

Methodist University Community Oral History Project  
Methodist University  
Fayetteville, NC

**Anonymous 2016 3**

Interview Conducted by  
Patrick W. O'Neil  
March 9, 2016  
Fayetteville, NC

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Interview of

**ANONYMOUS 2016 3**

Interviewed by

**PATRICK W. O'NEIL**

0:01

**O'NEIL:** My name is Patrick O'Neil, it is March 9, 2016, and we're here in Fayetteville, North Carolina at the Coliseum, where Donald Trump is going to be holding a rally at about seven o'clock tonight. I am here with someone who's chosen to be anonymous, but could you for the record give me your birth date so that we can identify which is which?

0:21

**ANONYMOUS:** Yes, I'd be happy to. [DATE OMITTED,] 1945.

0:26

**O'NEIL:** Thank you, sir.

0:27

**ANONYMOUS:** Yes, sir.

0:29

**O'NEIL:** And you don't need to speak into the microphone; it'll pick you up. The only thing that'll happen is that wind will be in the way. So, can I ask, what was your childhood like? Where did you grow up? You say you were born on an army base—.

0:41

**ANONYMOUS:** I grew up in six different states before I graduated from high school.

0:47

**O'NEIL:** Okay. How was that? Was that because your parents were in the military? Both parents?

One?

0:54

**ANONYMOUS:** When I was born, my dad had just gotten out of the service; he had been overseas in North Africa and Italy. He was in service for four and a half years during the second World War. Family is originally from Statesville, North Carolina, the Piedmont area, has been for centuries. So I do consider myself by ancestry a North Carolinian and a southerner, although I don't have much of an accent now.

1:26

**O'NEIL:** Sure. What was your childhood like, moving around like that? How did you take to that?

1:31

**ANONYMOUS:** I loved it. I looked forward to it.

1:34

**O'NEIL:** What did you like about it?

1:40

**ANONYMOUS:** I was so wrapped up in the World Book and maps, and I would visualize myself in other places, and I'd simply just enjoy moving, and it was never a problem. I was a very shy and withdrawn, very geeky child, and didn't have a whole lot of friends, but I enjoyed the change and the moves, and I can't say anything negative about it.

2:14

**O'NEIL:** When you moved, did you move out of the country at any time, or were you just in different parts of the—?

2:17

**ANONYMOUS:** No, we never moved out of the country.

2:21

**O'NEIL:** Excellent. So, growing up, you went to high school, and then did you go to college? Did you do something else afterwards?

2:29

**ANONYMOUS:** No; went straight on—. I was drafted right after grad school. I was drafted in October 1968, and at that point there was a window of opportunity where you could enlist, because I did not want to have them pick out the branch of service. And I enlisted, or signed up to enlist in the Pennsylvania National Guard Infantry Regiment in Gettysburg, of all places. Did well on the ASFAB [Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery], that's the military preparation battery, and would have been able to go to Officers' Candidacy School. But after the pre-induction physical, the doctor went down the line and pointed—bellowed—at some of us, either "Step forward" or "Step back," I don't

remember which, after about four hours of being cursed at—Captain Weiss, M.D.—and he said, “Get your papers and get the blank out of here.” And I said, “Why?” And he said, “You have dorsal scoliosis,” curvature of the spine, which I did not even know. So I did not serve.

3:54

**O’NEIL:** How did that make you feel?

3:56

**ANONYMOUS:** I was actually disappointed at the time, but I was told later, “No, you wouldn’t have enjoyed it.” [Laughs.]

4:01

**O’NEIL:** Why were you disappointed?

4:03

**ANONYMOUS:** Probably naiveté, because I don’t think I’m—. A lieutenant, if I had ended up in Vietnam and made it through Officer Candidacy School, probably was not a good thing. Some of the men were known to frag, roll grenades under the tents of lieutenants they did not care for.

