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Oral History Program
University of Arkansas at Little Rock
2801 S. University Little Rock, AR 72204
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Use Agreement Form

Narrator: Ladd Davies & Janice Davies

Date(s) of Interview(s): April 19, 1994

Place of Interview: Davies Home - Petit Jean Mtn.

Interviewer: Georganne Sisco

Description of Tapes: audio video

Subject of Tapes: CCC work at Petit Jean State Park

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If narrator wishes to place restrictions on the use of these materials, narrator should describe these restrictions below and state the period of time for which they are to be in effect.

Signature of Narrator with date: X Janice G. Davies

Signature of Interviewer with date: April 19, 1994

↳ Georganne Sisco 4/19/94

This agreement will become effective when signed and dated by both parties.

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Signature of Narrator with date: X J. Zedler Davies

Signature of Interviewer with date: April 19, 1994
Georgianne Sisco 4/19/94

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INTERVIEWER: GEORGANNE SISCO
INTERVIEWEES: JANICE AND LADD DAVIES
SUBJECT: CCC CONSTRUCTION/PETIT JEAN STATE PARK
DATE: APRIL 19, 1994

GS: It's April 19, 1994 and I'm interviewing Ladd Davies.
I'd like you to tell me a little about your background,
please, and how you got to Arkansas.

LD: My father moved here, was the resident engineer for the
construction of a bridge across the Arkansas River at
Morrilton. I was three years old. While here he developed
an engineering business of his own and stayed here. I grew
up in Morrilton. I went to the University [of Arkansas,
Fayetteville] after high school and stayed two years from
1931 to 1933. At that time, the CCC program was starting
and developing in Arkansas, and my father was asked to get
an organization together to work for these people. We had
here, differentiated from the other CCC's, we had World War
One veterans.¹ I think my title was Landscape Foreman. I
had had two years of Engineering study, and of course I had
helped my father some. So, I was the "Instrument Man"....

GS: Okay.

LD: ...in the program. Since my father was really the chief
engineer for the park.

JD: Now don't get into what you did before you give her the rest
of your background.

LD: Alright. I stayed two years...during the first development
of the park.²

GS: That would have been about 1933?

LD: 1933 to 1935

GS: Okay.

LD: I went back to school. After I graduated from the Univer-

sity of Arkansas with a degree in Civil Engineering, I went to work for the State Health Department. I worked for them until World War II came along.

JD: 1943 or 1941?

LD: 1941?

JD: When did you go in? 1941 or 1943?

LD: I don't remember.

JD: I think it was 1943.

LD: Alright, alright. I went in the Army in 1943 with the rank of First Lieutenant. I was assigned to the Sanitary Corps which was part of the medical branch of the Army.

JD: Now will you let me interrupt every once in awhile?

GS: Sure. Go right ahead.

JD: Now, before he got to World War One, he had been given a grant to study at Harvard and he got his Master's degree in Civil Engineering. He did that and graduated in 1941. Even before that though, he had had special training for the Rockefeller Foundation in malaria control. Now all this ties up with what happened to him in World War Two, because the man who was head of the department under whom he studied at Harvard, was a consultant for the Institute of Inter-American Affairs which was more or less a good-neighbor policy for Latin America. When he heard that Ladd was going into the Army, he contacted him and said, "We would like to have you. Just let me know when you get in and I'll take it from there." So now, this all ties in together with what eventually...so pick it up there.

LD: So I was assigned to the country of Panama near the field part.

JD: Malaria control.

LD: ...malaria control drainage.

GS: Okay.

LD: Outside of the canal zones, malaria control was taken care of by the canal zone operations. I was working with the people of the rest of the country--little town, doing malaria control.

JD: Excuse me. Because they had to get the road dried out.

LD: This was considered important because the canal zone really did use labor outside the zone--they worked as labor. They registered poor health. I was there two years. We were under general contract with the country and ours was terminating right at the end of World War Two, so I went back.

JD: Pick it up there.

LD: Went back to Washington [D.C.] to the main office and to serve there.

JD: You don't need the rest of that, just the fact that they asked you to go with them to Peru and I could go. We had one son and he could take us with him to Peru in 1945. Then, I guess....

LD: We were stationed....

JD: We were stationed at Lima, Peru, where the Institute there was helping the country of Peru set up a whole road system.

GS: Oh, okay.

JD: He was an engineer.

LD: In a particular part--we were assigned to part of Peru--the eastern side with the mountains and valleys. We worked with them there. Stayed there....

JD: Two years. Decided we wanted to come back home because he and his daddy wanted to go in business together, in contracting business...municipal contractors, which they did for....

LD: Fifteen years?

JD: Sixteen years. And when his father wanted to retire, Ladd decided to close out the business. Went to the Department of Pollution Control and Ecology and became Director, and stayed as Director there for the state of Arkansas for what? [Laughs] 1970, '75, I think. So that's his background.

GS: Okay, that's great. Now, could we go back to the time at Petit Jean and could you talk a little about being the landscape foreman--I believe that's what you said.

LD: I had some interesting duties. For example, I surveyed the boundaries...the then-boundaries of the park.

GS: Of the park?

