceful, it was nonviolent, so, but we would still get harassed, you know.

CAVE: What were some of the other protests that you were involved in?

ROSEMOND: Well, we picketed Greyhound bus station, they were segregated, you know? There were a lot of things going on different places. Of course, King's Island was segregated. We went to King's Island and I got pictures of my kids. We're sitting on the bench outside of King's Island and I would get all downtown -- when I first got to Cincinnati, I don't think I was here a week and I got a phone call from an organization here [00:26:00] and it was about a dentist downtown. He was right near Shillito's and we had to go down and picket and his name was Dr. Sam Pollack. He had an office, but his office, he had a Colored waiting room with the signs up "Colored" and a white waiting room. And I couldn't believe that. I thought here I am in the north and they're still doing Colored and white. So we picketed there and then there was a Woolworth downtown. Of course, Woolworth eventually closed, they were in the heart of

downtown. There were several other places, but we picketed different places here and that's what surprised me about Cincinnati because I didn't realize -- I just thought the North was completely changed, but it wasn't.

CAVE: Talk about the protest at the Greyhound bus station here in New Orleans. [00:27:00]

ROSEMOND: Well, we would go down and, you know, of course -- I'll tell you about it in a minute, the Freedom Riding -- but we would go in the bus station and there was, if I remember right, there was a separate place for Black people and the only Black people we saw in the bus station would be -- they would be peeping out the window from the kitchen and they were happy to see us. But of course, we weren't being served. There was a tendency to make you invisible in some of the places, the restaurants, and even Greyhound was having problems. So it was plenty of places we picketed. We picketed Canal Street, there was a theater across from Woolworth. Was it the Saenger? It may have been the Saenger, one of the theaters, and we picketed that. We picketed quite a few places [00:28:00] in New Orleans.

CAVE: Was there a change in CORE when Rudy Lombard left and Oretha took over?

ROSEMOND: No.

CAVE: No?

ROSEMOND: It worked the same, it was good, everything was good.

Because everybody was so dedicated in CORE. I tell people, I said we were motivated by a higher power and I'm not talking about people. I look at it as the Lord and I look at it because every -- in the movement every song, every prayer, everything went up to God giving him thanks and praises. When we rode the buses on the Freedom Ride, the songs were given honor to God. Everything recognized who God was. In the jails it was about God. It still is, you know. So, this is why I feel -- I know how I was motivated, I couldn't stop. Even if we lost our life we were going to continue because it was that important. And I tell people today when I speak different occasions, "Any cause worth living for is a cause worth dying for." So, if you've got the lord in your life and you're living, you're trying to do the right thing, you got to do what you have to do, you know. And that's how I felt about it. We had to continue, and we knew many times when we left home we may not be going back. We knew that we could be killed at any time. It's not that we wanted to die, but we wasn't going to run from it. We had to face it.

CAVE: Talk about [00:30:00] the Castle house, your meetings there.

ROSEMOND: It's still there. I forgot, is it Roman? There's a side street right down from AJ Bell school and the house is there. It was Miss Castle's mom, she was so wonderful. She allowed us to meet there and, you know, Jerome even, he stayed. They had a little place in the back where he could stay because I think he had a few home problems, I'm not -- if I remember right. But they would take you in or -- they did everything that, you know, her mother couldn't have done more to try to help CORE. So that house ought to always be preserved because it was the meeting place for CORE.

CAVE: How did you get involved in the Freedom Rides?

ROSEMOND: Well, when the first bus left Washington the Freedom Rides, the 13 people? And they left on May the 14th, which was my birthday, I ain't gon' never forget that, or they got bombed on May the 14th. But that was the first group, and they were going to Alabama and when they got down to Anniston, Alabama and through Birmingham, you know, it comes on every year on Black history on TV, they show it. When they got to Alabama and they were on the bus there were passengers on the bus -- we didn't charter buses, you need to know that. We just would buy a ticket and if it was a group of Freedom Riders, they would get on that bus too, you know. There were people like Hank Thomas from Atlanta,

