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(SNP039) Randal Dean interviewed by Dorothy Noble Smith, transcribed by Joy K. Stiles

Randal R. Dean

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Interview with Randall Dean
Part of the Shenandoah National Park Oral History Collection, SdArch SNP
(formerly SC #4030)

Interview conducted at unknown location
By Dorothy Noble Smith on unknown date

Transcribed by Joy K. Stiles

Key

[DS:] Interviewer, Dorothy Smith

[RD:] Interviewee, Randall Dean

Total interview length: 00:40:49 min.

[Begin audio file (SNP039), 00:00:01 min.]

[THERE IS A LOUD HUM PRESENT THROUGHOUT THE TAPE FROM THE ORIGINAL
TAPE RECORDER, MAKING TRANSCRIPTION DIFFICULT IN PLACES]

[TAPE BEGINS IN MID-SENTENCE]

Dorothy Noble Smith: . . . who, at one time, lived on Dean Mountain. Where did you live on Dean Mountain?

Randall Dean: We lived about a mile and a half up the mountain from the Cedar Falls. You can see that from, oh, around Elkton and those areas there.

DS: Uh, huh. A mile and a half up or down?

RD: Up.

DS: Up, from the Cedar Falls. How large was your family?

RD: There's six in our family.

DS: Six?

RD: Six children.

DS: Was that normal, or did some of them have bigger families?

RD: Some had larger families, yeah.

DS: Yeah, um-hm. Your nearest neighbor was how far away?

RD: Our nearest neighbor was about half a mile away.

DS: About half a mile. Do you remember their name?

RD: Deans, they were the Haygood [?] Deans.

DS: Oh, then you were all kin, then, lived all around in that area?

RD: Well, not close kin. We were all . . . they, they wasn't real close kin to us, no.

DS: Now, have you any knowledge of how the Deans came there?

RD: Not, not really, I don't. I know my, I have an aunt that lives in Salt Lake City, now, she has a lot of information gathered up about the Deans. I'm sure she could tell us, but I don't know.

DS: You don't know. Do you recall those that your, like your grandparents and your great-grandparents and like that?

RD: Yes, ma'am.

DS: Um-hm. How big a piece of property did you own?

RD: We owned a hundred acres.

DS: A hundred acres!

RD: Yes, ma'am.

DS: Was this mostly woods, or clear woods?

RD: I'd say about, oh, probably eighty acres of it was woodland, and that maybe twenty acres cleared.

DS: Great. What sort of a house was it?

RD: This was a, see, had four rooms, two story, and it had a kitchen built off from the, from the other part of the house.

DS: With a breezeway in between?

RD: Breezeway, yes. It would be real modern, now!

DS: Yes, it sure would! (laughter)

RD: We didn't think so at that time.

DS: Was it a log house, or . . .

RD: It was a log house, yes, ma'am.

DS: A log house.

RD: And then our house had been sealed with wide poplar boards on the inside.

DS: Oh, hey, that was really modern, too, wasn't it?

RD: It made it nice and warm.

DS: Yeah. That was a good, good airtight house, wasn't it?

RD: Yes, it was, um-hm.

DS: Now, as you were growing up, did you have any particular jobs that were yours to do?

RD: Yes, I helped my, my dad owned a sawmill.

DS: Your father had a sawmill.

RD: Yes, ma'am, and I helped him from just a little tot on up, until I was twenty-one years old and left home.

DS: Alright, now, you had a sawmill and what did you do with the lumber?

RE: Well, of course at that time you cut trees with a cross cut saw. You did all the logging with the horses and mules. Dragged them to the sawmill. Cut the lumber at the sawmill and we hauled the lumber to Elkton, Shenandoah and McGaheysville with a team of horses and wagon.

DS: Oh, my. Now, the people would bring the wood to you, to be sawed?

RD: We had, we cut right much of our own timber off of this hundred acres, to start with, then afterwards we bought timber from people and we would move our sawmill and make our own

little place and cut the timber and then we'd move, haul the lumber out, then.

DS: Oh, I see. Oh, so when you worked their lumber, what would you do, say, "I'll, we'll pay you so much for this acre?", or . . .

RD: Yes, my daddy would usually look at the timber and then figure crews with people, and he just, more or less estimated how much footage of timber along this piece of property and they would agree on an amount of money. He didn't have too much education but he was real good, he could almost tell how much timber and lumber on a piece of land.

