

## **GRTC**

### **Interview: Robert Scott**

Laura Browder: ...facility in--

Robert Scott: Uh huh.

LB: ...September, so it's gonna be... your portrait, some of your words, and then, um, Benjamin is gonna create a sound piece to go along with that, so...

RS: Oh... Alright.

LB: And then, the other thing that's gonna be really cool is we're gonna have the portraits and the stories in the buses... as well, so...

RS: Ok. What kinda stories?

LB: Whatever you tell me.

RS: [Laughs] Oh, Lord...

LB: Basically, what we'll do is we'll record the interview and then I'll get it all transcribed. And then I'll take that transcription and select... just some excerpts.

RS: Ok.

LB: Of things you tell me, so...

RS: Alright.

LB: And I hope you won't mind the, uh... the toughest thing about the interview is being shut... in a soundproof closet [laughs].

RS: Oh. No, I'm--I'm--I'm--I'm alright with that.

LB: Are you alright with that?

RS: Yeah.

LB: Good.

RS: So, fill this out first, or--?

LB: Yes. Please.

RS: Ok.

[Long pause.]

LB: Is that your first coffee of the day, Benjamin?

Benjamin: Yes.

RS: Hm.

LB: You've held up... amazingly well.

Benjamin: ...Well, I do a smoothie every morning where I have... bananas, peanut butter, coffee and milk. So I get, like, half a cup of coffee... in my... smoothie.

LB: That's...

Benjamin: It's really not [enough?].

LB: ...very...

Benjamin: I usually have, like...

LB: Yeah.

Benjamin: I try to keep it to two in the morning. But that hardly counts as coffee.

[Long pause.]

RS: Need the zip code?

LB: Mm hmm. Please.

RS: Ok.

[Pause.]

LB: That way we can keep in touch with you.

RS: Ok.

LB: Because we'll definitely wanna send you an invitation for the opening.

RS: I don't have email...

LB: That's ok.

RS: Ok. Today's the 29th, right?

LB: 30th.

RS: Lord.

LB: I know. It's practically June.

Benjamin: It's crazy.

[Pause.]

RS: That's it.

LB: Alright. That's great. Thank you. Now, I'm gonna start hitting you with all the questions.

RS: Ok.

LB: Starting with... please, tell me something where you grew up, how you grew up, just tell me about your childhood.

RS: ...That's a long time ago.

LB: I know.

[Laughter.]

RS: Um... I grew up in, uh, Manhattan. Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island. I was born in Buffalo. But I don't know too much about Buffalo. Just a little. I met my wife in Buffalo. Ok. And, uh...

LB: How'd you meet her? What--what took you to Buffalo then?

RS: Um... I had a... I had, um... cousins that took me to, uh, Buffalo. And... she knew all my family up there, that was up there. And we was at a--felt like a homecoming thing. And she came gliding around the corner with her mama.

[Laughter.]

RS: Mm. So...

LB: How old were you then?

RS: ...'Bout 22, 23.

LB: So that's a nice memory. So how--how old were you when you came to Richmond? What brought you to Richmond?

RS: Uh, my wife had a... had a job with Philip Morris in--in New York.

LB: Ok.

RS: And, uh... they were giving packages out. Philip Morris c--Philip Morris was closing down the--the New York office. And she took a package. YYou know. And I was tired of New York. I said, ok. At first I was trying to hang on to my job. In, uh, New Jersey, uh transit. And I was coming down... here... on the weekends and then go back. It was rough.

LB: That's very rough.

RS: Yeah, so I stopped and just had to let the other job go.

LB: So did you get into the transit authority immediately after you... grew up?

RS: Got here?

LB: Ye--yeah.

RS: No. Uh, I didn't know they had a transit authority here. You know, and then I had a job, uh... at... what's that bank across from, uh... um, [Harmony?].... Bank--Bankers'... Trust?

LB: Something like that, they always change their names. It's hard to keep track.

RS: Yeah, it's a tall building. And I was working there. And--in security. I didn't know nothing about security. And if... you know, going up and down them stairs, it would... little bit much. But anyway, I was standing outside and I seen a GRTC bus go by. And then I seen somebody with a uniform, white shirt and... talking to them like they was a boss or something. So I went over and asked him about it. And they said, yeah, go see, uh, Mr. Brown.

LB: So what year would that be?

RS: That would be, uh... 2003? Three or four, I'm not sure which.

LB: Ok.

RS: Cuz I--I'm here nine years, so...

LB: Alright, so... you must've come on right... around the same time, or maybe a little bit after, Marsha Schmegalo? Who I just interviewed?

