

**James Madison University**  
**JMU Scholarly Commons**

---

Shenandoah National Park Oral History Collection

JMU Special Collections

---

9-19-1978

(SNP026) Vallie Cave interviewed by Dorothy Noble Smith and Octavia Allis, transcribed by Victoria M. Edwards

Vallie Cave

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/snp>

---

**Recommended Citation**

Vallie V. Cave interviewed by Dorothy Noble Smith and Octavia Allis, September 19, 1978, SdArch SNP-26, Shenandoah National Park Oral History Collection, 1964-1999, Special Collections, Carrier Library, James Madison University

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the JMU Special Collections at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Shenandoah National Park Oral History Collection by an authorized administrator of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact [dc\\_admin@jmu.edu](mailto:dc_admin@jmu.edu).

Interview with Vallie Cave and Floyd Thomas  
Part of the Shenandoah National Park Oral History Collection, SdArch SNP-026  
(SC# 4030)

Interview conducted at Luray, Virginia  
By Dorothy Noble Smith on September 19, 1978

Transcribed by Victoria M. Edwards, September 2009  
Original incomplete typed transcription - date and transcriber unknown

Key

[DS:] Interviewer, Dorothy Noble Smith  
[OA:] Interviewer, Octavia Allis  
[VC:] Interviewee, Vallie Cave  
[FT:] Interviewee, Floyd Thomas

Note that the original incomplete transcription significantly alters the introduction of the interview and also significantly alters the dialogue of Dorothy Smith. Any errors or omissions found in the original are corrected for this version.

Note that while the original interview is on one tape, two sides, the digital version is on two 45 minute tracks. The break between digital tracks occurs during the middle of a sentence when the original audio tape distorts. The two digital halves have been merged into one file with extraneous blank audio removed.

{\*} Unable to understand word  
{\*\*} Unable to understand more than one word  
{ - } Speaker makes abrupt change in sentence  
Refer to the Baylor University Style Guide for consistency in transcription

Total interview length: 00:52:11 min.

[Begin audio file, 00:00:01]

FT: With the Park Service, huh?

DS: Not really. I just do this to, because I'm so vitally interested. It's the only way—the park doesn't have time to do it. They want to, but they don't have the time or the personnel. You've probably read some of my articles that I write in the Page News and Courier. Valley Talk?

VC: Yeah.

DS: Have you read that? You're gonna like the one, let's see, not this week but next week. Gary Bowserman (?) and his brother Mark. His twin brother?

VC: Oh, uh-huh.

DS: I went to interview these boys, I thought I was just going to get an interview with Gary. And I thought Gary would be an old man because (laugh) I was told that he was president of the Page Farm Bureau. Well that sounds as though you're pretty old. And that he was a great historian. That sounds as though he's pretty old. I go in and here's a real young fella and he said, "I've got an identical twin, Mark." (laughter) "He'll be in in a minute." (laughter) Believe you me, I was one stunned person. (laugh) Okay, now, we will get this going. We are interviewing Mrs. Vallie Cave and her brother James Thomas.

FT: No, my name's Floyd Thomas.

DS: You're Floyd Thomas.

FT: My father was named James.

DS: Oh, okay. Now, you had lived where in the mountains?

FT: We lived back in, do you know Bootens Gap is?

DS: Bootens Gap? Yeah.

FT: Well, we lived about a mile and a half on down from there, around Rocky Knob.

DS: Okay. Now, I'm going to move these. (sound of recorder moving) I think this will pick up. Alright, now. Who were your nearest neighbors?

FT: Elliot Meadows.

DS: Who?

FT: Elliot Meadows.

DS: Elliot Meadows. How far away were they?

FT: About a mile.

DS: About a mile. That was pretty general, wasn't it, that the houses were about that far apart? Yeah.

FT: And then Bob Meadows, they was the next closest and Elliot lived a mile from his place. He lived back by Rocky Knob or Clover Hill over by Naked Creek.

DS: Now, were most of the families large families?

FT: Yeah, most people back them days had large families.

DS: What would you call a large family?

FT: (laugh) Well, some of 'em had eight or ten like that. Seven, eight, like that.

DS: How about the houses? Were they—what was your house like?

FT: Well, we had a right good house when we lived on John Beaver's place and he built that house for us. That was a pretty good house that he give us. It happened we went back after we moved out of the park, me and my brother, and tore it down. But we got a little of it and then him and I got the rain and got wet and we couldn't get out with it. So we had to leave it. Some of them people on down Naked Creek, I think, got the rest of it.

DS: Was it a log house or a frame house?

FT: No, it was a frame house. The one we lived in, but the most houses up there was log houses.

DS: Right. Have you any—was it ever passed down in your family where your family came from?

VC: I don't know, do you?

FT: No, I don't know. Where we came from.

DS: Well, Thomas is an English name.

FT: John Thomas was my grandfather but I never did see him, he died before I was (trails

off).

DS: How long was your family up there in the mountains?

FT: Well, we was up there for, I think, about thirty years.

DS: Thirty years. Do you suppose, maybe, now I know a lot of people went up there—

FT: We been down here, we've been moved out now about forty years.