4:32

**O’NEIL:** Fair enough. So when that happened, what did you do instead of the military?

4:36

**ANONYMOUS:** I got a job in a library, State Library of Pennsylvania; that’s my first job.

4:41

**O'NEIL:** What were you doing there?

4:42

**ANONYMOUS:** Reference.

4:44

**O'NEIL:** Yeah. How did you like it?

4:45

**ANONYMOUS:** I love it. Loved it.

4:47

**O'NEIL:** And you've done that all your life?

4:48

**ANONYMOUS:** I have, sir. In different places.

4:50

**O'NEIL:** What brought you down here? Was this before you retired, or when you retired?

4:53

**ANONYMOUS:** Before. Just a family, change; wife is from here. And I finished at the Greensboro Public Library. Good place, good people. Librarians are an odd but interesting bunch.

5:12

**O'NEIL:** I agree.

5:13

**ANONYMOUS:** We do fairly well at Trivial Pursuit. [Laughs.]

5:15

**O'NEIL:** Well, I'm a historian, so I owe them a lot. So, can I ask, politically, were your parents political?

5:24

**ANONYMOUS:** They were as far-right as a person could be. [Laughs.] Yes.

5:28

**O'NEIL:** Did they impart that to you? Did they talk politics?

5:31

**ANONYMOUS:** Yes, I believe it took. [Laughs.] I was never drilled or grilled on it; just, you hear it. It was talk.

5:41

**O'NEIL:** Yeah. And what they said was convincing to you.

5:45

**ANONYMOUS:** It was.

5:46

**O'NEIL:** Okay. Why?

5:49

**ANONYMOUS:** I've known too many people—. I can't say that I was convinced immediately; that would be crazy, because I paid no attention. I did not pay attention to them; as a teenager you're not supposed to. I've met too many—. I've met too many—. The most—. Alright, I'm just going [to go] ahead and say this, I don't care if you edit. I'm not going to edit it.

6:13

**O'NEIL:** Okay.

6:14

**ANONYMOUS:** Republicans are known to be intolerant and filled with hate, and so on and so forth. None of these things [that] have an "i-s-t" at the end of it. I am not a racist. I am not a sexist. I am not homophobic, which does not end in "i-s-t," but at any rate. The most intolerant people I have ever known, almost every one of them, have been on the left. Not all people from the left are intolerant; the most I have ever known have almost invariably been leftist. I have some in the family.

6:54

**O'NEIL:** How does that work? Why do you think that was?

6:58

**ANONYMOUS:** About the family? No, I won't do that, I mean, I'll talk about other relations—.

7:01

**O'NEIL:** No, I'm not thinking about your family. But generally you say intolerance comes from the left. Why do you think that does? Or, doesn't come from but exists on the left?

7:11

**ANONYMOUS:** Oh, I wouldn't know the genesis of it; that's just an empirical thing. It's an observation. Of course there are intolerant people on the right, but the most intolerant, in my opinion only—this is an empirical thing, it's observation—have been on the left, and people who hold opposing points of view, they seem to have no tolerance for them. And Dr. O'Neil, you might want to add a description about what I look like, because I fool the other side.

7:47

**O'NEIL:** Sure. Would you like to describe yourself?

7:50

**ANONYMOUS:** Possibly as a failed Ozzy Osbourne impersonator.

7:54

**O'NEIL:** [Laughs.] I couldn't do anything better than that. That's a far better description than I could provide. That's great. So when you think about intolerance, you would say tolerance is a value. That's something that you value? Or is it something that you—?

8:11

**ANONYMOUS:** Absolutely! I try not to judge people on appearance because I'm judged on it constantly. I was afraid I'd be singled out here, but I don't think so.

8:20

**O'NEIL:** Okay. Why did you think you might be singled out here?

8:27

**ANONYMOUS:** Oh, honestly, I sometimes exaggerate. I was a little concerned, because some people who are very conservative can be intolerant also. But I've had no negative experiences or interactions with anybody here.