different ones on that bus because they had [00:32:00] met in Washington and came down. The bus was bombed in Anniston, Alabama and you know that. A firebomb was tossed on. Hank Thomas managed to get the door opened. If he hadn't got the door opened they would have all burned up on that bus and there were passengers on the bus also. But he managed to get it open, but when they got out, they were beaten down. Some of them was arrested and it was just a terrible incident. But because of that -- and President Kennedy at that time wanted that to stop, that was his statement. He wanted them to turn them around and send them back to Washington. But he wanted it to stop, but it wasn't going to stop. And his brother was Bobby Kennedy, the Attorney General, he took a side with the movement, Civil Rights. He did a lot for Civil Rights. And so they -- it wasn't stopping. This is why other the states, other the groups formed in different places. We wasn't going to let them stop that movement. That was the beginning, but other groups began to really form and when they formed the Freedom Rides, they came from all over. Groups from California, Louisiana, different states, you name it, and they began to travel. Now the ruling had been passed, the ICC ruling that interstate travel had to desegregate, but they weren't following that, places hadn't changed, places

were segregated, the travel was still segregated so that's why other groups decided that we're going to test it, we're going to get out there and we're going to do it too [00:34:00]. So that's why our group formed. We decided to go on Freedom Rides and our first Freedom Ride went to Alabama. We went to Birmingham, we went to Mobile, we went to Beaumont, Texas, we went throughout the South. And there were places in the South as we'd travel, the purpose was to test, we were testing the facilities. We were testing to see if the policies had changed even -- because the law said we had a right to do -- we had a right to go in the white waiting room. We had a right, that all had to change, but it hadn't changed. We were going through some towns and there would be police waiting for the bus to come in to the town. There would be dogs. There would be policemen with guns. There were times we couldn't get off the bus. When we went throughout, to Beaumont, Texas from New Orleans there were places we couldn't get off the bus. And you know, it was just, we were just to test the facilities. And because of that that's why other Freedom Riders went different pl-- you know. Nashville, Atlanta, different groups began to travel too.

CAVE: Talk about Poplarville.

ROSEMOND: Oh, God. (laughter) Well this Freedom Ride -- my eyes are watering because of my glaucoma. This Freedom Ride we left New Orleans one night. It was five young Black ladies: Dodie, Jean, Alice, Pat, Frank Nelson was a young white guy that had come down to help us. Dodie said he was from New York, and I always thought he was from California, but he's on the pictures, [00:36:00] when she brings the poster you'll see it. And they -- so we went down and we bought tickets and our job was to go to Mobile, test the facilities to see if the laws were being followed. We went to Mobile, and nothing was being obeyed. We couldn't go in these places. We were just testing. Now everybody in the ride that night had an assignment. They were the ones who were to go in and test. My job was to be an observer, make a phone call if anything happened along the way. We didn't have cell phones, but I didn't think, I didn't know nothing about cell phones, and I agreed to make the phone call, but I didn't know how I was going to make it. It didn't hit me till it hit me. (laughter) We went, we tested, and that was unsuccessful. There was a lot of segregation still. On the way back we came through a little town called Poplarville, Mississippi. We wasn't, it wasn't on our list as a stop but they went -- everywhere we were supposed to stop we were supposed to test. So, in Poplarville when they pulled there

and stopped, Frank and two of the girls got off and went in to test. Dodie -- what I observed, when they went in to test, and we were still on the bus, a couple of us, and then I saw a little mob pull up, a group of white men ran up the street and I saw them grab Frank and I saw them -- a pickup truck pull up [00:38:00] and I saw them put them in the back of the pickup truck, and the two young ladies, and they drove off. Now here's what I guess was so disturbing. Poplarville was a town that we -- the name was familiar to us because there had been a lynching in Poplarville a year maybe before that, a year or two, and a young man, it was a Black young man, his name was Matt Parker Junior, they had brutally beaten him, lynched him, and thrown him in the Pearl River. And he -- his -- they had done it because he had either whistled or looked at a white woman in Poplarville and they murdered him, brutally murdered him. So here we are in a town that already had been a bad occasion there. You know, not connected with Civil Rights, it was, happened. So anyway, I got off to make a phone call because I knew I had to do something quick and there was a phone booth -- there was a gas station sitting back from the road. There was a phone booth right there, a walk-in phone booth. I got off and went over to the phone booth and I was very young and Jean and I, we all only weighed 100