DS: A lot of families moved up there to help take care of the cattle at Big Meadows. Do you suppose—

FT: Well, we did there where I grew up. They had, lots of people had cattle right up by the place we lived, all had cattle and people would look after them.

DS: And did your family help look after the cattle?

FT: Yeah. A lot of 'em we looked after.

DS: What about cattle of your own? Did you have any cows?

FT: No, well, we had one and then John Beaver bring us cows up over the summer and we'd milk 'em.

DS: Well, what did you do for milk, then, in the winter?

FT: Well, we had a, we kept a cow. We finally got us one and we had one then through the winter.

DS: Uh-huh. So then you'd make cheese and keep it in the spring house, and butter?

FT: Oh yeah. You'd put the milk in that water and about times just as cold as you'd get it out of the fridge. (laugh)

DS: Yeah, right. How about vegetable garden, did you have a vegetable garden?

FT: Oh yeah.

DS: What did you grow?

FT: We raised everything green.

VC: Everything.

OA: What kinds of things?

FT: Well, beans and tomatoes and we raised corn and all like that, like we do down here.

DS: Cabbages?

FT: Oh yeah, we had cabbages.

DS: Were the cabbages good?

FT: The people back up would put, buried cabbage and leave their, let the roots stick up and bury 'em in the ground and any time in the winter you could go up there and dig you out a head and it was good.

DS: Yep, stayed as fresh and crisp as ever, didn't they?

FT: Yeah.

DS: So the eating was very good up there, wasn't it?

FT: Yes, indeed, it was good.

DS: Did you ever beef?

FT: Beets?

DS: Beef.

FT: Beef. Didn't get much beef in unless you got canned beef. (chuckles) Corned beef, y'know.

DS: Yeah, right.

FT: That was about all.

DS: So, mainly then you had chickens and ham?

FT: Yeah. We raised a few chickens and hogs. We butchered our own meat.

KS: Did you keep the hogs penned in in any way or did they just—

FT: Oh, they just, they were on a hundred acres and they run on their own. We—

DS: How would you round them up, how did—

FT: We'd pad 'em up to fatten 'em up and then butcher 'em.

DS: How did you know which were your pigs and which was somebody else's pigs? (laughter)

FT: Well, they, see, the land was fenced off, and there wasn't, what we had was on the place that Mr. Beaver lived.

DS: I see, yeah.

FT: And we'd fatten 'em up and we raised corn, y'know, fatten 'em on corn. Nobody did buy a sack of hog feed when they lived back there.

DS: Now, when you needed supplies, what would you do, go down to the store and take eggs or something like that?

FT: Yes, take eggs down there to Jollett's Store down there on Naked Creek.

DS: Jollett's Store on Naked Creek. What—and then you would get credit for those, or would he give you cash?

FT: Well, we'd generally trade it out, y'know?

DS: Yeah. Did he give you little tokens or things of that kind, or little—?

FT: A lot of people, yeah, used to do that. Most of the time we dealt it all out.

DS: What else would you take down for trade? Hams?

FT: Yeah. Used to sell hams. Air 'em out and bring 'em by head Stanley. (?) Chestnuts, used to be a good chestnut crop back then. People gather chestnuts and get all their winter clothes and shoes with chestnuts.

DS: Then the darn chestnut blight came along.

FT: Yeah, that killed it all.

DS: Yep. Terrible. Awful. Did you take your corn down to be ground to the mill?

FT: Yeah, we take pounds of corn down to the mill to have it ground.

DS: How would you get it down there?

FT: Carried it on my shoulders. (laughter)

OA: How many pounds did you carry down?

FT: Oh, we'd carry around a half bushel. Papa, he'd carry around a bushel, I would carry a half a bushel, something like that. And take it down to the mill, have it ground, bring it back. And-

DS: Would you pay the miller or would he take-

FT: Nah, he'd take so much out for toll.

DS: Yep, that's what I thought. Do you know where the miller was? Was he also down in Jollett's Hollow?

FT: Well, back then, we called Big George Meadows. He ground corn and then down along what they call the Tooth Furnace, (?) William Milam, he done the grinding. No, we'd taken it down already up to Meadows. A long ways to carry it down and back up that mountain. People didn't seem to mind it. I was young then, but I couldn't do it now.

DS: No, un-uhn. How about visiting? Did you do a lot of visiting back and forth?

FT: Yeah, oh yeah. I'd go, I'd go over on to Naked Creek and try to make it home on time. [dim audio and his chuckling make this very hard to interpret]

DS: Did you, would you do this mainly on a Sunday?

FT: Yeah, Sundays.

VC: Any time in the week. People didn't invite you to come, you just went when you wanted to go and spend the day and come back. And you'd eat supper over and get your work done after at night. It's much different then and now.

DS: Right. What would you do if you went there and somebody was busy, like shucking corn. Would you help them?

FT: Oh yeah, oh sure. Everybody else helped everybody back then.

VC: Yeah, sure, everybody helped one another back then. [both speaking at the same time]

FT: And we used to have corn shuckings and bean stringings.

DS: Hey, did you play that game about the red ear?

FT: Yeah, used to play all kind of games. Used to play one called fimble, one would guess the right color of a little ball in their hand. (laughter)

DS: What would you do if you got a red ear?

