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(SNP122) Lorraine Tompkins interviewed by Norman Taylor and transcribed by Tiffany Cole

Lorraine Tompkins

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Interview with Lorraine Tina Brown Tompkins
Part of the Shenandoah National Park Oral History Collection, SdArch SNP-122
(formerly SC# 4030)

Interview conducted at Interviewee's Home
By Norman Taylor on August 31, 1991

Transcribed by Tiffany Cole, July 2010

Key

[NT:] Interviewer, Norman Taylor

[LT:] Lorraine Tompkins

[Notes regarding transcription technique]

[*unintelligible*] Unable to understand more than one word

_____ (??) Transcriber's best guess

— Speaker makes abrupt change in sentence

Refer to the Baylor University Style Guide for consistency in transcription

Total interview length: 00:55:34 min.

[Begin audio file, 00:00:01 min.]

Norman Taylor: This is an interview with Lorraine Tina Brown Tompkins for the National Park Service by Norman Taylor at her house on August 31st, 1991 at 9:15 in the morning. Could tell me Miss Tompkins just a little bit about where you were born, when you were born, and where you grew up?

Lorraine Tompkins: Yes I was born on Old Rag Mountain in December 20th, 1932 and I was moved off the mountain when I was two years old down to Syria because the Park you know took over as the Shenandoah National Park. I grew up above Syria store.

NT: So you were what age when you, you were two—

LT: I was two years old. Yes.

NT: And so you grew up above the Syria store.

LT: Mm-hm, yes. On Route 600.

NT: Could you tell me a little bit about, you were too young to remember anything directly from that period I—

LT: Most definitely.

NT: (laughs) But can you tell me kinds of things you heard about the move from the Park from your relatives?

LT: Yes. My grandfather was a post master on Old Rag Mountain and he owned a grocery store there. The Park paid my grandfather two hundred dollars for I believe a hundred acres of land. Of course I don't remember anything about that. And well all of my relatives was moved off of Old Rag. They all found homes with the help of my grandfather because I do believe my grandfather was the wealthiest man on Old Rag Mountain at that particular time because he did have employees working for him. And he fed many, many people up on Old Rag Mountain that didn't have food back in the twenties and the early thirties.

NT: Your grandfather's name was?

LT: William Austin Brown. His picture's on the latest book called *Shenandoah Secrets* by Carolyn and Jack Reeder. That's my grandfather. And my picture's also in here along with my two sisters, if I can find it. (looking through book to find the aforementioned picture) That's me in the background there. And this is Frances and Eunice, my two sisters. We dried apples and berries and many, many things. And here's a picture of my grandfather there. He was always reading his Bible, every picture that was ever made of him except this one.

NT: Do you remember any other stories about the move from the mountain?

LT: No, I actually don't even remember the move. I was only two years old with a big nipple in my mouth. When we moved there there was a picture made of all of us children the same day that we moved. But I do not remember anything. But I've heard many stories. Like I mentioned to you, my sister Hattie Broyles has told me many, many stories. And she's eighty-one and she remembers all these things that happened up there.

NT: Was there any stories that come to mind right now?

LT: Some good and some bad.

NT: What were some of the good ones?

LT: Some of the good ones was how happy they was up there. They had plenty to eat and it seemed to be about five boys to one girl when she was a young girl growing up. She was born in 19 oh 10 and the good times they had killing chickens and cooking 'em for all the company that my grandparents had. Many, many ministers came from far away to get advice from my grandfather. And they just had a wonderful time up there from what she has told me and she does. My sister she can remember all that. She's

eighty-one years old today. And they was very, very sad when they had to move from the mountain, but they all survived. But no one has actually been happy since they came down from Old Rag Mountain, various mountains that people lived on up there.

NT: Do you remember what kinds of things, you said they ate very well. Do you remember what kinds of things they would eat?