pounds, we were very tiny then, I went in the phone booth to call Oretha and let her know what had just happened. When I'm in the phone booth and this truck drove off, then here come more people running up the sidewalk on the other side and I could hear them and I could see them. The bus driver told them -- he saw me get off the bus and he told them, "Another nigger got off the bus." So, they'd start looking for me. [00:40:00] I stooped down in the phone booth because you know it had a little wood bottom that was -- I laid down on the floor, but I did get my call through to New Orleans to tell them. I told her I was hiding in a phone booth. When I'm in the phone booth the people on the other side was looking, the bus driver drove off and left me. It was 8:00 at night. Now in Mississippi it's dark, you can't see anything at night. I hid there and then all at once a Black man from the gas station walked out to the end of the street where he was looking across at the people running up and down over there. And he turned to walk back to the station and when he walked past the phone booth, I opened it a little bit and I told him, I said, "I'm a Freedom Rider and they're looking for me, can you help me?" And he says, "Stay down and I'll see what I can do." And I heard him ask two men in the station, they were two white guys, he said, "I've got an emergency at home, can I use

the truck? I got an emer--" And he must have been accustomed to doing that because they let him use the pickup truck. He drove near the phone booth and he said, "Get in." He opened the door, he said, "Get in but stay on the floor." He said, "I'll take you to the interstate and maybe you can get a ride from there." On the way to the interstate, he was praying and I will never forget his prayer. His prayer was so encouraging, so strong, and he was saying, "Jesus, tell me what to do." He said, "I can't put her out on the highway, Lord, tell me what to do. I got eight children, tell me what to do." [00:42:00] And when we got to the interstate he said, "I can't do it. I can't put you out." He said, "I'll take you all the way, but stay on the floor of the truck." He drove me all the way to New Orleans. New Orleans -- Poplarville is 75 miles from New Orleans. When we got to New Orleans we went directly to CORE, over to Miss Castle's house and some of the members were there, they were waiting. Oretha went out and talked to the man and the man said not to release this because if, "They would kill me and my family," you know, when he got back. He said -- so we didn't put it out that way in the paper, what came out in the paper the next day, the story had changed slightly. It didn't tell how I got out, but it was because of this man. He was an older Black man. We have

never been able to find out who he was because -- my daughter even called the church in Poplarville maybe two years ago. You see, I had been trying to find out who the man was because it saved my life. And the preacher at that church, he said, "I remember the incident." He said, "But the man was not from around here." If he wasn't from there who was he? You know? So that's been my question. But I finally turned it over in my heart. I said well the Lord sent him so he had to be my guardian angel. (laughs) He had to be an angel because he got me out of Poplarville, and he took me all the way to New Orleans. And he didn't get out but Oretha and them went out and talked to him at the truck. Now, the next day [00:44:00] Frank and them, they tried them and our lawyers in New Or-- here and some of the people got in cars and went up to Poplarville. It was about eight carloads of people and guess who got in the car to go back up there with them? I felt safe with our lawyers and them, but when we went up there to get them, they tried them -- the courthouse looked like a barn. It was -- I remember standing in the back of the room to hear what would happen, but I was standing by a light switch, and I thought if anything happened, I'm turning these lights off and I'm getting out of here. (laughter) But anyway they tried them. They were fined and they released them, and we

drove back to New Orleans. When we got to the interstate line, Louisiana line, there was highway patrol, Louisiana highway patrol, had a line waiting for us because we were followed from Poplarville by carloads of people from Poplarville. So, when we pulled -- got to the line there were all the police lined up just waiting for us and we were really happy because then the people that was following us turned around, you know. But that's why I don't want to go through Poplarville, I don't want to see Poplarville, because I would have died there. It would have been a different story. It would have been a young Black lady found floating in the Pearl River. They would have killed me, and they would have lynched me, you know. But it saved Frank and them's life. And the reason my call was so important, when I called Oretha they called Bobby Kennedy, they had a direct line, he had given them a direct line. They called him and reported what had [00:46:00] happened just then in Poplarville and I understand, I was told by Oretha and CORE that Bobby Kennedy called Poplarville and told them he knew everything, and he said, "If anything happened to those young people I will have the troops in Poplarville in the morning." So that's why they didn't lynch them, I'm sure, because he was the Attorney General.

