

Pappy O'Daniel

Wilbert Lee "Pappy" O'Daniel (March 11, 1890 - May 11, 1969) was a radio personality and a Democratic Party politician from Texas. O'Daniel was born in Malta, Ohio, and as a young child moved to Reno County, Kansas. He worked in the flour milling business and moved to Fort Worth, Texas, in 1925 to work for Burrus Mills. O'Daniel soon took over its radio advertising, wrote songs, and hired a group of musicians. His band was originally called the Light Crust Doughboys. Notable musicians such as Bob Wills got their start with O'Daniel. After the Doughboys split up, O'Daniel formed the Western Swing band Pappy O'Daniel and his Hillbilly Boys. The new group was named after O'Daniel's Hillbilly Flour Company.

In 1938, he ran for governor of Texas as a Democrat. O'Daniel's campaign hailed his flour and the need for pensions and tax cuts. He promised to block a sales tax and raise pensions. O'Daniel won the Democratic party primary election easily with 51% of the vote over 12 opponents. In office, he proposed a new sales tax, which was voted down by the Texas Legislature. He handily won re-election in 1940.

In 1941, O'Daniel ran for the United States Senate in a special election. He defeated Lyndon Johnson by 1,306 votes in one of the more controversial elections in state history. His victory made him the only person to ever defeat Johnson for elected office. As a senator, O'Daniel was ineffective, and most of his legislation was defeated. He endorsed the Texas Regulars in the 1944 presidential election. O'Daniel refused to run for another term in 1948, but ran for governor of Texas in 1956 and 1958 and claimed that the Brown v. Board of Education decision was part of a communist conspiracy. He finished third in the Democratic primaries both times.

The film *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* featured a character named Menelaus "Pappy" O'Daniel, loosely based on the real O'Daniel. The film's character was played by Charles Durning.

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/W. Lee O'Daniel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/W._Lee_O'Daniel))