

An Interview with

**David A. Dix**

at his home in  
Eminence, Missouri

**05 August 1998**

interviewed by Will Sarvis



Oral History Program  
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## PREFACE

David A. Dix was born on October 8<sup>th</sup>, 1932 in Shannon County, Missouri, and comes from a long native ancestry which he describes in the following account. I contacted Mr. Dix on the recommendation of Lynn Morrow, who learned of my interest in the establishment of the Ozark Scenic National Riverways (OSNR.) But the following pages contain Mr. Dix's observations on many subjects associated with Shannon, Carter, and other eastern Missouri Ozark counties. These include his experience as a johnboat river guide during his youth, the controversial Army Corps proposal of the 1940s and 1950s to possibly impound the Current and Jacks Fork rivers, the old custom of "grandmawing" timber in Shannon County, the Pioneer Forest, early OSNR land acquisition, and the wild horse issue of recent years. Of note is a particularly rich description of the old open range in Shannon County. Finally, because of Mr. Dix's long involvement with Republican Party politics, I ended the interview by asking him about this topic.

The interview was recorded on Sony type I (normal bias) audio cassettes, using a Marantz PMD-222 manual recorder (set on automatic recording level) and a Shure VP64 omnidirectional microphone attached to a floor stand. No interference compromises the recording, and the audio quality is good throughout.

The following transcript represents a faithful rendering of the entire oral history interview. Minor stylistic alterations -- none of factual consequence -- have been made as part of a general transcription policy. Any use of brackets [ ] indicates editorial insertions not found on the original audio recordings. Parentheses ( ) are used to indicate laughter or a spoken aside evident from the speaker's intonation. Quotation marks [" "] indicate speech depicting dialogue, or words highlighted for the usual special purposes (such as indicating irony). Double dashes [--] and ellipses [ . . . ] are also used as a stylistic method in an attempt to capture nuances of dialogue or speech patterns. Words are *italicized* when emphasized in speech. Although substantial care has been taken to render this transcript as accurately as possible, any remaining errors are the responsibility of the editor, Will Sarvis.



WS: I'm here in Shannon County with Mr. David A. Dix. We're going to talk about Current River and Jacks Fork, and general land use history, I guess. And maybe if we've got time or the inclination we can get into politics a little bit. First of all, I just wanted to ask you for your birth date, Mr. Dix.

DD: October 8<sup>th</sup>, 1932.

WS: Okay. And were you born here in Shannon County?

DD: I was born on this property.

WS: Is that right?

DD: Yes. Down where my mother still lives. Not the same house, but the same property.

WS: Well, we've been talking a little bit about family history. Maybe you could give me kind of a background on that, about how far back your ancestors go in Shannon County.

DD: My great-great-grandfather on my mother's side was here in the 1850s. I don't know exactly what date. Then, during the Civil War, they were burned out and left. They got refuge around Rolla in Phelps County, where the Union headquarters were. But then my great-grandfather and two of his brothers came back to Shannon County in about 1870. We've been here every since.

This great-grandfather, William Henry -- who had served in the Union army, the Union cavalry -- when he first came back he homesteaded just out southeast of Eminence. Over the years he owned lots of different farms. He seemed to buy, especially, old run down farms and then work and get them cleared up and built up, and then sell them and do it all over again. He owned this property here. It was, I guess, one

of the next to the last property he owned. He built the old house that I tore down just a few years ago.

But then his son, my grandfather, had cleared up a farm on Current River, about a mile and a half from here. When my mother was -- I think she was just about four years old, which would have made this about 1916 or something -- father and son traded farms. Grandpa moved over here on this property and lived here till he died. I bought the place after both grandparents had died. The old house down there, my children were the fifth generation on the Powell side to live in that house. I hated to tear the house down, but it got to the point to fix it up would have been more or as much as building a new one, so we just built this house and tore the old one down. We got to use part of the old siding from the old house to panel the basement and stuff, so we're keeping some of it.

WS: Were most of your ancestors in this area farmers?

DD: Yes, the Powells were farmers. The Orchard side, on my dad's side, they were farmers and some of them held public office here in the county. In fact, my great grandfather Orchard was a state senator from this district back, I don't even know what year it was; early 1900s. The Dix side of the family; Grandpa Dix, he worked some on farms, but he was always working for someone else. You may have heard about Colonel Tory that had a lot of property down in Oregon County, near Koshkonong. Tory's Ranch. He tried to get the state capital when burned back in the early 1900s, I guess. He had some success in getting people to look at it. But at any rate, he had this ranch down there and a lot of cattle, and grew a lot of fruit down there. My grandfather was one of his foremans for a while.



[tape meter, 50]

Old Colonel Tory was a Spanish American War veteran, and he tried to hire Spanish American War veterans for his workers. He called them Colonel Tory's Rough Riders.

But the Powells, they were farmers, timber workers. They just did a little bit of everything. They owned sawmills. One of my grandfathers was a farmer and had a grist mill and a steam sawmill, and also a blacksmith shop and built wagons. I used to help -- *thought* I was helping; tried to, in his shop -- but I probably wasn't as much help as I was hindrance. I had given to me just the other day an old wagon hub with three spokes left with it and part of a wooden rim, that my granddad had made. I just got that last week. It's a little keepsake.

WS: You mention timber workers -- were any of your ancestors involved with this industrial logging that came through here?

DD: They were not really connected with the mills or anything, but they did work hauling timber to the railroads and to the river. My granddad Powell, he used to contract with cutters and stuff to haul the ties to the riverbank, where they would put them in and then later make rafts and raft them down the river. He did a lot of tie hacking and cutting wood for his father. His father would buy a tract of land. They would hire men to cut the timber. Of course, they didn't even take it to a sawmill. They just hacked the ties out with broad axes. And Grand Dad usually would kind of oversee it for his dad. He was quite proud of his ability with a broad ax.

WS: When you were a boy, do you remember any of the early tourism associated with the Bales Boat Company and that kind of thing?

DD: Walter Bales and his father started the business. Dave Bales, who was state representative and state senator at one time was married to my grand dad's sister. So there's a little bit of a relationship there. (laughs) Walter, his son, was a cousin. I just remember when they started it. It was going on. From the time I remember it was very hard times and didn't pay much, but the people that worked for them were awful glad to get the work. Later then, after I was a teenager I worked for them. Back in those days you had guides run fishing boats or commissary boats. You had to have a license from the state. So we were registered, licensed guides. When I was running we got \$8 a day and room and board. The room was a tent and our board was what we cooked for ourselves over a campfire. But it was pretty good. The pay was, I thought, very good. I was almost ashamed to take it for doing something that I liked to do so well.

WS: So you were actually involved with running the boats.

DD: I did guide the boats for a couple of years. Even after I got out of the navy in '58, I didn't guide or run any boats, but I did drive cars for the fishermen to pick up their cars when they put in and take them to the take out point. I did that part time for a couple of years, even after my wife and I were married. Back in those days, when I was running boats, this was the late '40s; '49 or '50. We only had one fishing guide that was allowed to use an outboard motor. Tommy Rowlett was an old timer and had built most of Bales' boats for them. He had a motor and used it, but the rest of the guides didn't. A few of the commissary guides had motors to put on their commissaries, but not very many. If you used your own motor you got \$10 a day instead of \$8.