8:43

**O'NEIL:** Sure. So your political background—your parents were very far-right, you say—

8:49

**ANONYMOUS:** They were. They were. Goldwater Republicans.

8:52

**O'NEIL:** Sure, sure. So when you started voting, you were voting for the right as well?

8:57

**ANONYMOUS:** I did not vote until very late. Very late.

8:59

**O'NEIL:** Okay. When did you start, and why didn't you before, and why did you when you did?

9:03

**ANONYMOUS:** I'll tell you. 2000. Literally.

9:06

**O'NEIL:** Yeah. So what was it before that that kept you from voting? Can you think?

9:10

**ANONYMOUS:** No, I cannot. It would be one of those things where it would come to you at night or on the way home and then it's too late. It's not so much that I was apolitical, but more just non-political. I held views. I never talked about them, I just—. At home, I was taught in a southern way: you don't talk about money, you don't talk about this and that, the other. And I don't need to make enemies with people by giving them my views which are no more valid or invalid than theirs are.

9:55

**O'NEIL:** Sure. So, you say you started voting in 2000.

9:59

**ANONYMOUS:** That's the first time.

9:59

**O'NEIL:** What made the change? Why did you vote then?

10:06

**ANONYMOUS:** Fox News. [Laughs.] I wasn't aware of—. I thought CNN was all there was, and then I discovered Fox.

10:15

**O'NEIL:** Okay. And what was different about that?

10:21

**ANONYMOUS:** They just seemed like genuinely nice people, and—. Can you edit out some of the blanks? [Laughs.] The pregnant pauses?

10:39

**O'NEIL:** No, it's fine. It's completely normal, by the way.

10:41

**ANONYMOUS:** Okay. I'm sorry.

10:42

**O'NEIL:** No, it's exactly—.

10:41

**ANONYMOUS:** Is it really? Because I[’m] like, “this is awkward.” [Laughs.]

10:43

**O’NEIL:** It’s how all of us talk. When I’m in front of my classes, I say something and then I have nothing to say for a while. There’s nothing unusual about it.

10:48

**ANONYMOUS:** Okay. Alright. Honestly, I just thought this is way past time, and I don’t think anyone who does not vote—. And I’m ashamed of that, but I don’t want to lie to Dr. McNeil [sic], that’s the whole point of this, is doing something important. I’m very much ashamed. And I didn’t realize until my supervisor at the time said, “why didn’t you vote in such and such election?” and I thought, “Oh! Yeah, you can check that online.” Yes, in this state at least. But I voted Republican in 2000 and afterward. It has not turned out too well, but—.

11:37

**O’NEIL:** How has it not turned out well?

11:39

**ANONYMOUS:** We lost! [Laughs.] I don’t know your affiliations, sir.

11:44

**O’NEIL:** They’re not relevant, as far as I’m concerned.

11:46

**ANONYMOUS:** I know that. I know. I know.

11:51

**O'NEIL:** So what does Donald Trump mean to you?

11:55

**ANONYMOUS:** I had never seen him on television; I was very well aware of him; I knew very little about him. If he does well in the New York real-estate world, he's a piranha, and that's a wonderful thing—I mean that as a compliment. The man cannot be bought, and he says things openly that a lot of us think but wouldn't dare say. The Rubio comment about the hands [One of Trump's primary opponents, Florida Senator Marco Rubio, made disparaging comments about the size of Trump's hands at a rally in late February, 2016] didn't turn out too well for Senator Rubio, and that was not a very bright thing of Senator Rubio to say. He just handed that one to him, and I think as a consequence, Senator Rubio will, I think, lose very badly in Florida, at least so says [journalist and statistician at [fivethirtyeight.com](http://fivethirtyeight.com)] Nate Silver, and he's a leftist, I think—he is. But anyone who goes on Nate Silver's site, I've never seen him wrong, and he's left.

