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(SNP114) Irvin Shifflett, et al interviewed by Dorothy Noble Smith

Irvin F. Shifflett

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW APRIL 29, 1979

Dorothy Smith interviewing IRVIN SHIFFLET, JP ROACH, LYDIA SHIFFLET

Dorothy Smith (DS): We are interviewing Irvin Shiflet, who is also called, "Peents". Where did you live back when you were a child?

Irvin Shifflet (IS): I lived just about a mile and a half from what they called Rocky Bar up at the foot of the mountain, Blue Ridge Mountains.

DS: We are also interviewing Mr. P.J. Roach.

J.P. Roach (JP): J.P.

DS: Where did you live when you were a child?

JP: ...Right beside the Peent house.

DS: How was right beside? About a quarter of a mile?

JP: 500 yards. A few hundred...

IS: It was not that far. It wasn't over 200 yards, I think.

JP: Maybe it was...pretty close.

DS: Mrs. Roach Sr., where did she live?

JP: Same place.

DS: Same place as you did...Bennie Cupp, who lived...

Bennie Cupp (BC): I grew up in Dayton, but my people all grew up down here, right above Rocky Bar.

DS: Hazel Roach, where did you live?

Hazel Roach (HR): I lived up here on 340, about two miles above Rocky Bar. I'm not going to be much help to you.

DS: I know you'll be talking so I wanted your voice identified. You were all living pretty much around in the same area. You were childhood friends, then?

IS: Oh yes...

DS: Did you have any other childhood friends?

IS: Yes. Hits some of 'em that's passed away and then hit's some that's still living, gone away from around here...Range family...
HR: Ralston family.
IS: Ralston family, lived over land right joins the park. So hit's quite a few homes that's not around here now that used to be around.
DS: What was your mother's name?
IS: Bessie Royer.
DS: Do you know where her home place was?
IS: She was raised right around in this area here. They used to live maybe a half a mile up the river here, on what they called the Royer lot. They was raised around in this area.
DS: Your mother's maiden name was what?
JP: Luna Roach.
DS: Then Roach married Roach. How many children were in your family, Mr. Shiflet?
IS: Seven.
DS: Was that about normal?
IS: Why yes, I guess around about that time they mostly raised big families. I think there was ten in my wife's family. They run 'round seven, eight, nine and ten children.
DS: How were they cared for? Were they disciplined very strictly?...
IS: Yes, more so then they are today. (Laughter)
DS: You mean they'd go out with a switch with these children?
IS: Yes. If you disobeyed what they told you not to do, you got a whumping for it.
DS: Did you ever disobey?
IS: Sure I did...I think I learned a little by it, too. (Laughter)
HR: Paid off, didn't it?
DS: How about you, Mr. Roach, how was the discipline in your home?
JP: I got whuppin's, too.
DS: Did all of you have special jobs that you were supposed to do? Was it your job always to milk the cows, or your job to do something like that?
I: Mostly my sisters, inside work like—that—there. Of course, they'd help out some. My brother and I, we were getting wood. We had jobs in the evening. That's what we did if we wanted to have time off from school for Christmas. We had to walk two and a half miles to school. Then we'd came home in the evening and we got wood... We had to keep that wood on the porch where it was handy.

D: Did you have much of a job finding wood?

I: No, we had plenty of wood. Hit was wood maybe all around us. We had no trouble except just getting it in...dragging it in with the horse or hauling it in with the wagon.

D: Did either of you ever do any logging, cutting down trees for the poles for the telephone company or for the railroad?

JF: (unintelligible)

I: No. My daddy, he made some ties... We'd haul 'em out here to what you call (concrete). They had a side track up there. We also hauled some bark out. We'd load some bark here, N 'n W. (200) We'd load this bark on there, and haul it there, and he'd load it on these cars, and it was shipped away. Mr. Roach, Miss Lu's here father, tended the scales...at (concrete). He weighed the bark for N 'n W when we'd take it there. He also counted the ties after that.

D: So you'd strip the bark from the trees and then would you use the trees themselves?

I: Yeah, then you'd use the trees. You take the bark off the trees, then use the trees to make ties. A feller, Mr. J.T. Herd, from Elkton, was the one that run the scales up here. He was the one that run the scales and bought the bark and the ties.

D: Mainly cutting trees for your firewood would you look for dead trees?

I: Yes. You needed dead wood so you looked for dead trees, but also we cut a lot of green wood. But we always, mostly, took out the bad trees...for wood like that. You never cut good trees...just for wood, unless you had to do it, which we didn't have to. Let the timber grow.
DS: Were the chestnuts here when you were here?
IS: Oh yes, and plenty of 'em.
DS: Was that a money crop?
IS: No, not exactly. We didn't sell any chestnuts like that there. We'd just g'out and pick 'em and bring 'em in. Eat all we wanted, give 'em away...
DS: You didn't use them for money.
IS: No, we didn't use them for a money crop. But hit was a lot of 'em at that time. We did, I think, a couple of times, with Miss Lu here, we sold some chinkapins. We shipped some chinkapins and got ...a dollar a gallon I think we sold some for.
But now, if we'd thought about the chestnuts I don't know what we could have got outta them if we'd have thought about it...Back at that time had a way of selling them. 'Cause I remember, when the chestnuts went out I was just, I expect maybe twelve or fifteen, and the chestnuts began to leave. When I was young I remember my daddy climbed climbing trees, just shaking a tree and you could pick up a twenty four pound bag full in just a (little long time), just from one tree.
DS: Did you sell any chestnuts?
JP: Unh unh. Them things done died out about the time I was coming around.
HR: They had a disease.
IS: Yeah, when they left, they left in a hurry. Once they started to leave the chestnuts left in a hurry.
DS: It was a tragedy, wasn't it?
IS: Yes indeed...
DS: Do you recall any herbs or poultices your mother used when you got ill?
IS: ...I don't...Only mustard, you know, like a lot of people used. Mustard plaster they called it. They'd take this mustard, the seed, just grind 'em up, mash 'em...
Make the mustard poultice. That's for tightness in the chest, or anything...
DS: Did you ever have turpentine and sugar?
IS: Oh yes! We've taken that a lot of times. Turpentine was one of the main medicines for us. For sores, take it, or anyway at all.
DS: How would you use it for sores?