CAVE: What did your mom have to think about all of this?

ROSEMOND: Oh, this is what -- and you make sure the young lady hear about Poplarville. My mom knew we were going to Alabama, and I told her I'd see her the next day, I'll see you. But it came on the radio about what happened in Poplarville, and it also came on the radio -- because she had, I had a CB radio. My mom always listened to that too, you know. And it came on the news that one of the Freedom Riders was missing in Poplarville, Mississippi. So, my mom, she was messed up because she said she knew it was me the minute the next-door neighbor came over and told her, "Turn your radio on," what had happened in Poplarville. And she said, "One of the riders is missing, a young lady." Oh, my mom almost gave her a heart attack. She had a bad heart anyway so you can imagine how she felt, you know. But thank God, I made it. He got me out of Poplarville.

So no, I talk about Poplarville and what's ironic today is one of the bosses at the store where I had worked for 40 years, [00:48:00] originally, he was from Poplarville. He was a young white guy but he's very nice, he's not like the people we encountered. So, when he heard -- when he found out I was a Freedom Rider he said, "I know some of my damn relatives was out there trying to kill y'all." He said, "That makes me--" he was really nice. He's still with the

company and he's a nice person and he had to be very young, you know, but he wouldn't have been known at that time. But I don't know. But people ask would you do it again. I said, "I'm 80. If there's someone who would help me on the bus I probably would, yeah."

CAVE: After that incident were you still involved with CORE?

ROSEMOND: Oh, sure, sure. And even now I don't, you know CORE, I really -- I just do what's right, Civil Rights. If somebody -- something happen and it's not right or somebody need help. And I do a lot of speaking at the schools, at the colleges and the different -- you know, I stay pretty busy. I'm going to tell you an incident about -- I've been twice this year at Xavier University in Cincinnati, and she always call me, the history teacher, every year, because there are a lot of students, a lot of people don't know history. I guess they haven't been taught -- a lot of our children haven't been taught, a lot of Black children. Because they give them a part of it, but they don't know. A lot of people don't know what people went through to try to make a difference, you know. So this year at Xavier I spoke and then the next month they called me back again [00:50:00] and she said, "Can you come and talk to the upperclassmen because they want to know how do you become nonviolent." There's so much violence, Mark. Every night

there's murders in Cincinnati. You would not, you probably hear it on the news. There's mass shootings, there's this and that, every night, it's terrible. Well anyway I went back out to Xavier again to tell them how to become nonviolent but I told them this and now the Lord is always -- I talk about Him first and I let them know, I said, "As I look out over this audience" -- and it was packed in the auditorium, I said, "I know and I see that many of you don't know the Lord." I said, "So I want to tell you, you've got to let Him into your life." See, I had a wakeup call when my best friend Gerald got killed. That changed my whole life as far as letting the Lord take control of everything. Anyway he -- I said, "You've got to let Him into your life." I said, "Now how do you do that?" And I told them -- I quoted from Revelations and I always ask the Lord to put the words in me that He want me to tell the audience. I said, "He said in his word 'behold I stand at the door and knocked' and He's knocking on your heart and if you open it and let Him in, He said 'I will come in and I will sup with you.'" So I said, "So you've got to open your heart. Number one, you've got to have love. You've got to know the Lord. You've got to let him in. You've got to love your neighbor. No matter what happened to you you've got to love everybody." [00:52:00] And that's where I'm at.

I don't care what people do now because I know the Lord and I know -- and we are commanded to love each other so whatever happen you've got to love anyway, keep on loving them. So anyway, they listened and then I told them about the Freedom Rides and all of that. When it was over, at least two dozen students were waiting to meet and talk with me. Oh, it was so sad, but it had me in tears the whole time because one young lady was rubbing her chest and she was boohooing. She said, "When you were talking, I felt something, and I never felt this way before." She said, "And I don't know what it is." I said, "You've let -- you opened the door to your heart. You let the Holy Spirit come in. Now you know what I'm saying, what that meant." And she, I hugged her, and she was just boohooing, but that young lady was a changed person that night, completely changed. Then another girl, she asked me this -- she started boohooing. Lord, there was crying, and they had me in tears and I hugged them. So, she said, "I have a question." And I said, "What's your question?" She said, "Are you an angel?" That floored me. I said, "Honey," I said, "Why did you ask me that?" And she said, "When you were talking you had rings, I saw them." She said, "I don't know what they saw, but I know" -- and she's boohooing. "I know what I saw." I said, "I've never been asked that