LT: Oh well they had, everybody owned hogs you know. No, there was no beef. Oh, they had potatoes which was your potassium. They had potatoes every day. And they would always kill chickens. They had always had plenty to eat. They had peaches and apple trees up there which apples are very nourishing you know. They have a lot of pectin in them. And just didn't anyone go hungry up there. Of course there was a few poor people and George Pollock he helped many a poor person out up there especially the Corbins. The Corbins I believe was the poorest people up there. They was hard working people and they made their baskets you know and things like that to help supplement their income. And my sister also told me that you had to work to survive. Everyone had to work. No one could just lay around and not do anything because they were really the bad depression years. So therefore everyone had to work. But no one went hungry. Not as long as my grandfather William Austin Brown was up there, let's put it that way.

NT: Were there other ways that you heard of that they supplemented their income?

LT: Oh, most definitely, moonshine. All my relatives mad moonshine. You take Harvey Nicholson for instance. In fact he fathered his last child when he was sixty-nine years old. And he was supposedly, if you read some of these books, made the best and the cleanest whiskey on the mountain. Even the revenueurs bought from him so I read in George Pollock's book and this is the one that's called *Skyland*. He will tell you some stories in this book about people making their moonshine. Most of 'em was left alone, but every now and then one would tell on the other and there would be some kind of a grudge. And then the sheriff's department would come over from Luray. One of the government men they would you know come sneaking around, but most of 'em was afraid to come around the moonshiners from the information that I have gathered over the years. They've pretty much stayed away from the mountain people. In fact there was quite a few murders up there. And even the sheriff in Luray wouldn't even come over. Like Fennel Corbin shot the Dodson man for raping his daughter, one of his daughters you know. And so he just shot him. There was nothing done because George Pollock testified. It was just a mere hearing you know. Many things went on up there where the law didn't even get involved. I suppose they figured it was best to keep out just because they might get killed themselves, you know?

NT: So the moonshine was a big, big source of—

LT: This is where all of them made their supplemental income. Most definitely. Not so many, I've never heard of a Corbin making moonshine. I think it was the Dodsons, the

Jenkins, and the Nicholsons. There were other people too that made moonshine. Well I guess if they hadn't a made that some of 'em probably would have starved you know.

NT: Were there other alcohol type things that they made?

LT: Now let's see. There was some Nicholsons made brandy, brandy and whiskey. And my mother told me a story one time about they would make dandelion wine up there. She also made dandelion wine. I imagine they would make most anything that they could make money out of because they sold apples and berries. And of course the Nicholsons and the Corbins made their baskets. And they would walk way from up there at Old Rag down to Nethers and sell those baskets. And my grandfather, when he had his store up there, he would buy some things from them too you know.

NT: Did, I forgot what I was gonna say. You mentioned one of the families killing one of the other, one of the men killing one of the other men for raping—

LT: Fennel Corbin.

NT: Were there other stories about how the law was handled that you remembered up there?

LT: Yes, there was just a hearing if you readed the book *Skyland* by George Freeman Pollock tells you the story of what happened in there. It was a hearing and the Dodson, he was basically a drunkard and he like to abuse women and liked to rape them and do things like that. So that one evening he came up and he was drunk and Mr. Corbin told him to get away that he would kill him if he tried to molest his daughter again. So the Dodson boy opened his shirt and says, "Shoot, Goddamn you." So Mr. Corbin blew him away with a single barrel shotgun. It wasn't a double barrel. And he killed him instantly. And these Dodson boys have tried to push his home down. If you go up to Big Meadows into the visitor center, go down the hallway you will see they have a big poster of him up on the wall sitting up on the high porch. And they would try to shake that home down. And he was pitied by many a people because he did have a real hard life raising all the children. There is a picture of him in here (leafing through book). Oh, this is a picture of my father's old grocery store, not to change the subject. They tore that down and built a new one. But Mr. Fennel Corbin he was a very good old man; everybody liked him very much. Here he is sitting right here. That is a better picture of him up at Big Meadows in the information center. And my aunt Teeny (??), this is my mother's sister. She was, the stories I've heard was the cleanest woman on the mountain. She had many beautiful flowers and suppose she had the nicest furniture. She was a very religious woman. She married Bailey Nicholson, he was a minister. There is many, many stories in these books coming out by the Perdues and the Reederes. How they get all their information I really don't know, but the stories that they do tell is true.