IS: Just put it on.

DS: Raw turpentine?

IS: Raw turpentine.

DS: Didn't it hurt?

IS: It'd burn like a lot of other medicine, but then it seemed like it healed, too. Maybe some 'at didn't think it did. But it looked like it worked back when we were young. Just put it on your finger, didn't get sore...

DS: Did you ever get a snake bite?

IS: No. My mother and my sister got snakebit, by a copperhead.

DS: What'd you do?

IS: They had to get them out. They had to take them to a doctor. They got 'em out of the mountains. My mother went to the hospital. Didn't hurt my sister too bad, 'cause she was bit right after my mother. My mother's leg was swollen up. Bit 'em both right back of the heel there.

DS: While we're talking about money crops, did you ever do it, or know of anybody who started fires because you'd be sure of having huckleberries?

IS: Oh yes. I think it was quite a few fires set for huckleberries. I think it was some set...but it was kinda accidental, or some of them didn't just care, or something like that there...Hit was some set. We call it over here Lam town, we used to call it. I think the fire wardens had a little trouble over in there. Every few years a fire would get out, burn over a few days... Huckleberries was a money crop.

DS: Did you gather them?

IS: Sure.

DS: How much would you get?

IS: We would pick 'em, at times get fifty to seventy-five cents a gallon, for 'em. Sometimes a quarter... I could go up in the mountains, in half a day and pick six gallons of huckleberries without much trouble.
HR: Back in her younger time they didn't bring that much. It'd be fifteen, twenty-five cents a gallon at one time.

IS: I picked 'em for twenty five, too. You see if you pick six gallons of 
huckleberries, back at that time a dollar and a half went a long ways. I've 
worked for seventy five cents, so you know if I make a dollar and a half picking 
huckleberries in only four hours, four hours in the mountains would be all. 
I'd be, just messing the rest of the way going and coming. But, it wasn't so 
easy, with all the rattlesnakes. (DS' laugh)

DS: You were talking about school. Did you both go to the same school?

IS and JP: (Yes. Agree to the "Rocky Bar school.")

DS: It was about two and a half miles away?

IS: I think it is...close to it. (400)

DS: School started when, in September, October?

IS: I think then it started sometime...in September...

DS: Would it go through May or June?

IS: I think we let out before May...Sure, we had about a six or seven month...school...

DS: How many grades?

IS: Through the seventh grade...

DS: Was it a one room school?

IS: Two room. We started in what they called the primer, and then the first grade...

The first thing you learned was the ABC's, multiplication tables, and...

Of course, I didn't finish the seventh grade. I started. I finished the sixth grade.

DS: Why didn't you go through seventh?

IS: Just went to work. Went to work when I was fifteen...You could see it later on, 
education, you needed it. Just whenever we could get work and was old enough to 
get work, we just went off to work...

DS: Have you ever made any plans, or dreams about what you wanted to do when you 
grew up?
IS: No, I don't think really we did. I think it was mostly we just lived a life. Going to school when the school was there. During the summer we worked in what little patches we had. Outside of that we hunted a little when there was rabbits; fished, come down to the river and fish. I don't think...I really thought about just what I wanted to do or anything. I guess with my education I just felt like I would work just like my daddy...Just live by working, That would be it, you see.

DS: What kind of vegetable garden did you have. How big were they?

IS: We had a couple of fields what we raised a little corn and stuff.

DS: A couple of fields means a couple of acres?

IS: We had about four acres in a field and had about three fields and a small orchard..

DS: You raised wheat?

IS: We raised a little wheat, now and then...They could get it thrashed. There was a feller by the name of Hickle, wasn't it?

JP: Yeah.

IS: They would come in and thrash it, free for you if you didn't have maybe thirty-five, forty bushels. They'd come in and thrash it for you.

DS: Did you ever raise cane?

IS: We raised cane and made molasses.

DS: In your vegetable garden you grew what?

IS: We had potatoes, beans...most anything back at that time. Cabbage, beets, and other times we had strawberries in our garden like at that there. We had all kinds of bushes,...Like the quince, old time quince, currants to make jellies and stuff out of. We had all those bushes back at that time. Most of all the little places, don't make any difference, you can have but a couple of acres, most (500) people had a couple cherry trees, some apple trees...

DS: What kind of apple trees?

IS: Most of them was old timey apples...smokehouse they call it. We had one apple there, I don't even know the name of it. I was just a summer apple. It'd be a
IS: (cont'd) Davis and a winesap.

DS: Did you all know grafting?

IS: No, we had heard of it. I know my daddy tried it a little. (Laughter) But he never could do nothing with it, I remember that! Him trying to do it, but they'd always die on him. He'd just hear talk about it and he'd get out. He could do it, but he didn't have the right stuff to do it with.

JP: We had milam apples...

IS: Yes... That was good.

JP: Those were eating apples...

DS: ...With all your fruit trees, your huckleberries and everything, did you dry any huckleberries at any time?

IS: No. We canned them...

DS: Did you dry cherries?

IS: We never did, but my wife's people, or course she was from across the mountain in back of Free Union, she came from back up in on the mountain, and her mother dried cherries.

(DS laughs...)

DS: Mrs. Shifflett... where was it you came from?

Lydia Shifflet (LS): Albemarle county.

IS: Albemarle county.

DS: ... Tell me a bit about your life... I understand there were ten children in your family?

IS: Yes.

DS: What sort of a house did you live in?

IS: Other side of the mountain. It was a log house. There was another building, weather board...

DS: Did you have a vegetable garden?

IS: Oh yes. We raised certain things. 'Bout what he said.