RS: No, I don't--I n--I didn't see her--Marsha Schmegalo?

LB: Ok.... Mm hmm.

RS: Mm hmm. I'm not good with names [laughs]. Faces I'm good with.

LB: Yeah. Yeah. Everyone's one or the other, right.

RS: Yeah.

LB: So had you always worked for the New Jersey Transit Authority before coming here?

RS: No, I was with them about five year--six years. But I was with, uh... I used to do, uh... limo driving.

LB: Ok.

RS: Before I got in the bus. And, uh... I drove a lotta different people. But I... but I got... a job with, uh... uh... on Christmas, I was--Big Apple Limos--Limousine Service. And I got a job... at Christmas--New Years Eve, rather. And... I got a job with the... a CEO... on New Years Eve--that's the only job I have, Christmas, I thought I was gonna make some good money. But I got a job up--I mean, uh... you know, a good--*good* job. Paying job. So...

LB: So, once you started at the GRTC, what--what was your training like?

RS: GRTC?

LB: Yeah.

RS: It was--it was good! Uh... the only thing... they didn't have, they didn't have to give me that much training, but... like, they got, uh, booth they have now?

LB: Mm hmm, that simulator?

RS: Yeah, that simulator.

LB: Yeah.

RS: Well I had got that in, uh... New Jersey transit. But they're more intensive than--than that booth, I think. You know, that simulator is nice. And then I got a little bit in here.

LB: But you didn't have to do a full eight weeks or anything like that.

RS: No.

LB: I couldn't imagine that.

RS: No, cuz I had the experience.

LB: Yeah.

RS: You know, and--I was working for another bus company. Uh... Atlantic Express. Goes, you know, cross state--different states. You know. That was nice.

LB: So how long had you been living in Richmond before you got on with the GRTC?

RS: 'Bout a year.

LB: Ok.

RS: Almost a year.

LB: So it was still pretty new to you, then.

RS: What's that, Richmond?

LB: Yeah. When you started driving the routes.

RS: Right, because if--if... they take me off-route... I'm lost.... I'm lost [laughs.] You know. And the first night that I worked, I [had started?] nights. I had to give up... nights. Had to work nights. Uh... that's when you had that storm. On, uh... going down that hill?

LB: Gaston?

RS: I think so.

LB: That big tr--where the--

RS: Yeah. All that water came down...

LB: Yes. I remember, I was out in that.

RS: Yeah. And they wouldn't let me go take the bus down there. I didn't understand why. And they... rerouted me. the police rerouted me. I had a... bus-full of folks.

LB: So what'd you do?

RS: I said, 'I don't know where I'm going. You're gonna have to take me back somewhere.' They showed me how to get back. Cuz I didn't know--I didn't know--I'm--I'm off-route! I don't know where I'm going.

LB: And that was such an intense night, cuz I remember I was driving to work--

RS: Uh huh.

LB: And--cuz they didn't cancel work or anything, and--at a certain point, it was clear I was never gonna get there so I turned around to head back up to Church Hill and... one car in front of me, I saw the car start floating.

[Laughing.]

LB: So I can't imagine being out in a bus in those conditions.

RS: Yeah. Well, it was raining! I mean, it was pouring! But... gee! And I don't know Richmond. I still don't know all of Richmond. You know.

LB: [Laughs] even after all these years?

RS: Yeah. Because I stay--I stay on a--on--on--on my route.

LB: Yeah.

RS: You know. And the only time I went out anywhere is when I got shopping or something like that.

LB: Yeah.

RS: So then I had to make sure I--I'm--I'm coming back. You know. I know it pretty--pretty well now. Like I go out to Gaskin... uh... Parham Road. Stuff like that. You know.

LB: Have you driven a lot of different routes during your time here?

RS: No. Cuz I don't like all the routes.

LB: So, what do you like? And what do you not like?

RS: Uh--I like the express routes. Routes. And, um... now I'm tired of the express routes cuz... you got a lot of gristle heads out there. I mean, so many accidents!

LB: Yeah.

RS: I mean, where can you be going that your car flips?

LB: That's crazy.

RS: And you see it all the time.

LB: Yeah, I imagine that gets old.

RS: And then they--they look at... if somebody's getting ticket.... they slow down on both sides

or whatever. You know, to look! I'm used to that traffic that zip, zip, zab, zab. And they know what they doing. So I... it was different--it was different driving down there, but I'm used to it now. But... when I first got here, phew. [Laughs.]

LB: So you're over the express route, right? You don't wanna do that anymore, what--what do you like doing? What's your favorite route?

RS: Uh, 34.