before, but I'll tell you this. One day when I see Jesus I'm going to get my two wings and I know [00:54:00] I'll have wings." She said, "You have them tonight." I cried all the way home in the car because I had never been asked that before. But everybody had questions, you know, but I can tell you this, there were some changed people that night and that happened in that auditorium. The professor called me the next day, Professor Anderson, she's at Xavier University -- you can make a note if you want, she's still there, and she called every year. And she told me, she said, "We have never had a service like we had last night. Everything -- people -- it affected so many people, but it will, when you let them know, we've got to love each other" and that's what's happening today in the world. There's so much hatred. There are people who will hate you for no reason. There are people who look at you, you speak to them, you're nice to them, and they won't even speak and that's more and more the world is changing like that. If it continues the way it's going, it's going to be even worse than it was back in the '60s and back then because there's so much hatred. There's hatred. Cincinnati has a lot of hatred. I love Cincinnati for the kindness they showed when my family came up from Katrina and how nice they were and they still are nice where I live, but sometimes there are

people at work that wont even say, "Good morning." You speak and you -- but it's OK. You don't hold it against them. You just keep on moving, you know what I'm saying. So, we must love everybody, and I tell me children, I've raised them that way [00:56:00], no matter what happens love anyway. You've got to love. If we don't love, how can we say we love a god who we've never seen? You've got to love, you know.

CAVE: You talked about songs that you used to sing. What were some of the --

ROSEMOND: "Ain't going to let nobody turn me around."

CAVE: And did you sing that on the Freedom Rides or was that --

ROSEMOND: Oh, no, on the buses, on the line, picket line.

Everything they sang that and going to jail, in the jail, you sang. You sang, you gave praise to God. And "freedom," oh, "freedom, freedom over me, before I'll be a slave I'll be buried in my grave and go home to my lord and be free." There were a lot of freedom songs, "He's got the whole world." I wrote a freedom song. I told you I'm a poet. I'm not saying I'm a singer because I don't -- my grandson used to cry every time I sang to him as a baby, and it gave me -- it made me realize that I must sound awful. (laughter) But I wrote a -- it was a poem. Once when I came home from

church and the Lord was giving me a poem and I started writing and then I started humming it and I thought Lord, this is a song. And I don't try to sing, but once in a while if the Lord touch you and you sing it, you sing it. Now there's a song that a young girl up there in Ohio made and it was "Because of you." The young girl had been in to sort of talk to me about a poem and that was a poem I had wrote. It was called -- but I wrote it because of the Lord, because of Jesus [00:58:00]. So that's my song and every now and then I sing it. And it goes a little -- now don't laugh at me, Mark. Promise you won't.

CAVE: OK, I won't. (laughter)

ROSEMOND: It's about the Lord. [sings]

Because of you my whole life has changed.
Because of you I am no longer the same.
Because of you whenever I call your name
I get an answer and it's all because of you.

Because of you I can go on.
Because of you my life is now a song.
Because of you, the blood you shed for me,
I am free and it's all because of you.

That's what he gave me.

CAVE: That was good. You're a good singer. (laughter) I think he was just crying because he's a baby, that's what they do.

ROSEMOND: He gives me a lot and the poems are beautiful, you prayed it. I'm not going to just let anybody do the books because I said, "God gave me the best and I want the best for him. I want it to change lives. I want people to realize how blessed we are, not just Black people or white people, everybody. He loves everybody, you know."

CAVE: Were you ever arrested during the movement?