DS: Did you have flowers?
IS: We had some. We had fruit trees, too, before we moved across from the other side of the mountain. Cherries and peaches and apples. We usually had a space, put up a garden, bit like he did.

DS: You dried huckleberries.

IS: No, didn't dry no huckleberries. Cherries. My mother did.

DS: In doing your laundry, did any of you hear about taking some peach leaves and putting them in a bag when you were boiling white clothes?

IS: I don't think I did.

IS: No, we made homemade soap. That's what they used, mostly... They had something back there you'd buy at the stores when they could get out. Bluing... They used it for bleaching clothes.

DS: Did you have cows? How many cows did you have, Mr. Roach?

JP: Well...

IS: Think you had two there at one time.

JP: Two. Most everybody had two, that was the main thing. You had your cow and your hogs (600) and that was just about fed from your garden.

DS: And chickens.

JP: Yes.

DS: Did you have bells on your cows?

IS: Yeah. We just run 'em in back in the woods. That was another job for us boys. His (JP's) brother, the one that's dead now, he, in the evening, and my brother, all three of us we'd go hunt cows. One job we had to do in the summer. Go out and listen for them cowbells and then go till we did hear 'em... We most likely knows which direction once they started ausing it, where to find them at. Sometimes we would miss out and have to go...

DS: Mrs. Shifflet, how many cows did you have in your family when you were growing up?

IS: From what I can remember it was about two. Just milk cows.

DS: All families made cottage cheese or clobber? Butter.

(general agreement)
DS: Would you sell these?
IS: At that time you would sell butter...
DS: Where was your nearest store?
IS: The nearest store was what they call Rocky Bar.
DS: When you took your eggs and butter in, did they give you money for it...or credit?
IS: Sometimes they would give you credit, or mostly when you went to the store like that you would take your eggs and buy your groceries with them and bring your groceries back. If you had something coming to you, they would give you the money and if you owed 'em something, then you'd pay them. That was something... Eggs was something you only got on Easter. You didn't get eggs to eat every day like you do now...We had eggs, but they used them for to get coffee and sugar...

Unidentified voice, a young man: ( ) I don't know if this has anything to do with it, but Casey's got a thing up here from the McGaheysville store as a token. Was that something they traded for?

JP: I don't know, but when we took huckleberries down there, he just wrote me a due bill.
IS: Yes...Now, when we sold huckleberries we'd get what they called a due bill...
A lot of children picked the huckleberries and sometimes we would take our huckleberries in and they'd give us a due bill for 'em. We could give 'em to our mothers...Sometimes we did. Sometimes they would give us a due bill to buy our clothes and things for start to school...

DS: Did you buy your shoes these at the same store?
IS: Yes. Folks kept some shoes there and things that we could buy at the store.

DS: Did your mother make your clothes?
IS: Yes. She made a lot of our clothes and things...except our overalls. We'd have to buy. Especially for the girls.

DS: How about when you were growing up, Mrs. Shifflet, did you take eggs and butter and things like that to the store?
LS: The only thing I can remember is taking eggs down...
LS: (cont'd) 'Cause I was small...

DS: How far away was that store?

LS: Well...

IS: It was about five miles, wasn't it?

LS: About five miles...

DS: That was a good walk, wasn't it? Then you'd have to buy the things and walk back up again.

LS: Yes.

IS: They had a horse and buggy, too.

DS: Oh good... How many horses did your family have?

IS: We had two mostly, for a while, then we got (unintelligible word) You had to have mostly two to farm a little bit, plow gardens. We would plow gardens for other people from up to Rocky Bar... (700)

DS: How many did you have, Mr. Roach?

JP: We didn't have any when I was growing up.

DS: How did you plow the gardens, then?

JP: We got them...

DS: Oh! (her laugh)

IS: The neighbors always would plow the gardens of people who didn't have horses...

DS: Your wheat. Where was the mill to have that made into flour?

IS: That was what they call Island Ford down here. You cross the river bridge. Then you'd turn to your right and go down over in there what they call the River Bank Mill.

DS: That was a distance!

IS: Oh yes. It was close to five miles down there.

DS: How would you get it there?

IS: We had a one horse wagon. You'd take one horse and a wagon and you'd leave home. You'd get back close to two o'clock in the evening, leave that morning. It just depends on how busy the miller was. If he was busy you'd think you were gonna starve before you did get back. (DS laughs)
DS: Did you pay the miller to do it, or did he...

IS: Yes. You either paid him, or they would take a certain amount of your flour or wheat or the cornmeal or whatever, out, and then give you the rest of it.

DS: Same way with you?

JP: Well, we just bought most of ours.

DS: You didn't raise any wheat?

JP: No.

DS: Tell about the apple butter boiling.

JP: Apple butter boiling was something most every year...

IS: Everybody. One would help the other. Maybe we'd have an apple peeling here for a couple of nights, 'cause we got ready for to boil apple butter. All gather in, peel apples...Then when we go ready, we'd gather in, 'til we got around and each one made a little apple butter.

DS: Did you make any party out of it?

IS: No, not really around where we lived. I think it was maybe in places, but mostly we just stirred the apple butter. Coupled during the day, and take it off in the evening when it got done.

DS: Did you have the custom that if the paddle touched the side of the kettle?

IS: That was the old sayin', alright. (IS, DS laugh) If you could get somebody to stir with you. (more laughter)

DS: Did you ever go up into Bacon Holler or Smoke Holler?

IS: ... I been up in there but I never was acquainted with many up in there. I knew a few people that lived up the head of Mile Run where I live on now. Luther Morris, Sonny Shifflet, lived down over on what they call Ivory Creek, or Ivory Branch.* There was a Breeden lived in there, and Tom Shifflet.

DS: What were those people like?

IS: They were just same people, mostly. People that looked like they wanted to live off to theirselves. I guess, quiet... They didn't like crowds, anyway, or get out. They mostly come to the store, go back. The would come out and work.