FT: Huh?

DS: What happened if you got a red ear of corn?

FT: Well, that, you had to drink, then. (laughter)

DS: Great! (laugh) Speaking of that, I understand there were always a lot of apple orchards. Did you have one?

FT: Well, a lot of apples all back through in here. And we used to gather them and boil apple butter out of 'em.

DS: Right, we'll get to the apple butter boiling in a minute. That was fun.

FT: Yeah, used to boil apple butter and some boiled apple butter near the whole night.

DS: Yep, you did it all night. And did you have a fella on one end and a girl on the other?

FT: Yeah.

DS: What happened if the paddle touched the side of the kettle?

FT: Supposed to get a kiss, then. (laughter)

DS: What do you mean, supposed to? You didn't get one? (laugh)

FT: Yeah, if I could. (laughter)

DS: So then, when you boiled the apples, you'd peel them all the day before, right?

FT: Mm-hmm.

DS: And all the neighbors would get together and make the apple butter.

FT: Yeah, they'd all get together and help. [another comment is obscured by DS question]

DS: Did you have music, did you have somebody play on a fiddle and, some dancing?

FT: Well, no.

DS: No dancing.

FT: People used to have dancing then back.

DS: How about food, did you have food and drinks while you were doing this?

FT: Yeah, and drank, lots of people drank. Plenty of that stuff made back in there, y'know.

DS: Oh, I know there was and it was very good stuff.

FT: I know it was.

DS: And it makes a lot of sense, because it's easier carrying a jug than it is a bushel of apples. (laugh)

FT: I helped some fellas made some of that back in there. Give me a gallon for Christmas and the next day it's Christmas and I thought, "Boy, I'm sitting pretty now." (laughter)

DS: Oh, I wish they still had that beautiful stuff around, because that would be real good. So, with these apples, did people how to do grafting? [Grafting is the process of joining a young shoot to an old tree]

FT: Well, some people did. Down back across the mountain, some of 'em might have. A lot of people used to pack 'em up with just, put apples in a pan like and put bark and

stuff over it and keep all the winter.

DS: Bark keeps apples?

FT: Well, they put bark and then put dirt and stuff. Fodder over 'em. And they keep for spring of the year.

DS: Well now, I'm glad to hear that Milam apples kept all winter long.

FT: People used to have good Milams back then, but I never do see them anymore.

DS: I have two on my property. (laugh)

FT: They're good apples.

DS: Oh, they're wonderful apples, yeah. And so that's the way to keep them, put bark and dirt over them.

FT: Yeah, fodder and it sets all right. People keep 'em all the winter long. And taters, they'd bury their taters in the ground. Cover 'em up and they kept good, too.

DS: Turnips, too, right?

FT: Yeah.

DS: Sure. You said there used to be dancings around.

FT: Yeah, people used to have 'em—

DS: Where did they have them, in the barns or in the houses?

FT: No, in the houses.

DS: In the house. Move all the furniture out or something?

FT: Nah, they had room, room to do that.

DS: Do you recall any of the tunes that they particularly played?

FT: Nah, it's been so long that I've forgotten.

DS: How about "Turkey in the Straw"?

FT: Yeah, they played that.

DS: And "Golden Slippers"?

FT: Yeah. All of them old pieces, prettier than the ones they have now.

DS: Was there a church near you?

FT: Well, there was one up there at Tanner's, what were called Tanner's Ridge, you know that place. Had a church back on the pike, people would preach over there in there.

DS: Every Sunday?

FT: Yeah.

DS: Every Sunday.

FT: Yeah, they'd run meetings there. And revivals all the week.



DS: Did you have, I want to make sure this is—did you have school near you?

FT: Well, they had some about three miles, though, had to walk to it.

DS: Three miles away.

FT: Yeah, what they called Langdon School House. (?)

DS: Was this during the winter, or when?

FT: No, it was in summer, in warm weather.

DS: Well then you were busy on the farm.

FT: Well, come back and had to be working in the corn stook. [Stooks are sheaves and piles of cereal grains.]

DS: Yeah. But you went to school anyway, both of you?

VC: Mm-hmm.

DS: How far did the school go?

FT: Well, it didn't go too far, because it—Old Man Hook was one teacher's name, Old Man Hook and the other Old Man Clarl (?) but they didn't teach too long.

DS: You went to about fourth grade, was that it?

FT: I reckon something like that I guess, I don't remember, it's been so long. (laugh)

DS: Well I bet you remember, Mrs. Cave. What class did you go through?

VC: I went to fifth.

DS: Fifth. Now, what did they teach in school?

VC: Well, teach you how to read, spell, geography.

DS: Geography?

VC: Mm-hmm.

FT: They didn't have all the little—

DS: Arithmetic?

VC: Mm-hmm.

FT: All the games and stuff like they got now.

DS: No, I know it. Speaking of games, what toys did you have when you were children?

FT: Didn't have none. (laugh)

VC: We just had to use—

DS: Come on, I bet you played marbles. Did you play marbles?

FT: There weren't no games much then.

VC: Yes, you played marbles.

FT: Yeah, I played with marbles.