LB: Tell me about 34.

RS: Well the people are nice. You know, the people are nice on GAskin and the Parham Road. But the people are still nice on--on 34, but... it's not... hurried or--or rushed. I can just relax.

LB: Where does the 34 start, where does it end up?

RS: 34 starts at, uh... actually at 9th and Broad.

LB: Ok.

RS: And you got down to High--uh... not Highland Park--

LB: Highland Park?

RS: No. It's a... yeah. Highland Park. Go down to Highland Park.

LB: Ok, so... that's a different kinda scenery.

RS: Yeah. And you just got through, almost--almost old... old ward? Jackson Old Ward?

LB: Jackson Ward?

RS: Yeah, Jackson Ward, just a little bit through there. And you go back, all the way down to, uh... I forgot the name of the street where you layover. And you sit there a minute. And then you pick up the people. ANd you get to know your people.

LB: Is it the same people who take the bus most of the time.

RS: Yeah... Most of the time, you know. Same people. And they talk to you.

LB: So do you have favorite passengers?

RS: Yeah, I have favorite passengers.

LB: [Laughs.]

RS: Lotta favorite passengers.

LB: Yeah.

RS: Men and women.

LB: Tell me about them.

RS: Well, sometime they wanna bring you something to eat. Or something if you eating, they want some of your--what you're eating.

LB: [Laughs.]

RS: You know. But they--they were--they were cool.

LB: That's good.

RS: You know, they--they had their personalities. You know, and sometime they be running up to catch the bus, I'll wait of them. You know. But I had to get used to that. Because here... you know, uh, people... will say, hey, somebody's coming! You know, and I wasn't used to that. Because in New York, it's... you---and New Jersey, it's twenty-four--almost twenty-four-seven. You know, and... catch the next one, somebody's following behind you.

LB: Yeah.

RS: You know. You gotta wait for them... so... I had to get used to that.

LB: So what are some of the other differences between operating the bus in New York and New Jersey, versus doing it here?

RS: It seems more personal here than it do in New York.

LB: Interesting.

RS: You know. It more--it's more personal. You know, I mean, in New York, you can get go know some of your--some of your passengers, but not--not--not all the time. You know. And the bus I had was a big, uh... uh custom coach. You know.

LB: Mm. That's gotta be very different.

RS: You know, and so... and then you had a lotta problems with the cabs. Cabs is always trying to get up the--on the--on your right. And--and--and--so you can't turn, stuff like that. You know, so...

LB: Here, I mean, I've been talking to some of the retired operators, and they tell me that after driving the same routes for forty years, they get to know, not just the passengers who they knew

as babies, they see them grow up--

RS: Uh huh.

LB: ...they see them have children--

RS: Yeah.

LB: they see them have grandchildren, it's amazing.

RS: But I--I--I haven't seen that yet, I--

LB: Well, no, but...

RS: Cuz I ain't been here that long.

LB: The night is young [laughs].

RS: Yeah. Yeah, it's--it's young. You're right [laughs].

LB: So... typically, what would you say are the b--your favorite and your least favorite parts of the job. [Pause] You know, just in general.

RS: ... My favorite parts of the job? Getting to meet different people. I mean, actually meeting them. You know. And... parts I don't like of the job is--is the traffic. You know. The... you get... not--it's not like gridlock in New York sometimes. But it's--it's--it's... it's how they stop and look at everything.

LB: I know...

RS: You know, I mean, you see--strobe lights and they stop to look. Got to--got to see what's going on.

LB: It's a different pace.

RS: Yeah. It's--entirely different pace. You know. Like I said before, you know, they tell you, 'hey, somebody's coming!' You know, and you--you're getting ready to pull off. And then you have to stop. But I had to get used to that.

LB: Yeah.

RS: You know.

LB: So what--what would you say your biggest challenge is on the job?

RS: Not getting into an accident. Not getting into an accident. You gotta look at everything. You

get into them, but, you--you know, sometime--most of the time, it's not your fault.

LB: It's kind of amazing how few accidents you get into.

RS: Yeah.

LB: Considering.

RS: Yeah. So... [them?] accidents are something else. Especially, uh, hitting somebody in the rear. And--and the thing about it is I know how to drive a bus and I got into an accident turning a corner. Cuz this guy was on a corner... and so... when I first got it, this guy was on a corner. Out two feet! From the curb! And I was turning this bus and I--I should know better.

LB: Pedestrian you mean?

RS: No--no, no--no...

LB: Oh, he was in a car. Ok.

RS: No. He was parked.

LB: Oh. Two feet from the curb.