[tape meter, 100]

But those old boats, the old johnboats; they were heavy, wooden boats, made like a barge. They weren't made for an outboard motor. The ones that they did run, they just fastened a block of wood on the back to stick up enough to hang a motor on. You could kind of control the boat going downstream, but those five, seven horse motors didn't do much going upstream with those old boats.

Now Tommy Ratliff, he built his; of course, built a little different. It was what we used to refer to as a motorboat, the style it was built in. In fact, my son has one of the last boats. I guess it probably was the last wooden johnboat made by Bales Boating Company. It's the motorboat style. Later they all went to that style.

WS: Were these visitors from Kansas City and St. Louis?

DD: They were from all over. The first trip I ever ran was an old man, Al Fair. He was, I thought, pretty old at the time. I don't know; he was probably at least in his seventies, I would think. But he was president of International Shoe Company. He'd come down here with Bales, and had been floating with them ever since the beginning, I guess. He was quite a character. I had the honor of running him the first trip I ever ran. He had me scared to death. I knew if I sunk that boat he was so old he would have drowned in a minute. (laughs) But he knew the river better than any guides. He could tell us where the bad spots were.

And the river was different than it is now. Honestly, there was more water in the river then, and it flowed a lot faster. Where you could see back up the river quite a ways, you could look and it looked like a series of stair steps where there'd be a pool of water, then a swift chute, then another pool. Now, then, you look back up over that same stretch

of river, and it looks like it's almost flat. The whole character of the river has even changed since then. I don't know; a lot of it, there are not the logs and stuff in the river like there used to be for the current to wash out around and dig out channels and stuff. But there were some tough places to run back in those days.

WS: So there were more snags in the river.

DD: Yes, lots more. Snags and rocks. I don't know what's caused the change, really. In the early days of the canoe business, some of the canoe operators would pull a lot of these root wads and stuff out of the river just to keep from getting their canoes torn up. I don't know if that's part of it that's contributed to it or what. But it's not like it used to be. And we had certain places on the river that always -- just perpetually, year after year -- were hard to run. Bland Chute was one that comes to mind, between here and Round Springs. Larkin's Rootwad down below Powder Mill. That was a rough one. The river could get up and change course, and everything, but Larkin's Rootwad and Bland Chute never seemed to get any better. (laughs) They always stayed bad. And now, you can just float through one without ever putting a paddle in the water, almost.

WS: I wonder if some of those snags might have come from all the logging that had gone on, some years earlier?

DD: Well, it's possible; and they probably did. Although, when they were rafting -- floating ties and logs down the river, and then later building rafts out of them -- those rafters took a lot of that stuff out so they could get their rafts through.

[tape meter, 150]

In fact, they would dynamite some of the root wads and things out of the river to make it easier to get their rafts through. But some of those logs that would get in there -- I know of one particular log down here above the mouth of Sutton's Creek, that I learned to swim around. It laid up and down the river; no limbs on it, just a log. I guess the roots or something are still anchored. Part of that log is still there. The water is not as deep around it as it used to be, or at least not as deep as I remember it. Of course, to a seven or eight year old kid it was pretty deep. (laughs) But it was. There was just a lot more. Even after I got older it was deeper around that. Part of that old log is still in that river, for sixty years. It's unbelievable.

WS: You were talking about running boats in the later '40s. Wasn't that about the time the Army Corps was talking about damming the Current River?

DD: They started that probably even back in the '30s. But in the early '40s, prior to World War II, they even did a survey. The Army Corps of Engineers surveyed for a dam at Blair's Creek on the Current River. There was a lot of opposition to that. In fact, some parts up and down the river it was even almost dangerous to mention where you stood on the dam issue. Anyway, I guess they just scrapped their survey. They never followed through with any effort to dam it any more that I ever knew of after that. But I think that was about the second go-round that they'd done. This Dave Bales (whose father, Walter, helped start Bales Boating Company), he was in the state legislature then, and he was the one that was instrumental in fighting this dam issue at the time.

They were wanting to build two dams, one at Blair's Creek and one down about Doniphan somewhere. I guess Doniphan was really maybe one of the bitter fights, was

down in that area, from the stories I heard. They split the people. Where up in here, I'm sure there were people that supported it too, but most of them seemed to be against it. I was just a kid. I was actually kind of scared of the whole thing, because I just thought they could build that thing overnight and we'd all be flooded. (laughs) They told stories that the water would be thirty feet deep over the courthouse yard here in Eminence. I don't think it probably would have even *covered* Eminence, according to their survey, although it would have been sitting pretty much on the banks of the lake.

WS: You mentioned you got out of the navy in 1958?

DD: '58, yes.

WS: And did you come right back here to Shannon County?

DD: Yes. I went in February of '52 during the Korean War. It wasn't that I was that patriotic, I don't guess, but the draft was about to get me and I didn't want to serve in the infantry.

**[tape meter, 200]**

So I went in the navy. I got out and came back in '58. I really was considering staying twenty years. It was quite an involved plan that I had. I couldn't get early release for some more duty that I wanted. They wouldn't release me early from the Pentagon, so I took my discharge and came home. I was going to go back out to Washington, D.C., and enlist, and had this friend over in the Pentagon who was going to pick me up some recruiters and assign me overseas. But I had several months I could stay without losing time or losing my raise or time in service. Before I got back in I met my wife and I never did get back.

But there never was a doubt in my mind, of all the places I visited and everything, during that six and a half years. Some of the visits weren't much of a visit, but I at least set foot on five of the seven continents. I saw some awful pretty places and interesting things, but I always knew that once I got out I was coming back to Shannon County.

This is where I belong. And I did. I've been here ever since.

WS: I guess when you got back there was quite a bit of talk about the Park Service coming into this area.

DD: Not long after that; probably '59 or '60, somewhere along there. I don't know who introduced it and all, but it was a National Monument idea. We organized pretty well and fought that issue. Our motto was "Monument No." They turned it down. Later the thing kind of evolved, and they came up then with this Ozark National Scenic Riverways, which was the first park of this type in the nation, is the way I understand it.

WS: Do you remember an organization called the Current and Eleven Point River Association?

DD: You know, I don't even remember the name of the organization, but I'm sure that was probably the one that was fighting this monument, that I helped nail up "Monument No" signs for and everything. I stuffed envelopes. I'm sure that was the same organization, but I just didn't even remember that it had a name. I know that we were pretty well organized, though.

WS: Was this the same one where Reverend Vincent Bucher was involved in it?

DD: Yes.

WS: That would have been the one, then.

DD: Yes, he was part of that. And, like I say, we go the monument stopped, but we didn't get the park stopped. We fought that too, unsuccessfully.

WS: Do you remember, there for one term of Congress; in the 1961 Congress, there was an alternative bill. People called it the Forest Service bill.

**[tape meter, 250]**

DD: Yes.

WS: It was sponsored by Congressman Tom Curtis in St. Louis. It was sort of a way to offer an alternative to the Park Service bill. Do you remember that?

DD: Yes. I don't remember a whole lot about the details, except it was Forest Service. It would have been a multiple use plan of the river, where we felt the monument [and later Park Service plan] was too restrictive in all matters, all ways. Although we preferred for them to just go on and leave us alone. The organization itself, and several of the members, felt, "If we had to have something, that this Forest [Service] bill would be better." But it was not too well received by a lot of people, either. It didn't get very far. In fact, we even had some signs made up, "Monument No, Forestry Yes." I put some of those up. I'd forgotten all about that. (laughs) That's been a while back.