LD: Completely. All the way around. Got that done. Laid out the roads after being generally located. Under the direction of my father then we did what was called staking them out.... And the water and sewer lines for the cottages and lodge--those kinds of things in the engineering field. I located the dam and I designed the stone bridge.

GS: The big stone arch bridge? Okay.

LD: The big stone arch.

JD: That's on the National Register.

LD: That bridge doesn't have a piece of steel in it. It's a stone arch supported bridge. We were building a dam, which actually abuts on one end of the bridge. Clearing for the lake and so forth and I left to go back to school. It was most interesting work. We accidentally ran into an illegal bootlegging operation.

GS: Oh! (laughs)

LD: On one occasion. We were cutting across to meet the trucks.

None of us had been that way before--it was on the side of the mountain, so we were going to take a shortcut to get to it and ran smack into this still in illegal operation.

JD: May I ask you something that I wondered if you knew? Did you know the particulars of how the CCC got started in Arkansas?

GS: I know the bare facts. I mean, I know about Milton McColm and what he did and how he got started here.³ If you want to talk a little about that, that would be great.

JD: I just wondered what you had already found out about, because it's an interesting tale. I don't think she knows all the little....

GS: I probably don't know all the little details.

LD: Are you talking about...Judge Amsler?

JD: I'm talking about Guy Amsler. I'm talking about the politics of the whole thing.⁴

LD: The state had a park department and it was under the Attorney General and also the Game and Fish Commission which had a Secretary who was Guy Amsler, Sr., who was later a Supreme Court Judge here. But was the Secretary of the Game and Fish Commission. He had his office in the same place with Attorney General for some time. Guy heard that they had this program in Texas and he maneuvered around to find out what it was and what we had to do to get it and to apply for. He had to develop everything from purchasing to payroll. He asked my father if he'd be interested in being.... They had some land at Petit Jean that had come back to the state for taxes. If he'd be interested in taking the job of Superintendent. And he definitely was.

The first thing that came through was--you've got 12, or was it 13 positions. Dad said, "Well, I can fill them!"

JD: Now let me stop here. You must realize that this was the depths of the Depression--the depth of the Depression. Mr. Davies, Sr., who had been here already 8 years, 16 years--something like that, was the only engineer, actually, in this county, or anywhere around, and had had a very nice business. All of a sudden, everything just dried out--nobody could do anything!

GS: Right.

JD: So when Guy Amsler, who was a friend, called and said, "Would you like to be the chief up at Petit Jean?" it was just a marvelous opportunity! At the same time, Ladd's sister was up at the University and Mr. Davies was very happy to give Ladd a job, for you know....

LD: To get me off his payroll!

JD: (laughing) I think the machinations of this--I think some of the things they did in getting the equipment to work with is just amazing. For instance, everything was done with wheel barrows and....

GS: Right. Mules.

LD: The bulldozer had not been invented. We were allocated a small track-type tractor and had it. The track-type tractor had been invented. We had a small one of those we could use for pulling down trees and doing that kind of thing. And three trucks--4 trucks--I think we had a flatbed truck and 3 dumptrucks and a pickup. Of course, the pickup was assigned to Dad, he took it. That was his supervisory.... I don't remember how many crews--must have been 4 or so who were taken out from the camp. The Army took over the....

- JD: Now, before he goes into that, I think this is important. I think people do not realize how many organizations worked together to do this case.
- LD: The Army was assigned to furnish housing and food and upkeep. It involved having an Army Captain and maybe two lieutenants. They picked out their men first; they got mess sergeants and so forth and so on available, and the civil foreman. This gets involved in how do you pay the men in camp on a basic salary of \$30 a month--\$25 of which was sent home.
- GS: Right.
- LD: And if they had a rating--there was a \$36 rating and a \$45 rating and we had one in each way of rating. Each crew had one \$45 and the truck drivers, I think, were a \$36.
- JD: Now, all of the professional help, the foremen, Mr. Davies-- they were employees of the National Park Service.
- GS: Right.
- JD: There's no....
- GS: They weren't employees of the Army.
- JD: They had nothing to do, actually, with the CCC business.
- GS: Right.
- JD: They were working for the National Park Service. And it was the National Park Service that actually built this Park. So, lots of times they think Ladd was in the CCC. Ladd wasn't in the CCC. (laughs)
- GS: Right. He was a part of the National Park Service.
- JD: He worked for the National Park Service.
- LD: There was a hierarchy we were under in Sante Fe, wasn't it, New Mexico?
- GS: Was it that, or was it Denver?

LD: I think it was Sante Fe at that time.

GS: Okay.

LD: I think it might have moved onto Denver later.

JD: But you had three things here--you had the National Park Service, the CCC, and the Army--all working together. Ladd mentioned this and I've heard Mr. Davies talk about it too, the fact that it was so different working with these men who were mature men. Now many of them were completely uneducated, but they had skills. They had people that could do everything! And those camps that worked with just boys that had been picked up off the streets of Chicago, and what have you, that was a different sort of thing. Because they really had lots of very excellent workmen. There was somebody that knew how to do the work.

LD: One of my Dad's Foremen was an excellent mechanic. Under his direction, we got several mechanics to take care of the machinery. We had a blacksmith too. We didn't have any trouble finding a blacksmith.

JD: One of the foremen was a wonderful rock mason.