RS: Yeah. That's how they park. Haphazardly.

LB: [Laughs.] So you were turning the corner and he's there parked tow feet out from the curb.

RS: Yeah. And I misjudged it, when I turn--made that right turn, I took his fender. Pulled his fender out.

LB: Oh well!

RS: Yeah.... So, I don't know about that.

LB: I know. So... can you tell me something about the good leadership and maybe not so good leadership you've experienced in your job--and you can take that question... wherever you wanna take it.

RS: How you mean, good leadership. Who's--who's leading.

LB: Well, I mean, I've had people tell me everything from talking about themselves and their own leadership to talking about President Obama to talking about Eldridge Coles to talking about the passenger--I mean, people talk about all... different things. That's why I like to keep the questions vague.

RS: [Laughs.]

LB: Cuz you never know where people are gonna take it, so take it whoever you like

RS: I don't know where to take that... [??] going... going to Obama. You know... first black president? Lord. [Laughs.]

LB: I know.

RS: You know, you never would think that was gonna ever happen.

LB: I know. That first inauguration especially?

RS: Yeah.

LB: It was just amazing.

RS: People were in tears.

LB: Yeah! I know! I mean, we were all sitting in front of the TV set crying.

Benjamin: [Grant Park?]

LB: Were you really?

RS: Huh?

Benjamin: I was in Grant Park.

LB: In Chicago.

RS: Oh, wow.

Benjamin: ...Amazing.

RS: Hm.

Benjamin: [Inspired the nation?]

RS: But... that was a good thing. It really was.

LB: It really was.

RS: Yeah.

LB: I know, it's... it was hard to believe when it happened that it was hard to believe how long it took. To happen, you know? both ways.

RS: Yeah, this man is... um... doing stuff off the moon... and... stuff wasn't happening right down here!

LB: I know!

RS: And--and speaking of the moon... I think there's a lotta things that this--they can do... for cancer. You know, they... they got scientists that's amazing. But I think it's all politics. Money.... People are making money off cancer. You know, and it goes all the way back to that--what is that thing you call insurance... on insurance?

LB: The deductible? No.

RS: No, no. Um... they don't--they--nobody says anything about them. I mean, how much of hundred-dollar pills--for a pill.

LB: Oh, yeah, yeah, the prescriptions? It's incredible.

RS: Yeah. They, uh... nobody says anything about it. Why?

LB: I know. It's crazy.

RS: And that goes along with the cancer. I bet the only people that can do--really control their cancer is people with money.

LB: It's a lot harder if you don't have it.

RS: Yeah.

LB: That's for sure.

RS: Yeah.

LB: So... so, tell me... what have been some of your most memorable experiences operating the bus? [Pause.] Things that stick out in your mind.

RS: I don't know (?). Um... a woman bringing me a chocolate cake--

LB: That's pretty memorable.

RS: ...that I never--yeah. I didn't--I didn't even know her. You know, I mean, she sits in the back. And I left it on the bus. I forgot it.

LB: Ohh...

RS: [You know...?]

LB: Cuz my next question was, was it a good cake?

RS: Yeah, I--

LB: But you'll never know.

RS: I'll never know. And when I went back for it, it was gone.

[Laughter.]

LB: Well, maybe I should ask someone else if it was a good cake.

RS: Yeah. I don't know who it was.

LB: [Laughs.]

RS: And, uh... another guy, uh, giving me a hard time. On the bus.

LB: What'd he do? How'd that all happen?

RS: I was doing, uh... it was nine--the nineteen, all the way out there in, uh... nea--near, uh, Gaskin. And... I gotta run the bus within a certain time. And I'm on that certain time. But this guy... wants me to move it, move it, move it. To catch the 18. And I'm always... you know, not--I'm not in there with...in--in--in time with that 18. In sync with them. And for a month, he kept bugging. And then I had to stop the bus and go back there one day and straighten him out.

LB: And what'd you say to him?

RS: I said, I'd appreciate if you'd let me drive my bus. You know, you'er aggravating me. And you're aggravating me, I might have an accident. And it'd be your fault.

LB: What'd he do?

RS: He didn't do anything! He say, 'I'm not from here, you know.' I don't know what that mean. So I had to call, uh... uh... call it in. And tell them that this guy still--even after I went back, he still bothering me. And then, uh, supervisor came out, Mr. Mohammed came out and talked to him. And then after that, we--we... came, uh... kinda friendly.

LB: That's nice.

RS: Yeah. [Laughing] He didn't bother me no more. You know, he understood why the... we got a schedule. You know.

LB: So Mr. Mohammed just kinda...