WS: Do you remember how Congressman Carnahan might have reacted to all that?

DD: Congressman Carnahan; the best I remember, we couldn't get a commitment out of him. We didn't know really just where he stood. Well, then Dick Ichord decided to run for Congress. I heard him myself, when somebody asked him where he stood on this monument. He said, "I'm against it. I'm against any action that will make a haven for hoot owls and bobcats for a large part of my area." Boy, that went over big here. We



didn't know just where Mr. Carnahan stood. He did come out late in the campaign opposing it, but it was too late this time. Ichord was already against it.

They had a parade here in town, horseback. A horse threw Dick Ichord (who was a candidate at this time) and broke his leg. He went ahead and made a speech there on the courthouse yard. That one little incident got him more votes almost as being against the monument. I heard people say later they wished the horse had broken his neck instead of his leg. (laughs) But, anyway, he was elected and one of the first pieces of legislation he put in, then, was for the Ozark National Scenic Riverways. He defended it by saying he was against the monument, that it just wasn't anything at all like that. I don't know; it's kind of nit picking. It's about all the same difference to me, it looked like. We fought the park issue too.

**[tape meter, 300]**

If they wanted to make a national park, I really wasn't opposed to that issue. It was the right of eminent domain that burned me up. If you're my neighbor and you've land you sit down and sell to the Park Service, that's between you and them. But if I don't want to, they shouldn't be able to take my land, in my opinion. They're part of the federal government. They can out wait us. Sooner or later they'll get it all anyway, so why force the issue? I felt that way then and I still do. I don't think it's right. And sometimes people say, "So and so, he works for the park. He's a park ranger and he's a friend of yours. How come?" I'm against the eminent domain clause of the Park Service. I don't agree with a *lot* of the things the Park Service does, but that doesn't carry over to the individuals that work for them. They're some of them I like. They're some of them I

don't have much use for. But I judge them on an individual basis. They've had some good people in here. They've had some that are pretty -- I don't know of a good word to describe them! (laughs) Obnoxious, a lot of them.

**[end of side 1, tape I; tape meter, 327]**

WS: We were talking about condemnation; eminent domain.

DD: I can understand it in certain instances, but it just doesn't seem, for a park or recreational use, that it's necessary. People in this part of the country seem to have a lot more attachment to the land than they do in other parts. When they live on the farm for generations and all; a person who doesn't have that feeling just doesn't understand it. The trauma and all a person goes through. Just to come in and say, "You've got a pretty place here. I want to take it for a park." And do it.

I don't feel like it was done fairly when they started out. In the beginning, if they had handled their land acquisition and stuff a little differently, and stuff, I think it would have made for a lot better relations and solved a lot of problems that they had along the way; a lot of resentment. But that's all in the past. They've got it now, and they'll probably take more before it's over.

In fact, Secretary of the Interior Udall, in one of his hearings on this park -- under question he finally admitted -- he said something like, "Yes, this was just a foothold. A beachhead, so to speak." I do. I feel that sooner or later the federal or the state, one, will not rest till they have it all. And I don't know; a lot of environmentalists are pushing issues now that, to me, are completely off the wall. I consider myself a *conservationist*, but I'm definitely not an environmentalist. And there's a big difference. I think natural

resources and things that we can use should be used, but use them wisely, sparingly. A lot of people don't even want you to cut a tree. In my opinion, a tree is just like any other crop. You plant it. It grows. And when it matures, you harvest it. Then another one takes its place. But, I guess it takes all kinds to make the world. Sometimes I'd like to do without some of them, though.

WS: Mr. Morrow seemed to think that you or your family actually lost land through eminent domain to the Park Service.

DD: My father in law. My wife, the property she was raised on, is just below Two Rivers on Current River. Their property was taken by eminent domain. Of course, my father in law fought this park all the way through, from the monument days on through. They condemned him and took him to court. In my opinion he didn't even get the value of his house out of his home and about 300 acres of land they took. He had one; I think it was eighty acres of land down below him on the river, on the opposite side of the river. It was not farmland. It had never been farmed or cleared. There was a lot of timber on it. But he had paid registered surveyors to plot that and set it up in a subdivision, and had sold some of the lots. They didn't recognize this. They said this was just a ploy to try to get more money out of the government.

Of course, when it comes right down to it, what are you trying to do with *any* of your property that you own? A man is trying to make a living out of it; trying to make money, one way or another, whether he's cutting the trees off of it, or farming, or whatever.

Some people that supported the park and all, got an unreasonable amount of money for their land.

WS: Unreasonably high.

DD: Unreasonably high. Like \$4,000 for an acre of ground with no buildings on it and no river frontage.

**[tape meter, 50]**

Some of the people that fought the establishment of the park got hardly anything for it. It seemed that maybe some of the first ones to sell got a better price, and the last two or three that sold got a better price. But the ones in the middle really got taken.

These old hills and rocks for farming and stuff are not much good. Like this place here. They could offer me several times the assessed valuation of it. If you've been here for four or five generations, you don't want to sell. How do you put a value on your sentimental attachments to something? In a lot of the cases that was so. A lot of people were wanting to sell just to try to make money off of it. But I think most of them would like to have kept their property.

If we'd had this big influx of canoeists and tourists like we've had *without* some control over them, we would definitely have problems. So in a sense, in that way, it's kind of good. I'm glad that they do have a little bit of control over what they do. But I still go back to that eminent domain part, and I just can't buy it.

WS: You say the way they went about appraising the land and all had something to be desired. Maybe you could go into some detail on that.

DD: They had a land acquisition office here in Eminence. I don't know what the guy's title was, but he negotiated and bought land for the park. In a restaurant one day at lunch, he was visiting with a bunch of people, and I heard him tell how much he enjoyed his job. He said, "I really enjoy just trying to see how cheap I can get this land." That didn't set well with me. His whole attitude. I know one family that wouldn't let him on the property to do an appraisal. They said, "Fine. We don't have to. We can just drive down the road and appraise it."

I mentioned my grandfather clearing up his farm over on Current River. A cousin of mine owned that when the Park Service came in. The appraisers were out looking at it. He told him, "Now, Mr. Powell --"

**[telephone interruption; tape recorder momentarily off]**

-- this portion of the land up here. This is all I'm going to allow you for river frontage. The rest of your river frontage overflows. So this is the only thing you could really do anything with as far as cabin sites and this stuff." Wayland agreed to that. One or the other took their pickup, and they went together and drove and measured this part on the odometer. It was a quarter of a mile. Their offer, he didn't accept it.

They went through condemnation proceedings and went to court. Well, they got in court. I think it was two cabin sites, is what they'd allowed. And when Wayland Powell, the one that owned the place; when his attorney questioned, "Do you remember you measured a quarter of a mile. Is this all you think cabin sites you could put on there is two?"

**[tape meter, 100]**

And the guy said, "Oh, no. But we just figured that would be all he could sell." So that's all they allowed him in their appraisal.

They got the property. They arrived at these things supposedly by comparative prices; taking property that compares favorably, similarly, that has sold. Well, they knew which property they were supposed to have compared this with. It was an old house, but Wayland had done some extensive repairs and remodeling on it. It was a good house. And the property that they had used for comparison was up on Jacks Fork. It was an old house that was falling down, and the foundation was falling out from under it. Wayland and his attorneys had pictures of both places. But when they showed him [the Park Service man] pictures of the property over here on Current River, they said, "Oh yes, that's Mr. Powell's house." They showed him pictures of the other house he said, "I don't know. I never saw it. I don't know. I never saw that place before." Well this was the place they were using for comparison prices.