DS: Sure, right. Your mother's maiden name was what?

RD: Dean.

DS: Dean?

RD: Yes, ma'am.

DS: Was she close kin to your father?

RD: No, no. They were fourth, fifth cousins, something like that.

DS: Oh, really. You know how they met?

RD: No, I really don't. It was probably at Sunday school at the little school house on the mountain there . . . they went to, I would think.

DS: Alright, while we're talking about schools, what was your school like?

RD: Let's see. The first school I went to was at Mount Pleasant, I don't know if you've heard of that or not. It's down at the foot of the mountain.

DS: That was pretty far away.

RD: That's where I was, my sister and I walked down there for the first year or so. And then later on -- we had a school house up on the mountain and many times our parents and neighbors would have to go Harrisonburg to see the school superintendent to see if he would send a teacher there. Sometimes we'd have a teacher for three months and sometimes for five months, at the longest. I went there just fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh grades, I believe. After that other school.

DS: Um-hm. Well, that was a very good school, then, wasn't it?

RD: Yes, ma'am. This, this, school was about, oh, I'd say, three quarters of a mile down the mountain from the South River Picnic Grounds, now, if you measured it.

DS: And how far was that from your home?

RD: It was, oh, I expect about a mile from my home.

DS: You had a garden?

RD: Oh, yes.

DS: What did you raise in it?

RD: We had two gardens, we'd always raise corn, all the corn that we'd need, and potatoes, and cabbage, and all these things.

DS: Were the cabbages good?

RD: Ohm, they were large cabbage, yeah. And then in the winter, I can remember my daddy would dig up a kind of a pit in the garden, and turn these cabbage upside down, some of them there, and put them in there and they would stay all winter, so you could have cabbage all of the winter. And I tried it once after we moved off the mountain ourselves and mine didn't keep.

DS: Now, that's the strange thing. Most of the mountain people couldn't, they couldn't do it either. I wonder why, it kept up there and didn't . . .

RD: I don't know, but I tried it after we moved off the mountain, near Swift Run up here, and ours didn't keep. I didn't do it right somehow.

DS: Is the temperature, was it colder up there, do you suppose?

RD: Yes, ma'am, a little colder, yes, ma'am. I think.

DS: How about the snow? Was it very heavy?

RD: At time, yeah. I think the snow was heavier now--then, than it is now. Because I can remember walking over top of the rail fences, snow would have been falling, maybe fall a bit and get hard, hard pressed enough, that you'd just walk across the fences if they drifted.

DS: Now, you had horses . . .

RD: Yes, ma'am, horses and mules.

DS: Horses and mules. And cows?

RD: Cows, right.

DS: How many milk cows?

RD: We usually just kept, I think most time just one milk cow, but one, possibly two.

DS: And you had hogs?

RD: Yes.

DS: Now, did you allow the cattle to sort of roam, or did you have them fenced in?

RD: We had ours fenced in. Some of the neighbors up there just let them roam--

DS: Had bells on them.

RD: --but we had ours fenced in. Yes, ma'am.

DS: Your mother made butter?

RD: Made butter--

DS: Cheese.

RD: cheese . . .

DS: Clabber?

RD: Right.

DS: Did you like clabber?

RD: Not too well. (laughter)

DS: How would you fix it?

RD: She'd let this milk clabber, then she'd put them in kind of a bag like a cheese cloth, and hang it up and let it drip, it would make the cheese. The cheese were delicious.

DS: Did you ever put salt or sugar on your clabber?

RD: Maybe salt.

DS: And if you (), you'd have liked them. (laughter)

RD: No, not really!

DS: Did you ever make sauerkraut?

RD Oh, yes.

DS: Un-huh. Did you ever sell any of your eggs and chickens, and hogs?

RD: Well, hogs, we didn't, we just always kept two or three to butcher for our own use.

Now, we might sell a couple of the hams. And we would take the eggs and sell them because you'd need some income to, oh, to buy your sugar, and things like that.

DS: Sure. Where was the nearest store?

RD: The nearest store was at the foot of the mountain. I think Marvin Eppert ran it. It was probably about, I'd guess three or four miles, downhill.

DS: You'd carry them, or take them by horse?

RD: Sometimes we'd carry them, but, and sometimes take them down by horse, too.

DS: Would he give you credit for them, or cash?

