

An Interview with

Joe Dillard

at The State Historical Society of Missouri in
Columbia, Missouri

20 July 2011

interviewed by Jeff D. Corrigan



Oral History Program

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PREFACE

Joe Dillard was born in 1937 in Chillicothe, Missouri. He grew up in nearby Blue Mound, Missouri, where his family lived on a small farm on which they raised various animals and small crops. Dillard attended the Blue Mound School, a one-room schoolhouse adjacent to his family's property, before eventually graduating from Chillicothe High School. Dillard describes early life in Blue Mound and Chillicothe, including school programs, civic life, and other activities. After graduating from Chillicothe High School, he worked with the Missouri Highway Department surveying roadway routes, particularly a portion of what would eventually become Interstate 70. Later, Dillard attended the University of Missouri in Columbia, first studying civil engineering, and then wildlife conservation. Mr. Dillard received his bachelor's degree in 1963, followed by a master's degree in zoology in 1965, after which he began working for the Missouri Department of Conservation. Mr. Dillard details his career with the Department of Conservation, including several of his prominent projects and publications. He also discusses his semi-retired life with wife, Betty, and his extended family.

The interview was taped on a CompactFlash card, using a Marantz PMD-660 digital recorder and an audio-technica AT825 microphone placed on a tripod. There are periodic background sounds but the recording is of generally high quality.

The following transcript represents a rendering of the oral history interview. Stylistic alterations have been made as part of a general transcription policy. The interviewee offered clarifications and suggestions, which the following transcript reflects. Any use of brackets [] indicates editorial insertions not found on the original audio recordings. Physical gestures, certain vocal inflections such as imitation, and/or pauses are designated by a combination of italics and brackets [/]. Any use of parentheses () indicates a spoken aside evident from the speaker's intonation, or laughter. Quotation marks [“”] identify speech depicting dialogue, speech patterns, or the initial use of nicknames. Em dashes [—] are used as a stylistic method to show a meaningful pause or an attempt to capture nuances of dialogue or speech patterns. Words are *italicized* when emphasized in speech or when indicating a court case title. Particularly animated speech is identified with **bold** lettering. Underlining [] indicates a proper title of a publication. The use of underlining and double question marks in parentheses [(??)] denotes unintelligible phrases. Although substantial care has been taken to render this transcript as accurately as possible, any remaining errors are the responsibility of the editor, Sean Rost.

Narrator: Joe Dillard
Interviewer: Jeff Corrigan
Date: July 20, 2011
Transcribed by: Teresa Bergen

[Begin Interview One.]

[Begin Track One.]

Corrigan: —recorder on. This is Jeff Corrigan, oral historian for the State Historical Society of Missouri. I'm in the society's conference room today, Wednesday, July 20, 2011 to interview Joe Dillard. Also sitting here today with us observing is Amy Nicholas, a library science grad student who's doing her practicum here at the society this summer. Mr. Dillard is being interviewed today for the first time for our Missouri Environmental Oral History Project. Let's begin. Can you start by telling me when and where you were born?

Dillard: Well, I was born in Chillicothe, Missouri, in the hospital. That was on February 24, 1937. And I found my mother's diary for that day. And it was very straightforward. It said, "Had Joe today. It really hurt." (laughter) And I was the second child. And the last. And my brother and I are ten and a half months apart. Which biologically is about all you can do. (laughs)

Corrigan: So he's ten and a half months older?

Dillard: Younger. I'm sorry, older. Yes.

Corrigan: So what's his name?

Dillard: John.

Corrigan: John.

Dillard: So we're twins for a month and a half out of the year. My father was forty-six when he got married. And my mom was twenty-eight. And they were married for four years before she got pregnant. And the doctor told her, "Fern, if you'd lose some weight, you'd get pregnant." So she lost some weight and she got pregnant. A couple of times. (laughs)

Corrigan: Now what did your father do?

Dillard: My father was basically, I won't say retired. Well, let me back up. My father had a third grade education. He was born and raised in northwest Missouri. And his father would rent him out to other farmers to do farm work. And he kept the money. My

dad finally caught on to that and basically left home. So I think the best way to put it, my dad was basically a transient. He would go out into Colorado, do the beet harvest. Come back to Kansas, do the wheat harvest. Go through Iowa and do the corn harvest. And end up in the dairies up in Minnesota and Michigan and places like that. Then he started working for the railroad. And he came through Chillicothe. He met my mother. They went together twenty-eight days and got married. (laughs) But by that time, he was forty-six. He had some arthritis and [other] problems. And we moved to Blue Mound not too long after that. So what he did, he basically stayed home and my mom made the living. She worked at the Boss [Glove] manufacturing plant for forty-two years [sewing gloves]. And he helped the farmers around there and took care of us kids the best he possibly could. He was able to write. He would write me a letter when I was at college. There was no punctuation. It just started here and ended there. He had his own form of mathematics. He never had a driver's license. He never did drive. My mother did all the driving. It was a really interesting family relationship. My mother was obviously the dominant figure. She wasn't domineering because all the decisions were joint decisions. But it was just so different than what most people had in terms of when they were growing up. Of course, we lived twelve miles out in the country, so—(laughs) And I think at that time my mom was working, I think five and a half days a week, I believe. I think she only had Saturday afternoons and Sundays off for a long time.