ROSEMOND: I was arrested in Alexandria, Virginia. I was up there at the time working up there [01:00:00] in Washington, Alexandria. And a girl from California, she was in CORE, the group out in California. There was a conference in Virginia, and we had gone to the conference and Alexandria had a lot of segregated places and it was right across from Washington, DC. You cross the river, you're in Alexandria. Alexandria had a restaurant downtown and it was segregated and Inga, her name was Inga, she was German, she and I was to go in the restaurant and test it and see if they would serve us. We went down there, and this was in the '60s also, we went down, and we were asked to leave but our purpose was to -- we knew we would be arrested. We weren't

going to leave, you know. So, the police came, and they arrested -- I have the newspaper at home, you may can pull it up, I don't know if you can. It was the *Alexandria Gazette* and we're on the front page, Inga and I, getting in the paddy wagon being arrested. And we went to jail. We were in the jail the whole weekend and they -- we begged them to put us in the same cell which they had never done that before, but they did put us in the same cell. We went to trial Monday. When we went to trial we were asked why did we go in the restaurant, why did we refuse to leave? And of course, my answer, I was a little bit shook up, I said, "Because I was hungry, and I wanted something to eat." My lawyers almost fainted. (laughter) They had gave us the answers, how to answer it, you know, but [01:02:00] anyway we was three days in jail, but they did find us guilty. And our sentence was six months in jail and a \$250 fine, but our case was appealed all the way to the Supreme Court, and I thank God we didn't have to go because we would have had to go to prison farm -- up there they have farms too. But we didn't have to serve that time and oh, thank God for that.

But what I did, and I do -- it's called *Alexandria Gazette* back in the '60s. If not, if you can't get it, I do have it

at home. I've got so much stuff at home. So, my brother, my oldest brother, was over in Germany at the time, at Scharfenberg, he was in the Army, I sent him the paper, the clipping out of the paper. Oh my God, he said, "Did it cause an uproar with the soldiers over in Scharfenberg." Because he was an Army officer and he was in tears and he was saying, "Look what's going on. This is my baby sister getting arrested for going in a white-only restaurant." So of course, you know how they felt. Here we are defending our country and look what's happening to my sister. But nevertheless, I was in there for three days. That's the only time I've been arrested.

CAVE: Did you finish a degree at UNO?

ROSEMOND: No. When I left there, I got in Civil Rights and I traveled throughout different cities and places and then I eventually went and stay-- you know, moved to Cincinnati. Now, I wanted to be an English teacher [01:04:00]. I had two years left to go and up there in Cincinnati a lady that took over being my mother since my mom here had died, she wanted me to go to the University of Cincinnati and finish those two years, but I didn't do it because by the end I had a couple of little kids, and I couldn't do it. I had to take care of my children; you know. And I found a job in Cincinnati, and I worked up there.

CAVE: Did you have relatives up there before?

ROSEMOND: Nope. (laughter)

CAVE: What brought you to Cincinnati?

ROSEMOND: I got married to -- the guy I married, his family was in Cincinnati so that's why I moved to Cincinnati and we lived up there. So that's -- but the closest relatives of mine were in Atlanta, Georgia.

CAVE: And you said when you got up there you were still active in the Civil Rights Movement.

ROSEMOND: Yeah, because that was his home and he knew people like Bill Bowen, people -- officials and things and there were problems going on and when word got out, you know, that I was a Freedom Rider. We got calls and they -- I would go and picket. Like the NAACP, I got an award from them, President's Award, and I did, stayed active wherever the need was.

CAVE: How has being involved in Civil Rights Movement and CORE impacted the rest of your life? Has it been something that each year you do something connected to it? You're called?

ROSEMOND: I loved it. I want our history known. I want to let the people know that there are people who laid down their lives for justice trying to make this world a better place. So, this is my goal is to let people know about the

[01:06:00] Lord, how he brought us through and what he brought us through and also to let people know that everybody -- God is -- no respect to the person -- that everybody is equal. And one of the little things I wrote was, "Red, yellow, Black, or white, all are precious in God's sight." That we all are. Everybody count. Every sheep counts. So, if I, if young people -- but today the young people, there's so much violence. I'm in tears every morning when I turn on the news because there are so many murders, so much killing, you know. And that makes me sad because we didn't have that coming up. So, and the young people did get involved in things to try to make things better, you know. So, I don't know, we're in, right now, the way the world is, something's got to happen. I said I'll be glad when Jesus comes back because when he comes back it's going to be a new heaven and a new earth and it's going to be all right.