GS: Okay. Do you remember his name?

LD: Mr. Pierce, lived in Havana.⁵

GS: Okay.

LD: At the time. Arkansas.

GS: Okay.

LD: Mel Pierce. He was an excellent rock mason.

JD: And when they got ready to build the lodge site, they did not have the logs they needed, so the Parks just bought 40 acres of timber and cut the timber and made the logs that built the lodge and the cabins. Didn't have it!

LD: We had a man who was like--what was the famous imaginary character in the logging business? I can't think of his name.

GS: Oh, you mean Paul Bunyan?

LD: Huh?

JD: Paul Bunyan.

LD: Paul Bunyan! We had a Paul Bunyan and he wanted to make a beam out of a pine tree, he'd just put a broad axe on each foot, and as they say, just "clumb" [sic] the tree.

GS: Oh. (laughs)

LD: He climbed the tree and then hacked it going up, you know and cut it off. We had the finest hacker. So anyway, we had people who could cut beams out of them and cut the joints and so forth to get the logwork done.

JD: There was another foreman too, I think, who had charge of making all the furniture.

GS: Do you remember who that was?

JD: Oh yes.

LD: He was Charles Gustafson.

GS: Okay.

JD: Spell that.

LD: It's Swedish. Gus-taf-son.

GS: Is it G u s t a f s o n?

LD: He was an excellent cabinet maker. The Road Foreman was Paul Gordon. Do you know who Nathan Gordon was?

GS: No, that name is not familiar.

LD: Nathan was, what do you call it, Lieutenant Governor? Nathan was one of Arkansas's....

JD: Medal of Honor.

LD: Medal of Honor winners. He came back....

JD: Congressional Medal of Honor and came home and was Lieutenant Governor of Arkansas.

LD: For 17 terms!

JD: 17 terms! This is a nephew of an old family in Conway County.

LD: He was one of the Road Foreman. Carl Lewis.

GS: Okay, now that name I know. I've seen that name on the plans.

LD: Carl Lewis did this beautiful piece, I think, of stone work--the revetment on the road as you go down....

JD: The back side of the mountain.

LD: The back side of the mountain. You really don't notice the stone on one side there--stayed as long as it was in the park.

JD: But the stonework in the lodge, in the cabins, in the Visitor's Center is very very beautiful.

GS: It's wonderful.

JD: It's beautiful stonework.

GS: It's just really nice work.

LD: Later on, the Park Service sent us two landscape architects who helped with the designs.

GS: Who did they send? Do you remember?

LD: One was Leo D....

JD: Diederich?

GS: Diederich. Right.

LD: And one was David....

JD: David?

GS: David Hunter.⁶ Great.

LD: And we had an Amsler--Judge Amsler's youngest brother had just gotten out of college. He was in business, and he did the clerking.

JD: Stanley Amsler.

LD: Kept the books, all the payroll, and purchasing, and so forth. Guy used to talk about how there was a rule of thumb--if it was less than \$100, you didn't have to get it approved. So they'd get up orders for \$100 worth of this, that and the other--one right after the other, until you'd get enough picks, for example!

JD: They just didn't have things for the men to work with.

GS: Right.

LD: It was silly, but it worked, and we got them to work with. This is one of the things that is sorta [sic] interesting. We had a powder man--dynamite.

GS: Who was that?

LD: Name was Grady.

JD: Was this a CCC man?

LD: He was a CCC man.

JD: Oh, he knew how to dynamite?

LD: He knew how to dynamite. We dynamited the stumps--the big stumps and big rocks and so forth. And he would work all day "loading". We didn't have those electrical things you use--fuses or caps that had to be lit. The fuse burned, as I remember, a minute per foot.

GS: A minute per foot?

LD: So if you wanted 3 minutes to run away, you'd put 3 feet.

GS: Oh, wow.

LD: He started at one end--a day's work--loading stumps. Then at a certain time in the afternoon--late--why, he'd start

lighting. He had a carbide lamp. Are you familiar with that? They had flame instead of a bulb. They had a spurt of flame. They used that flame to light the fuses.

GS: Oh, okay.

LD: Because it was steady and hot and would get it done. He'd light one and then trot down the mountain to the next one and before he got through lighting, they'd be blowing up behind him.

GS: (laugh)

JD: Could I tell a little tale here? There's so many interesting tales of that time. They had to have someone carry off the garbage at the camp after the meals and so forth. Mr. Bryan, who lived up here on the mountain, was employed to get rid of the garbage. You can't imagine the poverty. You cannot imagine. There were many of the men who brought their families. Now they were living on \$25 a month. The people up here who had tried to be farmers and all were just so poor that many many of them lost their land. They couldn't pay taxes on it. Well, I don't know whether it was Mr. Bryan's idea, or the Army, but there was so much good food that was left over everyday that it was a shame to throw it away. So Mr. Bryan, when he came each day to pick up the garbage, they also had a great big container, or containers, I don't know which, to put the good food in. The people then, along the roads, would hang out on their mailbox a lard bucket that had a....

LD: Bail.

JD: A bail to go over the top of it and Mr. Bryan would stop and fill those buckets with the good food.

GS: Every day?

JD: Isn't that a marvelous story?

LD: That's just a sideline.