Corrigan: And what did she do there?

Dillard: She was, she worked at the glove factory.

Corrigan: Is that what they—gloves?

Dillard: Made gloves. Uh huh. And she had become so proficient that they gave her a special job of repairs. Other people would make a mistake in the glove and she had three different machines that she sat by. So she could swivel between them and make repairs on gloves.

Corrigan: And was that in Chillicothe?

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: Okay. And you said, so Blue Mound is only twelve miles outside of Chillicothe?

Dillard: Twelve miles south.

Corrigan: South. Okay. And then, Blue Mound is, can you describe Blue Mound a little? (Dillard laughs) Its size, its, and did you live in the town or outside of it?

Dillard: Oh, yes. (laughs) Well, Blue Mound is a place is about what you can say. It was a crossroads. It was never platted. It was never incorporated. There are two signs. One's on the south side and one on the north side of Highway Z. And they're probably 150, 300

feet apart. (laughs) But the crossroads, there was a church and a store. And a schoolhouse. And I have done a lot of research on that. And I don't know, it's hard to define Blue Mound—

[End Track 1. Begin Track 2.]

Dillard: —in terms of just exactly where it is. What I define it as no more than a mile from that crossroads. Mainly because back in those days, they placed the schools two miles apart so you didn't have to walk any further than a mile. But our house adjoined the schoolhouse property. So when I tell the kids that we had to walk two miles to school each day uphill both ways, they can't believe me. Because it wasn't true! (laughs)

Corrigan: How many houses were in Blue Mound?

Dillard: Oh, you got me on that. I have a map that was drawn by a person of all the houses that was there in 1920. Most of them were still there when we moved down there in 1945. And I can get that number for you. But it would be less than, probably less than fifty.

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: Maybe less than thirty, even.

Corrigan: So bigger than a half a dozen. But—

Dillard: The *Missouri Gazetteer*, which lists the businesses in various places in Missouri, listed the, what I saw over the years, the maximum population of sixty. Now how they ascertained that, I don't know. But of course, back in the 1800s, there were, they actually had post offices there. Which was a real revelation because I was looking at a map one day and here's the Blue Mound post office, almost down in Carroll County. See, Blue Mound is only a mile north of the Carroll County line. Blue Mound is in Livingston County. And I saw that post office, it was listed almost in Carroll County. And I thought, what is going on there? Then the light went on. In the old days, there wasn't a building you walked to; it was in somebody's home! And that guy just happened to live down there, close to the Carroll County line. (laughs)

Corrigan: Now most one-room schoolhouses were out in the country.

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: Blue Mound was its own little town, but it was out in the country.

Dillard: Yeah.

Corrigan: So it wasn't just sitting on the edge of a farmer's property. It was in Blue Mound.

Dillard: Yeah. But then you have to be kind of careful because here's the Blue Mound schoolhouse. Sits on probably three-fourths of an acre of land. We owned three acres to the east. And we were on that property. There was one house right across the street from the schoolhouse. But the next house then was probably 300 yards on further. So it wasn't just like house, house, house.

Corrigan: They were spread out.

Dillard: Right.

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: Yeah.

Corrigan: Did you guys grow anything on those three and a half acres? Was it pasture? Was it—

Dillard: Well, no. Well, some of it was pasture. But my dad loved animals. We had basically one of everything. We had a cow. We had a pig. We had a sheep. (laughs) We had goats. We had chickens. We had banties. We had guineas. We had ducks. We had a small orchard when we first moved there, which was really nice. And our grandmother moved out there with us. We moved out in probably July or August of 1945. And she lived long enough to see the peach trees bloom the next spring. But it was really interesting because as the peaches got ripe, this cow, who had access to the orchard would eat the peaches. It was really interesting to watch. Because she would munch on those and all of a sudden the seed would come out of the corner of her mouth. (laughs) But we had a big garden. We had one of those, what they call the cave, the cellar. Which, are you acquainted with those?

Corrigan: Is this like a root cellar?

Dillard: Yeah. Like a root cellar.

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: And we raised a lot of potatoes and had a potato bin down there. And so we'd store enough potatoes to try to make it through the next winter.

Corrigan: Now is this one of those that was a, where there's a mound over the top of it?

Dillard: Mound of dirt.

Corrigan: Did it have a wooden door?

Dillard: Wooden door, yeah.

Corrigan: Into it? And about how big was the inside of it? Was it, you couldn't stand up in it, right? Or was it—

Dillard: No, you could stand up in it.

Corrigan: Oh, you could, okay.

Dillard: It was fairly spacious. Because we used that as, when the tornadoes, when we think there was going to be a tornado, we'd all go down there.

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: You could probably, I'd say it was probably at least fifteen feet long. And probably eight feet wide and maybe six feet tall. It was a pretty good-sized place.

Corrigan: Okay. That's a pretty big one. And how far away from the house was it?

Dillard: Probably no more than twenty or thirty feet.

Corrigan: Okay. So if a storm came or something, you could dart out there quickly.

Dillard: We always kind of enjoyed that because we canned grape juice. So we'd go down and open a jar of grape juice. Sit around drinking grape juice and play in the potato bin.

Corrigan: So you raised grapes, too, then.

Dillard: Oh, yes.