NT: Is that a story that you actually heard told, the one about the rape and the shooting?

LT: It is this book here.

NT: Oh, okay.

LT: And I have heard it all my life. And my sister, she talks about it quite often. The Nicholson boy that was shot deserved to be shot because he wasn't a very good person to start with.

NT: The Nicholson boy?

LT: He was a Nicholson.

NT: Okay.

LT: No he wasn't. I'm sorry. He wasn't a Nicholson; he was a Dodson.

NT: Right.

LT: His name is in this book here.

NT: Right.

LT: No, I never heard of a Nicholson killing anyone. It was mostly your Jenkins and your Dodsons and some others. There's a Sours; there's a story about a Sours in here, but I can't get the whole story together without reading the book again.

NT: Well that's okay. You mentioned, you showed a picture of your father's store—

LT: My grandfather's store.

NT: In the *Shenandoah Secrets* book. Your grandfather's store, right. Had you heard any of your relatives talk about that and what did they say about it?

LT: My grandfather?

NT: Your grandfather's store. Had you heard any of your relatives talk about it and what did they say about it?

LT: Well everybody loved my grandfather Brown because he was a very religious and educated man. His father taught schools for more than fifty years and his name was Andrew Hampton Brown. So all the Browns were pretty well-educated. He was so honest that when he weighs something he would hold it up for the customer to see. And any child that came in always went away with a free handful of candy. In fact my grandmother, his wife, told the story one time that my mother would bring all of us children in his store and we would open up the oatmeal boxes and get the glass out and leave the oatmeal sit. (laughs) And everybody thought a lot of my grandfather. He held

inquest (??) when anyone died because he had the authority to do that. My grandmother she was very, very sad when they moved them off the mountain and she lost her mind after that. She grieved herself to death the doctor said. She lived only a few years after that. My grandfather outlived her quite some time because he was more tolerant of the Park takeover. The full story has never really been told; the full story has really never been told about how the Park did treat the people.

NT: Yeah. Could you tell me about, you mentioned the bad stories. Can you talk about those?

LT: Yes. Some people were literally carried out of their home and immediately their homes was being torn down. The government men would go in at nighttime when they knew everyone was at home and then they would make the people get out and tear the home down. Of course I don't remember anything, but there's actually a picture in here of them doing that to one person. I believe in the Park takeover because I love animals, but I believe it should have been done a little bit better. They should have been given more time and paid more money for their homes up there. But I'm so happy today that it is a park for the animals where they can have refuge up there and not be killed and everything. I really wish that I had grown up there on Old Rag Mountain so I would have had more memories, but I was just a little two-year old kid.

NT: Well, do you remember stories of specific instances that your relatives have told you about being moved off the mountain?

LT: About being moved off the mountain? Yeah they were very angry. Some of 'em were angry enough to shoot the people that came and took their homes from them. Let's see there's one picture in here (leafing through book). It doesn't state who the person is, but there's a government man on each side of him and his feet isn't even touching the ground. They're literally carrying him off. And I can just sympathize with that family you know, this was their home. I think I can find it in here somewhere. I really believe that I would have fought back a little bit more than those people did up there. Of course the people that lived up there wasn't, a lot of 'em wasn't educated. And they didn't know how to go about hiring an attorney. Of course I don't think it would have done any good to have hired an attorney because once Congress signed all the papers and everything, that was it. Like it will be when this takeover, I'm gonna be pretty happy to see this takeover in some areas let's put it this way, so the animals, the deer will have better places to roam without being shot by the hunters.

NT: What are you referring to now?

LT: Yes. Well we have, the Park is going from Maine to Alaska and they're going to take sixty million more acres. You're not aware of that are you?

NT: In where? Where is this you're talking about?

