

**Clayton, Doris**

Dustin Norris is also sitting on the interview.

Katie Bell: We can ignore it. So—you said you found ten of them?

Doris Clayton: Yeah, well they came—Dwight and his dad came up often as he was growing up, and—so he left a complete record of pictures and all that sort of thing. So Dwight is very familiar with what went on up here even though he was born here. I don't know how old he was when he left, probably about three.

KB: Oh, okay. When they finished the dam construction?

DC: Yeah, in '45, and folks began—most of them left about that time. Some of them stayed on as operators down here. But most of the real Dam Kids left [laughs]. We're the ones here during the construction of the dam. And after the dam was finished, there were some others that came in with the operators and so—and they're honorary Dam Kids.

KB: Oh, okay. So when did you come down to this area?

DC: We—I came here—my dad was cafeteria manager so he had to be here most.

KB: All the time!

DC: And, because they didn't start building the houses right away, so they had what they called Tent City, you probably heard about it.

KB: A little bit, yeah.

DC: Anyway, they had temporary cafeteria and all. And we came up in August of '42 I think it was, and maybe it was '41, '42, anyway, we stayed and moved into what

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they called a trailer house, over in another section. Until all the houses were finished.

And then we moved to just across straight from here actually.

KB: Oh really?

DC: And we were here three years.

KB: What was—do you remember like your first impression when you moved to—

DC: Different what?

KB: First impression when you moved to the area?

DC: Yeah, my mother almost fainted coming up. We came up—a friend of my dad's brought us up to visit, and it had been raining, and the road had just been cut through. We didn't come up the way we do now, we came up—there was another road back that they brought you out down by behind the—oh, down where the marina is now, and that's where the cafeteria was, right across from where—just on the left where the horses are now.

KB: Oh, okay. Was the dormitory down there?

DC: The dorms were down there, and the community building was across the street, across the road. Set up on a hill, and there were dormitories everywhere. The women's nurses dormitories were up by the old hospital. Anyway, it was muddy and the road was narrow [laughs] but anyway. Then we came—we went into Knoxville usually, about once a month. Really had everything here you needed, but they went in there for

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major shopping I guess, and my dad used to say on those curves, he'd say "One, Two, Three, Turn!" [laughs]

KB: [laughs] Get ready!

DC: That's about the store—I guess this was—I remember the other places we lived at Watts Bar when they were building the dam down there, and we also—we lived in Chattanooga when Chickamauga was being built, and I lived in Corinth when Pickwick was being built, and we just moved right up. Now, Bob Keim I think started out in Norris. He's one of the—that was the first one. Anyway, it was, Westborough had a village, and Pickwick we lived in Corinth, and Chattanooga, we lived in Chattanooga when Chickamauga was built, and I liked every one of them, but I guess this one was the best. It may have been because of my age. When I came up here I was in the eighth grade. So, we had a lot of fun. TVA always furnished all kinds of entertainment. Not only for us, but for the dormitory—the men in the dormitories. I mean, they had a pool hall down there, and movies, all—softball team, or baseball team, all that sort of thing. And we had tennis courts, and we would skate in the community building, and I was always busy doing something. And, I think the boys might have got into some troubles, but nothing like boys get into troubles today [laughs].

KB: [laughs] wow. So your family, how many of you were there—in your family? How many were there?

DC: Now?

KB: Back then. When you all moved up here. So it was your dad—

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DC: Yeah, mother and dad, and I had one sister.

KB: And one sister? Okay. Was she older? Younger?

DC: She passed away in 2006.

KB: Mmm.

DC: Because my dad was supervisor, we had a permanent—what they called a permanent. And so it had three bedrooms, and a bath, and what everything had back then, but it didn't have any two bedroom—I mean two bathrooms [laughs]

KB: And that was right up here?

DC: Yeah, it was right across—let's see where we are—it was not down that way, I forget we're in the end, it was right across from the school. And as you come up the hill, that way, I don't know what that road is now, there's one permanent house there, and then there's the fire station or something, and then ours was the next house, where there used to be what they call a trailer house in between there. They were torn—and then up Welch Road was all flattops houses and they were torn all those down. It was quite a place. I think they said there were 5,000 families, I'm not real sure about that.

KB: Yeah, I've heard that it was—at one point—one of the biggest towns this far out in western North Carolina.