*meaning, "Ivy Creek?"
IS: (cont'd) Mr. Morris, he would come out and maybe stay through corn cutting. Live out and cut corn and then he would go back up. Now he lived on Hinkle farm, a grazing farm. That's where some of the people live up in there, living on grazing farms. Others, then, owned their homes... A lot of them just went back in and cleaned up ground and in the park. Some of them owned their homes... but some of them didn't. Like the ones that lived above me, here, over where I live now. They just went in and cleaned up the land and just lived there 'til the park come and take that over. They had no deed for it. If they had anything it was just so they could pay taxes.

DS: Sure. Did you hear of much moonshining up there?

IS: Yeah. They made it... Most moonshine was made around a lot of places, but I don't think that they all made a living or depended on it all the time. Because a lot of them worked out and I've heard... one of my oldest cousins say that he remembers up in the mountains taking a load of cabbage out to Elkton and sell. Take a one horse wagon and take a load of cabbage out... Whatever they had to sell they would take it out like that. Hit was a lot of whiskey made back in there. But you wouldn't get any of it unless someone knew you or something like that because they was people they didn't trust you that much unless they knew you... You'd have to tell 'em who sent you. A lot of 'em didn't talk much when a stranger'd come around. They didn't have too much to say... They felt like they was invaded on, or what was something up...

DS: They were probably afraid it was a revenuer...

IS: That's true, too.

DS: Did you hear of many fights going on up there?

IS: Well, now and then you'd hear of some... Younger fellers would get out... Maybe a big day or something going on in Elkton, and they'd have quite a few rows... (DS' laugh)

DS: I think they were the ones that made Elkton have a bad reputation. (DS, IS laugh) Because they were really busy... You say everybody would get together at apple
DS: (cont'd) butter boiling, was this unusual to be visiting like that? Or did people regularly visit.

IS: It was just a get together... Some that lived close t'nough, like Miss Roach here, we lived close enough together it was just hollering distance. The boys, we went together squirrel hunting in the fall...grew up that away. You might say, the boys, we had the run of the woods up in here. It didn't make any difference who it belonged to, we hunted on it and nobody said nothing. The girls...my mother and J.P.'s mother, they would go out to the stores together, and come back together...and church.

(Older voice, male): We done a lot more visiting then than we do now, didn't we?...

IS: Oh yeah...They'd go to see each other and talk...Go out to picking huckleberries...

DS: Would you visit in the evening?

(Same male voice?): Yeah. They'd come out, set at the store and talk and do and all get together...and play checkers.

(): I think people were just a whole lot more closer then. When you meet somebody you had time to talk, now they don't even...

IS: ...The men used to meet and whittle sticks...Sit down and whittle sticks and talk for an hour or two, no, nobody has time...

( ): Now everybody's moving too fast, they ain't got time to talk.

DS: Speaking of whittling sticks, did you ever see any of these mountain people...whittle a whistle that they would use to call a neighbor?

IS: I don't know. We used to make a lot of these whistles out of chestnut. The small chestnuts. We would trim up whistles and make 'em out of that there. You could call if you wanted to on 'em, cause it would be right loud. We set down and sometimes make three or four when was was boys just in a little while. It didn't take long. In the spring of the year you had to make 'em, when the sap was coming up in 'em...without bursting the bark off, twist it off whole, rub it 'til the sap come up...slip the stick out, fix your ends in it. Then make a whistle.
DS: But you never heard of the mountain people using it to call each other.

IS: No...

DS: Any of these fires, like lightning fires, was that a fright to the people because of their houses?

IS: ...In a way some of them would get a little excited, but mostly the first thing they thought about was firing around your own house. If it got close enough to you, you just start firing, regardless of what was going to happen. I remember one time, Ross's place up here was afire. My brother let it get out. The wind got in there. He had taken this far up into the mountains. I thought it was a house over there...The first thing I did was, me and another boy, we run up clean over there and we had matches and we started a fire just right around the house and pushed it back and just let it burn away from the house...Saved the house.

DS: Did any fires ever start from their chimneys that you know of?

IS: I really don't think too many did...Mostly people, it would be dry and they would be burning something. The woods wouldn't be too far off and a whirlwind or something would get in the ashes after they leave it and that would cause a fire. Lightning would cause a lot of fires. Most of the fires, I think now would come from the N 'n W...I mean from the trains...

unnamed man agrees.

IS: ...Lot of people like to say they just wanted to start a fire. I remember one it was told to me. Mr. John Goodwin and Mr. Doodings, two that was cutting extract up here in the mountains. Mr. King was living there at the place my daddy bought off of him and he moved out. But, anyway, they'd had a little trouble with each other or something. So one of them says to the other one, let's burn John King out. Scare him to death...So they taked a match and throw it down in the leaves, and first you know it got started and they had to think about the extract. "Man, we got a carload and a half of extract up there," (DS laughs) And they tried to out it and they couldn't out it. Burned up all the extract. (Some laughter)
That'll teach 'em.

( ): It looked like everything...It'd be just as still it can be, and you think,"It's a good time to burn things". The wind would get up every time. I don't know if its the heat from the fire caused it...

IS: It does. It causes a draught...Oh, I been scared quite a few times burning things like that...afraid it would, could get into the woods. 'Cause...we fought a lot of fires that would get out like that there. Well, after so long you got paid for some of it. But we fought fires and we didn't get nothing for it. Just to keep it out of certain property. We'd keep it back in the mountains, and they'd fight around our houses...If it burned over the mountains, well, they'd just let it go. We just saved the land you had, the house, and the others around. If it got up to what they called (unintelligible which is the park now, was nothing we could do about it. You couldn't get it out.

DS: I'd like to talk about a fun thing. How did fellas court a girl?

(laughter)

IS: ...It's different, I guess, now. You mostly went to the houses then...

DS: Were you chaperoned? (1000)

IS: Not exactly...

DS: You mean, they trusted that gleam in your eye?