RD: I think he would do it either way. We usually just, probably bought more than we took in. We'd just take the credit on it and finish paying the bill in cash.

DS: So you'd buy sugar, kerosine, coffee . . .

RD: Yes, ma'am.

DS: How about flour? Did you buy or raise wheat?

RD: We didn't raise any of our wheat. We just bought our flour, now I think some of the mountain people maybe raised a little patch of wheat and would take it to the mill and have it ground. I can remember a couple times of taking maybe some corn, and take it to the mill and have it ground and bring it back. But most of the time we just bought ours.

DS: Where was the mill?

RD: Pardon?

DS: Where was the mill?

RD: Oh, the mill was at the foot of the mountain, too, wasn't too far from the store. So it was, let's see . . . I expect it was about four miles away, too, it was four or five miles.

DS: And you'd take your corn there?

RD: Yes, corn.

DS: Did you ever make ash cakes?

RD: You mean, out of the--

DS: Corn meal.

RD: Oh, yes, my mother would make, she'd make this bread, it was kind of a corn pone she called it, and she () and it was real good. It was more bread and not quite so much crust.

DS: Mmm, good. Your mother had a regular stove?

RD: Yes, a regular cook stove, uh-huh. Wood stove.

DS: Yeah, a wood stove, right. So, was it part of your job to see to it you had firewood?

RD: Oh, yes, when I went to school, when I was a young boy, I would see to the firewood was gotten in, and also feed the pigs and I would go to the barn, feed the horses for my Dad, and just put the hay in the (), and the corn in the trough and so forth. Have it ready for him when he came home.

DS: Did you ever have to work in the gardens?

RD: Oh, yes, yes, we had to work the gardens.

DS: So then how did you have time to go to school?

RD: Well, we had school up on the mountain, so you didn't have but, I think, but a three to five months school, so we would have plenty of time to work. (laughter)

DS: Well, I imagine you worked pretty hard.

RD: Yes, we did.

DS: Did you have any particular friends that you played with?

RD: Yes, I guess I played with the neighbors, the kids close by, about a half mile away. I had cousins that lived down over east of the Blue Ridge, it was probably five or six miles away, but sometimes I would go up over there, over the weekends and just stay there, over Saturday and Sunday.

DS: What would you play?

RD: Oh, we'd play ball and another thing, we just had these hoops off of buggies and roll those up and down, things like this.

DS: Oh, yeah. And marbles?

RD: And marbles, we'd play hide-and-go-seek.

DS: Did anybody have any dances?

RD: Not in our area too much, no.

DS: How about music?

RD: Not so much music, no. Some of the Deans that lived over on the east side of the Blue Ridge, close to the, it's down past the South River Picnic grounds, now. I understand they were very musically inclined, they played banjos, and guitars, and they sing. We didn't play too much. I had a guitar, but I didn't really play it much.

DS: Oh, gee, and I wish you would, because that is great fun.

RD: Yeah, it really was.

DS: Anybody play a Jew's Harp? () sit around and do that.

RD: No, I've tried, but I never did do much with that, either.

DS: What would you do with an evening, then?

RD: Let's see, you mean, like after work? Our evenings were very short, especially in the summertime, when I'd be working with my dad. We wouldn't have any time left to play. I know many times that we would be coming home with our horses and wagons, people down here would be eating their dinner or supper, whatever, and we still had the mountain to climb. It was about

dark most times when we got home.

DS: And then you'd have dinner and go right to bed?

RD: Um-hmm, go right to bed. I know that Saturdays and so forth I had the time; play the violin, of course we had these old Victrolas, and kin read to us, and things like this.

DS: Did your mother make your clothes?

RD: When I was real small, she did, yes.

DS: How about shoes? Where would you get those? Did you have a cobbler in the area?

RD: We got our shoes, most of the times, from probably this store we dealt with in, uh, it's a store in Elkton, Robertson's Store and he's still open now, his son runs it. My father's the cobbler and he'd got his own shoe lasts and so forth and my dad would take care of that, get soles put on them and everything like that he would do.

DS: Did you ever use those metal . . . "whosey-whats-its"? that's on the heel?

RD: Heel taps?

DS: Yeah.

RD: Some, not too much. They would kind of cut the floor up with the nails that ().

DS: Yeah. Okay, so you had a wooden floor?

RD: Yes'm. 'Course we've got a new linoleum ().

DS: Did you father buy the furniture, or did he make it?