Corrigan: I guess I didn't—

[End Track 2. Begin Track 3.]

Corrigan: —ask what kind of things were you growing in the garden.

Dillard: It was mostly tomatoes and cucumbers.

Corrigan: And potatoes.

Dillard: And potatoes.

Corrigan: And grapes. Okay. And did your mom do the canning?

Dillard: Yes. Which was really interesting. Because she'd work all day at the glove factory and get off at five. Get home by six. And then have supper and then start canning.

Corrigan: That's a lot of work. It is.

Dillard: Well actually, my dad would almost always make the supper. We would help him around the place doing various things. And about four o'clock he'd knock it off and he'd go down to the root cellar and get ten or fifteen big old potatoes and start peeling them. We had a lot of fried potatoes. (laughs)

Corrigan: Okay. Was he a good cook?

Dillard: Oh, yeah. And he, almost every day at noon he'd cook fried bologna sandwiches. (laughs)

Corrigan: And I'll get into, later when I ask you questions about the schoolhouse, about your lunches and that.

Dillard: Well, let me tell you one thing about that, though. Which is really horrible. (laughs) After school I'd come home almost every day. And the big old iron skillet that we cooked the bacon in in the morning would be there. And it would have probably what, a half or a quarter inch of just good old-fashioned lard in it. So I'd heat that up and put in a couple slices of bread. In that old hot oil. And then eat them. (laughs) And not only that, but I'd get out a cup and put in some cocoa and sugar and mix it all up and just eat it. (laughs)

Corrigan: Without the bread, you would put—

Dillard: Yeah. That was dessert.

Corrigan: With the lard, the cocoa—

Dillard: No. Just the cocoa and the sugar. That was dessert.

Corrigan: Okay. Okay. Okay.

Dillard: Poor old Mom would have killed me if she knew I was doing that. (laughs)

Corrigan: She was gone all day.

Dillard: She was gone all day, yeah.

Corrigan: And you said she worked there forty-two years?

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: So did you only have one car, then? Is that because your father didn't drive?

Dillard: We just had one car.

Corrigan: You didn't need another car.

Dillard: I think the only time he drove is before we had a garage. He built the garage that we had. Which was just basically a small shed. On really cold times, he would take the car up there and put it in that guy's barn. And I recall one time he got out, one morning, and started the car up and backed it out. But that was the only driving he did.

Corrigan: Did he ever say why he didn't drive, or didn't want to drive?

Dillard: I don't know. I never—my dad was not a very talkative person. He was, he just didn't say a whole lot.

Corrigan: Did you have any type of lawnmower or tractor or anything that he ever drove? Or no?

Dillard: No.

Corrigan: So all the gardening and everything he did by hand.

Dillard: Oh, yes.

Corrigan: Okay. Now did you have regular chores as a kid?

Dillard: Pretty much. And not only that, but like I said, but what we would do, my brother and I, we'd get up and we'd help my father do whatever needed to be done. But we would start on him immediately. That we needed to go hunting and fishing. And by noon we'd wear him down. And he'd say, "Oh, go ahead!" Out the door we went. (laughs) So we spent most of our afternoons goofing off. (laughs)

Corrigan: But you did the work in the morning.

Dillard: Oh, yes.

Corrigan: Because there was chores to be done. There was farm animals, there was—

Dillard: Well see, see, we didn't have indoor plumbing. And we had to go out and bring the water in. We had to bring kerosene. Well see, when we first got there, there was no electricity. We didn't have electricity for about a year and a half.

Corrigan: And you said this was 1945, correct?

Dillard: Nineteen forty-five. And when we moved out to the country in that particular area, they were just converting from horses to tractors. A lot of people still had horse power.

Corrigan: Were they horses or were they mules?

Dillard: Horses.

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: I don't, there may have been a few mules in the community but not very many. Most people had work horses.

Corrigan: Okay. And did you have a well?

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: So you'd carry in the water each morning.

Dillard: Right.

Corrigan: Carry in kerosene.

Dillard: And had to carry the dish water back out.

Corrigan: How was your house heated?

Dillard: It was kerosene.

Corrigan: Okay. That was the kerosene.

Dillard: I'm writing my stories. *A Full Cup of Joe*. You haven't heard about this.

Corrigan: No, we'll get to that. He's writing a book.

Dillard: I'm writing a book about, well, my introduction to water quality, both surface water and underground, was at Blue Mound.

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: And the person that delivered the kerosene for our tank, we had a tank, and he would fill it up. He backed off into the grader ditch, which is right off the road. I don't, most people know what a grader ditch is anymore.

[End Track 3. Begin Track 4.]

Dillard: —and hit a fence post and broke off his spigot and dumped probably 150 gallons of kerosene in the grater ditch. Well, it wasn't very long before the well water started tasting funny. So this was in the fall. So we pumped a quart jar full of water. Set it

outside and the next morning it had all frozen except about that much. [motions about two inches with his fingers] And that was that much fuel on top of that quart of water. So we had to pump the well dry and refill it probably at least three or four times. Because that kerosene had got into the grader ditch and went underground and flowed into the well.

Corrigan: And did that contaminate your neighbors, too?

Dillard: No. It was just, [us], there wasn't anybody downhill from us.

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: And then the next spring, our cherry tree died. (laughs) So that was the underground version of water quality.