CAVE: What were your thoughts when you were watching the television coverage of Katrina, seeing your old home --

ROSEMOND: I got the videos too, the Spike Lee *When the Levees Broke*, but it brought back a lot. Because I had been here when we had had a couple of hurricanes, so I know how -- and then I had a sister that lived down in the Ninth Ward when Katrina hit. So, I called -- she was my youngest

sister. She still lives in the Ninth Ward. In fact, Brad Pitt -- she lost everything. All her -- everything she had in the Ninth Ward. But Brad Pitt did rebuild some homes down there, so she does have a new home in the Ninth Ward [01:08:00] but she's about from here across the street from the levee so what good is that? They're going to always be flooded, you know what I'm saying?

But we knew Katrina was going to hit. I was in Cincinnati, and I called my sister, she was still in her home down there on Delery in the Ninth Ward. And I told her to leave her house because this is what the Lord told me to call and tell her. Her name is Thelma. I said, "Thelma, leave your home and do it tonight. If you don't you're going to die in that house. Leave it." And she said, "Well, where can I go? Where can I go?" I said, "Go to the stadium." I said that to all the people that -- I told her to go to the stadium. That was the first thing came to my mind because I felt there would be a safe place, you know, so she did. She called me back later that night and I thank God that she got out of that house. Everything was under water, *everything*. And she would have died in that house because she wouldn't have known what to do. And there wouldn't have

been nothing she could have done; she would have died there.

Katrina was bad and there are still areas when we came down on the trip before this there are still lights out down in the Ninth Ward, there were still some areas. And we walked up to the levee. I want to show them tomorrow when we go see Thelma, I'll show them the levee and the lake, but it'll happen again. It won't, you know, even though New Orleans put the pumps in but it's a lot of water to, you know, look at.

CAVE: Is there any part of your Civil Rights experience that we didn't talk about that you think we should?

ROSEMOND: Oh, yeah. (laughter)

CAVE: OK. [01:10:00]

ROSEMOND: I got invited -- the Freedom Riders got invited to the Oprah Winfrey Show.

CAVE: Oh, talk about that.

ROSEMOND: Yeah. So, 179 Freedom Riders went to Washington for the Oprah show. I was so glad I got invited. I was living in Cincinnati. And so, we went to the show and it was at the station and Oprah paid for everything, she was very nice. There's pictures on that -- I might even give you that poster. You'll love it.

CAVE: Oh, good. (laughs)

ROSEMOND: And there were 179 Freedom Riders that went from everywhere, California, different places. So Oprah, I was sitting halfway back in that crowd of 179. There were two tall men sitting in front of me. I couldn't even hardly see the stage where Oprah was, and I was praying, I was sitting back there praying and I was saying -- my hand shakes all the time, that comes with too much coffee and 80 years. (laughter) I was praying, "Lord, please move me. I can't see anything back here. Lord, I want to be closer to Oprah, please move the two tall men." Let me tell how quick God answers my -- an usher from Oprah came down to that row where we were sitting and he was pointing and he said, "Come out." So I came out of that row. He took me all -- wait till you see the pictures. He took me up on the platform. There's Oprah, there's Hank Thomas, there's John Lewis and guess who's next? [01:12:00] (laughter) I'm sitting right up there near Oprah. And I was so thankful because God answered my prayer and he answered it so quick. So Oprah paid for everything. It was such an honor to meet her, and we all got pictures and stuff, and you know. So, it was really nice.

Then another thing, we were invited, women Freedom Riders, 15 women was invited to the National Women's Law Center in Washington, DC and we were to tell our story up there. And then, we didn't tell our stories to the whole banquet, it was 2,600 people in the banquet room. President Obama was president, and he was the keynote speaker. So, when he arrived, we were all in the banquet room and he said, "I would like to meet with the 15 women Freedom Riders." So, we met with him in another room before the banquet started. And oh my God, I couldn't believe it. He talked to us -- first he talked about God. That's why I respect him, He is my number one. He talked about he knew why God sent him to the world and the job, you know, he just talked. And then he listened to us talk and then he said, he gave us each a handshake, a hug and a kiss on this side. This is reserved. This is the President's side. (laughter) So when we went back into the banquet room there's 2,600 people looking at us as we came through the doors [01:14:00] with the President. And I just lost it, Mark. My family is sitting here at a big round table, the kids and other people who went with us, and I said, "Oooh, ooh! I will never wash this side again!" My daughter'll tell you -- (laughter) It embarrassed her the daughter that's out there. She said, "Mama!"