DC: Biggest town?

KB: Well no—this far in the mountains. Like, just in the area. It growing big.

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[to Dustin] Do you have any transformation questions.

DN: Oh, uh, well, I guess now, coming back, all these years, ah, what's kind of the biggest changes that you can see?

DC: Well, we really—this has really been some reunions, because this is our 29<sup>th</sup> year, and its just like we never left you know, everybody—the ones that we've found, of course, the 500 kids in high school and grammar school at that time in '43, that was the big year, and we've found about 325 of them. So—

KB: That's a good—

DC: So we're still looking. As a matter of fact, we got one here now that's new. Every year we find one more here and there. And, we just go over the old times, and we're just like we were when we were up here [laughs] we don't do the hiking anymore. We did, and Harvey Welch—he was a big hiker up here, and he is into wildflowers, and so we'd go way out on wildflower searches and he—I don't know if he showed you his book or not, he might not have brought it with him, but he did a wildflower book, and then he—

KB: I think there's a little bit in here [I flip through a self-published book that Harvey Welch had shown me about the Dam Kids reunions]

DC: Also made us calendars, and but Harvey had a stroke in March and we're just really happy he could come up with us.

KB: That's what he was saying, yeah.

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DC: So, anyway. Any other questions? We just had fun, we were just normal teenagers, we had Friday night open house in the gym, we had church in the gym [laughs], we had movies in the gy—high school, and that lower end where the Wildwood is now, was a high school, and the other one was the grammar school. And after the first year, they had so many 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders that they built that little fitness room in between. That was the junior high.

KB: You said 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> grade you were here?

DC: What?

KB: You said you were in 8<sup>th</sup> grade when you were here?

DC: I went 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> here.

KB: Oh okay. What are some of your memories from that time? Just growing up?

DC: Oh yeah, I just remember open house on Friday night. Everybody [chuckles]—couple of stories about that. As for me, we had—our principal, Ms. McCall was a civics teacher and on Fridays we always had to give an oral report—current event. And I never did like to speak in front of anybody, I'm more work behind the scenes [laughs] and so, I would have liked to play sick that day, but I wanted to go to the open house that night, and Mildred Williams—have you interviewed her?

KB: I—I just finished. Yeah.

DC: She's a character [laughs]

KB: [laughs]

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DC: She would come, and she might have told you this, 'cause everybody knows it, but she, being a Friday night, she would have her hair rolled up and a big knot, and did she tell you about that?

KB: She did—all them curlers

DC: So, TVA always took pictures of—a lot of pictures of us, and they always did that on Friday, so whatever picture you see, has Mildred with her hair rolled up [laughs]

KB: [laughs] Wow, that's amazing. For the – you mentioned you did current event type reports in school. What kind of things did you talk about? Was it war related or—

DC: Well, the war. Yeah, yeah. Something that would come during the war, and we had—let see, they had [11:01] all the time, four years up. Anyway, it was [11:08], we knew it was war time. And, we bought saving stamps and I think they—oh, we learned—we had a red cross building, and that's where I learned to make a bed properly [laughs].

KB: [laughs] Teach you how to fold corners?

DC: And the women knitting you know, socks. We never did figure out what they did with all those socks [laughs]. Then, well lets see. That one class collected scrap metal. I didn't, but a lot of—I think it was the sixth grade that was into that. And they had victory garden up on the hill somewhere, where all the families kinda got together and grew different things. And when we first came up here, there was the log cabin of course, but there was nothing else. Maybe one or two houses scattered up near what—

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Shuckstack—you know where that is. That's up on the mountain. The family up—not many families around, and so, one of these families had chickens, and I remember some of the women would buy chickens from them and—Robbinsville, I don't think—I don't think my mother ever went to Robbinsville, we mostly went to Knoxville, but the road as you know it now was not there, and we had to go back to the gap and go around that 18 miles or more curves [makes a sound like “sheew,” laughs]

KB: That's an interesting drive.

DN: Every time.

DC: Oh, we didn't think about anything like that. I'm sure our parents did, but I know—I don't know if you've interviewed Charlie Sanford, but I wish you could because his family came up here before anything was done here and they lived a place called Tipton. It was not far from here.

KB: Right. You said Charlie Sanford?

