

Oral History with Whit Hicks and Peggy Sadler. Part 3. Recorded in 1979

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Well, it wasn't, I don't think, I think the blackface part of it, they thought we were making fun of the Negroes. Well, it wasn't that. I don't think it was, I should think they'd feel it and honor.

It was just that you could get the way sometimes the black people talk. Some folks naturally are well-educated, they talk real, but there's that little draw to it, you know, that you could get into when you're telling a joke or something like that or anything, you could get that draw into it and make it sound funnier, you know, see? So, no, I think it was too bad because they cut them out. Do you have any idea how all of this started? Because, of course, we didn't have black people around here or Negroes around here in the days when minstrel shows became popular.

No. So it wasn't like we were... It just, we pulled it really from Al Jolson's business, I think. Al Jolson was a white fella and he blackened up and put on that Jolson song, I don't know if you ever heard of him, Not Many and so forth, you know, and it was considered, I don't know, just how it did to start, but they were putting them on all around, Mr. Jingles and Mr. Jangles and so forth, and you could get a lot of fun with it.

But we used to have, really, we used to fill that hall two nights down there and people called it a spring tonic. They used to always look forward to that show and we had a lot of fun. I wouldn't be surprised, I don't know if the shows will revive, the minstrel shows won't, I don't think, although, I don't know, but they were talking about it here during the parade, you know.

Did you see the parade? Yes. We had a lot of the minstrel show costumes on there, you know, that I wore. Yeah.

And those were different things and it kind of aroused the talk about it so that I wouldn't be surprised if they attempt another one. Huh, that would be neat. A variety show, you know, people... That was the Lions Club club that you're talking about that had all those costumes.

Yeah. Right, right. Do you know, there are a lot more things I'd like to talk to you about, but it's going to, I think I'm going to wear you out and I think I should... And a dog would get down there, you know, right across from where, well, just at the entrance where you go up to the street before you get to where Jane Bottom used to live, that big house.

Yeah, yeah. He'd sit right there on that cement, you know, see, and he'd do that, ooh, you know, see, just like if somebody died, you know. You've heard that expression when a dog howls.

Right. He was sitting out there and we said, open that door, Dave. So we lit one of these cherry bombs, you know, see that round one with a fuse on it.

We lit it and threw it. It rolled across, right across the driveway, you know, right across the street and you could see the dog kept looking at that thing coming, you know, see, and then

all of a sudden that thing, boom, you know, see, and that dog humped his back up in the air and he went up the street and you could never get him down Main Street again. Oh, they're big dogs.

He used to come up to the house there when we were up on Willie Hill and he'd get out, you know, in the moonlight nights, you know, and right outside of our house there in the door and he'd do that howl and, you know, say, well... I didn't know St. Bernard's howls like that. Oh, yeah, awful mournful howl. So I get up this night, I don't know what time it was, it was midnight or two o'clock and we were burning coal.

I opened that door gradually and he was right out there in the open and I threw a chunk of coal out there and it hit him on the rump or something, you know, he'd never know what struck him. And he went down that hill to beat the band. Well, from then on, every time Ernie, Belanger, and Mary used to come up and walk up for exercise visitors, the dog would follow them along, see.

Well, he'd get just about halfway up the hill and he'd sit right there and he wouldn't go any further. They couldn't understand what it was. We never told them.

That's amazing. Well, I'm going to...

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