RD: He bought the furniture.

DS: How did he get it up there?

RD: Well, we had this wagon, and so we'd put four horses to that so you could haul everything up there, even the hay ().

DS: You had a good road up there?

RD: Well, it was a fairly good road, now. Took a pretty good automobile, you know, to pull that () in a car, they come up there sometimes () was steep. ()

DS: Did you lay in extra supplies in the fall because of the hardness of getting out in the winter?

RD: Yes. We'd, uh, well, you asked about making furniture, I know he did make a, well he didn't make it, someone else made it. A big mill, we called it a bin, we'd always fill it up with cornmeal and then we'd fill the other one up with flour. He built those two things for him, and of course you stored up your potatoes, and cabbage, and apples and all these things that we grew ourselves. Dad would always buy a keg of salted fish (), clams and things like this. You could almost live, you know--

DS: Forever!

RD: --()

DS: Did you ever have a struggle getting to the barn? Because of the snow?

RD: Oh, yes, yes, yes. Sometimes. I can remember once one snow, I guess I was about eleven years old, that, it was snow so, better than four feet deep. It was hard to get around for a while.

DS: Yes, it was! And yet you still had to get there to feed the horses--

RD: Yes, right.

DS: --pigs, chickens, and . . . amazing what people were able to do, isn't it?

RD: Yes, it is.

DS: They were strong people, weren't they?

RD: Yes, they were strong people and I'd more or less say that most of the people around our area were fairly industrious people. Even though they lived in the mountains and all, they were rather proud people, they didn't, didn't want, you know, too much help, as long as they could help themselves. I know when this WPA, whatever, came around, my dad never took a penny. When

they offered to help, and so forth. He felt like, as long as we could help ourselves, why, he didn't want help.

DS: Did you ever make apple butter?

RD: Oh, yes, every year.

DS: Was that a fun time?

RD: That was a fun time, yeah.

DS: Did you ever have a custom that if the paddle touched the side of the kettle, you got a kiss?

RD: Yeah, I think there was something supposed to be! (laughter)

DS: Did you ever get a kiss?

RD: No, I was kind of shy, wasn't looking for no kisses! (laughter)

DS: That would go on sometimes, late night, wouldn't it?

RD: Yes, we would always try to put ours on by daylight. We would take it off before it got dark. Sometimes we had, we called them apple butter boilings and maybe there were, oh three or four kettles, and it sometimes went on late at night. They just kind of did this, kind of had a party out of it, I guess.

DS: Now, no music then, even at that time?

RD: Maybe so, I never did get into that. (laughter)

DS: Okay, did any of your neighbors make any moonshine?

RD: Not that close, neighbors close by didn't make any, no. We had, my dad and I, when we'd bring a load of lumber to town or around someplace, we've had people stop us when we'd get to the feed mill and say, "Would you haul this hundred pounds of sugar up for us?" So we have done this for them, I think it usually went on over maybe the other side of the mountain or somewhere. But we didn't try to find out where the still is, we didn't want to know. (laughter) ()

DS: Well, it, see, it was a very practical way for the people to use up the apples, though.

It's cheaper than--

RD: That's right.

DS: --and easier to carry a gallon of that than barrels of apples. So, I can see why they did do it. How about visiting, did you all do any, much visiting?

RD: Yes, we, we'd visit most every Sunday. We would go someplace or someone would come see us. So most every Sunday we'd do some visiting.

DS: Did you go to church at the time?

RD: Not when we lived on the mountain, because they didn't have a, when they did have a church, it was just in the schoolhouse up there, one room school, didn't have a church up there.

DS: Okay. So then what happened when people wanted to get married? Did they have to come down to Elkton to get married?

RD: Yes. Now, we did, come sometimes to churches around there, couple churches at the foot of the mountain, one in Mount Pleasant, another one out at Maple Springs, we'd go over there sometimes.

DS: Oh, the Maple Springs Church, uh-huh. When, how about illness; were there any particular illnesses that you recall people having?

RD: Yes, one real bad thing, I guess that one of my parents had told me about some children, they were dying of the diphtheria. And we lost two little, two little brothers with the, we called it croup. They would just get choked up.

DS: Did your mother know any herbs to use when you all got sick?

RD: Not too much in herbs, she kept medicine there all the time for colds, and coughs and things like this. Now there was a, a lady, a Mrs. Breeden up there that, she made all kinds of teas out of herbs and things and so when we had a, oh, a spell of sickness maybe, we'd always call her in to help.