Corrigan: And how old were you at this time?

Dillard: Let's see.

Corrigan: A rough age.

Dillard: We moved after I was in the third grade. So I would have been what, probably just eight, maybe? Roughly.

Corrigan: Yeah. That's about right.

Dillard: Well, in '45, sure, I was [born] in '37. Duh. (laughs) Well, let me tell you the above ground. The surface water story. We had a dog named Flash. He came with the property. The people left him behind. He was just a Heinz dog, but a wonderful dog. Loved to hunt. I mean, we'd get the gun off the rack and he'd get the door. (laughs) Had a squirrel treed before we could get outside the house. (laughs) Well we were out hunting one hot summer day. And old Flash was getting hot. So he went over to the stream, got himself a big old drink. My brother and I thought well that's just pretty neat. Maybe we'll just get ourselves a drink. So we went over and got a great big old drink out of the stream. Then started hunting some more. Went uphill about a quarter of a mile. And there was a big old dead sheep laying right in the middle of the stream. (laughs)

Corrigan: And you put two and two together.

Dillard: Yeah. I said "Whoa, let's see, water come down here, that dead sheep, hmm." (laughs) So that's my surface water quality story.

Corrigan: So you learned quite young, at the age of eight that you had to—

Dillard: Right.

Corrigan: You had to be aware of the water, what was in your water, where it was coming from, what was—

Dillard: Where it was going.

Corrigan: Where it was going.

Dillard: Yeah.

Corrigan: But you were eventually able to get the kerosene out of the—

Dillard: Yes. I think we had to pump that well dry at least twice. And I'm not so sure that we didn't get down in there and actually wash it with some soap. I don't remember that for sure. A lot of people at that time had cisterns, which is different than a well. But ours was a well primarily. I think we had some water off of the house. But it, one of the reasons I think I know that is because we hadn't been at Blue Mound more than probably two or three years and a new rock quarry came in. And they started doing some blasting, which seemed to affect the flow of water into our well.

Corrigan: How deep was the well?

Dillard: It couldn't have been much over twenty-five feet, I don't believe.

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: But I don't remember how big around it was, though.

Corrigan: But twenty-five feet's fairly decent. Especially at that depth. Was it lined with bricks or was it—

Dillard: Rock.

Corrigan: Rock, okay.

Dillard: Yeah. That reminds me, I have a series of those Foxfire books. Have you ever heard of those?

Corrigan: No.

Dillard: Yeah, Foxfire books were written down in the South. And this was a student project that this guy had to get his students interested in English. And they wrote a whole series. What they did was went out and interviewed all the old-timers about things they used to do. One of the things they interviewed was the guys that dug wells. And I swear to goodness, you ought to read that sometime. You just get chills reading those. Because here are these guys, sometimes the well is forty feet deep. They're down there digging by hand. And they're pulling the residue up. And like the guy said, if one of those rocks falls

off of the bucket when it's forty feet and hits you in the head, you're out of business. (laughs) Plus the fact when you're down there and you look up, that hole looks like it's about the size of a quarter. (laughs) And one of the hazards, of course, in cleaning out or digging wells is getting in the zone where there's no oxygen. So what they did in the old days, they pumped the well dry. And then they'd tie a kerosene lantern on a rope and they'd drop it down. And if the lantern went out, you don't go down. And I don't know what causes that. I think maybe they cover that in Foxfire, but I don't really recall the physical/chemical aspects of that.

Corrigan: That's interesting. You mentioned you bugged your dad to go hunting and fishing each day.

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: Could you [and] did you go with your brother?

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: And could you describe both activities? Where you would go, how far you had to go, and what you were hunting or what you were hoping to catch. Or what—

[End Track 4. Begin Track 5.]

Corrigan: Or was it whatever was out there?

Dillard: (laughs) We just wanted to get away. We didn't want to work. But no, primarily we hunted squirrels and rabbits and groundhogs.

Corrigan: Were there a lot of trees nearby?

Dillard: Yes, yes, yes. There was a lot of forest nearby. And the other attraction was, adjacent to our property was an abandoned WPA rock quarry. And they basically just walked off and left all the equipment there. So we would go down and run the rock quarry. (laughs) They had left some old wheelbarrows. Commercial. Heavy duty. We'd load up rocks and go up the ramp and dump it off into the chute. Of course none of the machinery would work because it was all rusted. But we'd spend hours doing that. (laughs) And the hunting, we consumed a lot of the game that we killed. But the groundhogs, they were really numerous. And of course, like I said, they still had horses. And it was really hard on the horses because the groundhogs would dig holes in the ground. And the horses would get in there and break their leg. Or it would tear up machinery. So the local landowners would give us twenty-five cents for each tail we'd bring them. And we would spend hours. And our dog Flash just loved to hunt groundhogs. (laughs)

Corrigan: Now that was a lot of money back then for kids, twenty-five cents apiece.

Dillard: Oh, yeah. Right.

Corrigan: Did your parents let you keep the money? They didn't need it themselves?

Dillard: No. They'd let us keep the money. We also mowed yards, too. I remember doing, that was actually the first job I ever really had was mowing yards. It was basically a dollar a yard.

Corrigan: What [did] you use your money for?

Dillard: You know, I don't remember. Probably buying candy. (laughs)

Corrigan: Was primarily all the shopping done in Chillicothe?

