

Matilda Pugh Daniel

Interview with Matilda Pugh Daniel

—Gertha Couric

*MATILDA WAS WED IN DE WHITE FOLKS' PARLOR*

Near Eufaula, Alabama, on a bluff stands a little three room cabin neatly furnished with plain, well worn, but nicely kept furniture. Surrounding the house are small beds of pretty flowers, and rows of fresh vegetables. Here resides in peace and tranquility Aunt Matilda Pugh Daniel, an old Negro slave, aged 96 years. Aunt Matilda was a full grown buxom gal when the War between the States was raging. She belonged to United States Senator, James L. Pugh, and was born on his plantation, near Eufaula. Even though time has dimmed her sight, and slightly diminished her hearing powers, she is still active of mind and accurate in her memories. We will let her speak for herself:

"Yassuh, white folks, I remembers lots of things dat happen in de slabery times. I works aroun' de house for mistis, who was de daughter of Gen'l John

Linguard Hunter befo' she ma'ied de massa. When I was a little pig-tailed nigger, I usta play 'roun' wid Massa's chilluns. We play injuns in de woods, an' buil' dams down on de creek an' swing in de yard an' sometime we sho do devilish things. We hid red pepper in ole Black Bob's chewin' bacca, an' you ought to seed de faces he made. It makes me laugh still yit. Den we tuken a skunk dat us little white an' black debils kotched an' turn him loose in de slave quarters. You ought ter seed dem niggers come a flyin' outer dere. Dey come out like a swarm of wet antses.

"Atter I grew up I ma'ied Joe Daniel, a house nigger, an' Gen'l Hunter, de Mistis's pappy 'formed de ceremony. We was ma'ied in de parlor, an' I wo' a party dress of Miss Sara's. It sho' was purty; made outen white tarleton wid a pink bow in de front. I had a pink ribbon 'roun' my haid too, an' Joe, he look proud of me. Atter de weddin' all de niggers on de plantation gathered about an' we had a soiree in de back yard. Me an' Joe moved to de quarter den, but I still worked in de house. Mistis warn't goin' ter

let nobody wash dem julep glasses but me, an'  
warn't nobody a goin' ter polish dat silber but dis  
here nigger. Nawsuh.



*Matilda Pugh Daniel, Eufaula, Alabama*

"Durin' de war us warn't bothered much, but atter de surrender, some po' white trash tried to make us take some lan'. Some of 'em come to de slave quarters, an' talk to us. Deysay 'Niggers, you is jus' as good as de white fo'ks. You is 'titled to vote in de 'lections an' to have money same as dey,' but most of us didn't pay no 'tention to 'em.

"Den Massa James an' Mistis moved to Washington, an' Miss Sara wanted me to go wid her to be her house maid. She said she'd pay me money fo' it, but I couldn't leave my ole man, Joe, kaze he had a case of consumption. Joe died a year later an' lef' me wid fo' little chilluns. Us stayed 'roun' on de plantation an' de new massa paid us good money fo' workin', but soon de house kotched fire an' burn to de groun', an' I have to move to Eufaula. I bought dis little house wid de money I saved. I has kinfolks in Detroit dat sen's me a little money, an' some good peoples in Eufaula helps me out some so I is in purty good financial shape. I ain't neber 'sociated wid no trashy niggers an' I ain't neber 'ten' to. I is goin' to be a proud an' good nigger to de las'."