LT: Everywhere. Even Etlan here is in part of the takeover. Syria, Criglersville, Madison, mm-hm. I don't believe you are aware of that, but they are. But I think it will be done, I think the people's gonna fight a little more today than what they did back in 1934. I have advised some of them not to waste their money because they're going to take it regardless. Congress will definitely sign the papers for the Park, this Park takeover now. And in yesterday's paper they found the boundaries. See they was having troubles with the boundaries. The boundaries was so mixed up here in Virginia. But according to yesterday's paper, they have found the boundaries now. And I think most all of Syria will be in the takeover which is right down the road a little ways here. Madison Mills. I have no objections with the Park taking over now because there is a lot of land that is not being used for anything. And that way the bears and the deer they will be safe in the Park. Of course I don't want to see any families suffer. You know, but I don't think they're gonna take their homes now they're just after the land right now.

NT: Was there anything else in terms of the moving the people off the mountain that you wanted to mention that you had heard? I don't know if there was anything else about—

LT: Oh, many of them became ill. Various illnesses, they had heart trouble. Well of course they had diabetes back in those days, but they didn't know what was wrong with 'em. But a lot of the people became ill. Of course we have some lazy ones on the mountain. (laughs) But like I tell you, my grandmother she really lost her mind because the doctor in Madison, it was Dr. Cave I believe said she had grieved herself to death because she had missed the good times on the mountain. She had employees; she had women to help her wash because she had so much work to do because my grandfather was in the store and post office all the time. And there was only three boys and they was all grown and married. They just had such a wonderful time. People from D.C. would come up. There was a lot of tourists up there you know taking pictures and my grandfather fed many a tourists up there. I think, I believe the biggest problem with the people that moved off they just grieved. They grieved over the good times they had up there and no one paid for any land up there. They was, a lot of 'em was called squatters. Well back in those days, you didn't have to pay for land. You take Mr. Aaron Nicholson, he was born in the 1700s. Why he owned more property than anyone up there. He never wore shoes. He was always barefoot and he is a descendant of mine. They call him the King of the Hollow because you had to go through him for everything. I remember reading in one of these books here that he was very angry because one of the presidents, I believe it was—. One of the presidents, I can't remember if it was Hoover or who it was, he was very angry because they didn't come to meet him when he was up there for the opening of the Skyland. He lived to be a very, very old man, Aaron Nicholson. And he was a apple peeler. I don't know if he ever made moonshine or not. Probably did. (laughs)

NT: You had mentioned in the relocation that you moved above the store at—

LT: Syria.

NT: Syria. You had said that your father helped find housing for some people, is that what you—

LT: My father, well my grandfather.

NT: Your grandfather. I'm sorry, I keep saying your father. Do you know anything about that?

LT: Well, my father for one and his two brothers. I can't remember there were some Seales that he helped. Because you see all those people didn't have homes to go to. They had to buy their home back in those days and now when they went to the mountains, well they just found a piece of land and that was that. There was homesteaders and some of 'em was called squatters. Well I don't think they could find, they didn't have the money to buy homes with. So they had to squat, let's put it that way. You've heard of squatters, I know. And most of us settled in the Criglersville and Syria area, but nobody ever seemed to be happy. No one just never seemed to be happy.

NT: Did the government help at all with that relocation?

LT: No. None whatsoever that I know for a fact. And the day my grandfather William Austin Brown retired, moved off, not retired, moved off the mountain he had two hundred dollars to his name. That's what he they paid him for his property. And I believe he owned right about thirty acres. It's in this book what each one was paid. The *Shenandoah Secrets* you will find in here what each one of 'em was paid for their property. You'll find it in the back here (leafing through book). Which the Reeder's did an excellent job of research on this. I imagine they had to go to many courthouses to find this.

NT: Do you know about what your grandfather did after he moved off the mountain what he did for livelihood after that?

LT: My grandfather and grandmother was very old at the time. They didn't do anything except he had some apple and peach trees. He did raise strawberries, beautiful strawberries. My grandmother she would do just a little cooking. But she cried most of the time. She wore the old long dress. She died in 1950. They didn't do anything. My grandfather Brown was ninety-four when he died. And I don't know how old my grandmother was.