DC: Right. Now he has raspy voice, but he's—

KB: Yeah

DC: He has tales to tell I about that—living over there and—there were different areas around where, like Bee Cove and places like that where people lived until they could get over here. And then some of them that lived in Proctor, and the water took their homes, got a job with TVA and moved in here, so. But it was just interesting. Fun.



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KB: Yep. So each—for a class—each class had a different war effort project? Like you mentioned 6<sup>th</sup> grade collecting metal?

DC: Well, one class raised chickens out here—down here on that there vacant area you see behind the school. There was a chicken house sitting. And, I don't know which class it was. And then the boys, mostly collected the scrap iron. I don't know whether it was for one class or what, but then we all bought war stamps and—ten cents a piece [laughs] and the drug store that used to be down there, was—used to be down where the store is now—yep.

KB: Oh, where—in the ice cream shop? Where that is down there?

DC: Yeah, there was a barber shop, a bank, a post office, and a grocery store, and a meat market, and a little dry good. So really there was everything that you actually needed here, but to go Knoxville was a big treat, every now and then. And our movies were always in the gym, so we go to Knoxville, we might go to the Tennessee, but most everybody was just real—I don't know of anybody that had any arguments or, nobody got mad and [laughs] I'm sure they did, I just didn't know it. [laughs]

KB: [laughs]

DC: Anyway. [picks up purse]

KB: Thank you so much!

DC: You ought to have enough from me [laughs].

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KB: Thank you so much for talking with us, I really appreciate it! [laughs] we kinda snagged you!

DC: [chuckles] I tell you, when you get these Dam Kids together, they just go over all these tales over, as they say, they lie to each other all over again.

KB: That's what they keep saying, like "Now tell them the truth!" [laughs]

[15:58]

DC: We got one guy that lives in Murphy, and if I could just get him over here, he's—I don't know why he doesn't come, he sends an enormous fee, mailing fee, all the time, but he won't—he's never shown up. And I was just hoping he would come be, because he really—he was one of the boys that got into mischief.

KB: Really? What was his name?

DC: And—well, we called him Poke. P-O-K-E. Why? I don't know, but his name's John Caringer, and he was—where are you all from?

KB: Oh, Western Carolina University.

DC: Oh, that's right.

KB: Yep.

DC: Well, he lives in Murphy.

KB: Okay.

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DC: And he was with the power company over there. They know of him. I understand he still rides around in the power truck with them [laughs].

KB: [laughs]

DN: I was going to say, he must still be causing trouble, that's why he's not here.

DC: He tells the tale that's true. One time the boys were up on the mountain up there doing something they shouldn't have been doing, and I don't know what it was they did, but I think they were supposed to be—there was a curfew, and they were supposed to be in, and the patrol, the safety patrol, stopped them. And whatever they were doing, they decided to take them home, you know. So, they opened the car door, and I think there were about four or five of them, and old Poke was the leader of the troupe, and he got in that one door and went out the other one, just [laughs].

KB: [laughs] Just kept on going.

DC: Yeah. So. Really I don't think there was too much meanness up here. I don't know—I don't know of—you know, of course I might not have known about it, there might have been. They had a little jail down there somewhere, and I think occasionally they had maybe somebody had too much to drink—there used to be, a truck would come in from Knoxville, or from somewhere, loaded with watermelon, did anybody tell you that?

KB: No.

DC: And underneath they had moonshine [laughs]

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KB: Oh my goodness.

DC: And so they parked in what used to be the store down there, and the boys would steal the watermelon. Which, they didn't really care, because they didn't come up here for the watermelon anyway. And they'd haul off a watermelon, and we'd all get together and have watermelon [laughs]

KB: [laughs] Oh my goodness.

DC: They didn't know—we didn't know at the time that moonshine was a connection.

KB: The real business [laughs].

DC: But they said the fella driving the truck would just get out and fuss at them and not—and let them go, you know, so.

KB: Wow, that's amazing.

DC: There's a lot of tales. Well, I'm going to see if I can find somebody else out there. I'm sure—I'm concerned 'cause they got so busy doing everything else they didn't come in for their nametags [laughs].

KB: Oh no [laughs] they got distracted.

DC: Yeah. We had a fish fry last night, and it was really—Betty and Jimmy Wildon [spelling?] do that every year. And the, we have Spring Fling, we call it, in April. We come up. It's not a big crowd, and we won't be a big crowd this time, but I think there will be about fifty.