RS: Smoothed it out.

LB: Smoothed it out?

RS: I asked Mr. Mohammed what he did, or what he say. But Mr. Mohammed is big [laughs].

LB: Is he?

RS: Yeah.

LB: I haven't met him yet.

RS: Oh, yeah, he's big. But he's nice. He's a nice guy. I don't--he's not intimidating or anything. But he's a nice guy.

LB: But you know how those really big guys are, they can be really nice and then when they need to use their size to be a little intimidating, they can do that.

RS: Yeah... yeah. Oh, he might've, I don't know.

LB: I mean, not in a bad way, but just, you know...

RS: Yeah. Yeah. And--and the boy--the boy said that, uh... he lied on me. He said, uh, he think that I was gonna knife him. I didn't go in my pockets for nothing, I didn't no knife.

LB: I mean, how crazy is that?

RS: [Laughs.] I must've looked mean or something, I don't know.

LB: So you must have a lot different experiences dealing with different types of passengers.

RS: Yeah... yeah, um.... There was one experience but it wasn't with the GRTC. You wanna hear it?

LB: Sure.

RS: Uh... I was with New Jersey Transit. And this guy came on with--with, uh... it's a coach bus. Came on with a, uh... suit and tie. It was summertime. The air conditioner was rolling. I had a--a jacket on, you know a suit jacket. And... I kept hearing the people s... saying, 'oh my God.' Stuff like that, you know. And when I stopped, I turned around to look to see what was wrong. This guy sat there with his clothes on his--on his briefcase on his thing and his clothes on his thing, sitting there buck naked.

LB: [Laughs.]

RS: I asked him, 'sir... what's up?' [Laughs.] He didn't answer. And so I got on the radio and

before I finished the radio, he got up and said, 'Let me off, please.'

LB: With or without his clothes on?

RS: Without his clothes on, and walked out.

LB: Wow.

RS: I don't know where he went, but I took off. YOur know, that's... that's... I ain't never seen nothing like that.

LB: It sounds like every day has the potential to be really surprising.

RS: It does. It does. You know. And some people--you--you're not going fast enough or you're going too fast. For them. Like, during he snow--or, uh--uh snowstorm in New Jersey, I was doing 25 on--on, uh, New Jersey Turnpike.... And the wind took it. And it took a... this way to the, you know... the back end went this way. And I had to correct it. And the back end went that way, I had to correct it. And this guy is saying, 'slow down!!' And I'm doing 25. I didn't say nothing to him. I just hoping I can get... to where I'm going. Which I did. I didn't hit nothing.

LB: How do you deal with the crazy weather here when you're surrounded by drivers who have no idea how to deal with it. Because it's one thing being up in New York or New Jersey where everyone knows how to drive in the snow and the rain more or less. And here... I've noticed moving from the North, it's a whole different thing.

RS: Yeah, it's a whole different thing. They--they close up everything when it snows here. And then when they--these people get out here. I s--I slow down, way down. And then I just hope that they don't hit me. Because they--they're scared. They don't know how to get out of it scared (?). You know, they... *shoo*. They something else with that skidding.

LB: I know. Have you had any... difficulties here when you were driving in a snowstorm or, you know, ice storm or... whatever.

RS: Mm-mm. No, I didn't have none. You know, I just take my time.

LB: Yeah, I mean with the other drivers on the road.

RS: Yeah, well lay--they come close. And they--they stop blowing their horn and stuff, but... I don't know they blowing their horn for.

LB: I know.

RS: And then they... oh, they cut you off. Terrible. I mean, they think you can stop--excuse me--on a dime. You know. You--you--you--that's tonnage there. And they--they don't have no respect for it. You know. So I just keep that in mind. And just... slow up in--in bad weather.

LB: That's all you can do.

RS: Yeah.

LB: So... what are the biggest moments of change that you've experienced... since coming here to the GRTC... biggest moments of change in your job?

RS: Well, they looking at his a little bit more.

LB: Yeah? When did that start?

RS: That started with, uh, the CEO... um... that left, I can't--Ted Lewis or--?

LB: Some--yeah, I'm not sure.

RS: Mr. Lewis, that's all I know.

LB: Yeah.

RS: With him because... he started, uh, doing things that weren't right.

LB: Like what?

RS: Uh... trying to fire people. Uh... [pauses] trying to do things that--that... that... get people in trouble. To me, uh, to--you know, make--make... make everybody unhappy. You know, the drivers, I'm talking about.

LB: Was he the one that was here during those two years you didn't have a contract?