NT: But he lived for, if he was ninety-four—

LT: He lived one year after my grandmother died.

NT: Okay. So they lived for almost eighteen years after the Park had taken over the land.

LT: Well yeah, but we call it soon after because we think they would have lived a little longer because most of the Browns lived to be way over a hundred years old. If you go to the graveyards and check their tombstone, most all of them lived to be 106 years old, 104, 106.

NT: How old was your father at the time of the move off the mountain?

LT: My father was forty-one because he was forty-two when I was born. My father he was a carpenter. He was a carpenter all over, New York, Pennsylvania. He didn't work around here too much because it wasn't that much work to find.

NT: But you lived with your grandparents or—

LT: No, I lived with my parents, but when my grandparents moved off the mountain and moved above the Syria store and I started when seven and eight years old, my sister and I we would take care of my grandparents. We would do all the work for them because they was on up in age, you know. We would stay with them at nighttime, cook for them, bring the wood in for them, and do the necessary things. And then we had a woman that would come in when we was in school during the day, we spent the night with them.

NT: So who lived there in that store over at Syria? Who actually lived there? I know your grandfather, your grandmother, and who else lived there?

LT: Not at the store. They lived above Syria, two and a half miles above the Syria store.

NT: Okay. I'm sorry.

LT: Just my grandparents lived there.

NT: And where did you live?

LT: I lived about a quarter of a mile above them in our old home place which we still own today. Ira Brown was my father and he had a brother named Waymon (??) and one named Dewey. Uncle Dewey was a postmaster in Culpeper for many years. And they were in their nineties when they died also. My father died in '76 and he was ninety years old.

NT: So in your house there was your father and your mother—

LT: And five sisters and one brother. See my father was married twice. I have five half sisters and brothers. This is where Mrs. Broyles comes in. She's the oldest child; she's eighty-one now. She just lives right around the corner here. And she's given an awful

lot of information to the Park Services. Well not to the Park Services, to these authors that comes around to her for information for book publication.

NT: How old was she when they moved off the mountain.

LT: Okay, she was born in 19 oh 10. And—

NT: Okay, that's right.

LT: Let's see, in 1934 we all had to be off. I imagine she was married at the time with two children I believe.

[tape break 00:31:11-00:31:25]

NT: You were saying she must have been around twenty-one or twenty-two.

LT: Twenty-one. Yeah. She lived in the old Butler house. I was born in the old Butler house up there. I heard her tell stories of the snow. It snowed so deep up there that you would have to take your broom handle to find your way around.

NT: This was—

LT: Up on Old Rag Mountain. See my people just stayed in the Old Rag Mountain area. Of course there was Weakley Hollow, Corbin Hollow, and Nicholson Hollow. See there was three sets of Nicholsons that came from Great Britain. There's two sets that I wasn't related to. My grandfather was Oscar Nicholson and his father was Dave Nicholson. They was real hardworking people. My grandfather Nicholson owned less land than anyone up there. He only owned ten acres. I'm surprised because he had nine children. And back in those days on the mountain no one kept their hogs in a pen. They all ran loose. I've had heard some stories that George Pollock told in his book about the hogs and they would go wild, how some of them would be caught. (laughs) How someone got shot over some hogs one time. Must have been quite something up there back in those days. (laughs) But I love to sit around and hear stories from the old people that I've talked to what went on up there. It's a shame you can't talk to all of them because you would get many, many laughs. (laughs)

NT: Was there any other stories that you can recall that we haven't covered?