13:20

**O'NEIL:** So what do you want Trump to do—

13:23

**ANONYMOUS:** I'm drifting, I'm sorry.

13:24

**O'NEIL:** No, not at all. You'll have to forgive me—sometimes my questions drift.

13:28

**ANONYMOUS:** No. No. It's fine.

13:30

**O'NEIL:** But what do you want Trump to do to or for America?

13:35

**ANONYMOUS:** He admits he used to be a Democrat—it's on tape. So many things are public record: I went on the Federal Elections Commission site and got a printout, which anybody can do, of all of his donations. Yes, he's given to both sides. When you're in real estate doing business, that's just the smart thing to do. But as I say, this man, he has somewhat of an ego, and he is not condescending. I believe he will win a lot of what used to be called the Silent Majority, or the Reagan Democrats. I think he'll have some crossover appeal. Clearly a lot of the party regulars detest him, and that's—

14:32

**O'NEIL:** Why do you think that is?

14:35

**ANONYMOUS:** Maybe their free ride's about to end.

14:38

**O'NEIL:** Okay. So, can I ask you, when you think of America, what is America for? What is America about to you? What does it mean to you?

14:51

**ANONYMOUS:** I can't say anything deep or original or profound; I'm not a deep or profound or original thinker. I was a history major—undergrad—and I never really gave too much thought about what I considered to be our exceptionalism until I traveled fairly widely, at least in Europe. And they were good places and nice people, but I thought, "Yes we are. I feel we are exceptional." And our ancestors, whether they came—. And honestly, I have no problem with people who come here to better their lives, regardless of how they get here. A wall is fine [Trump proposed building a wall along the American border with Mexico], however that happens, but I don't have any problem with that. But all of us, whether they came last week or centuries ago, they came for a reason, and it's because their lives—may I use a mild obscenity?—

15:54

**O'NEIL:** Whatever you want to say.

15:55

**ANONYMOUS:** —because their lives kind of sucked wherever they came from, and I welcome them.

16:02

**O'NEIL:** So do you feel that Trump is welcoming to people who want to come to America? Because there's so many—.

16:08

**ANONYMOUS:** Well, it's—. I do not know. Honestly, I don't know. Because there are so many seeming—not even—. They're almost immediate contradictions. It's hard to say. But when he's backed openly by Jerry Falwell., Jr. and by Pastor Jeffords of Southern Baptist Church in Dallas [Robert Jeffress of First Baptist Dallas, who had introduced Trump at rallies but not technically endorsed him] and they have no problem with it, I think people outside of academia—I'm sorry, I don't mean you [laughs]—

16:44

**O'NEIL:** No worries.

16:50

**ANONYMOUS:** —I'm not referring to Dr. O'Neil—

16:52

**O'NEIL:** You're fine.

16: 56

**ANONYMOUS:** —some real-world people—and I'm sure Dr. O'Neil is—I don't know. He does say a lot of things that—. He will contradict himself within ten minutes, and it does not seem to make a difference. He seems to be able to dig a hole and get out of it very quickly. [Laughs.]

17:17

**O'NEIL:** Yeah. Okay. So I'll keep you for just one or two more minutes.

17:23

**ANONYMOUS:** It's fine. Everything's cool. My wife's the one in purple, there—yeah, okay, that's fine.

17:29

**O'NEIL:** I'll keep my eye out for her [in case the line moves]. So—

17:30

**ANONYMOUS:** Okay, cool. Am I being of any help at all?

17:34

**O'NEIL:** No, you're being totally interesting. Again, our job is to collect stories.

17:39

**ANONYMOUS:** Okay. What do you teach? What is your specialty?

17:42

**O'NEIL:** I teach American history—

17:43

**ANONYMOUS:** Ah, excellent.

17:43

**O'NEIL:** —mostly before the Civil War.

17:45

**ANONYMOUS:** Oh, I love that; colonial and antebellum's my favorite, and I know next to nothing about anything past that. [Laughs.]