VC: And my grandmother made me the first old doll I'd ever had and that was a rag doll.

DS: Oh, wonderful.

VC: And I wish the Lord that I'd kept it, I hate so bad that I—I wish I'd had that right now, it's from my grandmother. Made my first doll I'd ever had and it was a rag doll.

OA: Did you see her make it?

VC: Mm-hmm.

OA: How'd she do it?

VC: Cut out, had a piece of material and cut it out in the shape of a doll and stuffed and then take a pencil and make its eyes and its mouth and its ears and sewed, and stuffed its arms and sewed them and its legs and sewed them, too. Made it a little dress and put it on.

DS: Aww. How nice. What did you call the doll?

VC: I don't remember. I say, I don't know.

DS: The reason I ask, I had a Betsy doll and I remember her very well.

VC: I imagine I named her but I can't remember what.

DS: I heard of one fellow whose grandfather made him a little wagon.

FT: One winter there come a awful big snow back there then. One on top of the other one and lots of times you wouldn't see the ground until the spring of the year.

DS: Yeah, right.

FT: And it'd get right hard and you'd have to kick your heels along it to going.

VC: Sleigh rides, and there was also sleigh riding.

FT: And there'd be sleigh riding. A lot of us over on Calder's (?) Creek, back on that creek, a whole bunch of us, and we had a big one horse slide and a whole bunch of us on it, riding and called it the Washington Bullets. (laughter)

DS: Why did you carry the corn to be ground if you had a horse?

FT: Well, didn't have none at that time, course we got us one and then we take it on the horse. But when we didn't have a horse we carried it.

DS: Right. How about a doctor? What would you do if you got ill? Did you have a doctor that would come?

VC: No.

FT: No. Hard to get a doctor to come.

VC: Dr. Frank Koontz one time.

FT: I had appendicitis.

VC: Come to see him.

FT: And they carried me over near the foot of the ridge and as far as Charlottesville.

Old Doc Koontz.

DS: Dr. Koontz. Dr. Ross didn't come to your place.

FT: No.

DS: No.

FT: And take me over to Charlottesville.

VC: Wasn't anybody sick enough to have a doctor when we lived up there.

DS: No, that's true.

VC: We wasn't ever that sick. Now if you got a cold, somebody'd run to the doctor. That's the truth.

OA: What did you do for colds in those days, when you were living up there.

VC: Well, you took-

FT: Old people was their own doctor.

DS: What, such as what?

VC: Turpentine and castor oil, cold oil they called it. Mix salve and mama used to make onion poultice and put us on us if we was tight and stuffed up.

DS: Onion mixed with corn meal?

VC: Uh huh. Make it and put it on your chest.

FT: The old people would doctor their own like that, done ya as much good as going to the doctor now. (laugh)

DS: Sure, right, they really worked. And you used the kerosene with sugar?

VC: Yeah.

DS: What did you do if you got a snake bite?

VC: Never did get one, thank goodness.

DS: You didn't?

VC: No, ma'am.

FT: I've had my hands that close to a rattlesnake, feeling the rattle buzz out of it. There was a log run through that vine and I was picking the raspberries and there was a rattlesnake laying right there on that log. I had my hand close to him but I never did get bit.

VC: And the spring was about as far from the house, down the hill as the turn up here. And mama told me to go down there to get milk or water or something that I went to go for, and I was a runnin' and a big rattlesnake was laying across the path and I run and jump that thing.

OA: Jumped right over it?

VC: I was too close to him, I couldn't turn around and come back, I just jumped and went on and when I come back it was gone. (laughter)

OA: Well, that's good. (laugh)

VC: Never did see that snake no more. (laugh)

FT: How you reckon you would have felt if Bob Meadows was living back in there. He had a rabbit that run up into a, he run a rabbit up into a big hollow log, a big one, a big chestnut y'know. And he crawled up in that log after that rabbit and a big rattlesnake crawled in that log behind him and he said he had to back out over it and was about that close to it.

DS: And never touched it?

FT: No, it never bit him, but that was the only way, he had to back out over that rattlesnake, y'see.

OA: My goodness.

DS: Did you do much hunting?

FT: Yeah, I would hunt some. Rabbit hunt and pheasants and things like that.

DS: How about coon hunting?

FT: I never did do no coon hunting, lots of people did, but I didn't.

DS: Possum hunting?

FT: Huh?

DS: Possums?

FT: Yeah, possums. I used to catch 'em in snares. (laugh)

DS: Oh, you did. What kind of a snare?

FT: I'd bend a bush over in what I'd call a snare and cover it with strings and put sticks around it and set what you'd call a snare and then put something on it that he'd eat and the possum snared round his neck, swing him up.

DS: They're such stupid creatures, aren't they? (laugh)

FT: Caught rabbits like that, too.

DS: Really?

FT: Yeah.

VC: Tell her about how you used to make a rabbit box.

FT: Yeah, make rabbit boxes and catch rabbits in 'em.

DS: Well, how did you make the box?

FT: Well, you just make a box and you put a string on this one end and you have the end at this end and you have a piece that goes across the top there, and I bored a hole right in that box and run a stick down in there, fasten an apple on that down there in the box and this piece here had like a notch in it and that fastened to that. That rabbit goes in there to eat that apple, that falls and knocks it and the lid drops down.

