10-14-1977

(SNP043) Hunter Dodson interviewed by Diane and Eugene Wilhelm, transcribed by Jeanette Shapiro

Hunter C. Dodson

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Interview with Hunter Dodson
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(formerly SC# 4030)

Interview conducted at Hoover Camp
By Eugene and Diane Wilhelm on July 3, 1964

Transcribed by Jeanette Shapiro, February, 2004

Key
[EW:]  Interviewer, Eugene Wilhelm
[DW:]  Interviewer, Diane Wilhelm
[HD:]  Interviewee, Hunter Dodson

[Notes regarding transcription technique]
_______  (??)  Transcriber’s best guess
—  Speaker makes abrupt change in sentence

Refer to the Baylor University Style Guide for consistency in transcription

Total interview length: 00:09:53min.

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

[Interview begins mid-conversation]

HD: …homes around the stream, it was plenty of the native fish for everyone. Oh you could drop in and if you wanted to bring those many home just use a gallon. My father used to take a gallon, or a peck basket, on the White Oak, where I could fish for half a day, come back, and it’s full. Nice trout.

DW: It was much rainier then, two or three rains a week?

HD: Oh yes, we had a much better season then we have now.

DW: The other day a woman said to me, it’s a very light spring, I guess she meant by that that there wasn’t any rain, is that what…

HD: Perhaps.

EW: Well most of the rain fell in summer, did it? In these thunder showers, like, during

HD: Yeah we’d have lots of thunder showers and through the winter it would be very rough winters.

EW: Lot of snow.

HD: Deep snow. Then in the spring when the thaw came, naturally you’d have, the waters way up above normal.

DW: You were going to tell me about the people with the musical instruments and they went to the apple picking.

HD: Oh yes. Some of the people that go to the apple pickings, they call it, in Winchester, Virginia.

EW: Winchester.

HD: And they were strong healthy boys, they could really pick apples. Some of them... two hundred bushels a day.
EW: 200 bushels!

HD: And I think then we paid like five cents, four or five cents a bushel. And so before they’d come home they’d want something to bring home to entertain the family. They’d buy a violin, a banjo, an accordion, a mouth harp or something. In most every family would be someone that could play an instrument. Course myself, I never could play anything.

EW: Is that right?

[All talking at once].

HD: I was unfortunate, I didn’t get the time. I had to work to…

EW: Well when they would go to these apple pickings, how would they get there? Would they hike, would they walk, or would they take a wagon or…?

HD: They would go down into the valley and say oh ten, twelve, maybe twenty of them would get together. Then hire some of the neighbors to take them in a truck. Pay him enough that he could afford to run the truck. And then let them know what time in the fall they wanted to come home, and the truck would go pick them up and bring them back. That is back, close to home, like in five or six miles. Walking distance.

EW: What about when we were talking before, you know, about stock animals. Were there any horses or mules on any of these little homesteads?

HD: Yes, some of them had horses and mules. The most of them did not.

DW: I guess they probably ate too much and didn’t pay back their keep, was that it?

HD: That’s correct. They didn’t have any way of making enough to feed the horse, you know? And naturally it does take a lot of corn through the winter.

EW: Sure does.

HD: As I said before, they wanted to save all the food for themselves.

DW: Another thing I wanted to ask about, I was interested in the other day. In a couple of the cemeteries, you know, and something that we don’t have in our part of the country, they always have stones at the bottom of the grave, and it almost looked to me as though they had something written on them and they were scratched out. Is that of any special significance? Do you know much about that?

HD: Well the reason of the stones the people didn’t have the money to buy, you know what I mean, to put at the head. Headstones. The footstone. So a lot of them would just use the stones. Nice long stones, were flat. And they would inscribe on the stones, some of them. Who it was and what year they died and the age and so forth. A lot of them would just have the stone, no name on it. They were family graveyards, especially here. They knew anybody.

DW: They knew who was there.

HD: Not too much difference, as far as they were concerned.

DW: And everyone still takes care of their own little plot, yeah?

HD: Some of them do. They can be there if they want to. They can take care of their family graveyard. But the most of them, they are not taken care of. Grown up, trees through them, and a lot of ‘em, you can’t hardly tell they was ever a grave yard there. You may notice the one the Drive near the lower Hawksbill parking area. That’s to the right.
EW: Yes.

HD: I knew all those people there. They just lived on over the hill from here. Their names were Taylor. He also worked for George Freeman Pollock in the summer months.

DW: What do people around here think of George Freeman Pollock? He was quite a colorful character, I guess.

HD: Oh I think Mr. Pollock was a wonderful man, myself. And all of the local people in around Skyland thought he was a wonderful man, which he was to all of us. He gave all of us employment, practically all of us. Through the summer, and a lot of times in the winter. When the weather was suitable. We would cut firewood for him, and rick it up. In the coming spring he would haul it in. In those days some had the fireplaces, had to burn... they burned blight chestnuts in the most of them. There was plenty of chestnuts to cut. My brother and I cut much wood for him. He paid two dollars and a quarter a cord. That was a rick of wood 16 foot long, the length two foot. What I mean by long, that’s the long way.

EW: Right.

HD: And then four foot high.

EW: Four foot high.

HD: We’d go cut, split, and stack, the whole part of the day, my brother and I. Two dollars and a quarter.

DW: That was a pretty good price though, wasn’t it?

HD: We was really making money.

EW: Yeah that was big money, sure.

HD: We had a five foot cross cut saw. And we could saw a tree of wood before we ever stopped. We kept the tune edge in the saw, it would bring out shavings 3-4 inches long, and that chestnut timber was easy to cut anyway, and real easy to split. We made some money right there. Job... didn’t last long.

DW: ...ask you too, and maybe if we go down toward Weakley Hollow, is there anyone down there who might like to talk to us too? Or anybody else that you know?

HD: No I’m sorry, I sure don’t know of anyone that I think would be willing to speak. I myself have just about spoke with all of them. Well, a part of it anyway.

DW: Well I think that you really told us a lot. I can’t think of too much more, can you, to add?

EW: No I think- [cuts off].

DW: The previous interview was recorded July 3, 1964 by Eugene and Diane Wilhelm, with Ranger Hunter Dodson at Hoover Camp, Shenandoah National Park.

[End audio file, 00:09:53 min.]

End of Interview