17:54

**O'NEIL:** Well, I feel the same thing, very frequently. So what about Trump's ideas about foreign policy? Do these matter to you as much?

18:07

**ANONYMOUS:** Not honestly so much.

18:09

**O'NEIL:** So what matters more?

18:13

**ANONYMOUS:** The party needs to really be picked up, shaken hard, and changed. And, just my opinion, some radical change is needed. When you control both houses of Congress and you are too meek and timid to get anything done, it's a party that I think is ripe for change. And I was very saddened that someone I still like, [South Carolina] Representative [Trey] Gowdy, supported Senator Rubio. I like Senator Gowdy a great deal, and I think he's a very good and sincere person. But I'm afraid so many of them on both sides of the aisle are absolutely bought and sold by the people who pay for them. And then after they're out—. They'll stay in as long as they can. We're paying for them; they're not on the public—the actual name of the law, I won't call it that, it's the Patient Protection and Affordable Care

Act [colloquially known as “Obamacare”]—they don’t, as far as I know, unless they volunteer to be subjected to it, they’re immune from it. They’re immune from a lot of things—it’s a part-time job, seemingly, for a bunch of them. And I don’t know what kind of pre—. Nobody can figure out what kind of president he would be if he were elected.

19:53

**O’NEIL:** Does that scare you? Does that worry you?

19:56

**ANONYMOUS:** No, it doesn’t. No, it doesn’t. The thing about the other side—. No, Senator [Bernie] Sanders does not appeal to me, but I find him an absolutely truthful man. In my opinion he’s a crackpot and has a very tenuous grasp of economics, but he doesn’t annoy me. And I think he absolutely believes in what he espouses. And he doesn’t grate on me. Now, Mrs. [Hillary] Clinton has a voice that if ears could bleed, I would hemorrhage to death. I have to hit the mute button when she’s on.

20:54

**O’NEIL:** Okay. Okay. So—

21:00

**ANONYMOUS:** You don’t have to edit that out.

21:02

**O’NEIL:** No, it’s fine. So is it personality as much as politics?

21:02

**ANONYMOUS:** Yes, yes, a lot of personality. Well, yes, it counts! Because it reveals a lot about a person. If you're so scripted—and he is not scripted, he is playing the media like a deck of cards. He will have something tonight that will be covered by every network. He will free-associate, and they will cover every minute of it, and he's not paying a dime for it. And they're losing, probably, commercial dollars on it. The man—

21:35

**O'NEIL:** Does that seem—

21:36

**ANONYMOUS:** No, I love it, I think it's great.

21:38

**O'NEIL:** Does that seem like a kind of power?

21:40

**ANONYMOUS:** Yes.

21:42

**O'NEIL:** So what is—

21:43

**ANONYMOUS:** He's the brilliant non—. To be a non-politician, he's the best one I've ever—he's better than most actual politicians. He has no experience. I don't think he listens to anybody, I don't think you could ever put a filter on him.

21:59

**O'NEIL:** What does that power mean—

22:01

**ANONYMOUS:** I don't mean to use it in an evil or a bad way. I mean, he's aware that there are three parts of government and that as president he's constrained; of course he—. But I think he would take names and kick butts and do the best job he could. And he may exaggerate his wealth, I don't know. I don't think he's gonna file a hundred pages of false statements to the Federal Elections Commission; whether he's worth ten billion or five billion's immaterial. He's a very rich man, and he came by it honestly, as far as I know. I feel that he did. He does not need anybody's money, he does not want anybody's money. I don't know if he'd make a great president or an awful one, but it's time to find out.

22:51

**O'NEIL:** Is there anything else you'd like to say?

22:53

**ANONYMOUS:** No, sir, I think I've rambled on enough. [Laughs.]

22:55

**O'NEIL:** Not at all. Okay, thank you. Then I'll press "stop."