DS: So then you're having yourself a rabbit. Then how did you cook the rabbits?

FT: I would skin 'em and cut 'em up.

DS: Make a stew?

FT: Rabbit was good.

VC: No, we'd cook 'em in-

FT: Boil 'em and then fry 'em.

VC: And then take 'em out the broth that we just boiled 'em in and fry 'em in the skillet and take that broth and make gravy.

DS: (whistles) Good.

FT: I like rabbit as good as any kind of wild meat.

DS: Sure. And speaking of that, did you ever make ashcakes?

VC: No, I haven't, but I've seen my grandmother make 'em.

FT: Hardly did ever make 'em. Mother had fireplace and loaded up the fireplace.

VC: Used to roast potatoes in the fireplace.

DS: They're good that way too, yeah.

FT: And then I'd be worried about wood and dragging it through the woods and finding more wood.

[End Tape Side 1, 00:26:01 min.]

[Begin Tape Side 2, 00:26:03 min.]

DS: Excuse me a moment. (long pause)

VC: I better go see about my dinner. While she's fixing that.

[Question obscured, probably from FT]

OA: I come down here from vacation and trying to look for some land to buy so maybe my husband and I can maybe move down here. I love it.

DS: Now.

FT: Yeah, it's a good place.

DS: I have a couple questions to ask about-

FT: You her daughter?

OA: No.

DS: Did you ever use turpentine for cuts?

VC: Uh huh.

DS: You did. It really helped?

VC: Yes it did.

DS: And if you cut your foot, did your mother make an onion poultice?

VC: No, I don't recall that. We just rubbed, we're talking about cold oil for everything now, cold oil and turpentine in all of 'em.

DS: Did you use turpentine and sugar for a cough?

VC: Mm-hmm.

DS: That sounds so horrible.

FT: You'd take turpentine and you'd take castor oil. Now that was a bad dose. (laughter)

OA: That must be hard to take. (laugh)

DS: Kept you busy. (laugh)

FT: Unless there was an old \*\* [comment mumbled then trailed off, words uncertain]

DS: I heard something about for poison oak. There was sweetheart leaves used, do you know what those could have been?

VC: Never heard of 'em. I have no idea.

OA: What did you use for poison oak? When you got it.

FT: Boy, that used to be all up and down everywhere.

VC: Salts, I believe.

FT: Epsom salts and get as hot as water as you can boil it. And boil it up and fix it overnight.

DS: Well, now you should have used lye soap.

VC: I have, I've used that.

DS: Yeah, I had it here.

FT: Back then I didn't know that, back then in that day I used what they called coppers.

DNS: Called what?

FT: Coppers. And boil it, I hate the times I'd get too much of 'em and get salt water and get in the scabs and boy, was that a doozy, it was bad.

DS: There's a lot of poison ivy and poison oak up there.

FT: I went to Dr. Smith up at Stanley and he give me salve to put on it and that healed it up. But it don't bother me much anymore but that used to eat me up.

DS: How did you handle your laundry? Was that a tremendous job?

VC: A washboard.

DS: And then did you boil the clothes?

VC: Yeah, boiled 'em in the wash bin.

DS: Did you make your own soap?

VC: Yeah.

DS: That was good soap.

VC: It was.

DS: Darn good.

FT: Good old days back up in there.

DS: Oh, were they ever. But now, you didn't just work all the time.

FT: All this new stuff going on here around now.

DS: Did you say you visited?

VC: Mm-hmm.

DS: And you didn't think anything much of walking a long distance to go to visit, did you?

VC: Walked everywhere we went, there was no way to ride. Had to stop if you got there.

DS: Sure. Right. Now I understand you walked down to Camp Hoover.

VC: Yeah.

FT: When we had to work back in those days—

DS: How did you feel about it when you knew President Hoover was going to build his camp there. Were you happy about it?

VC: I imagine, I never—I don't know.

DS: You don't recall?

FT: Now George Barker were, by God. When Hoover got elected, he come up a tree and then hollered "Hurrah for Hoover!" And he give him a good job, he had it pretty good while he was in there.

OA: You said you worked back there.

FT: I worked back there and I was building up that road back in there, what we called the Hoover Road back in there. I was in the other day, working the other day and the rains started going. (?)

DS: You were, huh?

FT: Yeah, been over on the other side bringing the mail up and then the rain came.

DS: In other words, then, it helped bring some money into the area, didn't it?

FT: Yeah.

DS: You mean you walked every day down there and back?

FT: Well, we camped down there. We had the little camps to stay in. They'd stretch tents, y'know, they had tents of course they had a cabin for it where they cooked and eat. And that was made out of logs. The camp we all stayed in was tents they had stretched up in a box, on it. And come up a bit thundercloud one night and thought we was gonna take the tent and one of 'em jumped up and took hold of the it, the pole in the middle, and the rain got in.

DS: Hoo, yeah, there are thunderstorms up there, aren't there? What made you decide to walk down to meet President Hoover?