DS: Yeah. You know those herbs have been proven to work.

RD: Yes, I think so.

DS: They have. How about it, did you ever get turpentine and sugar?

RD: Yes.

DS: What does it taste like?

RD: It didn't taste good. (laughter) ()

DS: Did it do the job?

RD: Yes, I think it did help; it kind of cut the stinging in your throat, you know. Especially the cough. And of course, there were the great believers in the Vicks salve, then I know of the, we had, oh, called it a mustard poultice or something. And I've known that to break the pneumonia.

DS: Great. Did you have doctor who would come to your home?

RD: Yes, Dr. Miller from Elkton. He was a dad to a Dr. Miller who practices here in town now.

DS: Oh, really?

RD: He would always come, yeah. My dad would always meet him, he'd drive his car up to the foot of the mountain, my dad would meet him down with a horse and bring him up on a horse. In wintertime, it was snowing so he had a sled and he'd have two horses with the sled and got along fine.

DS: How steep is that mountain?

RD: I don't know what the degree of steepness you would say it is, but it's pretty steep.

DS: Now, you didn't have a minister, so what happens when people died?

RD: Let me see . . . I guess we would get . . . I think there was a minister that would come up, I forget what his name was, but he would come, maybe, at this little schoolhouse and we would have services once in a while, so I guess () . . . I can't think of what his name is.

DS: Did you have your own cemetery?

RD: Yes, um-hm.

DS: Did you use stone markers? Or monuments?

RD: Lot of the older people who was buried there had stone markers, now. See my Dad and Mother was buried up there and we have a marble marker.

DS: Because so many of them just use stone, and now there's no way of knowing who . . .

RD: Probably no way of telling who's there.

DS: That's right. Christmas! What did you do with Christmas?

RD: Oh, Christmas was a big time, there was quite a, not too elaborate like we have now, but we always got a toy or two of some kind and this was a time that you got a lot of candy, there was oranges, and coconuts and most any ().

DS: Coconuts?

RD: Yeah. We'd always have a big deal for Christmas.

DS: Did you shoot off firecrackers?

RD: Oh, yes, I would do that!

DS: I wonder why! (laughing)

RD: (also laughing) I don't know; I always had firecrackers for Christmas.

DS: Did you do the Kris Kringlers?

RD: Yes, uh-huh. () that was a time for ()

DS: That was fun, wasn't it?

RD: Good times, yeah.

DS: It's too bad they don't do that now, isn't it?

RD: Yeah, I suppose so. People's got so they uses masks maybe to cause trouble.

DS: ()

RD: Yeah, right.

DS: Yeah. In those days, nobody did ()

RD: No, they () think they're wrong.

DS: Well, I've notice you have a lot of locks here; did you use locks on your doors?

RD: Well . . .

DS: At night?

RD: . . . yes.

DS: You did?

RD: Just the old lock. We always locked up our place when I left. Had this old, I think it was () locks on the door, ()

DS: So there was stealing?

RD: Oh, yes, yes there was stealing. One of the, oh, one of the most things that were stolen was probably chickens. You always had a problem, always people going to drink and have a big (), you know, and then sometimes some of the men would get together and () and have a drinking party and they'd steal your chickens ()

DS: I hope they weren't close neighbors, were they?

RD: No, I don't think, not usually! (both laughing)

DS: That is unusual, because most of the people never locked their door.

RD: Well, we locked ours.

DS: Did you do anything about these people that () stealing? Did you call them "Long Fingers?"

RD: Well, usually they were right hard to catch, so most of the time they didn't take but one or two and it didn't happen too often, so we just didn't worry about it.

DS: How many chickens did you have?

RD: We didn't have too many, I guess twenty-five or thirty, just enough to get eggs to use and maybe possibly to fifty at times so we'd have a few to sell, to buy the extra things with, like

coffee and sugar and something else.

DS: I've heard of some people that would trade eggs with other people so they'd get a different brand of chicken, (). Did you ever do that?

RD: Yes, I think we did do that, sometimes, yes, ma'am.

DS: And how about potato seeds, seed, uh, seed, you know --

RD: Seed potatoes?

DS: Seed potatoes, would you trade those with a neighbor?

RD: We'd trade them with the neighbors, and I think usually, many times, too, we'd buy seed, seed potatoes, you know, too.