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KB: Fifty?

DC: And some of them are honorary, you know, they're family. We've had, some people see our group, and our shirts, and are so curious, and they want to know can they be a Dam Kid [laughs]. So we had a couple, maybe 10, 12, years ago that came through from England. And they were—they have a daughter in Knoxville, and she had—they come over to babysit and then they—then the daughter finds them a place in this country for a “holidays” they call it. And so, they came through here one time when we were here, it's been a long time back, and wanted to know what all this was about Dam Kids. We had our sign out there and he said “We just came from keeping damn kids” [all laugh]. And so, he wanted to see a room, and he said “well, that's adequate.” And so, they were going to stay the night, and they ended up staying all weekend, and joined our group. And they've come back, year after year, until about two years ago, and then Jean Birkenshaw was their name, and Jean is not really—well, she's not ill, but she's not well, she's on medication. And they have socialized medicine over there, so she can't bring enough over to last her to stay longer than two, three days and you don't want to come from England and stay two or three days and go back. So they haven't been, but we, they still keep in touch. We have—we're scattered all over and most—a lot—there's some in California, Washington state, Idaho, I don't know, different. But they, because of the distance and age now, they you know—mostly we're North Carolina, and Tennessee, and Georgia, Alabama, and Florida.

KB: Right. Makes sense.

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DC: I think you've heard enough of me.

KB: Thank you so much! Can we get one of these—these are just—permission for us to use the recordings and what not.

DC: Yeah.

KB: If you want to look over that—But yeah, thank you so much for your time. And if you think of anything else feel free to drop by because we are hear all day! Or send others our way, that would be fantastic.

DC: If you hang around, you're bound to hear all kinds of tales.

KB: I think probably just sitting out in the lobby I might hear some [laughs]  
That's it.

DC: What is today?

KB: Today is the 17<sup>th</sup>. I had to check that like three times today, make sure I had it right.

DC: I have to look at my calendar every morning to see what day it is.

KB: Yep. Alrighty. Thank you!

DC: You're welcome! I'm really not good at interviewing, and TVA has taped us, and I don't know who all—that's been with us.

KB: Oh no! That was wonderful!

DN: You did a lot better than I did.

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DC: [laughs] We do hope that gets the history out, and I think it's worthwhile—  
knowing about.

KB: Yep. Worthwhile saving. Definitely.

DC: Didn't realize—I guess we didn't realize how historic it was when we were  
here or anything, but—everybody knew the war was going on, and—

KB: It's hard to realize it when you're living it.

DC: Yeah, and when—of course when the war was over, and they got word of it,  
the sirens blasting, had all these things going.

KB: Oh really?

DC: Yeah.

KB: Was it big—was it just—a celebration type thing?

DC: Yeah, yeah.

KB: Wow.

DC: Mr. Slimmer, who was the project manager of Fontana, had a son that was  
killed in France I believe.

KB: That's rough.

DC: And there were several that lost brothers and sons and all that, so bad. But, I  
just don't know where they are right now. I'm going to go out there and round them up.

[laughs]

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KB: Alright. Sounds like a plan.

[Doris Clayton walks away. Dustin and I sort papers from 24:07-24:25, then Doris comes back to the table]

DC: There's some things in here that you might be interested in looking at, and may not, but this is one of our old newspapers and I've just got various—

KB: Oh, this is wonderful.

DC: Various things—

KB: Oh, so they had news for grammar school and the high school as well?

DC: Yeah.

KB: That is so cool.

DC: We were an accredited school. This was a civil engineers—had a—gave an event for us. I don't know what you call it, but anyway, they fed us a good meal [laughs]

KB: Good food, always worth it.

DC: Yeah. And—that's just one of our—this is kind of a gossip column paper [laughs]

KB Oh okay [laughs] Gotta get your news.

DC: Anyway, you might be interested.

KB: Thank you, yes. [Pause, then to Dustin] Oh yes, [25:18] The Village of Five Lives—that book that I showed you.



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Recorder is shut off. After a few minutes, Doris Clayton returns with another book. Considerable cross-talk and background noise.

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DC: They were open around the clock, because the men worked around the clock.

KB: Right.

