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ISAAC WOODARD, IN HIS OWN WORDS

WRITTEN BY JAMES BLAYLOCK

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My name is Isaac Woodard. I'm twenty-eight years old. I was born in Winnsboro, South Carolina. I lived there, until I was fifteen years of age. From there, I went to Salisbury, North Carolina. I stayed there about four years. From Salisbury, I went to Burlington, North Carolina, where I stayed for two years. After that, I went back to Winnsboro, South Carolina where I lived for eighteen months. Then, it was off to Camp Jackson, in Fort Benning, Georgia, where I was inducted in the United States Army. The 13th day of October, 1942. I stayed there nine days. After nine days, they transferred me to Bainbridge, Georgia, and I stayed there for around eighteen months. Then I went to Camp Story, Georgia for three months. Then I went to Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, the Army base there. Then to Norfolk, Virginia, the Army base. Then, after three months, I went out to camp in California for about three weeks. Then I was sent to the Southwest Pacific, New Guinea Island. I stayed there for fifteen months. I saw service in the Southwest Pacific on New Guinea Island and the Philippine Islands. The last place I was stationed—was Britannia Bay. I stayed there for about a month. Then it was back to the United States. In the Army, I received a Good Conduct Medal and one Battle Star and an Honorable Discharge. I tell you all of this, because I want you to know that I've seen some sights! Yes, I have. I have seen some sights! But I don't see no sights no more. You see—today—I'm blind.

When I got back to the United States, I was in Augusta, Georgia. I went down to the Greyhound Bus Company, and I purchased a ticket from Augusta, Georgia to Winnsboro, South Carolina. After I boarded the bus, a few miles out of town, after about an hour's ride, the bus driver stopped the bus. I asked him did he have time to wait until I go to the rest room, I mean the latrine. He says to me, "Hell, no." He said, "Damn it, go back and sit down. I ain't got time to wait." I says, "Damn it, talk to me like I am talking to you. I am a man just like you." He said, "Go ahead then and hurry back." Well, I goes ahead and hurried back and takes my seat again. That was all of that. So he did not say anything more

to me, and I did not say anything more to him, until we come into Batesburg, South Carolina. He gets in Batesburg, and he stops the bus. He gets off the bus, and I don't know what he got off the bus for, but he came back to the bus and walks up to me and taps me on the shoulder and says, "Get up! Some one outside wants to see you." He turns around and walks back out of the bus, so I gets up and walks out of the bus. There was two polices standing there when I walked out. The bus driver was standing out there talking to the police. He said, "This soldier has been making a disturbance on the bus," so I goes to explain to the police that I had not been doing anything for them to arrest me. I was explaining to them what the bus driver said to me, and what I said to him. But before I could explain it, the police hit me with a billy club across my head and told me to shut up. So I hushed. The driver finished talking, and after he finished talking, the police said to me, "You won't ride this bus out of here. You will catch the next bus out. Otherwise, I am going to lock you up." So then, he grabbed me by my right wrist and twisted my arm and looking at me just like he wanted to hit me. I don't know, but that is what I was thinking to myself. So he was not saying anything to me, and I was not saying anything to him. He comes to the corner where one street goes down straight, and another goes around a corner this way, and he turned right. But instead of him telling me to turn too, he just turned the corner and twisted my arm all at the same time, and so then I lit into him. I still did not say anything, so he asked me, "Have you been discharged?" and I says, "Yes," just like that. So he said, "Don't say 'Yes' to me, say, 'Yes, sir.'" So I begged his pardon, and I told him I would say, 'Yes, sir' to him if he wanted to, which I did. So he started beating me all at the same time, just as soon as I said 'Yes,' so then I throwed up my left arm and blocked a few licks, and he continued to beat me until I had to do something. So I grabbed his billy club and wrung it out of his hand, and when I did that, some other officer threwed a revolver in my back and says, "Drop that billy. If you don't, I will drop you." So I drops the billy club, and he picks it up and walked me on up to the jail.