After they take the land, the court rules. I don't know what the price was they got; I don't remember. But they sent him notice that the money has been deposited in an account to cover this, or something. Well, Wayland began to go to them and ask, "Where's my money?" "Well, you'll get it." They kept putting him off and he just kept demanding it, because it says it's on account. It got to the point that they finally paid him. He took this money, then -- I guess this was actually before the case got into court -- but he took the money and bought another farm southeast of Eminence there. And this land acquisition officer got mad and threw a fit right on the street there in town there one day. He said, "That will be last one to get the money before everything is settled."

But you know, what are they going do? Take your home and move you out and then let you just kind of hang in limbo for two or three years till the case is settled? Or what are they going to do? And I don't know if other people had that same problem or not. I don't know. But I suspect less of them got their money after that, until everything was settled.

Those type [of things]. They could have been a little more . . . I don't know a word to even describe it. But they could just have handled everything differently than what they did. I think it would have solved a lot of problems for everybody. Later on, some of the park rangers -- if you were wearing a park uniform, they had no use for you in the beginning. Like I say, I never really felt that way about an individual. If I did, it was for a personal reason -- it wasn't just because they worked for the Park Service.

WS: Wayland Powell was your grandfather?

DD: No, he was a cousin, but he owned the old farm that Grandfather had cleared up over there. And our family cemetery, the Powell family cemetery is there. My dad's buried there; my uncle, my great grandmother, and great grandma Powell are buried there. A great uncle. Quite a few family members over there. When the Park Service took this, they took all that farm -- with the exception of one acre.

**[tape meter, 150]**

They left this one acre out for the cemetery. As a result, I suppose the reason they did that, then they're not responsible for the maintenance. They're also not responsible for maintaining the roads that go in there. Well, that's just about a mile and a half from where we are right now.

When Wayland was living there -- of course he did a lot to keep it mowed and everything; cleaned up, pretty much. He had a boat down there at the river. He had a tractor and wagon, usually horses. We could drive right down right to the riverbank. Then he'd go across in his boat or he'd set us across with his tractor and wagon, ford the river. Anyway, we'd get the equipment back and forth. Like I say, it's just about a mile and a half.

Well this spring my son and I went over there. We took a four wheel drive vehicle. About sixty miles of road. Just about two and a half hours from pavement to get into the cemetery. And it takes a four wheel drive or you won't get there. The place is a *terrible* mess. We went in there doing a lot of work with chainsaws, cutting pretty good sized stuff that had grown up in those graves since we've been over there. The longer I worked the madder I got at the Park Service. They ought to be sued, taken to court, and either made to maintain these cemeteries or keep a passable road into them. But, it will probably never be done. And I suppose they probably did that with all cemeteries; left those out of the property that they took so they probably wouldn't have to maintain them. There are other families buried in there, too, besides our family. They're buried on the lower side; our family is all on the upper side of the cemetery. There are a couple dozen graves in there, anyway; or more.

WS: Seems like I've come across that name, Wayland Powell. Did he run for state representative?

DD: He ran for state representative. He served for years as collector of Shannon County. He was sheriff a couple of terms. He wasn't elected state representative, but he did run for it.



WS: I'm trying to remember the man he ran against.

DD: Merrill Baltz.

WS: That was it. That was where I came across his name.

DD: Merrill Baltz supported the park. He had an acre of ground on top of a bluff down toward Powder Mill that you couldn't driver into. You had to walk quite a bit of ways to get to it. It was on top of a high bluff. You couldn't get to the river from the property. There were no buildings on it. He got \$4,000 for his acre of ground. So he was one of them I was talking about a minute ago, and it was mostly political figures that got that type of money. And then Congressman Ichord ended up with his own private cabin.

The Park Service was supposed to have left a mile corridor on each side of the towns, which would have been Eminence and Van Buren for expansion or whatever.

**[tape meter, 200]**

This acre of ground down by Powell Springs over on Jacks Fork (I don't know if it's an acre of ground, but), it's not within that one mile corridor. So I guess somebody maybe had an easement. But anyway, our congressman ended up with a nice A-frame cabin right there close to the river. I don't begrudge anybody having a nice cabin on the river, but there were a lot of people who didn't think too highly that he wound up with that, on land that probably would revert to the government eventually, if not already.

They took easements on some of the land, but some of the restrictions -- I have a brother in law that owned some land that they took. It was small, just two or three lots. But they had a cabin there and lived there. He wanted an easement on it, and they wouldn't even let him have an easement. Of course, they said this would probably be in a

major development area. But a lot of people could keep an easement, if you wanted to put up with the restrictions that they placed on you.

WS: What was your father in law's name, that lost the property?

DD: John Colley.

WS: John Colley. I came across that name, too.

DD: My wife was a Colley. Her father was Canadian who has American citizenship, but now lives in Old Mexico. (laughs)

WS: He's been moving south all his life. (laughs)

DD: Yes! (laughs) Too much cold weather when he was a kid in Canada.

I don't really know in dollar amount what he got for his property. But just the way they talked, I'm satisfied it wasn't much more than the value of their house. It was difficult place to get into. You had a ferry boat to cross if you took a vehicle over. If not, you had to paddle a boat across the river and walk a ways. I always told my wife that was why I married her. We met and before the year was out we'd married. I said, "I wasn't about to paddle the boat across the river (laughing) this winter just to get to see you."

WS: I understand you had a prosecutor here for a while, Wendell Bailey, who gave the Park Service a pretty rough time.

DD: He was a congressman.

WS: Well, I think he ran against Ichord for Congress, but he lost. No, wait a minute. Winston Buford. I had the wrong name.

DD: Winston Buford. Well (laughs); maybe the least said about Winston the better. Winston was later circuit judge, too.

WS: Oh, he was?

DD: He was prosecuting attorney and then circuit judge. Yes, he pretty much asserted his right or local rights over the Park Service. They've tried to close all the county roads and everything going into the river.

**[tape meter, 250]**

In fact, this road that goes in front of the house here, they've had cables across the road down below, and drove posts in it. But the county continues to put a grader over it at least once a year all the way to the riverbank. Sometimes you can't hardly get over it, if you had high water or something. But at least the county spent some money working it within the year.

I don't remember any particular incidents with Winston Buford on that, but I know some of these issues were roads. I don't even remember; it may have been after he was judge that he made some of these rulings. I don't even remember that.

Now Wendell Bailey, he filed for Congress before, when Dick Ichord was in, but then maybe he knew in advance that Ichord was going to not run for reelection. But he'd come out before Ichord ever made the announcement that he was going to run. Ichord withdrew, and they did run. I want to say they had six Republicans in the primary for that. Several; I don't remember just how many. And I'm sure there were a lot of Democrats. But Wendell ran and was elected. Bill Emerson was elected that same year from the district just east of us. But then, at the end of that year, they did redistricting.

While they were in, redistricting was done. Just with the drawing of a pencil down through there, they almost cut both of them completely out. But Wendell, then, moved over a little bit in his area and let Bill Emerson run in what had been most of Wendell's area. Bill was reelected and Wendell was defeated. He ran against Ike Skelton, at that time. Of course, Ike's still in office. Bill Emerson was until his death; now his wife is in the office.