DC: This was one of our teachers. [00:18.00-00:31] And her daughters still come every now and then. Ah, this is—I was up in—my husband was [00:43.0] and he volunteered to go to Ohio to a plant up there and [00:52] and when I was up there, a lot of people went from here to there. I mean after this was finished. Anyway, while I was there, this guy was a writer and did an interview with us for the local paper in Waverly. And so I met him one day and I said, “you know, some of the people from Fontana came up here after they left Fontana.” And they went to [01:15] Bristol Village, it was a retirement community. And so I said “I wonder if there’s anybody up here.” And so anyway, somehow or another, he wrote this article and I got in touch and come to find out the minister of the church was there. And uh, Paddock was his name. Anyway, but it was interesting, and then we became friends with guy, and we still go back and forth, but—

KB: What part of Ohio?

DC: This is Ohio, this is not here. He worked for this for the Ohio thing— somewhere in the area. And, I didn’t find any of them, but I didn’t know about the minister [02:28] We had a minister there and a minister up here and then church in the school gym. Everything happened in the gym [laughs]. And anyway—

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KB: The community building—

DC: He had that in there, and that's how come I found Paddock—Reverend Paddock.

[Pause as DC flips through book, stops at a TVA photograph of a sandwich assembly line]

KB: That is a lot of sandwiches. Oh my goodness.

DC: Yeah, because they packed their—because they were shift workers and they worked all night. You pick up your package and you know—

KB: That's amazing. [03:18]

DC: I've got all kinds of [3:27] a lot of dignitaries from other countries came over and they ate in the cafeteria with everybody else. And I've got a lot of—the girls did a scrapbook.

[Pause as DC flips through book, crosstalk can be heard. 03:45-4:23]

DC: We've had several write-ups [laughs, gestures to a newspaper clipping on the Dam Kids reunions] This is one of the teachers, and she just passed away a couple years ago.

[4:45-5:20]

DC: That's the drug store. The pharmacist was Dr. Barefoot. [laughs] He wasn't Indian, but that was his name. And—anyway—he came one time—and all—after school

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we'd all rush down to the drug store, down the hill to the drug store. Everybody had their flavors, and mine was root beer. One of the guys like limeades. So anyway, we all [5:57] sodas, and Dr. Barefoot became well known to everybody. So when he came up here—and some of them worked in the drug store. Some the older ones. Part-time. So when he came up here that year, he was just overwhelmed with everybody who knew him and it was really neat.

KB: That's great.

DC: [6:25-6:45]

[points out the grocery store and dry goods in the photo album]

KB: [points to hospital] I think the hospital is where they're talking about putting the museum.

DC: Yes, it's still down there, and this is where [6:54]

[talk about future museum in hospital from 6:59-7:59, difficult to understand]

DC: Oh, this is Kelly. He poured the first and last bucket of concrete. And, his son and [8:11]—I wish we could find all these folks.[8:23-8:34] This is little Harvey. This was our interview from TVA.

KB: Oh, okay.

DC: That's Harvey. Had a blueberry farm. Pick your own blueberry farm. That was real fun. He might have told this, but I doubt it. We had out in front of our house, three blueberry bushes, and used to get a lot of blueberries off them. And he became

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acquainted with Harvey, he had a blueberry pick your own farm. And so he and my husband got together and they were, you know, talking so long and all this stuff and [19:15] and they talked a while, and finally Harvey said, “how many blueberry bushes you got?” and Clinton said “three,” and he said—I mean, you know Harvey [laughs], “3,600.” [laughs] And he’s still got the farm, but he doesn’t do the [9:33]. He had taught at the university up there, and he had a Harvey Apple thing developed, [9:42]

[flipping through book till 10:20]

DC: Yeah, there were a lot of blacks. During the war there weren’t all the young guys, they were off fighting. So they had trouble finding these workers. But then up here they had quite a lot of Indians, and a lot of blacks, and I don’t know whether you knew it or not, but they had their own separate village”

KB: No, I didn’t.

DC: They had everything they needed there. Do you know where the hospital is?

KB: Yeah.

DC: Across from that they had a school house, and everything, just like here. And—we’ve been trying to find some of them, but we hadn’t had any luck because they weren’t in management, and they probably didn’t [11:02]

KB: More difficult records?

DC: They had a separate cafeteria and everything, and separate dormitories, and all that stuff back then.

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[stopped transcription at 11:54.0]

END OF INTERVIEW

Katie E. Bell

12/5/2014