LT: Yes. They're relatives of mine, but I won't mention their name because it would be embarrassing for them. There were two sisters, they were very, very poor. They would go up to Skyland in the restrooms and they would beg, they would never steal, they were very honest people. Anyone knew them can tell you that, but they would have a little can in their hand in the restroom they would beg. They were beggars. And so they would come home, some CC men chased them down the mountain. And they made the remark that they never saw girls run so fast in their life. (laughs) After they would get

their begging money, they would take off for home which was in another hollow which I would prefer not to say which hollow. But that actually happened. And there was one woman up there, she had I think maybe it was eleven illegitimate children. And she lived to be a very old woman. I know who she is, but I would prefer not to say who that is also. (laughs) I've heard many, many stories and I know they all true, some funny and some very sad. But I don't think this Park takeover will be anything like the one back in 1934. We won't see the hardship that the people saw back in those days. My grandmother she would sit and cry, her chin would tremble. She says, "I will die unhappy because they took me away from my home up there." And she would cry every day. I believe she must have been the only one that ever did that because I never heard of anyone else you know, really suffering the way she did. I mean it was just terrible the way she carried on day and night, day and night. And she got so bad she wouldn't even go to the bathroom. She would just lay in bed and do what she had to do. And we had to take care of her, clean her up, and bathe her. So I was kinda relieved the day she died. She was out of her misery then. My grandfather, he suffered through it. He never said much, but he knew what she was going through. So I do have some more stories, but I can't remember them all you know just at one time. I should have you know sit down and made a little notes of the stories.

NT: Well they're very interesting.

LT: Uh-huh. Oh, there is one real cute story. George Pollock he had parties up there you know, up on Skyland. A lot of parties. And there was this one Corbin woman got mad because another Corbin woman had gotten a larger gift at Christmastime because Mr. Pollock he would hand out Christmas presents to people up there. She got mad, she took off and went home, wouldn't even take her gift with her which was very childish, but they was like that back in those days. (laughs) I suppose they all wanted to be treated equal. (laughs) I get a kick out of that every time I hear about that. And it's in this book right here called *Skyland*. He has many, many funny stories to tell, Mr. Pollock does about some of the people up there. But basically he speaks good about most of the people up there. Some of the men would come in drunk, a lot of the Dodson boys and they would wreck the dining room hall. And he never had any more Christmas parties after that. They came up there and would tear his dining room up, drinking you know. I never knew that till recently that things like that went on up there at Mr. Pollock's place of business. Of course that was at the old dining room. It's not like the one they have today up at Big Meadows.

NT: Did you remember anything in particular—. I know that your mother or, probably would be your mother or your father would in terms of, they grew up on Old Rag, is that right?

LT: Yes.

NT: Is that right?

LT: Uh-huh.

NT: Do you remember anything in particular in terms of ways that they would treat illness? And how would different illnesses be treated?

LT: Well my grandfather William Austin Brown, he was very good at that. I had pneumonia when I was two weeks old and I would have definitely died if it hadn't been for my grandfather. He took the saliva out of my throat. Oh, there was remedies. All kinds of remedies like coal oil and something else, and mustard they would mix together for croup you know things like that. Oh they would doctor themselves. And then we had a very good woman called Miss Sizer which is in most all the books. She would come in from Luray and go up and you know kinda take care, like a health nurse. You know what I mean?

NT: Mm-hm.

LT: There was one little baby boy. He was suffering from protein because the Park wouldn't let anyone kill meat, kill any animals for meat. So Miss Sizer took the little boy, his picture's in one of the books here, took him to Luray and got him well. He was dying; he had rickets. Oh, he was a very pathetic looking little baby. And the father was told to go kill the meat for the baby until it became a certain age. No one ever knew about it and if he woulda been caught, I'm sure they wouldn't have done anything under conditions like that. The baby would have died if she hadn't a taken it to Luray and fed it certain amounts of protein. See everyone has to have at least three ounces of protein a day. I was a health nurse for twenty-seven years so. I didn't know that many years ago, but you know people have to have protein. And the baby was so young that it couldn't eat potatoes which there's protein in potatoes. And beans, you know the baby couldn't eat anything like that. But they did have protein for babies back in those days. I don't think Similac was out then, but they had protein. And he grew up to be a very healthy young man, the baby did. And her name was Miss Sizer. I can really remember her. She was a very nice person. Yeah, my grandfather Brown he would take care of sick people up there. He was such a good man.