Bill became very popular in this area, even though it's a strong Democrat area. It began to really get behind Bill Emerson and support him. Then when his wife ran for his unexpired term and for reelection last time, they got behind and carried for her, too.

**[end of side 2, tape I; tape meter, 302]**

WS: Since the Park Service has been here, I've heard about maybe four controversies, enough to catch people's attention. One was this limiting of the horsepower of the motors. And then there was the trapping controversy. There was something over canoe concessions. And then, of course, most recently this wild horse controversy. I don't know if any of that caught your attention or not.

DD: I don't remember just what the canoe concessions controversy was about. But there's been kind of ongoing feud between motorboaters and canoeists, a lot of the time. They've limited the horsepower. This was really a controversial issue. A lot of local people had big outboard motors with jet units on them. They didn't want to see it happen. Personally, when I go to the river, I like to boat ride a little bit, but it's primarily just to fish. But you know, 100-, 150-horse motor going up the river full throttle, you don't have time to see much scenery. I kind of like to take my time and look things over.

I've got an old 35-horse jet unit. I guess that's good. I can go up as far as Round Springs, I believe. I think above Round Springs you have to go down to a 20-, 25-horse maybe. Then 40-horse below Round Springs. But that was a very controversial issue.

We've got these wild horses here; they're just horses that got away from people or have been turned out or something over the years. "Wild" from the fact that they've never been handled. And there's been quite a group. I can remember back forty, fifty years ago there was a group of horses. We'd called them wild horses, but at that time there were a lot of people around still using horses. We had open range, and turned horses out. So they weren't all wild, even though we called them wild. But I suppose these are some of the descendants of those same horses. Now, then, there is more than one small band up and down the river.

The Park Service decided, for some reason or another, this was not part of the natural environment to the Ozarks, and they should get rid of them. And even, I think, trap some and ship them out; or, I don't know what they did with them. But gosh, people were up in arms over that, too. They got Congressman Bill Emerson's support on it. He even got legislation through U.S. Congress. His argument was, "If you're going to remove the horses because they're not part of the natural environment of the area, are you going to remove the rainbow trout, speckled trout, and stuff from the river?" Because they're not natural either. Well, if you want to get right down to it, if we go all the way back to the beginning, I don't suppose man is natural here. Anyway, there was legislation to protect the horses and keep them here.

It didn't really make much difference to me whether we had the wild horses or not. I enjoy seeing them. But I was against them taking them out, because I always thought, "Well, this is just the first step. They'll get rid of these horses, then they'll stop anybody from riding horses and crossing the river with them." And we have the trail rides in here, and that's a big help to our economy. I'd hate to see them close down. But it just comes to a point where enough's enough, and I think we've taken more than enough here and they ought to get off our backs.

And people here are what I call masters of passive resistance. You know, you come up and tell me your ideas, and I may sit and shake my head and all and not say anything, then go right out and do as I damn please, regardless of what you said. (laughs) And that's kind of the way everybody is. They don't want to interfere with anybody else's life too much, but they don't want people to interfere with theirs. There's a lot of this hard feeling just to the government in general. That includes state government; and federal.

**[tape meter, 50]**

But there's just too much interference in our daily lives, and they don't like it. I try to tell people to look at the political parties and see what they stand for, but they won't listen to me either. (laughs)

WS: You mentioned the open range. Do you remember when that closed?

DD: Oh, yes. It didn't close until after the Park Service was here. That would have been in the, probably, early '70s. I never did let any of my cows run outside. Now Granddad used to let his cows run out, years and years ago. But I didn't have many cows and I kept

them. Hogs I always had. From the time I was in high school I had some hogs, and let them run in the woods.

Evidently there was a law on the books to close the range. A state law. But I guess it must have been local option, because every so often it would come up to a vote. It was always worded, "*Shall* we enforce the law to close the open range in Shannon County?" If you wanted to get a good turnout for an election you put the stock law issue on there, the open range law, and man there were people that voted that hadn't been to the polls in years. And we voted on that. I don't remember just what year, but we would vote periodically; several times, as I remember it. We had just voted on it, maybe a year before. And then, naturally, the Legislature closed it, regardless. People voted it down big. But then the Legislature came in and closed it.

This country was settled by people that were just subsistence farmers, mostly. There were a few bigger farmers. But most of them, they liked to hunt and fish and do a little subsistence farming to get by. And this was ideal. You could run several head of cattle in the woods. Lots of hogs.

I'd have people say, "Oh, you couldn't make money selling hogs that way." As long as we had open range I never lost money on a sow. When they closed the range I never made any money on them. So I got rid of all of them. I've had hogs that would run out almost all winter long. They would be like the horses. If you didn't go around them once in a while they'd get wild. Especially the pigs, if they'd never seen anything. I'd try to find all my hogs and take them some feed or something, at least once a week. Lots of mornings I'd get up on the first snow of the year, look out, and here'd be an old sow with

seven, eight, ten pigs standing out there. They'd come in out of the wood. The pigs were big enough to sell. They never had cost a penny to raise them. But those hogs, they knew where home was. If they needed some feed they were here.

WS: I guess you had earmarks for your hogs.

DD: Everybody had their own mark. I never did earmark my hogs. I let the word be known in some certain circles that they were all tattooed. But they weren't. I never lost any hogs, either. I almost lost some a time or two. When I found them, I'd find a pen, maybe built nearby where they were, with some feed in it. And they'd be way too gentle for hogs that had been out all summer (laughs), and all fall, and winter maybe. I'd lose a few pigs to animals, but you did that right here on the place; wild cats and foxes coming in catching pigs. If you had a good (what we called) a range hog, a range sow, she could take care of those pigs herself.

**[tape meter, 100]**

If they were acorns, they'd get fat on them, with very little effort on your part. And to me, it was just an ideal situation for country like this. There was so much timber. This county is a thousand square miles and three-fourths of it is in timberland.

But, I've gotten old enough now, I wouldn't want to get out and do a lot of walking around in these woods hunting my hogs and trying to get them up and stuff. That's really a little more than I'd want to do anymore. But it was just another way of life that's gone. Occasionally we'd have some hogs we couldn't catch. We'd go out and shoot them.



You mentioned earmarks. You knew all your neighbors, the people around, what their earmarks were. If you found some hogs with a mark in their ear you knew. My cousin, he did what they call an "underbit" in the left ear. My granddad had a crop off of both ears and a split in the right. My uncle, he just had a split in the right ear. But everybody knew what everybody's mark was and pretty well honored it. We had some people who didn't pay too much attention to earmarks, but you had to know who they were, and like I say, kind of keep an eye on your hogs, and maybe (laughing) get around to those people and tell them you'd tattooed your hogs so you could identify them. It worked in my case, anyway.

WS: They tell me in Carter County they registered those earmarks down at the courthouse.

DD: They should be registered, just like a cattle brand; should be registered, although a lot of people here didn't. They just, "Well, this is my mark." I don't know as my granddad [registered his mark]. When I first started getting hogs I wanted to mark some of mine. Granddad asked me, "What mark are you going to use?" I said, "Well, I guess a crop off of both ears and a split in the right." And he said, "No. That's my mark. You can't use it." (laughs) And I didn't. Even though he *could* have had it registered -- and a lot of people did -- I strongly doubt if Granddad ever registered his mark. But people from several miles around knew what it was.

WS: You were talking about some people didn't pay any attention to the marks -- I imagine you could modify somebody's mark and make it into your mark.