DS: Did you buy your corn?

RD: Yes.

DS: Was it rocky there?

RD: Right rocky, now, you got a place, maybe, to put a garden, a couple gardens we had that wasn't too rocky, but there was right many rocks there.

DS: Did you open up new ground every now and then?

RD: No, I think we just, we'd put this manure on the garden from the horse stable and so forth and it kept right, right fertile. We didn't have to open new ground, just the two gardens all the years we were farming. Now, I suppose we were a little more fortunate than some of the mountain people. My dad had income from the lumber and things like this, so we didn't do as much farming as some of the people did.

DS: How about huckleberries? Did people in your area start fires so they'd be sure of having huckleberries?

RD: I have heard they did. Now, in our area where we lived, there wasn't any huckleberries, much. Now, they're on, let's see, farther to the northwest. The mountains run () Lacey Springs, most of what you're talking about () down in that area, () huckleberries.

DS: So you were never troubled with fires?

RD: No.

DS: You never were afraid of a fire?

RD: No.

DS: Okay. A lot of people would. Would you give me what was, would be the typical morning breakfast?

RD: Oh, we'd have, well maybe not always at the same time, but bacon, eggs and, sausage and, we'd usually have oatmeal and, another thing that we really liked was just the white, brown gravy. That's () enough to sit down () you almost a meal () you just load it with gravy and biscuits, gravy and cornbread. Another thing in the winter, we'd have buckwheat cakes and we'd stir those up in a crock and start them in the winter with this yeast, all you have to do is just keep adding to it, we'd have them all winter.

DS: Did your mother make her own yeast?

RD: No, I think she bought her starter.

DS: Now, you mentioned sausage. When did you do your butchering?

RD: Around, I 'spect, about the middle of November.

DS: It was cold enough then?

RD: Oh, yes, it was real cold, yes.

DS: Did your father and you ever peel bark for the tanneries?

RD: Yes. I'm a, I was, I remember peeling when I was just a young boy, but we had a couple of men that peeled bark, hauled it to the tannery in Elkton before it burned.

DS: You say that you were twenty-one when you left the mountains.

RD: Yeah, I was, I said when I left, left my dad and went into business for myself. I believe I was fifteen when I left the mountains.

DS: You were?

RD: Yes, ma'am. I was fifteen years old.

DS: Why did you?

RD: Well, well, we always was kind of wanting to move out on account of schools and churches and so forth, and a more convenient place to live, but the Government had bought the land around, so we really had to leave. ()

DS: Oh, so that was why you moved out, yeah. Do you feel that your father got a fair amount for his property?

RD: No, I don't think he did, because property was cheap at that time, but, I remember he got seventeen hundred dollars for our hundred acres, the land plus the house; it was an old house but it was in fair shape.

DS: What did your father do after he had moved out?

RD: He bought a house about three miles up on 33 heading towards the mountain.

DS: Uh-huh. Was he unhappy?

RD: No, I don't think so. See, well, we, he knew when we lived up on the mountain a lot of our work was out around Elkton, the hollows. (). Later on () start to haul with a team of horses and wagon and so forth, but about 1933, I guess, he bought a truck and we started doing our hauling with a truck, go out every day ()

DS: Oh, yeah, umm-hmm. So it was easier to be here.

RD: Right.

DS: You apparently never made sorghum, did you?

RD: No, we never made that, no. We would always just buy a gallon of something. My mother would make cookies out of it. We didn't eat the sorghum unless you had too. We didn't like it.

DS: You didn't! But you did put apple butter on your flapjacks, wouldn't you?

RD: Oh, yes, apple butter.

DS: Did you ever hear of dried apple butter?

RD: No, I've heard of dried apples. Now my mother did some of those, up on the roof or someplace and dry them.

DS: Did you ever sell any?

RD: No, no.

DS: No. But, there have--I've heard of some people that really cooked it until it was absolutely dry. And then you'd slice it off, and it kept for years.

RD: We didn't do ours that way, no, we would boil ours until it got, oh, fairly thick consistency, you know, didn't like it real thin and runny.

DS: Did you ever hear of pumpkin butter?

RD: Yeah, I think I have. Haven't made any, but I have heard of it.

DS: ()

RD: Well, I think it would be pretty good.

DS: I should so.

RD: And I like pumpkin pie, so . . . (laughs)

DS: Did you grow any pumpkins?