RS: Yeah. Right. He was the one, and, uh.. people weren't--well... unsure of their jobs. Or, uh... nobody seemed to care about--about the drivers or nothing. You know, he was doing different stuff.

LB: Like what would he do to try to get people fired?

RS: Well... people, uh, would get tickets. Start getting tickets. Uh... somehow or another, uh, the police focused on us. And then when that lady hit... I don't know whether she was hit with him or not. But when that lady hit... the bus driver hit the lady... I think she got--yeah, she got killed. Uh... it really--that really turned up the screws. You know. Well, I--I don't know the particulars about how--what happened with that. How they... you know... and... people walk out in front of the bus, but--to *me*, that ain't--that ain't nothing. Because... in New York, they do that all the time. You know. And you've got messengers, bicyclists, messengers that hang onto the bus or just come out and do anything. That was--I'm used to that. So... but here, it's--it's a piece--was a piece of cake to me! I don't know about the other people. You know, but that was a piece of cake to me. So...

LB: But there was a lot more kinda scrutiny.

RS: Yeah, you--you scrutinized.

LB: When Lewis was here.

RS: Yeah. You scrutinized. And--and then you got people that--that trying to hit... get hit so they can get paid.

LB: Do you see a lot of that?

RS: Yeah, I see a lot of it. I still see it.... They trying to paid. They don't know that they--it's gonna be going to the [laughs] relatives if--if they don't make it. You know... And you got--you--you still got people out here that think you--you--you... you know, they got... what'd you call it? Fenders? Or rubber bumpers or something.

LB: Mm hmm.

RS: You know and they just walk out in front of you. And you--you--you--you got people... on a bus, you're attention is--is right there. And these people will come... they can hear when that door close. Walk right in front of the bus. And then you got people that come off the bus, do the same thing. Waiting for traffic and traffic is moving and they--they blocking you. So, I don't know...

LB: Yeah, but what are you gonna do?

RS: I don't know. You just gotta be patient. Same with the--when the cars come around--you don't know they coming around, most of the time, they don't give a signal, they just come around, and turn, make a right turn on you. That's--that's--that's a problem there.

LB: Have you seen any changes in the bus ridership since you started with the GRTC? Like, different kinds of people riding the bus? Or different attitudes or different anything?

RS: Um... a little. Uh, people... people will focus on us like we were the bad guys for a while.

LB: After that incident?

RS: Yeah. You know. And, uh...

LB: Would people say stuff to you about it? Riders or...?

RS: No, they didn't say anything, but... you know the people just--it--it--the people outside in general, just... maybe they can get paid.

LB: Wow. So you feel like once that--I mean, that's so crazy. That once that woman was killed, with the accident, that you started seeing more people like deliberately trying to get hit?

RS: Yeah. Get hit, yeah! You know, I mean you--you--you... you can't stop on a dime.

LB: No. I mean, it's--h--I don't even know how many tons of moving... machinery.

RS: And people just walk out there... And the, they'll say, 'he see me!' Do dumb stuff. You know. And then there's people that just... be alright. You know. But lone thing I don't like is--is--is... some of these, uh... parents... you come up to a bus stop and they got their little kid playing around the bus stop. So I don't--I don't go up to the bus stop, I stop there. And then I get into argument. 'Well, the bus stop is up here!' I said, 'Yeah, well you got the kid running around there. If I hit the kid, you gonna be jumping on me.' Am I right? Yeah, they're gonna be jumping on me. If I hit that kid. And you ain't got control over them. He on the curb, he might fall into the curb. Or whatever. [I'm not?] going up to that curb or--while that kid is messing around.

LB: No. No.

RS: So I'm gonna stop back here. If you want the bus, bring that kid by hand, bring him up. They do that.

LB: So how do you think people who don't take the bus... look at buses and bus riders... and bus operators in Richmond? Cuz it seems like in Richmond... I mean, in New York and New Jersey, everyone's on public transit, right?

RS: Yeah. Right.

LB: And Richmond, it seems like it's a little bit different. I mean, that's my... observation anyway, moving from the North to here.

RS: Uh huh.

LB: It seems like there's a lot of people who never ever take the bus. How do you think they look at... the GRTC and bus riders and bus drivers and...

RS: Uh... I don't know, I think they feel we crazy or something.... I--I guess, I don't know, just... they don't wanna take the bus, they don't wanna do this, they--they rather drive. I--I--I think it's like they wanna put their own fate in their own.... in their own hands.

LB: You think that's it--you think they're scared?

RS: I think so. Or they just don't wanna be--pay. You know, because then when some of the counties don't want you in there, and then, uh... you know, they don't want the people coming out or the people going in... it's ridiculous.