DD: Right. You would see some people would have their mark -- and both ears would be chopped all to pieces. (laughs) That was, I think, the reason for that, sometimes. But

there again, you had to kind of keep an eye on your property and sometimes keep an eye on some of your neighbors. Most of the neighbors were okay, but everybody knew who they had to watch.

People took that real seriously. I remember one time, years ago, we had a county treasurer who was charged with embezzling \$20,000; which was a *tremendous* amount of money, back at that time. I think he got four years in prison for it. The same term of court, they had a guy charged for stealing five pigs. And he got twenty years. So (laughs) they placed a lot of value on those pigs, and of course, teach other people a lesson.

WS: I understand if you had hogs out in the woods eating acorns for a long time, if you brought them in and you were going to slaughter them you would want to feed them corn for a while.

**[tape meter, 150]**

DD: Corn makes awful good pork. They used to say if you butchered them off the acorns you got "soft pork" (whatever that meant). But I remember one time we had (I think it was) five young boars. They would have gone about 200 pounds, I guess, and they had gone wild and we couldn't catch them. So went out and we shot them and brought them in and butchered them. I couldn't tell a thing in the world wrong with that meat. I've always heard that if they'd been fattened on acorns and you didn't feed them corn that you'd have what they call soft pork. But if that was soft pork, it tastes pretty good.

WS: You're talking about people stealing pigs, I understand you also had a problem sometimes in this territory with what they call "grandmawing."

DD: You've done a lot of studying about this country, (laughing) haven't you?

WS: (laughing) A little bit.

DD: Yes. You could go out and hew a tie and get somebody to haul them. They'd buy them at Winona at the railroad yard. Lots of people back during the Depression; hard times, and all -- and I guess it probably started before that, actually -- but from the time I remember it was back in the tail end of the Depression, just prior to World War II. There were people who would go out and cut them a load of ties; cut and hack the ties, or maybe split stave bolts. They usually brought a pretty good price. They'd haul them in and sell them. Supposedly this is where it came from, if they were ever questioned where they got the timber, "Why, it was off of grandma's property."

But my dad, when I was a boy, had a truck. There were people coming to him wanting him to come haul stave bolts for them. And he did. I don't know what he got paid; probably so much per bolt, or maybe a percentage; I don't know. Sometimes he'd haul ties, but especially stave bolts. And there were people that he knew and everybody knew they never owned any land or any timber.

Ties got to, one time, I don't remember; seems to be it was 85¢ or 90¢ a piece. And I thought, "Boy, I could make some money at that." And I was just sixteen, seventeen years old. I went back up there in the back field. This would have been on grandma's place, too, (laughs) because it adjoined Grandpa's property but it wasn't his property. And I cut the tree down and got it cut off for a tie; got it kind of blocked up. Granddad had a broad ax. I was a pretty good hand with a regular ax, but I'd never used a broad ax before. And I started in. You score that tie with your regular chopping ax down

the side, and then you take your broad ax and hew it off. I really don't know what happened, except that it was kind of like a barber pole. I kind of circled that log when I tried to hew it off. It looked like anything but a tie. It looked like a tie that had been twisted (laughs) real good. That's my only attempt at ever trying to hack a tie. There's an art to it, and I didn't have it. It seems like it was 75¢, 80¢, maybe 85¢ a tie that they got then.

**[tape meter, 200]**

And I worked all day long on that. I mean all day long, and then didn't get a product I could sell. But I had never used a broad ax. They were made different. They had a different handle, different bevel on the blade for a right handed person or a left handed person. I've watched people use them. I don't know how they kept from chopping their toes off.

But that's a lost art, too. I don't know of anyone around that could do that any more. Two years ago there still was a few old men around. In our centennial (of course, that's been a few years ago, too, now) in 1968, we had guys give a demonstration of tie hacking. Quite impressive.

WS: What did people around here think when the Pioneer Forest came in, I guess around the 1950s, and started expanding.

DD: I don't remember much. Let's see; there was another . . . I was thinking it was Pioneer that was here way back in the '30s.

WS: Oh, the Pioneer Cooperage.

DD: Pioneer Cooperage.

WS: Yes. And then National Distillers bought most of them out or all of them out.

DD: Pioneer Forest, and that was Leo Drey. He bought their property.

WS: Right.

DD: But it had already been owned by big companies and stuff, and I don't remember much opposition to that. Leo didn't pay his taxes for several years, and there were a lot of upset people because of that.

WS: Yes, I read about that. And it went all the way to the state Supreme Court.

DD: We had an old city marshal here at the time of that court case. Leo's car was parked illegal, and the marshal gave him a ticket. When he came out, Leo saw the ticket and said, "What's this?" This marshal, he was from Alabama, I think, originally. He was an older man, but he still had that Southern drawl; very polite. "Mr. Drey, that's a parking ticket." "Well, I didn't park my car there." The marshal said, "That is your car, isn't it Mr. Drey?" "Yes." "Well, that's your car and it's parked illegal, and you've got a ticket." Finally Leo said, "Well I'm not going to pay it." He said, "Mr. Drey? You may not pay your taxes, but you're going to pay (laughing) your parking fine."

Everybody that was around, that went over pretty good, because there were quite a lot of upset people that he wouldn't pay his taxes. I really don't know what the fight was over it, if he felt like it was too high. But it's anybody's right to protest, I guess. I guess the local people thought they were having to pay an unfair share to support county government when he was not paying proportionately enough. I don't know if they ever did get it up to the full value of the land, but as far as I know he's paid his taxes ever since then.

[tape meter, 250]

And Leo, he has enough land that the federal government, when they came in -- I don't know if they took *any* of his land or not, even though he did give them easements on a lot of it right along the river. But he still goes in pretty close, in areas, and cuts timber out of it. He doesn't cut any right on the river bank.

But that's just a fact of life, too. They'll do a lot different with a man with 10,000 acres than they will with one with ten acres.

WS: Well, it seems like one thing people would be glad about, as far as the Pioneer Forest operation is, is that they don't do any clear cutting.

DD: They are. Local people do not like clear cutting at all.

WS: I didn't think they would.

DD: Oh no. Definitely not. That would be a good PR point in Leo Drey's favor, locally, that he doesn't. I've not heard it talked that way, but. Yes, I got a permit to cut wood off of his property last winter where he'd done logging. They just thinned it out enough, that timber that's there is really going to grow, now -- which, to me, is the way to go. I could take you to some clear cuts that the Conservation Commission did back here not far from here. They did it a few years ago. And you can't walk through that; absolutely cannot walk through it. If a fire ever gets into it, I mean it would kill everything. And it will, sooner or later.

WS: Hundreds of thousands that big around [indicating his little finger].

DD: Yes. Some of them, several dozen coming out of one stump, which I don't think would ever amount to anything. Clear cutting may be okay, like in some of these southern

pulpwood plantations where they're cutting it for the pulpwood and planting back the same type of tree, or something, for fast growing pulp. That may work for pine or something like that. And the clear cuts here -- as long as it's not a vast amount in one bloc -- may help wildlife, too. Because deer and lots of animals, they kind of like the border areas between the timber and the open land. It may help somewhat on that too. But I don't like to see it wasted.

WS: This permit you got, is that like a firewood permit?

DD: Yes. Just for my own use.

WS: Like to cut the tops, where they leave the tops?