VC: At first I didn't, at first I made him, I worked, y'know when they put that wooden, when Shifflett put the drive through. I cooked up there. They had me, I worked there at the camp, I helped his wife cook for the men that were working there. Well, President Hoover, I had met him before I ever went down to the camp. He was up there, he come up there—it wasn't like then like it is now, you can't get near a President now, but then they didn't, y'know, they'd just walk up and talk to you. Shook hands with him up there, we talked and Mr. Wood and Ms. Wood and I we walked down there, on several occasions we've been down to the camp. He'd invite us to come down and we'd just get out and walk, we'd walk down and he's show us around down there and he was very nice, friendly, talked. Yeah, he was real nice and friendly and talking to me, because I met him before I ever went down to his camp. I met him up there when they had the camp for the state when they was putting the drive through, I was the cook, I ran a boarding house up there and cooked for 'em. And that's how I got to go down to Hoover's Camp.

DS: I get it. Did you ever meet Mrs. Hoover?

VC: No ma'am. No indeed, no I didn't get to meet her.

DS: He was a very wonderful man, I thought he was great. Did any of you do anything at Skyland?

FT: No.

VC: Well, no.

DS: You weren't interested in Pollock at all? [George Freeman Pollock, entrepreneur of Skyland]

VC: Never did meet him.

FT: I never did get back that far.

VC: I been there, I been at Skyland many a, lots of times.

DS: Did you do much fishing?

FT: No, I never did do much fishing.

DS: Hey, shame on you. All that good fish.

VC: All that good trout and nobody never fished, wasn't that something?

FT: There used to be a lot of good trout back in on, down on that creek right below me. There's rainbow fish in one of the creeks and the other was little speckled fish down in there. A lot of people caught 'em all. I never did do much fishing.

DS: Did you ever, and this is perfectly right to do so I'm not blaming anyone who did it, do any burning so you'd have more huckleberries?

FT: Oh, lots of people did back in the mountains.

VC: Yeah, they'd get out and set fires out and burn the mountains. We never did, no we never did do nothing like that. But there's plenty of people back there that did.

FT: Well \*\* [DS and VC talking over, cannot make out]

DS: Because huckleberries were cash crop.



VC: Uh-huh. They'd burn the mountain so's they'd have huckleberries to pick.

DS: Right.

FT: -huckleberries used to be back in there. We sold a hundred and thirty some gallons of raspberries just like what was put up. Like with the strawberries.

DS: Really? How much would you get for them?

FT: I think we got a quarter a gallon, because we had a cabin cleaned out to put 'em in the mountain back here.

DS: A quarter a gallon? That was a lot of picking.

FT: I'm used to it. Back then, not more than fifteen cents a gallon.

DS: How much would you get for the eggs that you sold? Do you remember?

VC: No, I don't remember, but it wasn't too much.

FT: Everything was cheap and you didn't get much.

VC: You could take a dollar then and buy more than you could take five dollars and buy now.

DS: That's right. How about clothing, did your mother make your clothes?

VC: Yeah. And after I got big enough to sew, I did. In fact, I make all my clothes now.

DS: You do, really?

FT: Didn't get but about one pair of shoes a year, though. Most of the time went barefooted, went barefooted and get a pair of shoes for winter time.

VC: Everyone and babies going barefoot. (?)

FT: Gather chestnuts and take 'em out to Stanley and get shoes. Chestnuts was great.

DS: But after the chestnuts were gone.

FT: People would gather chestnuts and get all their stuff in, flour and stuff, for winter and that would do through the winter. Get your wood in and go about if you wanted.

DS: Did you have, well watching the chestnuts disappear the way they did, was there anything that you felt you should be doing to help them, or did you just sort of watch and say, how horrible?

VC: There was nothing you could do, just watch 'em and let 'em go. That was it.

FT: That was a good crop that was back then, good paying crop that got in.

DS: Did you used to dry apples?

FT: Yeah. Yes, indeed. I carried bushels and sack full of dried apples over to Greg Meadows' store.

VC: That was in Hinsley Hollow. (?)

DS: In Hinsely Hollow? (?)

VC: Mm-hmm.

DS: How about cherries, did you dry cherries?

FT: Well, we picked cherries and can 'em like that, but didn't dry 'em.

DS: Would you take dried beans into the store, too?

FT: No, we dried them and kept them and ate them through the winter.

DS: How'd you cook 'em?

FT: Water and put a big piece of meat with 'em. I'd come in all ready every night from being out down in the creek, hollow as a man, talk about it made good. (?)

DS: Those were wonderful days, weren't they?

FT: They was. And I won't ever see them days no more.

DS: How did you react when you knew the park was coming in?

FT: Well, they first got talking about it, they think they were gonna put that road through there, so much on each side of the road was what's covered, but the county bowled through (?) and that's all it was gonna take. So they taking it all away.

DS: Did they give you any money?

FT: No, I was working a place when I was on the mountain. Man that owned the place got money, though.

DS: So then how did you manage? Did they offer you a house in Ida (?) or anything like that?

FT: No, they'd get you a place. They got us this place here.

DS: Oh, they did?

FT: Yeah, the government bought it but then after we was here a while we bought it then from the—they wanted to sell 'em to the people living there in 'em. So me and my brother bought this. Lots of people bought their homes then.