Dillard: Yes, primarily. There was a store in Blue Mound. And of course we'd go up and get soda pop and candy, candy bars. But, and I don't recall that my mother ever really bought that much there. Well, she was in town every day, first of all, and they had a better selection there. And probably cheaper.

Corrigan: What was the name of the store in Blue Mound? Do you remember?

Dillard: It did not have a name, but Mr. Whited ran it. Mr. Whited was the real deal. That old rascal lived, I think, to be at least 100, if it wasn't 101. He was not a very big man. He had been married, but I don't know whether he was divorced. There was no other person there with him at that time. He was the first person to raise soybeans in Livingston County, which I didn't read about until I saw his obituary.

Corrigan: Do you know how to spell his last name?

Dillard: W-h-i-t-e-d. Whited.

Corrigan: Whited.

Dillard: He played the violin. Not very well. (laughs) But he had a little dog. He played the violin and the dog would sing. (laughs) So Mr. Whited, he kind of liked to tip a few now and then. As a matter of fact, I think a lot. (laughs) So he got this brilliant idea. He was going to build a little dancehall. A Saloon, called the Blue Moon. (laughs) So I had a cousin who lived there who was a carpenter. So they built the Blue Moon. And the problem was, it was too close to the church. So they made him close it down. But he did run it for a while. I can remember it. And I interviewed a person who had passed away a couple of years ago who lived there. And she said her daughter used to go up there. And I didn't really remember, but he had an old organ there. And of course her daughter couldn't play anything. But she supposedly would play the organ. And Mr. Whited just thought that was great.

Corrigan: So was this a one-stop shop?

Dillard: Yeah.

Corrigan: Was it dry goods, soda, candy—

Dillard: I don't recall the dry goods. So far as I remember, no clothing. But basically anything that was canned or in a sack or a bag. Yeah. He did, I'm pretty sure he sold gas. But that is a little fuzzy in my mind. But see, there were other stores there in the past. And I've got those all documented on the website. And you might want to take a look at that, too, by the way.

Corrigan: The Blue Mound website?

Dillard: Yeah. I went through all the old *Missouri Gazetteers* and rounded up all the information about all the, well, I've also got newspaper articles about those, too. Yeah. I think one time there might have been two stores there.

Corrigan: Was there only one church in town?

Dillard: There's only one there now. But that's a whole other story. And I'm trying to get that pretty much figured out. [phone rings] Oh, excuse me.

Corrigan: Hold on one second. We just took a—

[End Track 5. Begin Track 6.]

Corrigan: Okay. We just took a brief pause there. But okay, we were talking about the, I asked if there was one church, or if there was only one church in Blue Mound. And you said there was currently. But you're trying to track down whether there was more and at what time.

Dillard: Yes. The best that I have been able to, well I think that there were actually, services were conducted in Blue Mound before there was a church. I've got some evidence, but I need to kind of work on that a little bit. As a matter of fact, I think some of the services were in the early school, which was the Burner school. Which is a whole another story. But they decided they were going to have a church, it's my understanding, a person who used to live there, a Mr. Hoyt, wrote a little book about himself. And it's called *Not Much To Do About Anything*.¹ He lived in Blue Mound. Near Blue Mound. So a lot of what's in his book is about Blue Mound. So they collected the money to build the church, and the would-be preacher took off with it. So they had to start all over again. So I think it was 1840 they finally built the Blue Mound Mount Hope Christian Church, which is still there. Somewhere along the line, about 1915, I think it was, they got in a big squabble in the church. There was a group of them that really didn't want to have music in the church. So they decided they were going to build their own. So they built another church in Blue Mound, about a quarter of a mile east of the current building. I think that

¹ The book title is *Not Much of Anything* by John Hoyt.

was around 1917, I think. I believe it only lasted no more than ten years, I believe. Because I have evidence that it was, the building was vacated and sold and actually converted into a store. But I think then later it burned down. And that was just not too far east where we lived. Then in about the 1960's or '70s, a group decided that they wanted to have their own church. So they moved a little house up to the schoolhouse property, which at that time was no longer a school but a residence. And this guy gave them permission to put their little church there. And it later became the Open Bible Church. But one day the guy that owned the schoolhouse, who used to be a minister of the church, got into an argument with the guy that brought the little house up there. And it got heated and he actually went into his house and got a gun and told him, "You get your church off my property." (laughs) So they loaded it up again and moved it down to Carroll County. And it's still there. So there have been three churches in Blue Mound. But the Mount Hope Christian Church is still there. They no longer have services. They do keep the yard mowed. And for what reason, I'm not sure. Although somebody said that if they didn't do that, that the rock quarry, the property would revert back to them.

Corrigan: Okay. That happens a lot, too, with one-room schoolhouses. There are lots of different properties. So you say you hunted and fished with your brother. We didn't really talk about fishing. How far did you have to go to fish?

Dillard: Well, see, Mound Creek actually heads up there in Blue Mound. Blue Mound sets right up on top of that ridge, and water runs both ways. So most of the fishing in those days was in the creek. Although by that time they had started building a lot of farm ponds around. But it was basically out the door, so to speak. No more than five or ten minutes to the nearest water hole.

Corrigan: Okay. And did your father ever go along with you?