DD: Yes. They'd logged it, and then all these tree tops were laying in there. And it's just for your own use, not to go sell any of it. The Conservation Department, they still issue wood permits, too, but they're getting awful restrictive on some of theirs.

**[tape meter, 300]**

They adjoin me on the back side here. If I'd find a dead tree I used to go tell them and they'd give me a permit to cut any standing or down dead timber. But now they won't do it. It's got to be timber that they've gone in and marked to be cut, or else just tops from where they've logged. You can cut those.

But they're in the process of studying a lot of stuff. Some of their clear cutting is just strictly for studies, for the Conservation Department. The national forest, they clear cut, and I don't know if that's a study or just a practice. I think it's just a practice in lots of cases.

Right behind me here, where the Conservation Department adjoins me, they've made selective cutting. They've gone in and marked trees ahead of time and then left enough younger stuff. And the clear cuts that they've done back here, the one I'm thinking about was just a very small area; maybe five acres or something. But I understand they are doing some new clear cuts now.

WS: I meant to ask you, back when we were talking about grandmawing -- did your father in law or granddad or cousin or anybody ever lose timber through that? Like suddenly discover (laughing) a bunch of stumps or something?

DD: (laughs) Not that I ever recall. I caught some boys cutting firewood on me one time, cutting the trees down. They tried to tell me they were on Conservation land. But, other than that, I don't remember any of my relatives -- although this did happen lots of times, especially if they were logging an adjoining property. They just cross the line. You heard about that a lot, but I don't remember it ever happening to any of my family. And that was usually kind of selective crossing, too. It seemed like the bigger the tree was the farther they'd cross (laughing) the line.

And I'm sure a lot of it was just strictly error on their part. People here, over the years they did a lot of their own surveying, you know.

**[tape meter, 350]**

Step it off. Didn't have a tape measure or anything. Just go out there and step it off. I had an uncle that could step off a row of fencing wire. And he could be within a couple of feet of where that wire reached, *every* time. I never could. I just stepped too far or not far enough. But there was a lot of surveying done that way; kind of by eye-balling. I



don't know if any of them ever had compass. I know they never had a transit. And yet they'd go running their lines, mark them.

And the mining company, over east of Blair's Creek area, when they came in there, God. I think they ran into a lot of that trying to get deeds straightened out. And then when the Park Service came in. A fellow that lived down there by my father in law on the river, John Cooley, who ran the ferry. Oh, he'd sold those cabin sites and stuff. He'd measure in one direction for this cabin, come back and measure the other direction for this one; write up a description himself. It was in such a mess, and he got my father in law to try to help him. We finally wound up hiring these certified surveyors to come in. We found out there was about a twelve or fifteen acre corner, triangle, over on the opposite side of the river that had never been claimed. It was still open. And them just trying to run the lines and get it straightened out. But how could you homestead on land that overflows every time the river gets a two foot rise in it.

**[end of side 1, tape II; tape meter, 385]**

DD: . . . Clint Orchard just had an abstract company here. A cousin of mine, by the way. He used to have Shannon County Abstract Company when the Park Service came in. He did a lot of title work for them. He kept noticing around Cardareva Mountain, every time he'd get to working in there, this one section of land he never did cover for some reason. Finally he just got to checking into it. I don't remember; I believe it was twenty acres or something like that; twenty-twenty five acres. Still open land. So he homesteaded it. He has a cabin there now. He goes down there and hunts. It's not too far from the river. He goes to the river and fishes.

WS: So he's still around.

DD: Oh yes. He's in his mid-seventies, I guess. He's the only person I ever knew that's homesteaded land in Shannon County -- well, that's still alive. I knew some earlier. My great grandfather did.

WS: He's about the only person I would ever know of (laughing) that homesteaded land anywhere.

DD: (laughs) I didn't even know the Homestead Act was still in existence till he did this. Of course, I don't think you can now. Shortly after he did this they closed it.

WS: I'll be he knew Nellie Burrows down there in Carter County.

DD: Yes!

WS: I've heard a lot about him. He was a quite a character, they tell me.

DD: In fact, we got him to do some appraisal for us when I was on the school board. The Park Service -- this has been so long ago I can't hardly remember -- I guess they paid in lieu of taxes payments. The Eminence school district, it seemed like, got about \$3,000. Well, we talked about it. This land had gone up in value. Of course, they'd taken up all available land. We got some property given to us, too; twenty acres. We had to put a value on that, and we got Burrows to do an appraisal. But we tried to get comparative appraisals, and did, from him. Our superintendent took it to . . . I guess our congressman. But anyway, we wound up instead of \$3,000 we were getting about \$30,000. Over the years the difference in price made quite a difference.

And that's really hurt; take all this land out of taxation. But they did. And that was our only farmland, as far as row crops, practically, that was in Shannon County. The

Park Service took it. And the Department of Conservation keeps taking more and more land. They make these payments in lieu of taxes, but it's not ever as much as what it would be if an individual [paid property taxes on it]. We're a poor county anyway, and that really hurt us over the years. Right now the county is probably in better shape than it's been in years, financially. I don't know what the particular reason for it is. Except you notice how much they spend on our county roads out here, probably, driving down here. (laughs)

WS: What's the name of that creek out there?

DD: Sutton's Creek. A fellow by the name of Sutton from over, I think, Iron County; Madison County; over in that area. St. Francois County, maybe. He built a log cabin down here near the river. I don't think he ever owned the property, but just had a cabin there. That's who the creek was named after. I've talked to some of the Sutton family. Eual Sutton. He's dead now; and his father, Frank Sutton. I talked to both of them about it. They're pretty sure it was a relation, because their family all came over, too. But they couldn't give me much information on it. Eual said they were probably all horse thieves, so that's probably why they never owned the property. (laughing) They just used it for a hideout. But you'd have to know Eual to appreciate him.

WS: Coming down the road I noticed you've got quite a sign maker as a neighbor.

DD: Oh. Bo Barnes. I'll tell you. Oh, I'll tell you. He doesn't have much to do with his time, I guess. (laughs)

WS: Well, being a Republican in this part of the state, I wonder if you happen to have ever been acquainted with Marion Huffman, over there in Wright County?

[tape meter, 50]

DD: I did know a Huffman; I don't remember his first name.

WS: M.J. Huffman, they called him.

DD: Years ago the old 29<sup>th</sup> senatorial district met. Emory Melton was our senator at that time. He reached over this far. There was a Huffman that would come to those meetings from Wright County, but I don't remember his first name.

WS: I'll bet that's who it was. He was a trial attorney, and supposedly one of the most influential people in the Republican party -- not just Wright County, but I guess he was involved with the state committee and all. But Senator Melton told me that he carried Wright County over another candidate in the primary who was a native son of Wright County because Mr. Huffman had backed Senator Melton and not the native son.

(laughs) So he had a lot of influence in that area. But I thought maybe you might have heard of him.

DD: This fellow I knew; I don't know. He's probably my age, so he may have been a son.

WS: Oh, Phil Huffman. Now he's been the prosecutor over there. He's still around.

DD: Phil kind of sounds right. I'm not sure.

WS: So maybe it was his son.

DD: Probably him that I knew. But I haven't seen him in years. Of course, we got taken out of that district. Although Wright County, I've been area director of State Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts for, I don't know; ten or twelve years. There are fifteen counties here in south central Missouri, and Wright County is one of them when I

was director. But it was different than the political [boundaries]. We tried to keep politics out of our soil and water districts.

WS: (laughs) Right.