JD: Oh yeah. These are just human interest things. (pause)
Also, there was a discipline problem that even the Army had trouble.

GS: Really?

JD: Oh yes. Some of the funniest tales are of that. Now, this was eventually a friend of Ladd's who was regular Army and was known as a good disciplinarian. They had to get rid of one of their lieutenants or whatever that was in charge.

LD: It was one of the first Captains.

JD: Captain, and bring in one of.... Honey, don't put your foot on that.

GS: Oh no, it's okay. I just wanted to make sure the tape was still running.

JD: Can you tell some of the things?

LD: Well, what happened on the first payday, they all got drunk.

JD: See, they had \$5 apiece.

LD: They had \$5 apiece and they hadn't had any money before and there was some moonshine available that they could get to. In fact, the whole camp was drunk and raising Cane--fightin' and playing cards and everything. They had a sing at one of the camps--I won't say inmates. (laughter) As a police official or policeman. And he had a 5-cell flashlight. He hit about 5 of them over the head with the flashlight. It was pretty bad. I think it took finally to call over to get the sheriff. Hauled some of them down to jail. But they relieved that chap and got another one. An old man--he had been advisor to the National Guard. His name was Richard....

JD: Honey, my senility's showing. Peoples' names escape me.

LD: Anyway, first thing he did was fire the inmates' policeman. I said, "What'd you fire him for?" I said, "I thought he did pretty good. He hit 5 of the guys!" He said, "He didn't knock a single one of them down."

GS: Oh no! (laughs)

LD: So, he straightened them out. These sub-foremen for grading had started carrying big sticks with them, sort of as their badge of office. Well, the men didn't like that, so he threatened them. So he said, "The next one of those big sticks he saw he was going to hang a pick on them. Like an old pick _____. So out at the back end of the mess hall was a big pile of those walking sticks right after the announcement! (laughter)

JD: One of the funny tales that Mr. Davies, Sr. told was about someone--I don't know if it was someone who lived on the mountain--I guess it is, somebody came running up to the camp and said one of his cows had gotten into some fresh alfalfa or something and swollen up and fallen over on the side, you know, with their feet up in the air. Of course, losing a cow was a serious thing at that time, and he said, "Oh Mr. Davies, is there anybody who could come and help me?"

LD: Well, it had to be somebody who knew where to stick them. You can stick a knife into the abdomen somewhere and relieve that gas and they're alright. So he had to have somebody.

JD: Who really knew about it. Well, this man said that he knew what to do but he didn't do that--that wasn't what he did--and that he'd be glad to go and take care of that cow. so they all piled into the back of the pickup and off they went

to find that cow. Mr. Davies said it was the funniest thing when he got around to where that cow's mouth was.

LD: They got it where it was standing up.

JD: Oh, that's right.

LD: Enough of the men could....

JD: They got the tongue and pulled the tongue as hard as he can and Mr. Davies, Sr., said that the air went out of that cow and she just immediately came back to her normal size and trotted off. Said it was the funniest thing he'd ever seen.

LD: It was gas.

JD: Yeah, gas. (pause) And then the dances--they would have dances on Saturday night. I've seen this, you know. We would never either go right close, but we'd sit out in the road and watch the dance that was at the Pavilion right above the lake. Oh, it was a picture to see--you've never seen such dancing! Course, lots of those ended in fights too.

GS: (laughs)

JD: Now, you wouldn't want to use this story, but it's so funny I'm going to tell it. (laughs)

GS: Okay, go ahead. Go ahead.

JD: One of the men had left his wife on the farm, wherever it was. He was so excited about getting his first paycheck--his first \$5, because that was going to get him home. And that was all he could talk about--all he could talk about. Everybody knew he was going to go home and see his wife. Well, I guess he went back on Friday night and instead of coming home on Sunday night, he turned up Saturday morning. "What in the world happened? What are you doing back?" "Well," he says, "I had a boy that was staying on the place

to help my wife. And said, "So I got there and found them in bed together!" Well he says, "By the way I slammed the door, they knowed [sic] that I was mad." (laughter) And he turned around and came back.

GS: Oh goodness.

JD: Alright now, we've done enough talking. What else do you want to know?

GS: Let's see. You talked about some of the projects you worked on--the lodge, or laying out everything.

LD: Well, I staked out the lodge. I'd take the plans. I had two or three men to help me, but I had my little crew.

GS: Who was in your crew?

LD: Well, I remember there was one named Atticus Black. I guess he was sort of the head man on the crew.

JD: Where was he from?

LD: I don't know, somewhere over around the area of Yell County.

JD: Let me ask you something. Ladd, who laid out the trails? Who built the places in the rocks that you could climb up on the high things--the high rocks. For instance, I'm thinking about....

LD: David Neal Graves. D. N. Graves had the trail crew.

JD: That was another one of the foremen.

LD: Another one of the foremen. He probably had one of Mr. Pierce's stone masons to cut the steps and rock house.

JD: Have you ever walked on any of the trails?

GS: No, I haven't.

JD: Wonderfully laid out and lots of interesting things to see. There were several trails that go down into the canyon where the falls run that way. Then Cedar Creek runs along it, then it came to what was called "Blue Hole"--which was a

wonderful swimming place, but difficult to get down to Blue Hole. You all finally built a road.