Dillard: No, not really. No. When we lived in town, he would go out and fish in the rivers with us. But that time, no, he just did not go out with us.

Corrigan: Did you, what kind of activities did you and your family do together? Seemed like your mom worked a lot and your father, you had a lot of animals, too. Did you do many activities? Did you have family nearby?

Dillard: We did a lot of visiting in those days. That was before TV. And the family that lived up the road were distant relation. And of course we had two cousins that lived nearby. And of course a lot of other people we just knew. So we did a lot of visiting in the neighborhood. Really the main thing that we did, we would sometimes go back to Chillicothe to the theater. But more likely, we'd go over to Dawn, which was not very far away. And they had, on Wednesday nights they had those outdoor movies. Where they would back in a great big truck and put a, where, in an empty space between two buildings and put up a partition so people—

[End Track 6. Begin Track 7.]

Dillard: —couldn't look in and a screen and project the movie out of the back of that truck. So that was a real big deal.

Corrigan: And that was in Dawn, Missouri?

Dillard: Dawn.

Corrigan: And do you remember, so it was kind of like an impromptu drive-in—

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: Except you weren't in the cars, you were sitting, though.

Dillard: It had folding chairs. That truck had room to store folding chairs. Of course, everything was cool, unless it started to rain. Then you were out of business. (laughs)

Corrigan: And was this, do you remember at all the price? Was it a quarter a head?

Dillard: Probably. I don't remember for sure, but I'm sure it wasn't much more than that.

Corrigan: Were these, what kind of movies were these?

Dillard: Mostly westerns.

Corrigan: Westerns. Okay. That was my question.

Dillard: (laughs) Yeah.

Corrigan: Mostly westerns. Okay. And that was every Wednesday they would do that?

Dillard: I think it was every Wednesday, yeah. They just made all the small towns on a circuit. Yeah.

Corrigan: And then you mentioned the theater in Chillicothe. Was that a movie theater, too?

Dillard: Yes. At one time, they had three of them. I don't know whether all three run at the same time. Of course, we lived in Chillicothe until I was in the third grade. And we would go every once in a while. Matter of fact, there was a person that lived in our neighborhood who was paralyzed. And we would wheel him down to the movie. And I can't remember for sure whether it was a reduced rate or whether they let us in free for doing that. I really don't remember. But I remember us wheeling him down to the movie.

Corrigan: That was an indoor movie theater, correct?

Dillard: Yes. Yes.

Corrigan: Okay. Good. Now was there any other activities? I was going to move on to, I wanted to talk about the one-room schoolhouses.

Dillard: Oh. (laughs)

Corrigan: But first, before that, so you were in the third grade before you moved to Blue Mound.

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: So where did you attend school prior to the one-room schoolhouse?

Dillard: That was in Chillicothe.

Corrigan: And what was the name of the school?

Dillard: (laughs) You would have to ask. I'll have to look it up.

Corrigan: That's okay. Was it a—

Dillard: I've probably got it right here.

Corrigan: Oh, that's okay. Was it a first grade through fifth grade? Was it through eighth grade? Was it just—

Dillard: Just, yeah, just the first grade through probably the fifth, I imagine. Yeah.

Corrigan: Okay. So it was elementary school.

Dillard: Yes. Right. (laughs)

Corrigan: And you only went there for the first three years.

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: And that was an in-town school? Did you just walk there?

Dillard: Yes. We lived fairly close by. Probably, I'd say, four blocks. Maybe five.

Corrigan: So you actually had a longer trek in Chillicothe than you did in Blue Mound.

Dillard: Yes. That's fair to say. (laughs) Central School.

Corrigan: Oh. Central School. Okay.

Dillard: Yeah, we only lived four blocks from school. And of course the big deal there, there was an old-fashioned market on the way home where we could buy candy. (laughs) And so we'd go, and I never have been able to find the name of it. But they came in kind of a long, square package. And they were probably, what, an inch maybe? And they were wrapped in wax. Looked like a miniature loaf of bread. And it came in chocolate, vanilla and strawberry flavors.

Corrigan: And what was it? It was a hard candy?

Dillard: Chewy. Chewy candy.

Corrigan: But wrapped in wax.

Dillard: Each one was individually wrapped. Yeah. I don't know how many were in the package. Probably eight or nine or ten, maybe.

Corrigan: But that was your candy of choice?

Dillard: Oh, yeah. (laughs)

Corrigan: And you would do, that would have been before you were making money though at the groundhogs or the mowing lawns.

Dillard: Yes, that was before. We had to have an allowance of some kind.

Corrigan: Okay. So when and where, so the third grade, is that when you attended the one-room schoolhouse?

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: And do you remember the name of that school?

Dillard: It was Blue Mound School.

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: District Ninety-Seven.

Corrigan: Could you describe the physical appearance of the school, both inside and out?

Dillard: A white frame building. It had a, the main door was on the west side, adjacent to the north/south road, which was Route Z. And there was a little entryway that was attached to the front of the school. That was where you could hang your coats and also contained the water bucket. And what we did is we'd fill that water bucket. And on it was hanging a dipper. And that's how we drank.

Corrigan: Was it one dipper, or individual dippers?

Dillard: One dipper. (laughs)

Corrigan: One dipper, okay.