DS: Well I know that you were very unhappy about having to move.

FT: Oh yes, people were, lots of people were. [last comment obscured by cough from VC]

DS: Because it was—

FT: They had to set my uncle out back there. Walter Jenkins, he lived on Boomback's Place. (?)

DS: They had you do what?

FT: Of course, he went down to Staunton, he and aunt, they wanted to get, but his wife was binding chief, (?) she'd tell you she wasn't going do it, set 'em out and he kept listening at her, so they set 'em out. And they was gonna give them a home just like the others. So they had to get out and get a modeled home front. (?)

VC: I believe that would have been my idea about it, though. When they put this park through, so that some people lived around and had grazing farms and they was squirreled back, you couldn't see a thing going up that drive but big mountains on each side, and I know when you could run lawnmowers over them fields up there they was so pretty but now they're all grown up. Right in the mountains, and I believe they would have lived like they had then, it would have been pretty, and I believe that the tourists would have liked it. I really do. All these cattle grazing, people would enjoy that, and now you

can't see a thing.

FT: I used to go up there when they put that drive through there, I'd get down below the road where there's a lot of wild strawberries, pick 'em, cut a pole (?) and get up on the road and sell 'em right on out of my chair. (laughter)

DS: Did you work for the CCCs at all?

FT: No, I wasn't in CC Camp. I worked on that road, from Big Meadow going down towards Booten, where you go down to Blue Ridge. Wood and them were building there. (?)

DS: But you weren't with the CCC.

FT: No.

DS: So then you all moved here. Well I think you have all done very well, because well, what did you find to do when you got down here?

FT: Oh, I worked around for the farmers through here. Then fall of the year I'd pick apples.

DS: And your brother has been working how many years for Arch Ellison? (?)

FT: Yeah, thirty some years.

DS: You know, I understand his accident with his leg was caused by no doctor being available, is that correct?

FT: Well, me and my father went to the store and him and my other brother went rabbit hunting. And when they'd done it, they jumped no rabbit, (?) they didn't have no dog, had to come back to the house and they got the June (?) Weakley's two boys, one of them was just a young boy. They had an old dog and they ended (?) the rabbit. And when they'd got all done down at the rocks, that young boy had his old rackham (?) he had with a hammer on the side and he was awful lazy on the trigger. And when that boy was had his looking on, I imagine he got that hammer down and didn't know get it back and lay it down that way and he walked up over the gun and pried it down (?) through buck (?) and it shot him through the leg. (?) And they take him over to Harrisonburg. [The general gist of the story is apparent, just really hard to make out what he's saying, even at normal speed.]

DS: Because the story I heard was that he didn't get, wasn't able to see a doctor for a couple of days.

FT: Yeah, taking him on-

VC: Oh, he went on that same evening, took him that same day.

FT: Willy Robertson taken him.

DS: Well that's a shame, isn't it.

VC: Yeah.

DS: But, Harrisonburg was quite a trip away.

FT: Yeah.

DS: How'd you get to Harrisonburg?

FT: Willy Robertson taken him in the car.

[Unknown voice makes an indecipherable comment here]

FT: That done it, take him up there in a buggy. Will Wheatley (?) taken him up there in a horse and buggy.

DS: Octavia, do you have any questions you'd like to ask?

FT: [Obscured by DS question] -and take him up to the hospital.

OA: How were the children raised? How all were you raised? Were there certain, kind of discipline that you had to follow?

FT: You had to listen at 'em. (laughter) Or you'd get a whooping. (laugh)

VC: Better had or you wouldn't have no head. (laughter)

FT: People back then, they made children listen now.

VC: Lot different then what they are today.

OA: Who told you what to do, your mother, your father?

FT: Yeah, mother and father.

VC: Both of 'em. And when they told you something you better do that, too.

DS: There was a very strict code of ethics, wasn't it?

VC: That's right.

OA: And did you start having chores really young? Things to do, like what kind of things?

VC: Yes, you'd stand me up in the chair and I'd have to do the dishes and when you got big enough to do dishes standing up in the chair, and you'd stand and do dishes. You had to work, now, when you was big enough.

FT: [Comment obscured by VC and DS]

DS: And there was no stealing.

VS: What if \*\*, I hear tell it. (?) If picking were picking something that didn't belong to them, you never could tell it.

FT: All of them nearly gone that used to do that.

DS: The morals were very, very wonderful in those days.

OA: And in your family, how many children were there?

FT and VC: Seven.

OA: Seven kids. And how many girls and how many boys?

VC: Three girls.

FT: Three girls and four boys.

OA: That's a nice group of people. And did the girls have certain things to do and did the girls have to take care of the rest of the children?

VC: Yeah, Momma'd go away and leave the children with me, when I got big enough to take care of 'em.

OA: You were the oldest?

VC: Mm-hmm. Right.

FT: Three of us \*\* all three of us. (?) [Obscured by VC]

VC: They used to be so mad when she'd, her and the old ladies would call her Tu, 'cept Danny Mays' (?) wife, he was talking about this new coaster (?) y'know, and I always called her Toot, (?) I don't know what her name was. But they called her Toot, and nearly every day, here you could see Toot coming over that little hill, and mama and her'd take off and go somewhere and I'd be there and take care of everything. I used to get so mad, oh I'd get so mad when I seen her coming. (laughter) I've said more than one time, if she just would've stayed at home. (laughter) And I was too small to go ahead and do, y'know, I caught that I had to do it.