LD: It was not a road.

JD: Just a trail?

LD: It was more than a trail.

JD: Well eventually there was a road down to Blue Hole.

LD: There was never a road in the Canyon.

JD: I knew there wasn't a road in the canyon.

LD: Or going down to it--they were all trails.

JD: Just trails.

LD: If they used any materials, they had to carry them down there. So they built things out of poles and so forth and decided they needed a privy at the Blue Hole. So they built one out of cut poles and so forth to make an outside privy. I don't know whether they were just joking to begin with, but they said, "Mr. Pierce?"

JD: The stone mason.

LD: The stone mason. "If you'll make me two stone privy seats, we'll carry them down and put them in that privy." And he did. He said, "Okay, I'll do it." He picked out and found some rock to use for the seats--when it was just what he wanted he had the tools and he shaped the holes for them.

JD: In the meantime, somebody stole the privy seats.

GS: Oh no.

JD: Somebody was talking about it the other day--the fact that somebody had gone down there and stolen those privy seats. I don't know that anybody even swims in Blue Hole anymore. Do you reckon they do?

LD: I heard the trail was obliterated as far as the road was concerned. It used to come out on the road. I don't see it

anymore. I think people that go down there come from father up the canyon.

JD: I think the interesting thing about Petit Jean, in relation to its contour, is the fact that the mountain slopes to the center. In fact, when we were putting in our well, we had a geologist come. He walked down the side and he said the rocks all line down the mountain--all go in. Ladd says this, there's no washes down the South Brow because everything drains to the middle. Well, it was that drainage to the middle that made that little creek that made Cedar Falls. (pause) Now my child Richard, you know who Richard is?

GS: Yes.

JD: He says that the lake is really an artesian lake. Now all of the water drains to it, but that still wouldn't be enough to make it stay running all year long like it does. He says it's an Artisian lake, in other words, it's fed by springs.

GS: Right.

JD: Nebo has nothing particularly interesting. Mount Magazine has nothing particularly interesting--you've got magnificent views, but you do not have the trails, the beauty of the rocks, like you do in the park. The formations that have been made by the canyon are just beautiful.

GS: It's incredible.

JD: It's absolutely incredible. Now his Daddy picked the lodge site.

GS: Oh really?

LD: What?

JD: I said your Daddy sighted the lodge.

LD: Well, with the help of the...

JD: Landscape people.

LD: He had picked it out and that was approved. Anyway, the U. S. Park Service agreed that....

GS: That that was a good place for it?

LD: That that was the best place for it.

JD: Now, I'll ask you something. Have you ever seen the stone structure right close to the lodge, that's on the road. It goes up--sort of a tower sort of thing.

GS: Yes.

JD: The man who built that was--was he one of your foremen, Ladd?

LD: He was a landscape architect that had been sent in.

JD: And he built that--that was a water tower?

LD: Yeah.

JD: And he was fired.

GS: Do you remember his name?

LD: Fry.

GS: Homer Fry?⁷ Okay.

JD: He was fired.

GS: He was fired?

JD: He was fired. They came to look at that thing and wanted to know if that weren't out of Robin Hood--it didn't look like Petit Jean. They fired him because he built something so completely out of

LD: You had heard of him?

GS: I've seen his name on plans for several state parks in Arkansas. I keep coming across his name, and I asked Mr. Young if he knew Mr. Fry.⁸ He thought the name was familiar but he couldn't really place the man.

JD: Well Mr. Fry lost his job.

LD: Right here.

GS: Wow.

JD: For building that thing that was out of....

GS: What year was that? Do you remember?

LD: Had to be about--I was still here. Let's see.

JD: You started in 1933.

LD: 1933, 1934, 1935. It had to be in there, about 1934.

GS: I had no idea that happened.

JD: Now, I'm not saying it gleefully that he lost his job, but they thought it was so out of place.

GS: For the park.

JD: For the park here, that they sent him on his way.

GS: That's interesting.

LD: He had a lot of....

JD: Weird ideas?

LD: Weird. I always thought so.

JD: Now, back to you, you ask some more questions.

GS: Oh, okay. If you don't know the answer to this, that's fine. Most of the cabins at Petit Jean are predominantly made of logs. They have some stone work, but they were predominantly log, at least when they were first built. Now at Devil's Den, you know, you've got a total opposite. I just wondered if you knew what the reasoning behind that was.

LD: The original 7 cabins--there was one that was log and the other 6 were all rock.

JD: All stone?

LD: Yeah--with stone sides.

GS: They were?

LD: I think there was about 6 of them. I'm not sure exactly how many--they didn't have many. As I remember, they only had 7 or 8 originally.

JD: And only one was the log?

LD: One was the log one.

GS: Oh, okay.

LD: So, all these new ones were various styles. I like the construction with the rocks--where they start....

JD: I just have to interrupt with some things.

GS: That's fine, that's fine.

JD: Ladd's father left to become Arkansas's first State Park Director, you knew that?

GS: Yes, I did.

JD: Mr. and Mrs. Davies would come up in the summertime and spend some time at one of the cabins--it was called the Governor's Cabin. Isn't that right, Ladd? (pause) Isn't that the cabin you stayed in--wasn't that called the Governor's Cabin?