NT: Do you remember anything about the cleaning, special ways of cleaning that your mother had or special cleaners or—

LT: Yes. She made her own soap which all the women did back up there. They would take meat and lye and then boil it and there was your soap. As you know they swept their yards. All the yards was swept till the almost shined. They even boiled their clothes. They had a big pot and their clothes was just as white as snow hanging on the line. They were clean people. But they had to make their own soap. They didn't buy their soap back in those days. They took meat and lye and boiled it and made it into cakes of soap and that would clean your clothes. What they use for the dishes today I still don't know how they washed their dishes. Possibly that they used the soap that they washed their clothes with. And my mother she would boil the water to rinse the

dishes in because I can remember her doing that. She would wash them and she would pour boiling water over them to kill the germs I suppose. It would be done on the old cook stove, wood burning cook stove.

NT: Do you remember your mother having any superstitious about different things or—

LT: They were all superstitious. People are still superstitious today, even doctors. Most doctors I've worked with are very superstitious. In fact they won't even take a child's tonsils out in the dog days.

NT: In the, say that again.

LT: Your surgeons today won't take a child's tonsils out during the dog day period. Because—

NT: What's the dog day?

LT: The child has a tendency to bleed more. I think I know what kind of superstition you're talking about. I imagine they were all superstitious about various things because I've heard many stories up there about they would hear a baby hollering in the mountains which you and I know that it was a lion or a bobcat or something like that. Superstition like that, you know.

NT: What would that mean if they heard that?

LT: Even above the old Syria store we have heard this scream, we've heard tremendous screams at night, but it was from a bobcat or something like that I'm sure. But little babies died back in those days and they would open 'em up at the cemetery as you can see. There's a picture in this book here (leafing through book). Everyone was opened up at the cemetery back in those days. And then when something would happen they would connect it with the deaths some way or another. Yeah, they've seen ghosts, all kinds of ghosts and things like that.

NT: What was the purpose of opening them up?

LT: I don't know. I don't think they should have done that because I believe it's very hard on a family to do anything like that. But see this picture right here? (shows NT a picture from a book)

NT: I see, yeah. I see.

LT: And I've been told by many, many members of my family that the Corbins and the Nicholsons, when one died, they would grieve for years. They would really grieve. Not like today when someone dies. They don't forget, but they're just not in mourning so long like they was back in those days. And they would mourn over this little baby right here. They would just cry and carry on and go to the grave everyday for years. Well

there's various kinds of superstition. I think most everyone is a little superstitious about some things, you know what I mean? (thumping sound) Me I've never been superstitious about anything. I think it's because I've always had a open mind about everything. But many children died from worms. There was a little Seale girl that died from worms, she was two. See the medication that Dr. Ross would give some children would make the worm—. These were long, fifteen and sixteen inch worms. And a lot of little children got them from eating apples. We all had them, but we was given medication. Because people never sprayed their apples back in those days you see and therefore worms would get in them. And Ernest Seale's little daughter, she died when she was two years old. And she suffered severely with those worms, but they just couldn't get them out of her. So she died when she was two years old. Children would die from diphtheria and even whooping cough. Their throat would swell together on them. This coal oil and mustard and vinegar pack (??) would work with some children, but not with all children. We all had the croup, but we survived. It's amazing we all survived, but we did.

NT: Do you remember what occasions would have been for celebrations or holidays, what were important ones?

LT: Oh, everything. Oh, my sisters told me many, many sisters, my eighty-one year old sister. Oh, they would celebrate the Fourth of July. Course they all would drink you know and just have a real good time. And Christmastime they would always just get one little gift. And some of the families wouldn't have anything. They would go out and cut their tree down. But when I was growing up I can always remember having a tree with gifts under it, more than one gift. And the tree would be decorated from the ornaments we would make at school. But up in the mountains, up on Old Rag Mountain, she was just talking the other day, you must go by and talk to her, at the good times they had various celebrations when someone would get married and they really knew how to live it up, too. (laughs) From what I've heard. She could tell you many good stories about that.