OA: How old were you?

VC: I don't remember. I wasn't grown. Yeah, I'd get so mad when I seen her coming.

FT: And pulling weeds and hoe corn and work.

VC: Yeah, pull corn all day long.

DS: Would you sit, all sit down together at a meal? And you had a big table didn't you?

VC: Yeah, and they got up every morning and I'd like to help people-

[tape breaks; 00:46:47]

VC: -I'd eat breakfast.

OA: So you all had-if you didn't get there-

VC: Everybody had to go to the table at one time and had be ready to eat.

DS: Before daylight you'd get up?

VC: Oh lord yes. Daddy would-

FT: And I'd get him a gun and country I'd get up. (?)

VC: He'd get up way before daylight. Then get breakfast. He'd grind the coffee and Momma'd do the rest. And they'd call you for breakfast and you'd better get up and eat, too.

DS: What did you usually have for breakfast?

VC: Well, meat and gravy [obscured by FT] coffee [obscured by FT].

FT: People used to \*, would make gravy in the house out of grease, pour the grease over the gravy and boy it was good. Now, people don't hardly eat no grease and it ain't good for 'em.

DS: It was good for you, then.

FT: Good back then, though. [Continues to speak, but VC obscures]

VC: Fry them big pieces of lean meat and take it up and then put a little butter in and then make that red grease and pour over it. And make gravy and put that in your gravy and it was so good and now you dare not eat it.

DS: Now, remember you were doing a heck of a lot more exercise.

VC: Plenty of it. Plenty exercise.

DS: And nowadays nobody's really exercising that much.

FT: There wasn't much sickness back then, either.

DS: You needed that, you really needed that. Because the people all lived a good, long life.

FT: My father was a hundred and one and six months and twenty-eight days old when he died.

DS: Yeah. It was a good, happy, healthy life. It was a busy life, but a good one.

VC: You know on that mountain it's healthy, good, high fresh air up there and that good fresh water all the time, it's healthy. [FT apparently speaks to OA, obscured] Y'know, out here, people make it like the people from the mountains is crazy, but there's just as many crazy people out of the mountain as it was on it and I run into plenty of 'em since I been down here. I have, that's true. I run into just as many, more crazy people I'd say than was back on that mountain.

DS: Well there wasn't that much intermarriage between people, because there were enough different families.

VC: That's right.

DS: And you visited back and forth between them a lot.

VC: And people, when you visit back there, you got to be invited now to go somewhere, but back there you got up, got ready and you went. People were glad to see you come. Don't care what you had to do, they'd come in and help them, we'd help them, everyone helped each other. Well you can't pay somebody now to do something for you.

DS: I know.

VC: They won't work for money now.

FT: Maybe used to have wood gettings (?) in the winter, and everybody goes with a saw, but that's over. (?)

DS: Hey, how was courting done? Tell me about your courting.

VC: Had to sneak around a whole lot [obscured by laughter]. (laughter) Had to do right good on sneaking about. They say if you brought somebody home, they didn't like you any better than him. If you even go do any courting, bet you'd have to sneak around by that note. (?)

OA: So you had to bring somebody home to let the family meet him?

VC: Well, yes, you're supposed to bring 'em home but sometimes they'd tell you you weren't gonna be bringing them back any more. If they didn't they were all right or thought they was making us up or something, I don't know. [Begins to say something, obscured by DS]

DS: Were you closely chaperoned?

VC: Ma'am?

DS: Were you closely chaperoned?

VC: Yes ma'am. That sneaking around and courting was the best courting in the world, though. (laughter) Yes sir, that's the best courting \* I ever done think about.

OA: Sounds like you have some good memories.

VC: I remember that all right. (laugh)

DS: How about the weddings, were they nice, simple quiet weddings, usually in your home?

VC: They'd just get married in a home, preacher would say a few things to you, just the family would be there and the preacher.

FT: I never did have have none, that way. (laugh)

VC: (whispering) I smell my beans, I'll be right back.

DS: You didn't huh? You just didn't go for the girls?

FT: I didn't want to get married.

DS: Those beans smell mighty good, Ms. Cave. I bet you're cooking them the way you used to.

VC: (distant) Ma'am?

DS: I bet you're cooking them the way you used to.

VC: I'm cooking them same as I did fifty years ago.

DS: Yep. That's mighty good eating. You know, this has been a most fascinating time and you don't know we appreciate it. You giving up your time to talk with us and help us with his interview.

FT: Yeah, well, glad to help.

VC: I've enjoyed every minute of it.

DS: I thought you would, because I knew I would.

VC: Yes, I have. Because I'm a powerful talker when somebody gets me started. (laughter)

DS: Well, everything that we can learn that verifies what we already know makes it that much more certain. And you have certainly done that. You know, I have a couple of things, that have to be done, now.

[End Track 2, 00:52:21 min]

End of Interview

Vallie Cave Interview, 9/19/1978

SdArch SNP-26

31