Dillard: And it was a little, the well was right there as you came out by the door. And adjacent to that was a little shed that contained either coal or wood that they used for the stove.

[End Track 7. Begin Track 8.]

Corrigan: So about how big was this building?

Dillard: That's hard to say. Probably—

Corrigan: What about in comparison to this room? Was it smaller than this room? Or bigger? Because this room's approximately twenty-five by forty.

Dillard: I would say that's probably about what it was, yeah. I think in looking at some information over here, there was kind of a standard pattern that they used. But I really don't know the exact dimensions. I believe there was no windows on the south side of the building but there was windows on the north side. And I think there was, I think there was either three or four. I do have photos of that, by the way.

Corrigan: Okay. You said earlier, but, there was no indoor plumbing there. There was an outhouse. Was there one or two?

Dillard: There were two.

Corrigan: Was it a boy's and a girl's?

Dillard: Yeah. And the girl's were closer to the building than the boy's.

Corrigan: Okay. You said there was a shed.

Dillard: Yeah.

Corrigan: And that's where they kept the material to heat the school. Was there, did anybody ride a horse to school or anything?

Dillard: We had one or two individuals that did. Occasionally, but not always. But there was a tie-up rack.

Corrigan: Okay. Now the inside of the building, was there like one big chalkboard? Or did everybody have individual slates?

Dillard: It was one big chalkboard. It was on the west side of the, as you walked in the door. As you walked in the door, where the teacher sat was actually on the far east side. And of course then we had the rows of desks, which are graduated for size as you went towards the front. The little people sat in front.

Corrigan: Were they the individual desks? Or were they connected to each other? Or were they benches?

Dillard: No, no, these were, no, they weren't benches. They were desks. And as I recall, they were the type where they actually have them all hooked together. But they're not individual. They were side-by-side. As I recall.

Corrigan: Was it just one room?

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: So there's no other room for—

Dillard: No.

Corrigan: Okay. There was just one physical room.

Dillard: And the “library,” quote “library,” was in, by where the teacher sat up at, I guess you would call it, the front of the room.

Corrigan: Was there a lot of books?

Dillard: Quite a few. Yeah. I've got a list of those. (laughs)

Corrigan: There was quite a few, though.

Dillard: Yeah.

Corrigan: How long did you attend that school? From third grade to—

Dillard: To seven, for sure. I think maybe half of the eighth grade. I'm a little fuzzy on that. But I know I finished my eighth grade in Chillicothe.

Corrigan: Okay. But that whole rest of the time you went to the one-room schoolhouse.

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: You said the building still exists today?

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: The building does. But it's not, its function is no longer a school. It's a house, you said? Or a residence?

Dillard: Well, (coughs) excuse me. It was a residence. But then, I don't remember the exact year, but the rock quarry bought the property. And they've been using it as a tool shed. And right now it's in pretty rough shape. But it's still there.

Corrigan: So the rock quarry's still functioning, then?

Dillard: Yes. It's changed hands several times. But it's still functioning.

Corrigan: Do you remember how many kids were in your class?

Dillard: The first year that we went there, I think there was only about ten or twelve.

Corrigan: Total in the school.

Dillard: Right. Yeah.

Corrigan: So your class, though, would only be, were you the only one in your grade? Or was there—

Dillard: No, that was total population.

Corrigan: Yeah. So—

Dillard: Oh, in my grade?

Corrigan: Were you the only one? Or was there, out of the ten, did you actually have somebody in your grade?

Dillard: No, there was somebody in my grade. I don't remember how many. Yeah. Of course my third grade picture is on the website. So you can go see that. (laughs)

Corrigan: Do you remember, did you have the same teacher the whole time?

Dillard: Oh, no.

Corrigan: Or did the teacher change?

Dillard: Yeah.

Corrigan: Do you remember how many teachers you had?

Dillard: We started out with Lena Adams. And the next year was [Kathryn Lou] Baker. We had three different ones. Then it was [Lillian] Mantzey. Miss Baker is still alive.²

Corrigan: Is she?

Dillard: And I have tried repeatedly to get her interview on her views of that school. And she just won't do it. And I don't know why. (laughs) Because I interviewed Miss Mantzey. And I think she's since passed on. And she gave me her views.

Corrigan: Do you know how to spell Mantzey.

Dillard: Not offhand.

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: Yeah. But I can get that for you. I'm not sure I have that with me.

Corrigan: So you had three teachers the whole time there.

Dillard: Right.

Corrigan: Do you remember much about them? Did you like one of them better?

Dillard: Miss Baker—

[End Track 8. Begin Track 9.]

Dillard: —I thought was the most beautiful woman I'd ever seen in my life. (laughs) And Miss Baker never did get married.

Corrigan: Typically a lot of them were former students of the school, or?

Dillard: No.

Corrigan: Okay. None of these were?

Dillard: No.

Corrigan: Were they all single women when they were teaching?

Dillard: No. Mrs. Adams was married. And her son and daughter were also in the class.

Corrigan: Okay. So you had Adams first, then Baker, then Mantzey.

Dillard: I believe that's right.

² Kathryn Lou Baker passed away in 2016.

Corrigan: Do you remember anything about them? Their different teaching styles? Or did you feel that, did you think you learned more from one than the other?