NT: Was there anything that you heard about love and marriage and courtship and the mountain people that was unusual that you heard about?

LT: Yes, in this book here *Shenandoah Secrets* one man killed another man over a girl. I can't remember what page it's on. Oh yeah, there was murders over courtship. And you have to find it in these books that I have here on the table.

NT: But you didn't directly hear of anything?

LT: Oh yes, yes. I've heard my father talk about it. I've heard my mother and my father and my oldest sister, my eighty-one year old sister. There was one man, he was a Nicholson, he was in love with a girl up there. I know her and everything, but I'd rather not mention her name. Till the day he died, he was very vicious. He married this other woman and had nine children, but he was never happy because he wanted this other

girl. And the other girl didn't wanna have anything to do with him because he had a mean streak in him. And he was from a different set of the Nicholsons. Well I imagine there's more than one story like that that we don't know about. She could probably tell you some real good humdingers if you get the chance to interview her and talk to her. Like I say, I was too young to remember anything like that, but I have heard stories. It's in this book right here *Shenandoah Secrets* by Carolyn and Jack Reeder. One man did kill another man over a girl. And there was many, many fights over the moonshine they would make.

NT: Was there anything else that you felt was important or interesting to mention about that you had heard or about the mountain? The movement from the mountain or the people or the customs or any of that type of thing that we've missed that you'd heard about?

LT: Yeah, there's probably many of things, but I can't remember them all. There is some of the people was given life living in their homes there. And oh, Aaron Nicholson was one of them, but he died soon after the Park takeover, very soon after the Park takeover. And I have a few other relatives, it's in the *Shenandoah Secrets* here, that they did give them the right to live there as long as they lived so I thought that was pretty nice of the Department of the Interior to do that, to let the people live there. I think it was mainly the old ones that they let do that. And still today we bury people up there because that's our right to still use the cemeteries up there. I've heard many, many stories, but I just can't recollect them all. There is one story that it actually happened and the woman that did it was a close relative of mine. I'm ashamed to say it because I've always loved animals so much. They owned a mule and the mule became very stubborn one morning and she wanted it to do something, probably to plow the garden or something. And they lived on a cliff up there. So she became very angry with the mule. And she took a can of coal oil and poured over the mule and set it afire and give it a push over the cliff and killed the mule which was a very sad thing. Some people remember that. She was a very mean old woman. It's a shame the mule didn't push her off first. (laughs) That was so cruel to do that to an animal, but she really did that. And many, many a real mean stories that comes out of the mountains and there's some good stories you know. It's just like it is today; we have the good and the bad. We just have to make the best of everything today. (laughs)

NT: Okay. Well, is there anything else that you wanted to mention?

LT: No. I've said it before. I'm very happy that we have this beautiful park and I'm kinda sad when I read the *Shenandoah Overlook* the other day about what's happening up there with the ozone with people not turning their motors off when they stop at the overlooks. And about our beautiful dogwood and sometimes I wonder if it should be a park if people's going to treat our Shenandoah National Park like they are. And I do see some trash sometimes when I do go up there on the side of the road where people throw out. But overall I'm just so thankful that our little animals has a place to hide up

there. (laughs) And I take many trips up there and I just love to go up there. It's so beautiful. Mr. Pollock and his father has been highly criticized by many a person because of the takeover, but I think they was very intelligent. I think it was 1886 that it was in the making, the Park takeover by the old Pollock. I'm just happy that we have the Park today. And I think the rangers do such a wonderful job up there telling stories to the people especially the children, explaining the birds and all the trees to the children up there which is important, more important than the adult today because it's a younger generation that will keep our park beautiful in years to come.

NT: I want to thank you for taking your time to talk with me.

LT: You're quite welcome Mr. Taylor.

NT: And I appreciate it.

LT: Thank you.

NT: Thank you.

[End audio file, 00:55:34 min.]

End of Interview