LB: It is ridiculous. It's very, very different from... other places, don't you think?

RS: Yeah. It is. A lot different.

LB: What do you make of that, what do you think that's all about?

RS: I don't know. To tell you the truth. I don't know what--what... it might be prejudice, it might be they just don't want a whole lotta people coming out to their county. But they got malls out in they county so how you gonna get out there?

LB: And also they've got a lot of people in their counties wanting to come to the city.

RS: Yeah--city. But... and then the city... I don't know--I think the--the... it's not like New York, but it's still high for--for--for here. You know, the--the p--the, what you call them? Parking, uh....

LB: Oh, the parking meters?

RS: The parking meters, now they [wanted/want a/want it] 75 cent. But to me, that's... that ain't nothing [laughs].

LB: I know. I know, it's just a whole different scale of operations here.

RS: Yeah. Yeah.

LB: Um... so, do you think... that people's perceptions of riding the bus have changed a lot over the years in Richmond?

RS: Some of them did, I think so. They--they--they--some like to ride the bus. Some have no choice. You know. And then they get mad when the bus don't go to where they have to go.

LB: I'm sure they do.

RS: You know.

LB: And there's so many places the bus... doesn't come.

RS: Doesn't go. Yeah. Lot of these malls in different counties. Henrico and... all them other counties, they don't want you to come out there. Henrico, they--might be alright, but Chesterfield. They got places out in Chesterfield, they--you know, people wanna go. Chesterfield don't want them out there.

LB: It's amazing after all this time.

RS: Yeah.

LB: That--cuz that's been going on now for forty years.

RS: Yeah.

LB: Which is pretty crazy.

RS: I don't know what it is, politics or what, I don't know. But everybody could.. could benefit by it, I think. If they let the buses go out there. And you don't have to take the--to ride. Now--now, that thing they got with Kings Dominion, that's--that's a good thing.

LB: That's a huge change.

RS: Yeah. You know. And--and--and... Kings Dominion is looking at it as--more people coming from different folk (?)--different places. Yeah.

LB: I know cuz there's a lot of kids in Richmond that could never ever get out there.

RS: Yeah.

LB: Without the bus.

RS: Without the bus. You know, and it's five dollars. You know, ten dollars the whole trip.

LB: That's not bad.

RS: No.

LB: Not at all. So... what changes have you seen in Richmond since you've been driving the bus?

RS: Well, they trying to clean up, uh... uh... Broad Street. Well, I wasn't here when they had... when, uh, Broad Street was a big shopping... thing.

LB: Yeah.

RS: You know and they... trying to get it cleaned up now, they put a ice skating rink out there. They don't want a whole lotta people by the library, uh... waiting for the bus. So they--they trying to do something down there by the--by the... railroad station?

LB: Mm hmm.

RS: But I... all I seen was a... a--a... thing of it. You know, a sk... a sketch of it. A film (?) or whatever. Of what they wanted to do but I ain't heard nothing since.

LB: I'm--I'm gonna be curious to see what happens with all that.

RS: I don't think it's gonna happen. That--I don't see it happening yet.

LB: You think just too many politics or...?

RS: Yeah.

LB: It's frustrating. You know and the schools... you know, they can't pay for the schools. they can't do this--the schools need fu--every year, the school needs funding. Where's this money coming from? I mean, where--you know, where is it going? And I thought that the lottery was supposed to help the schools. Is it?

LB: It's very hard to say. Really hard to say.

RS: I mean, there's millions of dollars there, whe--where's it all going? Is it going to the state or what? And what's the state doing with it? Always need funding and the mayor needs... eh--he... needs all these... I don't know how many bodyguards--three bodyguards? Did the other mayor have a bodyguard?

LB: Yeah, I don't know, we've had so many mayors.

[Laughters.]

LB: We've had a lot of mayors over the years.

RS: And why does he need--is it--has he been threatened?

LB: Who even knows. So tell me, what would you say, if you had to choose the best thing about your job, what would it be?

RS: .... New buses.

LB: Yeah?

RS: Yeah. New buses.

LB: So you like the new buses.

RS: Yeah. The new buses are good. They need more.

LB: What's good about them, what's different about them?

RS: Well... they're more comfortable. Um... you know how when you, uh... snap a [tire/tile?]??

LB: Mm hmm.

RS: [snapping noise.] Well, on the older buses, the seats? When you bounce on some of these roads, it's like you snap. You know. No matter how--where you put that seat, it's gonna [snapping noise.]. It snaps you. And it supposed to be air. Sometime the air is pinched off. You can't fix it. So then you sitting down like that and you riding like a high-rider--what--what you

call them... them, uh motorcycle riders?