RD: Yes, we grew some.

DS: Um-hm, yeah. Do you know how a fellow would court a girl?

RD: Uh . . .

DS: You weren't paying attention.

RD: I didn't have much experience, living in the mountains!

DS: You didn't have any older brothers?

RD: No, younger brothers.

DS: Okay. Well what--can you think of anything that I have not asked you? Because you're the one that has the knowledge.

RD: . . .

DS: Was it a good life?

RD: Yes, I think it was a good life. It was a hard life and . . . the thing now, I'm used to working hard most of my life and I see people that says well, this is just too hard, I can't do this, it kind of aggravates me sometimes. I, they, if they work eight hours they think they've really done something. Eleven, twelve, thirteen hours didn't mean anything to us.

DS: Do you feel that your family was better off than most of the other families around?

RD: Yes, I believe we were. I think we had a little bit more . . . wealth. Didn't have any money, just the same, but we had enough to buy a few more of the necessities than some of the mountain people could buy. ().

DS: Income was, of course, the hardest thing of all for all those people.

RD: Sure is.

DS: So many of them said they really didn't need cash.

RD: Well, I guess we really didn't use a lot of cash.

DS: Now, like your nearest neighbors, what was their house like?

RD: Their house was something like ours. I'm not sure if it was a log or not. It had, we had, neighbors right below us and then neighbors to each side of us, maybe each one was probably half mile away. Houses were old weatherboard, () near as I can remember wasn't any of them even painted. It just ()

DS: Did you use whistles to call your neighbors?

RD: No. When I was a boy, I used to make a lot of whistles. We would take this chestnut, a little, you could rub the bark until it loosened up and take it off the wood and make a whistle out of it.

DS: You didn't used it to call the neighbors.

RD: No.

DS: If a neighbor was ill, would any of you do anything to help?

RD: Oh, yes. We'd help him any way. We would call the doctor, anything to help him out.

DS: How about if you visited somebody and you saw them busy doing something? What happened?

RD: Oh yes, you go and pitch in and help.

DS: Did you ever hear of any real fights going on up there?

RD: Not, not too much, no ()

DS: I guess everybody was busy with their own jobs.

RD: Yeah.

DS: Well, I sure do () very, very much.

RD: Oh, you're welcome.

[End audio file (SNP039), 00:40:49 min.]

End of Interview

Interview
with
RANDALL DEAN

June 26, 1979

Interviewer: Dorothy Noble Smith

Transcribed by: Joy K. Stiles

Shenandoah National Park
Luray, Virginia

Original manuscript on deposit at
Shenandoah National Park Archives

NOTICE:

The material contained in this oral history may only be used for professional and genealogical research, park interpretive and educational media, and brief quotations in nonprofit commercial publications.

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Side A:

Randall Dean lived on Dean Mountain in what is now Shenandoah National Park until he was fifteen years old. His father owned about one hundred acres of land, with roughly eighty acres still forested. His father owned a sawmill and made a living selling lumber and cutting lumber for others. The family raised most of their food in two gardens and owned cows, chickens, hogs, horses and mules. Staples such as sugar, kerosine, and coffee were purchased in Elkton, Virginia.

Dean first went to school at Mount Pleasant, at the foot of the mountain, but later attended a one room school house on the mountain about a mile from his home. Dean completed fourth through seventh grades in the mountain school, where the school year ranged from three to five months long.

Dean reviews various aspects of life in the mountains, talking about the crops raised, preserving food for the winter, making butter, cheese, and other foods, daily chores, playmates, and games he played as a child. He tells how his family obtained every day items such as clothing, shoes, and furniture. While winters could be challenging, Dean asserts that most of the people in his area were industrious and did not take charity.

In discussing social encounters, Dean recalls apple butter boilings and Sunday visiting. He talks about remedies for sicknesses and doctors coming up the mountain. Christmas time is reviewed.

Dean touches on the subject of theft and locking doors and mentions moonshiners. He answers questions about typical meals, obtaining seed for planting, and peeling bark for the tannery. He talks about the family moving off the mountain and their feelings and summarizes his feelings by saying that life was hard but good.

End of interview.

[Note: Randall Dean was the son of E. Dyche Dean who voluntarily sold 96 acres for \$2,161 to the Federal Recreation Demonstration Project (FERA), which later turned the land over to Shenandoah National Park.]

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