LD: Right.

GS: Do you know which one that is now?

JD: Yes, yes. Which one is it now?

LD: I don't know which number it is now. It was Number 2.

JD: I think, isn't it next door to the one that is the log cabin, but farther away from the lodge?

GS: Okay, as you're going down...?

JD: As you drive in and you make all the circle all the way back, then the Governor's Cabin was the one next to the end.

GS: Okay.

JD: Anyway, I think this is a little history that you ought to know too.

LD: I thought the log one was the Governor's Cabin.

JD: Maybe it was, hon. I thought the log one was the one next to it. Never mind about my tale.

GS: Okay.

JD: There were remnants of the Civil War still going on in the 1930's. Following the Civil War, no black person, or negro, was allowed to spend the night in Conway County south of the Arkansas River. The first negroes that I ever knew that spent the night was Mrs. Davies' cook, and the Hudson's--the Hudsons came every summer from Pine Bluff and spent several weeks up here and they brought their cook. Now she had a tent out in the yard that she stayed in, but when Mr. and Mrs. Davies came, their cook had a cot that was put in the kitchen. And these were the first negroes who had ever spent the night south of the river in this county. (Phone rings) Well, I'll go get that. Alright, where was I? I can't even remember what I was talking about.

GS: Those were the first blacks to be on the mountain, south of the Arkansas River.

JD: Oh. A number of years later, I was in professional Girl Scouting. This was for this district in 13 counties of Arkansas. We had a very difficult time to find places for our Negro Girl Scout Troops. I don't know whether we still have negro girl scout troops, but we did back then. To have a place where they could go to Troop Camp. So I called Mr. Rockefeller--no, I wrote Mr. Rockefeller a letter, and I said, "Mr. Rockefeller," I told him about the circumstances, that we were, and I said, "I know that you know that we own land up there, but I'm a little hesitant about sending black troops up there and I know if you would have them on your

place they'd be safe". So his secretary was a friend of mine and called me back and said, "Janice, Mr. Rockefeller just doesn't do that sort of thing. He just doesn't have people camping on his place, and he's out of town, but he just won't." Well, one day he called me and he said "Mrs. Davies, I'd be most happy to have those girls out there." So this black troop from Little Rock came up camp up here; he put a watchman on them 24 hours a day. Somebody stayed there all the time.

GS: So they'd be?

JD: So he knew they'd be safe. There's still this feeling. I think it's gone completely now, you know, because we have black people come to the park and camp and everything else. Of course, they had a hard time camping because he was doing so many things for them. He just wanted to do everything for them. (laughs)

GS: Right.

JD: But, I thought it was interesting. That was in the early 1960's, late 1950's, that there was still this uneasiness about blacks.

LD: Do I hear something squeaking? Is that this?

JD: You hear a bird.

GS: Yes.

JD: It's a bird.

GS: It's a bird.

JD: Okay, ask us something else.

GS: Ask you something else!

JD: Or have we talked you out?

GS: Well, no. All the questions that I had here, you've basically answered everything. I guess my last question

would be are there are more reminisces about what you did at the park, or things like that you want to tell me.

LD: Well, my favorite story, I guess was we decided we ought to have a little menagerie. For one reason, there were a lot of rattlesnakes there. A lot of people might not know what one looked like or what they sounded like. My Dad, he was the boss. He said, "I wonder if we could catch some rattlesnakes to put in pens so people could see." Well, that was just like an order to me. So we were surveying one time, and the same fellow I told you about, Atticus Black? He was the rear "Rodman" and had to stay back there so we could move the instrument up and sight it off back there and then he could come up. So he was looking around, and he said, "Well, there's the biggest rattlesnake I've ever seen right over here up in this bluff." We all got closer together and came back down and looked at it and yep, it looked pretty big. Must be 6 or 7 feet long and no telling how many rattles. To make a long story short, we cut a big pole about 30 feet long, something like that, because nobody wanted to get any closer!

GS: Yeah! (laughs)

LD: Then we cut some forked stick and we got that snake maneuvered around and that forked stick on his head to get him tied up to this pole. We used our boot strings.

GS: Okay.

LD: Course, the shoes were loose. Well, the snake started getting smaller--he was only about 3 feet long by the time we got him all tied up and safe. We came into camp with a live snake on this pole all tied up. We were the heroes. This was a Friday, which was the end of the work week. So

we got the snake and the carpenter---Mr. Gus' carpenter real quick got a box made with a trap door in the top that we could cut that snake loose and drop him in there without anybody getting hurt. And we were heroes. Brought a live snake. On Sunday, these....

JD: CCC boys?

LD: CCC boys--men. And one of them came in with a rattlesnake that WAS 6 feet long! Had him around the neck with one hand and wrapped up in the other.

GS: Wow!

JD: (laughter)

LD: No longer the heroes where we were concerned! I was master for a day--Saturday and Sunday that was it.

JD: Oh, there's another thing. Somebody got drunk and opened all the traps?

LD: Oh yeah. People were trapping and going on, and one way or another, for our menagerie, we began to collect bobcats.

GS: Oh really? Wow.

LD: We had 6 or 7 cats. They're still here--there's plenty of bobcats here.

JD: We caught one on our terrace out here last year.