IS: ...more or less...Fact was, you didn't get to go no place much except the room in the house. (DS' laugh) That was a whole idea coming in to the house. You set in the room there...They'd go out some...When I was growing up we would get out after I got to age I worked on the railroad. We would go up to McGaheysville, school's over there, if they had a school play or anything like that...take your girlfriend...

DS: What were the weddings like?

IS: ...Most of the people didn't have any big weddings... I was just married by a proper preacher...I think quite a few of them was married like that...Weddings
IS: (cont'd) like they have today are nothing like that.

DS: Before I started this tape you were talking about a funeral of somebody, or a burial ground of somebody?

IS: ...Browns... That was the colored people that lived up above where I live right now, back up in there, about a mile... I don't know how many was buried there... the way the graves looked there was probably several.

DS: Did they use tombstones?

IS: No, they just had markers there.

DS: Rocks.

IS: Yes.

DS: Speaking of rocks, was anybody around here a stonemason?

IS: Yes, we had several stonemasons that lived in Berrytown. They were Shifflets. Oscar Shifflet... I know it was several of them, cause they put that rock fence and that rock church up there at Rocky Bar... They built that when I was a kid...

DS: Did you use stone fences around you gardens?

IS: No. We generally just used... a rail fence. That was the first thing we put around it there. Then when you got some wire... just anything to keep the cows out...

DS: Didn't you have a lot of rocks in your ground?

IS: No. In some places we had a lot of rocks. Where they lived up there, about an acre and a half, it was not too many rocks on it, mostly just smooth land...

DS: No rocks on your property?

IS: We had fields up there, maybe on little spot in the field would be rocky, the rest of it would be smooth... In Rocky Bar, most always you see a lot of rocks in these creeks... Where I live up now there's some rock in my garden. But over on my daddy's place, just about a half a mile, I don't think its a half a dozen rocks back at that time was in the garden.

DS: How about further up in the mountains?

IS: ...You go on up in to the mountains you'd have nothing but pure black rich soil. Ground where they could really grow stuff... Beans, cabbage, potatoes... They
IS: (cont'd) didn't have not trouble. No bugs or nothing.

Old man ( ): Best cabbage come off there, you ever eat. Biggest, best...

DS: So, no rocks in this mountain. That's fascinating...

(muttered agreement)

Young male voice ( ): ...Down where I live now...and down here, both, but where you all lived then it wasn't.

Old male voice ( ): You go up in Big Run here, I can see up there where there used to be houses, you can see rocks piled where they piled 'em in rows, get 'em off the patch.

Middle-age male voice: ( ): Must be a difference. Must be some places it was rocky...

DS: Did the people...open up new fields?

IS: What land they had they cleared, but a lot of times they wouldn't clear it all off. They depended on wood then. Daddy had around...thirty, forty acres. They aimed to clean about half of it off. You'd save so much of it for wood because they never dreamed...You'd be burning back in there or anything. They just figured on the wood from now on...

DS: How did they do rotation of crops, or didn't they bother?

IS: They didn't bother too much...Well, maybe one field corn and the next year you've got a little hay, or pasture the cattle or something...In the summertime we just run the cows out...

DS: So you didn't open up new fields.

IS: No...Only just what land you had. Once you got it cleared, what you wanted, you just let it go.

DS: Did you ever see the mountain people open up new fields?

IS: ...They got a lot of this land cleared up, was in pasture for these farmers out. They run the cattle up there in the summertime. Maybe on person would live on this fellow's farm and he looked after these cattle for him. The others lived around...They only had...maybe a acre or two...They would just only
IS: (cont’d): have little patches because in the mountains, maybe a little holler here, you go on another...there would be a big patch a sweet corn or...maybe a half acre of just regular corn for to feed you cattle in the winter time...

DS: Did the people around here eat beef?

IS: Yeah. We'd butcher beef once in a while...Or you could buy your beef...

DS: Did you ever have any that you froze over the winter? Hang up to freeze?

IS: Yes...Way back at that time, I don't know how it would work no, but we have hung up a quarter of a beef and it would last. It would stay 'til you'd eat it up. But I believe it would spoil this day in time now, unless...I don't believe it would keep in January...

DS: That's always amazed me, that it could keep And it did.

IS: We did keep it back at that time. Just like when we butchered our hogs, stuff a sausage. We had a pole across there in the smokehouse and you'd go in there and ring that sausage around...that pole...From then on you want sausage. My mother go out there for breakfast...take a pan, cut the sausage off, and bring it back in the pan...

DS: Home made sausage...it's good...What would be your typical breakfast?

IS: Well, sausage...and gravy and a lot of times...things would get a little tight, mostly potatoes and gravy...Most always had jelly or...

DS: Hoecakes?

IS: Hoecakes and baked bread, light bread and warm bread. My mother, she'd bake light bread and warm bread...biscuits...cornbread...

DS: Did you all drink milk?

IS: Yes. I was a milk drinker, myself. I don't drink as much of it now, ...'cause it's so high, it's two dollars a gallon...(Laughter)Then we called it free.

DS: It was a lot better milk, too. I'll bet you can remember a ghost story that they used to tell...

IS: I don't know if I can remember any...I've had quite a few told to me...I had a cousin who lived down on what we called the Burner place. I was just a young
IS: (cont'd) boy, round about twelve years old, and he had about ten or twelve of the family. I go down and play with them and it'd get dark and he'd go telling these stories. I'd get a little scared to go up and I knew that was what he was doing it for. (IS laughs) I'd just wait 'til I'd have to go and then I'd take off and run the best part of the way up (IS, DS laugh)... uphill was home...Most all of them (stories)...was always something that would come down the steps or you'd hear a thump, thump...or the door'd slam...and yet you couldn't see nobody...

DS: How about practical jokes...Did you play any on him?

JP: I don't really remember...

IS: I don't think we went in too much for anything like that, did we...?