DD: Although everybody on the board knew what my politics was. I tried not to talk about it when I first went on there. Somebody found out and there began to be comments made along. (laughs) Good natured comments, you know.

WS: Well, I've heard a lot about the old South that they called the Solid South, being Democrat, has gone Republican. And I don't know the statistics on that. But I wonder how Shannon County figures into that. I know Shannon County traditionally has been a Democrat county. But I don't get the feeling that they have followed the trend of the Deep South, or maybe the delta, perhaps with the exception of Congressman Emerson.

DD: Bill Emerson has probably done more to get people willing to switch over and vote Republican than anybody in this whole southeast Missouri. In 1980 (I believe it was; yes) we elected a Republican sheriff here in Shannon County; Butter Reeves. And, as far as I know, it's the first time in history. Now, we had a prosecuting attorney who had been a Republican, but there were just no other attorneys in the county to run.

Butter Reeves ran and defeated a Democrat. The incumbent did not run. As far as I know he was the first Republican to be elected in a contested race in Shannon County. And at the time he took office he was the youngest sheriff in the state of Missouri. Twenty-four years old. He served eight years and got beat. He came back and ran against the guy that beat him, and got beat a second time. He came back a *second* time and ran against the guy that beat him and beat him again. So he's back in now. But

the year he got beat we elected a Republican southern commissioner. First time ever. He's still in office.

So now we do have two Republicans in the courthouse, which is the first time in history. (laughing) A historical thing. And I think people are pretty well satisfied. This southern commissioner, especially, is *very* highly thought of in his area. And a lot of them up in this northern district, too, talk about what a good commissioner he is. I've had two cousins that have served as sheriff of Shannon County and did good jobs at it.

**[tape meter, 100]**

But I think Butter Reeves, his first term especially was probably one of the most professional sheriffs we've ever had. And I think he's doing a good job now. But that and Bill Emerson.

Lynn Morrow probably told you this story. They were in here doing a Shannon County film, this SMS [Southwest Missouri State University] crew was. It was an election year, and boy, things were getting pretty hot. And they got interested in it, and Lynn began to wonder why was Shannon County such a strong Democrat county, and how did it go for Grant in 1868 (I guess, when he ran). And he couldn't find any record of it. Well, later on he was over in Iron County doing a similar study as they had done here in Shannon County, and he found a reference to a lawsuit where Shannon, Reynolds, and several counties over here were suing Iron County and the Iron County sheriff.

Right after the Civil War, there were several Republicans put in office, you know. At that time the railroad ran down through there; and the telegraph lines. That's where they got all their information. The sheriffs were given the election authority. They were

given charge with making sure that everybody knew about it. The sheriff being a Republican over at that area at that time knew this was a staunch Democrat area, just didn't notify the people over here they were having an election. (laughs) So, I don't know what the outcome of the lawsuit was. I hate to think it was a Republican that did that, but I guess politics has not changed a great deal (laughing) over the years. Sometimes it would be nice to have an election and not tell the Democrats you were having one, but I didn't know that it had ever happened.

WS: I guess you've been involved with the county committee here quite some time.

DD: I don't even remember when I went on the committee. Committee people are elected every two years in the primary election. It used to be you could just write your name in and they counted write-in votes. They don't do that anymore. You have to file and have your name on the ballot, or else file statements that you are a write-in candidate. Never being any Republican candidates here there weren't many Republican ballots cast. Somebody wrote my and my wife's name in for committee man and committee woman for Eminence. One vote.

So then they ran an ad in the paper after the election saying they were having a reorganization meeting and to show up. So I went up to see what it was all about. They voted me in as chairman, (laughing) and then handed me all this paperwork and they all quite. Come to find out George and Trudy Carter up in Bartlett had been elected. They had a shoe store in Birch Tree. But they were the only other two committee people in the county that had been elected.

That was about '78, I guess; '76, '78. So it was too late, then, to file a candidate. We got a guy to run a write-in campaign on the Republican ticket, countywide, for presiding commissioner. And boy, we worked that, and he almost won. It was unbelievable. Against an incumbent that had been in for twenty years. And we did it without any mud slinging or name calling or anything.

**[tape meter, 150]**

Two years later, then, Butter Reeves came in and was elected.

But I've been on ever since. Whoever wrote my name in gave me that one vote. They kind of hung a job on me that's been around ever since. My wife, she taught school, and she didn't want to get involved in it, so she dropped out the first time she could. And we have years where we have good workers and years we don't have any.

WS: I was going to say, it would probably be a problem -- at least at one time -- to find enough poll workers and all, Republicans, to serve.

DD: In the beginning it was just almost impossible. Most of them, they're a pretty good bunch now. We have eleven precincts. We still have a couple of precincts where we still have trouble finding Republicans, but there are people willing to serve as whatever [Democrat or Republican]. They just don't take their politics that seriously. And I've never had any complaint on some of them. A couple of precincts we've had people, we have no idea what their politics are.

WS: So they'll come in as a Republican whether they are or not.

DD: Yes. I think they're honest people. We had no contested races in the county this time. We've candidates for almost all the county offices in November this year. But we used



to, in lots of elections, two or three Republican ballots cast countywide in the primary. And even this year, with some hot races on the Democrat ticket locally that people are interested in, and no contested races on the Republican ticket, we still had 104 Republican ballots cast this primary. Which doesn't sound like a lot in a lot of places, but for here, boy, that's a thrill to see it.

WS: I was talking to some of the people in far southeast Missouri, like in Pemiscot, where also traditionally it was all Democrat. And they told me there, maybe in the '60s or the '70s, some of the Republicans would vote in the Democrat primary just so they could have some actual say-so. Did that ever happen around here?

DD: It happened right here this time. People that wouldn't think of voting Democrat in November will vote Democrat in the primary for local candidates, especially. Now, in a case where you've got Republican candidates, I suspect a lot of these people are going in, "Well, I'll vote for so and so because it'll be easier for my candidate to beat in the fall."

WS: (laughing) Oh, I see.

DD: But there's a lot of it -- and *most* of it is -- they vote for the person they really want to see in there. It has always seemed to me that Republicans here in Shannon County are more willing to switch over, because they've had to so much. They're more willing to switch over and vote for a good person on the Democrat side than the Democrats are for a Republican. And it's just because we've had more practice. (laughs) If we're going to have votes that count, in the past you've almost had to do that.

WS: So Republicans voting in the Democrat primary, has that gone on as long as you can remember?

DD: Yes. In fact, we've had lots of Republicans hold office in Shannon County, but they always did it under the Democrat label. If you really wanted the office, you ran as a Democrat. When I ran for state representative in '82 and again in '84 -- one of the reasons I did that was to get people to run on their own ticket. I didn't get elected, but I think I had a little bit of impact on people. I know all these counties are doing a little better now.

**[tape meter, 200]**

The first time, I made people look at my card and shake their head. They said, "I've never seen one of you people before." Over in Reynolds County, especially. Oregon County was almost as bad.

I even had that after I ran one time on the Republican ticket. I went back two years later. This guy says, "Why don't you run on the Democrat ticket?" I said, "Will you vote for me?" He said, "Yes! We'd not only vote for you, we'd elect you if you'd run on the Democrat ticket." And I said, "My whole campaign would be based on a lie if I did that." He said, "Well, I can't vote for you. You're a Republican."

**[incidental conversation omitted, tape meter, 209-243; end of interview; tape meter, 243]**