GS: You're kidding!

JD: Yes, but that's another tale.

LD: Well anyway.

JD: They made cages for them.

LD: It was some kind of a holiday. Maybe it was....

JD: Fourth of July, or something?

LD: No, it was....

JD: It doesn't matter.

LD: Whatever it was, they were celebrating and this guy thought that he ought to turn these things loose. So he opened the door, and said "go on". Maybe it was the war was over.

JD: No, we weren't fighting a war then, Ladd!

LD: Whatever it was, it was something.

JD: Just make it the Fourth of July! (laughs)

LD: Alright, whatever. Okay. The bobcats were turned loose, and the funny thing was they all came back at meal time.

GS: Oh no!

JD: I have hummingbirds by the hundreds each summer, and I was using the great big quart things because I was doing 6-8 quarts a day. And something started coming and cutting the wire from these hummingbird feeders.

LD: Plastic. It wasn't wire--it was plastic.

JD: Plastic something or other. The things would fall down on the rocks and break. The things cost about somewhere between \$13-\$14, and after two or three nights, we decided we'd set a trap. The first thing we caught was a possum. The second thing we caught was a raccoon. But it kept happening, and finally, we caught a bobcat. I never saw a trap as full of anything in my life as that bobcat--it was big. And I couldn't imagine what I'd do if that was a bobcat that was coming every night!

GS: Wow!

JD: Because it was trying to get that sugar water.

GS: What'd you do after you caught it?

JD: Hated to, but we had to kill it.

GS: Right, because he's going to keep coming back. Wow--your back door. Goodness.

JD: This doesn't have to do with the CCC camp directly, it has to do with the mountain, it's settling, so forth and so on. This land was homesteaded by a man who came following a number of years following the Civil War from Long Island, New York. And he was a horticulturist by trade. And homesteaded this land that we're on here, planted trees, various kinds of fruit trees, and many of those pear trees are still bearing. And then, as did many of the people up here, lost the land for taxes--just couldn't pay the taxes. So, at some point, Mr. Davies and Ladd acquired eighty acres and then as they afforded, added to from time to time. This just happened all over the mountain. We have had many of the people from that family, all whom eventually went to California, and who have done very very well--have come back to see the cabin down here where we were this morning.

GS: Oh, okay.

JD: Because that was built in 1884. They were raised there, or their parents were raised there or something. They're just awfully nice people. In fact, they were living at the time the CCC camp was built over right next to the park, weren't they? Ladd, didn't you say you camped in their front yard for awhile?

LD: Yeah. It was in the park, and that was frightening to them. The house they were living in was on land that had gone back because they couldn't pay taxes.

JD: It was about that time.

LD: And they knew it. And when we showed up, Dad quickly calmed them. Said, "Don't worry, we're not going to do anything. You can stay here as long as you want to. We're not going

to do any development right here at the moment." That seemed to soothe them.

JD: But it was during that time that they had to leave. Like the Okies and the Arkies. I think it's interesting--the poverty, you know--the fact that there was something in that family here and they did very well out in California. One of the women, very charming, became very active in politics. It's interesting. Then right down here where you turned the corner, there used to be, up until they burned the house down about two or three years ago, was probably the oldest house on the mountain, except for our cabin. I think our cabin is the oldest house left being used now.

GS: Right.

JD: These people were named Westphal. And Mr. and Mrs. Westphal had a fairly good education--just barely made a living up here until Rockefeller came and then both of them went to work for him. They did very well. They had one son, Jim, who was exceptionally smart, and they sent him to school in Little Rock to go to what's now Central High School, but was Little Rock High School back then.

GS: Oh, okay.

JD: Then he went on and got a degree in petroleum engineering at Tulsa University. Now, he is considered one of the greatest astronomers in the world--teaches at Cal Tech one three-hour course a year and the rest of the time he brainstorms. He is supervising the building of this tremendous new--oh, what's the word, Ladd?

LD: Camera?

JD: Not a camera, a telescope, in Hawaii, and it's going to be the largest in the world. He has time on the Palomar

Telescope in California, telescope down in Chile, goes all over the world talking, lecturing, does projects for NASA and so forth. I'm always so impressed, this coming out of a background here--limited.

GS: Right.

JD: Well now, two years ago, I got a package from him. It was paper stuff pamphlet and on top of it was a little note and it said, "I thought you'd be interested in this. We're leaving for the Fiji Islands to go snorkeling." He had been awarded one of the Catherine and what McArthur? Gene?

LD: Catherine and Charles?

JD: Charles Catherine McArthur, Gene, just gave him the money to do anything he wanted to do. He would never make any reports to anybody or anyone--that was absolutely immaterial. He was to do anything he wanted to do with that money. Well, he has one son, and he is as smart as his Daddy is. Just got his Doctorate from Berkeley in he says Physics, but it's really Astrophysics. Did all of his experimentation down in Antarctica. I'm just so impressed with people who come out of a humble beginning. He went up here on the mountain to a one-room schoolhouse through the eighth grade. In the ninth grade, they sent him to Morrilton, and Morrilton says, "You're not in our class--you're not in our school district. You can't go to school here." Sent him home. Well, his granddaddy stormed down to the courthouse and raised unmitigated hell and he came back to school. They took him.