(Old female voice:...) ...I think then people took up more for each other than what they do now...Somebody would have been in trouble, you'd be more apt to, your neighbors, to back you up than...now... More of that close relationship between neighbors...

IS: 'Course, it was some of it done...I remember a incident where my wife's brother, he's dead now, and a Shiflet boy down here married my sister... We'd all been a hunting...We was coming on out the road and so he reached into this fellow's coat pocket and got a shell out and put it in his gun. He shot. First thing you'd know he'd bump up into him again, and he'd get out another shell. He'd shoot, again...After he couldn't find no more, he said..."Herbert, how 'bout you shootin' one?" He reached into his pocket and he didn't have a shell (IS laughs, DS joins in). Hedick was the boy's name, we called him Dude, and everytime he'd shoot, Herbert would say, "Shoot again, Dude!" Just as soon as he got his chance to get his shell he would shoot. So when he asked Herbert to shoot he didn't have nothing to shoot with. (laughter)...He was pretty good for that (practical jokes)...Some of us did and some of us didn't. We all enjoyed it...

IS: Dude was about the most known practical joker...just full of crazy, wasn't he? ...I forgot about that...

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DS: What would you hunt?

IS: Squirrels, rabbits, possums, we didn't have many 'coons... There was a few way back in the mountains, but we always kept a hunting dog what we'd catch possums with....

DS: Did you sell any of 'em, or did you eat all the meat?

IS: ...I had rabbit boxes when I was growing up and going to school. I'd go round to my rabbit boxes every morning. Mostly we had a produce man that run 'round with the truck once every week, on Thursdays. I'd catch my rabbits and all we had to do was just take their entrails out and just hang 'em up in the smokehouse and they'd freeze. My mother would take 'em down and sell 'em to the produce man. That's the way I'd keep my spending change through the winter. I'd get fifteen, sometime, twenty cent. I have got as much as making a quarter for a rabbit. That there was money.

DS: ...Did you wear shoes all year round?

IS: ...We went barefooted in the summertime... Our feet got so tough, we'd just run anywhere.

DS: You weren't afraid of snakes?

IS: No... We seen a lot of 'em. We kill 'em. Rattlesnakes, copperheads, they was the most two we had to look out for. The black snakes, we didn't pay no attention much to them... little garter and the others you see around... water snakes, so many of them on the creek. We'd swim right around, they'd dive in the creek... They'd go back on the banks and we'd just go on in and swim...

DS: Your shoes in the winter, you'd buy at the store?

IS: That's right... They'd cost about, at that time... about a dollar ninety eight cents...

DS: Did you ever wear those old things, sorta like the ponies,....?

IS: Heel plates on 'em. Yes. Also we had steel toes... Boys, we had to walk out to school... rocks and we'd kick the toes out of our shoes. He (daddy) bought shoes that had the steel plates come up in front of 'em, keep you from

*that's how he pronounced it*
IS: (cont'd): kicking the toes out. Hit a rock and see sparks fly (IS laughs).

DS: You must have been nice and quiet to have around the house. (laughter)

Were your shoes the same, MR. Roach?

JP: I don't remember, hardly.

DS: Was there any cobbler anywhere around here?

IS: I guess it was someone who'd fix shoes...Mostly we did ourselves. I've sewn many pairs of shoes, so've my wife's brother.

JP: Every family had a last.

IS: Iron last...Most every family had one. They did their own shoes... Bought the leather, the tacks, and soak it in water, and then trim the leather like you wanted. Put a tack on the shoes and go around it. Mostly done a good job on it...

DS: They why did you ever buy them at the store?

IS: We couldn't make the whole shoe...The shoes would wear out... the soles and the heels and we would re-do 'em. Put new heels and new soles on em.

That's the way we had practically a new pair of shoes to wear us a long time.

DS: Everybody could do this.

general agreement

(Young male voice: ) You had different sizes to fit different sized shoes... Had little small metal plates that'd fit on top of the stand, remember?

IS: And had one for women's shoes...

(Young male ): ...I'd see different sizes...shapes, fit down over the post.

DS: ...Did you get presents at Christmas?

IS: Well, we got a few... All the boys... you'd get a cap pistol...

JP: Just about one thing... Each one got one toy.

IS: Yeah...

DS: Did you shoot off firecrackers?

IS: ...We'd get firecrackers.
Ds: Did your parents drink?
IS: My daddy may have drank a little bit in one time... He didn't drink too much.
DS: I mean at Christmas.
IS: ...If he had any I never seen it...
JP: We did...
IS: We did after we got a little older (laughter, IS and especially DS).
DS: That good moonshine...
IS and JP agree
DS: As little boys, did you play marbles?
IS: Yes, but mostly when we got big enough, that we could get out, we hunted more, except now in the summertime. But in the summer time we got big enough that we could get to the creek, we played in the creek or in the woods... We was raised in the woods, but just, we liked to get out. It was one thing we (1350) do, I don't know whether JP remembers, but... they had... about half a dozen old muskets... at their house. My daddy didn't have any. They had these long muskets, double barrels, we would just get them guns and get out in the woods and carry them around. For a long time we used them old guns just to carry around like we was huntin'. They wasn't no good, but (DS laughs) sure love to have 'em now.
DS: Mrs. Shifflet, can you recall you Christmas when you were a little girl?
LS: Not very much. I can remember my daddy having firecrackers... He always enjoyed Christmas so much... He putting them fireworks off before daylight on Christmas morning.
DS: Did you get any toys?
IS: Yes, we'd get practical things. A toy apiece and...(interrupted by DS)
IS: I think mostly for girls was these little baby carriages. They used to get doll baby and then if they didn't get the both at one Christmas then probably
IS: (cont'd): the next year you got a baby carriage to put your doll baby in...I know they did at home and I know others around, I've seen that.

JP: Nowadays I think kids get so much they really don't enjoy it. They don't appreciate it...

DS: They don't. How about music. When you were visiting anybody, did anybody take down a banjo and start to play, or a fiddle?