But anyway, it was such an honor to meet the president. I never in my life thought I would ever meet a president. After what my mom went through just trying to get registered, you know. So, they gave us an autographed picture of him, and my daughter has that picture. We have a picture with him, the 15 women. Diane Nash was on it. People you know are on that picture, Freedom Riders. And so that was one of my greatest joys of being in the Civil Rights Movement. So, I'll never forget that. When I got back to Cincinnati and went to church people at church all -- my pastor was waiting to give me a kiss. He always gave me a kiss every Sunday. All the people do. And we were in the lobby of the church, I had just walked in, and he came over to give me a hug and a kiss and I started screaming and people were in the church and I'm saying, "Oh! Don't touch it, don't touch it, you can't do that, don't touch me!" (laughter) People came round in the church to see what is going on in the lobby and I said, "Nobody can kiss me on that side any longer. That's the President's side." So some of them still would sneak and do it after that on a Sunday. Every now and then somebody will sneak [01:16:00] and then I'll say, "Aha, got a kiss on the President" -- but I said, "Y'all are going to make me get a big patch on

that side when I come to church." No, that was the greatest joy meeting Oprah and meeting the president. I met Dr. King in New Orleans when he came to speak.

CAVE: Oh, talk about that.

ROSEMOND: Well, I was in school then and he came to New Orleans to a rally. New Orleans had not let him use the Municipal Auditorium. He wanted to but they couldn't get it there so longshoremen's labor union had it at their hall. It was in the back town, back-of-town part of New Orleans. So, they had Dr. King there at a rally. My sister and I sneaked out of school that day. We were still in school, and we went over to the longshoremen hall, and they wouldn't let us in because we were kids, the hall was packed. So, we waited outside and when it was over and Dr. King came out, we was calling and hollering his name and he came over to us, but he fussed at us. He shook his finger, he said, "How come you're not in school?" And we thought why is he fussing at us? And we said, "We wanted to see you, Dr. King" and he patted us on the head, and he said, "Stay in school." That's the only time I met him, but it was an honor to meet him because -- but we got fussed at for being out of school and we really shouldn't have been there, but we snuck out of school.

CAVE: I don't have any more questions. Is there anything else you wanted to talk about?

ROSEMOND: Thank you for, you know, we've got to remember this always, people have to love one another [01:18:00] and they know at my church I preach love all the time. You gotta, and I don't care, people can hate, they can hate me, but when I leave this world, I want to go home to be with the Lord. I've got people up there. So, I don't care if they -- you know. But we did what we had to do, and I thank God, He was in the movement the whole time and I thank him. I call that man my angel and where I move today, where I live, it's a high-rise in Cincinnati and I'm on the 11th floor. And at first, I wasn't going to do it because of height, but one night I woke up, I thought I heard a noise. I've got two doors in my apartment, a kitchen door and living room door and I thought I heard a noise and I don't know if I got up and went to the door -- it was so real that I can't tell you if it was a dream or if I really did it, but I think I did it. I opened the door and there stood a man. The door is taller than this. He was dressed all in white, white satin trimmed in gold. Had a round gold something on his head and he stood at the door with his hands down, a gold tray in his hand and a cup on the tray. His hair was to his shoulder. I opened the door and it scared me. I

really got scared and I slammed the door. And after I thought about it for days, prayed about it, and I told my pastor, I told a couple of people at church, they told me I closed the door on an angel and I believe it, because I got an angel over my bed [01:20:00] it's a lady, she's holding the same type of little gold tray with a cup on it. A week later word came to me from Oklahoma, my brother was in Lawton, Oklahoma, he was still in the service, had been in there 55 years, and he was doing artillery training when he died, he had cancer. So, it was a word -- they called me a week later that my brother had died. And I think the message -- everybody said that was a messenger, the angel was bringing me a message on that little tray. And I believe it because it was only one week that my brother died. So we went to Oklahoma and they had a real nice military funeral for him. But that's about it.

CAVE: OK, thank you.

ROSEMOND: We met with Dodie last night, boy. My daughter taped everything Dodie said.

CAVE: Oh, good. (laughter)

ROSEMOND: Because - I don't want to tell you -- [01:21:07]

END OF AUDIO FILE