GS: I guess so.

JD: But it was after that, the ninth grade, they sent him to Little Rock to school. They were Lutherans and he lived

with a Lutheran family then until he finished high school. After we moved up here, my particular interest has been libraries and I became very involved in the one and it's had just the roughest sort of time. We've done everything we could to raise money to keep it open, really. Jim came home and he said "What's the problem with the library downtown?" I said, "Nothing that money wouldn't cure." He said, "I feel like I owe the library--that library is the thing that got me started. By the time that I had finished the ninth grade I had read 75% of the books. So he sent me a nice check. I thought, what a compliment. I guess his son inherited this land down here; Jim didn't want it, his father didn't want it--he's going to go to Hawaii when he retires and owns land over there by that big telescope. So, Andrew, this grandson, thought that he might renovate the old house and make a little money renting it out. He got figures on it that were just astronomical, so he said that he was just going to burn it down. But everybody took everything. They sold off all the doors, all the windows, just everything--they just literally took the house to pieces people buying things that they wanted. But this mountain was settled by a contingency of Germans--well actually they were trying to settle this valley when the Railroad. And the railroad got the Lutheran pastor and the Catholic priests to get people.

LD: The land grant program--are you familiar with that?

GS: Yes.

JD: For the railroads? You know the railroads were giving it in a checkerboard.

LD: Missouri Pacific is a land-grant railroad.

JD: So, every other square mile belonged to the railroad. And they wanted to sell the land, but they also wanted to develop the land to give them....

LD: Customers.

JD: And the last 20 acres we have down here is part of the railroad.

GS: Oh.

JD: I mean, was a part of the railroad. We were real interested, we were doing some work on the title and on that 20 acres we don't own the mineral rights, because the railroad still owns them.

GS: Oh, yes.

JD: I thought that was real interesting.

GS: I thought of one more thing I wanted to ask you--the Pioneer Cabin that's at the edge of the Park now, where was that originally before they moved it? Do you remember?

LD: It was on the area just about where the lake is.

GS: Okay.

JD: It would be covered now. That's why they moved it.

LD: It was in pretty good shape, at least the logs were. That's one of the last things I did.

JD: Did you mark those logs and move them?

LD: I marked them, I didn't move them.

JD: Oh.

LD: I marked the logs and made sketches of the sides, ends, and numbered the logs--marked them so they would go back in the same place.

GS: In the same place.

JD: By the way, that cabin was standing in 1854, when some people were still living right over on Airport Road, when

they came to Petit Jean and found this cabin already built and lived in it for years.

GS: Okay.

JD: The West Family.

GS: I found something. Oh, it was in the reports that I got at the National Archives that your father did. He talks about the Pioneer Cabin, and I believe he says they thought it was built around 1830.

JD: Could have been, when the West Family came to the mountain and lived in that cabin it was already built.

GS: Why did they decide to save that? Do you know? Was there any particular reason?

LD: Oh, I guess it was my Dad. He was interested in those kinds of things. Here is a more or less typical structure that was in good physical condition that could be moved, relatively cheaply, and might be a point of interest in the park sometime.

JD: And it would have been destroyed when the water rose.

GS: Right. Were a lot of houses destroyed when the lake was...?

LD: Not too many.

GS: Okay.

JD: But you cannot imagine how heavily populated Petit Jean was a long time ago.

GS: That's surprising.

JD: Mr. Westphal, the man who built down here, had little one-room shacks built all over. Let's put it this way, Mr. Westphal married a Jones and Mr. Jones was one of the first of the German contingent, and he owned 3,000 acres up here, They would rent out their land, and they had these little houses.

LD: He had, I think, 7 sharecroppers.

JD: Something like that, raising cotton up here. Can you imagine raising cotton and corn on these rocks?

GS: Wow. I can't imagine they were too successful.

JD: Well they weren't, of course.

LD: They raised a lot of cotton. I've heard it, but I don't remember exactly the number. But they raised the cotton.

JD: Course, land in the center of the mountain, or even away from the brow. It's hard. In another month when it gets real dry we won't have a blade of grass.

GS: Well, I guess that's about it. Thank you, I appreciate you taking the time to answer my questions--sharing your memories with me.

LD: Hope we have helped you.

GS: Yes.

ENDNOTES

1. The CCC Camp at Petit Jean was made up of World War One Veterans, not extremely young men taken from large cities all over the country.

2. Mr. Davies is referring to Petit Jean State Park here.

3. Milton McColm was a representative from the National Park Service out of the regional office in Denver, Colorado. He spent a significant amount of time in Arkansas while the parks were being built.

4. Guy Amsler, after setting up Arkansas' own State Park System, was the first actual director, or Commissioner. At this time, State Parks was under the Game and Fish Commission.

5. He is referring to Havana, Arkansas.

6. Both Leo J. Diederich and David C. Hunter were landscape architects for the National Park Service. Each man did a number of designs for Petit Jean State Park, but both went on to do extensive work at other Arkansas State Parks.

7. Homer Fry was a landscape architect for the National Park Service. The Davies believe he lost his job because of his water tower design for Petit Jean State Park.

8. Paul Young, Jr., was one of the landscape architects for Camp No. 2 at Devil's Den State Park.