IS: Yes...Some I could pick a banjo a little bit...I still got a banjo, but my fingers won't let me play much no more. Couldn't play with anybody much.

We played for some dances... That was another thing we had around the edge of the mountains here and around through the valley, was a square dance. We'd always have 'em at somebody's home. Get in and help take all the furniture out of one room. That night, then, fiddle and the banjo... We had a good fiddler, he was from up here at Lynwood, fiddler John Morris. He played for Roosevelt up at Big Meadows one time on Skyline Drive. He was a real fiddler, so we didn't lack nothing for music... We'd come and we'd dance up until maybe 2:00 in the morning...They had a little moony around, you know, to drink...I never seen 'em have any trouble much at all. Now and then there might be a little something, but mostly they all could drink and enjoy themselves. Take a few drinks and dance...

DS: Doctors, you had doctors that came here regularly.

IS: ...We had Dr. Miller, Frank Miller. From over Tyneville. Then we had another doctor, McAheysville doctor, Hammond or Dr. Yancy... Dr. Miller was the main one, would come out when you would call...You'd have to walk clean to the store or somebody had a phone...I seen him come out when the snow was on the ground. He'd have his horse and sleighbells...I remember, my uncle lived up in the woods, my grandaddy was up there with him and we had to get and call Dr. Miller. First thing we could hear them bells ringing 'fore ever he got up there to the house.

DS: Did you know if the mountain people bought newspapers?
IS: No, I don't really think that they did because they didn't get out that much... Where we lived we would sometimes, only when we was going in to school... But when you get up in the mountains, like some of them lived up in there, they had to come out through down here...come out little gap road. It was a long ways out of there and they didn't come out that often. Just like Mr. Jim Williams and them that used to live up in Big Run. Some nights in the fall of the year, if we'd get over here on Big Bun Road...we'd meet Mr. Sy Williams. We'd be 'possum hunting. 'Bout eleven o'clock he'd be going back in from the store. He'd have two sacks, one on one side and one on the other, tied together, full of stuff. I don't see how he carried it. He'd talk with you five minutes, I remember when I was a boy and he'd never set it down...Then he'd walk on, he'd walk back there in the mountains with it. Twenty five pound poke of flour and twenty-five pound corn meal, and all things like that there. Sugar, ...I don't think he'd come out but about every two weeks, maybe longer that that.

DS: Did you ever visit any of the people up there?

IS: ...We'd pick huckleberries and been by up in there. That's where a lot of people from out in there, they cut timber back up in there. Old Mr. Williams, he had a sawmill back up in there. He had an engine.

DS: A portable sawmill?

IS: He had a regular fully steam engine...The engine stayed in there after the Park taken over. Part of it was left. I think the people went in, though, and hauled it out...I remember when the old engine was together. It was junk, but the whole engine set there, with the wheels and all.

DS: The people that you saw when you were out hunting and huckleberry picking, were they all very friendly and nice?

IS: Yes.

DS: They knew you.

IS: Yeah, sure. Most everyone around knew each other, unless you would go way back up in the mountains...on top...
DS: Did you ever go up in there, Mr. Roach?

JP: I think everyone had moved out by the time I was growing up in there. Go up in there trout fishing.

DS: I was just wondering if you knew how those people reacted when they knew the Park was coming through.

IS: Well, from what I could read and what I can remember about, the reaction was not good. Of course, you couldn't blame them. No, it was home. That was just like is someone walked up to you, I don't care where you lived, and say, "you've got to move"... The words' not good...

DS: Did you know how any of them adjusted, did you follow up any...?

IS: No, I couldn't call the name, but I heard about some, after they got out they done pretty well. They adjusted to it. Harris family, up here in Grottoes, Roy Harris, I knew them, got acquainted with 'em working with them up there. They was talking about their daddy. Daddy moved out from up in there.

DS: Yes? Are they still alive?

IS: Yeah, there's Roy alive and there's another one, Doug.

(Young male): Duke?

IS: ...We called him Doug.

DS: And they live in Grottoes?

IS: Yes... 'Its another boy... Bill Morris, Luther Morris' son. He lives... at Afton now. He was raised up there on the mountain.

(Clarification of name exchange)

DS: Was there much stealing and cheating?

IS: No. The most cheating, I reckon, if you call it cheating, I wouldn't say it be, maybe one would get the best of the other in a horse trade... As far as stealing, I don't think it was much stealing... Unless someone would have a watermelon patch out and you would get yourself as you were going by... Nobody paid any attention to that...
IS: (cont'd) We...got out of the house and never even lock the door...If anybody wanted something, to get it...they wasn't going to do you no harm.

(Old male voice: ) I never did hear of anybody that was missing anything out of their homes...Everybody's home was open, then. All they had, like where we lived, they had a latch, a string that hung out the door...

DS: Was there much close marrying, say between first cousins or something of that kind?

IS: I know of one family that married first cousins...My daddy's cousins, too...and Rosy Shifflet. I think they were first cousins. It was some marriages, of third cousins. My sister married a third cousin. There was quite a few marriages around that was third cousins. When you take second or first, it would happen, but it was a little unusual...

DS: What did the people do if you had in your family somebody who was not quite right, mentally?

IS: I think mostly they was just taken care of by the family...

JP: Do you remember anybody around... I can't recall anybody right off.

IS: No, I don't guess that I do, but only just in reading about it. I think its a couple that I've heard of, that I heard my mother and dad talk about...

DS: Same thing with people that got elderly?

IS: Yes...Like my dad's mother and father, they stayed with us a while. They stayed with my uncle. Asbury they call him. They take care of 'em.

DS: If a neighbor got sick, what happened?

IS: There was always mostly someone there to help out, to go get a doctor if he wasn't able to go. Alls you had to do was holler if something was wrong...

DS: Think the life was better then?