Benjamin: ... Choppers, right?

RS: Choppers, yeah.

LB: Yeah.

RS: You know. I--I don't drive like that. I can't see. I need to see everything. All around.

LB: Yeah.

RS: But, new buses.

LB: New buses. That's good.

RS: New bus. Yeah

LB: And the worst thing?

RS: The worst thing is them old buses.

LB: [Laughs.]

RS: And the people telling you you late when you know you're not late.

LB: Yeah. That could get irritating. I would think. So... how do you like to spend your time when you're not working?

RS: I go bowling. Uh... go to a movie... Now I don't go to a movie too much. I stay home and watch the movie. You know. I go swimming. Um... I used to, uh... jog, but I don't jog anymore, I can't... so I go walking. Go walking in the woods out there at [Bailey?] Parks. Or at... used to be around the job--not here, but when we was over at the old place. Had that park over there.

LB: Oh, Maymont? Or Byrd Park?

RS: Yeah. yeah.

LB: Yeah. Those are pretty.

RS: Yeah. I used to walk in there. You know. So, we... we left there, so I got walking... around my neighborhood.

LB: Which is Southside?

RS: No, I live in Chesterfield.

LB: Oh, ok.

RS: Yeah, that's Southside.

LB: Yeah.

RS: I still ain't got used to it because I'm used to Brooklyn... Brooklyn, East Brooklyn, whatever. You know.

LB: I know. I know. It's different.

RS: The Bronx. It's different.

LB: So what would you tell a new operator just starting out with the GRTC, what advice would you give that person?

RS: Hm... just take everything with a grain of salt. You know, um... follow what you think is right. You know, uh, if--if--if the job don't want you to do certain things, don't do it. I mean, you know, do it--do... what they want you to do. You know. So that way you keep yourself outta trouble.

LB: Yeah. Is there anything I didn't ask you that you'd like to talk about?

RS: Not really.

LB: [Laughs.]

RS: You went the whole... gizmo there [laughs].

LB: Well, I'm really glad that you... came in. Thank you so much, Mr. Scott.

RS: Ok.

LB: We're gonna have a photographer get in touch with you. O--over the summer to take your portrait.

RS: Oh, really?

LB: Yeah!

RS: Oh, ok.

LB: And, um... then the... the show's gonna open up in September, so we'll send you an invitation to that. I'm sure you'll see a lot about it around here.

RS: Ok.

LB: And then they're gonna be putting up the--the drivers portraits and their quotations up in the buses. So..

RS: Mm hm. Oh, alright.

LB: Yeah.

RS: Uh, can I bring my wife and...?

LB: Of course!

RS: Oh, ok.

LB: Of course. Absolutely.

RS: And--and when is it gonna come out? In September?

LB: In September and it's gonna be at the old GRTC building.

RS: Ok.

LB: Which I think will be really cool. So, yeah, absolutely. Bring all your friends.

RS: Ok. And another thing, they said that, uh... they shoulda just... went over, rebuilt that old building over there. Instead of here. I--

LB: Do you like that one better?

RS: Yeah, it's much better. You--you got more places to leave from.

LB: That's true.

RS: You know. And this building ain't... it's... I mean, in one year, the--you got leaks and... and.. and... stuff that ain't right. Elevators ain't working. And you pay all that money? [I don't know?]

LB: I know. Maybe it's just taking a while to get the bugs out of it.

RS: Lord. [Laughs.] Oh well.

LB: Well, thank you so much for coming in, I appreciate it.

RS: Oh, I hope you can use me!

LB: Of course we can.

RS: Oh, ok.

LB: Absolutely, you've got some great quotes in there.

RS: Oh, thank you.

LB: And I think it's gonna be great having someone talking about the difference between... driving up in New Jersey and New York and here.

RS: Yeah... yeah... yeah...

LB: Cuz people here don't know.

RS: Well, all that chaotic, but they--they do, in New York, they can drive!

LB: Yeah.

RS: You know.

Benjamin: Absolutely.

RS: And I don't understand it--one thing, though: my wife drives good. But she don't like driving here.

LB: Because of all the other drivers?

RS: Yeah, I guess so.

LB: Yeah.

RS: She be alright.

LB: [Laughs.]

RS: Thank you.

Benjamin: It's nice to meet you.

LB: Thank you.

RS: Alright nice meeting you too.

LB: Good to meet you.

RS: Take care. Alright.

LB: Bye bye.

RS: You guys have... good one.

LB: You too.