IS: I really think in that part of it. It is better than what it is today. Not as far as money and things like that was concerned. But...in that day money was used to buy something with, I don't think they wanted too much. Except just to be taken care of...Outside of that there weren't a
IS: (cont'd) whole lot, I don't think people really wanted a whole lot.

DS: Do you think the mountain people were patriotic? Did you hear of any of them having fought in the Civil War or in the First World War?

IS: I don't think...they wanted to go just for that. In the first World War I had an uncle, he didn't live on after WWI, I think it was just like their duty and they felt like goin' for their country...It's not like it is this day in time. They're getting so they don't believe in that much in being just put in any kind of war at all. I think at that time it was when the country calls you was ready to go, you felt like goin'.

DS: Oboy, this has been marvelous....(She starts to end the interview. A general discussion ensues, during which it is revealed IS is sixty nine years old and still very active. Another subject is introduced.)

DS: The butchering, was that always done in the fall?

IS: Yes, that was a regular thing, too. We'd have hogs...Back at that time, mostly it was just help. You'd help one another and that was it... You'd start early and sometimes you wouldn't finish. Then later on in years we got so we was a little bit better than the older folks. We got on to a scalding pan and then we had our way of doing things in butchering. They used to hang the head up on a post...wait 'til after all the meat was cut up and they would cut the heads up and they would go to making the pudding ... In the pothouse they called it...We cleaned our heads first and got all that on so while we was cutting up the meat, that would be cooking. So then we'd finish up in the evening. We'd get out here and butcher five, or six by four or five o'clock easy cake.

(Young male: ) Yes. I think the last time we done five or six...

DS: Do you make the sausage at the same time?

Young male: ) Yes, everything. (general agreement) Salt and pepper the hams and the shoulders and the and hang the meat up.
IS: Keep out the tenderlion (sic)...and you pick out canning meat if you want some, for your sausage. Best pieces you want...for canning. Older people... they wanted their hogs so fat back then. I've seen my daddy have the hogs where they would just set down and eat...they wouldn't get up. They wanted that lard. They believed in that's what you had to have through the winter... Now, we just a little different than that, got our eyes on using all this greasy stuff...Now, we like a hog that's a little bit leaner. We can get the hog to grow up and not as much fat on 'em...

DS: What did you feed hogs when you were a little boy?

IS: Corn, mostly. Sometimes we'd feed 'em what they call middlings. If we had a sow and pigs. As soon as we could get 'em up and any size, we just went on corn to fatten 'em all out. And that would fatten 'em, too.

DS: You didn't give 'em milk?

IS: Yes...Lot of times we'd have clabber milk, sour. You just take a bucket full and maybe put a scoop of feed in that then, if you had a sow-boar and just give her. It ...made cheap feed...

JP: I heard stories of when they lived back on the mountain, he said they'd fatten 'em up on chestnuts.

IS: Yes, the old people used to. They used to just turn their hogs out on the mountain and they fattened off of chestnuts.

JP: Made jewel meat, too.

IS: That's the reason a lot of our game left from the Blue Ridge mountains, like our 'coons and our turkeys...The chestnuts left and the game had to leave...our wild grapes, they're gone. You hardly see any wild grapes any more.

DS: Why would that be?


IS: Yes...After the fires when a fire would burn over, new grapes would come out.
IS: (cont'd) Now we haven't had fires back in the mountains and the timber's
growed up and shaded 'em out. Japanese beetles, where ever they would find (1700)
one I'd reckon they would eat it up...

JP: I believe it would be a big help if they would go ahead and burn one mountain
each year like it... (garbled because IS is interrupting)...Let new shoots
come up.

IS: I think they're doing that is some places...One thing about our park,
they don't believe in burning or doing nothing in that. They leave it just
like it is.

JP: um

IS: Yeah. If you go up there you're not supposed to even break off a flower...

(Young Male: ): But they aren't fighting the fires as hard as they used
to, are they?

IS: No. I think when the forest starts now they...gonna let it burn.

(Young male: ): They work around it...

IS: ...and let it burn over so much.

(Young male: ): I think they really are doing it some, now.

IS: ...Speaking of the mountain people...I think they were people who went
back in there and was just more or less like what we called the mountain
men, in the west. They were people, to get away. As long as they was
out working for somebody, they were poor people, education limited, maybe
third, fourth grade, some could just write. They all knew how to count their
money. They...could handle their money pretty well. They got back in there
even to build on the park, if they could just clean 'em up some ground, they'd
say they had a place of their own. More of less like they was independent.
They were on their own. Even though it was a hard life, still I think they
enjoyed it.

IS: They were healthy people, weren't they?

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IS: Yes. The were rugged; they were tough... (A discussion of Mr. Williams)...

Them people would just go up one ridge and down the other, more so than what we could, I'm sure, because we didn't do that much. But we walked a lot.

I walked to McGaheysville more than one night to a lawn party. That there's about five, four or five miles... Get over and get a cone of ice cream and a hot dog, it was all about a nickle each back at that time... If you got a quarter you saved a dime probably for next Sunday... You never spent all your money.

(Here the tape is stopped and then started again)

IS: Speaking of jack o'lanterns, they claim that some kind of gas that forms in the air. I've seen it. It's just like a ball of fire, 'bout that big around. It'll dance along... You mostly see it in swamps or someplace like that, or wet ground. After night you go through there... I've seen quite a few of them. They'll just bounce like it's something floating in the air... 'til it fades away.

(Young male: ) A real dark night?

IS: Yeah...

(Discussion of some things LS gives to DS to read)

(Middle aged male: ) That was supposed to be true, about that there haunting of that there house... Where they turned them soldiers away down there... at the railroad.

LS: Used to be here, beside the railroad...

IS: (interrupting)... Another thing that we would see would be this foxfire. We used to see that glow at night. A lot of things I think people seen didn't investigate far enough and maybe thought it was something else...

(Young male: ) The older people, it put fear in 'em anyway, when they seen it.

(Ends with several voices discussing a dog. DS and LS discussing the books) 1790