Dillard: I think probably more from Miss Baker. I don't know why I say that, because it's really hard to remember. Maybe it's just because I liked her. No, I think she was really into teaching. Yeah. And went on to teach. And I think Mrs. Adams, I think, was just kind of filling in. That was kind of my guess.

Corrigan: Did you learn a lot from listening to the older kids and what they were learning? Do you remember?

Dillard: Yes, I think so. Mm hmm. Yeah, that was a really interesting experience to be in that kind of a situation where you had so many different grades.

Corrigan: Because you knew what was coming then. You knew what the older kids were working on. You knew what to expect later on.

Dillard: Yeah. Right. Yeah.

Corrigan: Do you think that was helpful?

Dillard: Oh, yes. I think so.

Corrigan: Did you find yourself paying more attention to what the other kids were doing or what you were doing?

Dillard: Probably other kids. (laughs)

Corrigan: I was going to ask you how you got to school each day. But you walked, obviously. It was next door. You said it wasn't very far.

Dillard: No. We could leave, you know, like three minutes before the bell rang.

Corrigan: Did the bell ring at eight o'clock?

Dillard: I don't remember.

Corrigan: Okay. What activities do you remember doing at the school? Besides school. What I'm thinking about is, did you do any type of programs? Did you have any type of, I know something that was very popular in Missouri was pie suppers, or Christmas programs? Did you do any of those? Can you, do you remember any of those?

Dillard: Yeah. We did all of those. And we did some plays.

Corrigan: Were these plays that the teachers wrote? Or were they plays that—

Dillard: I'm not sure where they found their material. But I know that we all had to, you know, practice our parts. And I think some of these may have been put on in conjunction with the pie supper. But I'm not real sure about that.

Corrigan: Can you describe—pie suppers are different at different places. Can you describe the pie supper? Was it—they were sold, correct?

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: So each family or each girl or was it each kid brought in a pie from their family?

Dillard: Yeah. And I may be mixing up the quote “pie suppers” with the box suppers.

Corrigan: Okay. Do you want to tell me what a box supper is compared to a pie supper?

Dillard: Yeah, I'm not sure, like I said, I'm not sure the distinction. But the box supper, for sure, the gals, particularly the unmarried gals, would fix up a box of goodies. You know, things to eat. And then the guys would bid on them, because then they got to eat with that person.

Corrigan: And this was a community event, correct?

Dillard: Yes. Yes.

Corrigan: So you had people coming from all of Blue Mound there.

Dillard: Right. And they were pretty well attended, too. Because you know, there wasn't much to do back in those days.

Corrigan: So people were attending whether they had students there or not. They were community members.

Dillard: Oh, yes. Yeah. Right.

Corrigan: Okay. So the ladies would make the box suppers. And these would be, was it just candies and cookies or was it a meal?

Dillard: No, a lot of times it was meals. Yeah.

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: And if some gal was well known for being able to cook, of course, the price of her box was a lot higher. (laughs)

Corrigan: And were they auctioned off live?

Dillard: Yes, yes. Yeah, oh yeah.

Corrigan: Oh, they were. And this was all held at the school, correct?

Dillard: Yeah. Right in the school.

Corrigan: Okay. So who usually did the auctioneering? Just a community member or the school board—

Dillard: Yeah. Probably somebody in the school board, I imagine. Yeah.

Corrigan: That was the box supper. Okay. Now the pie suppers typically were the same. The pies were made by women in the community. They were brought in. They were auctioned off. And that was a live auction, too?

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: Do you remember, was it to raise money to buy supplies? Was it—

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: Okay. And what about a Christmas program?

Dillard: Yes. You always had a Christmas program.

Corrigan: And was this where everybody participated? All the people of Blue Mound? The family, the relatives, everybody came out for these kind of events?

Dillard: Yeah. They did. And of course at the end, they always passed out goodies for the students. And—

[End Track 9. Begin Track 10.]

Dillard: —I remember getting an orange, which was a treat. (laughs)

Corrigan: Because it would have to be brought in from somewhere.

Dillard: Oh, yes. Yeah.

Corrigan: You said you had the peaches in your orchard. And you had probably apples and—

Dillard: No. Just peaches.

Corrigan: No. Just peaches?

Dillard: And cherries. Until the, well, we had two cherry trees. One died when the kerosene killed it. But we had another one.

Corrigan: But an orange was a treat at that time.

Dillard: Oh, yes.

Corrigan: And the programs, so you said they were well attended. So the Christmas program took place around Christmas. What time of year were the other, was it the end of the year kind of celebration? Or the beginning of the year kind of celebration?

Dillard: I think mostly in the fall, as I recall. Of course we had this one guy in the community who would always sit on the front row while we were doing our plays. And he had false teeth. And he'd look at us and smile. Open his mouth and let his front upper teeth come down. (laughs)

Corrigan: So that was kind of probably a distraction.

Dillard: Yes. A bit of a distraction. Always broke us up.

Corrigan: Did you have any other kind of programs there? Or was the school ever used as a, almost like a community hall or anything? Where other functions that were outside the school were held?

Dillard: I don't recall those. I think that some of that may have happened over at the church, I believe.

Corrigan: Okay. Well I wonder because you said it was a small community. There's not too many buildings.

Dillard: Right.

Corrigan: If there was a gathering, it had to be held somewhere.

Dillard: Yeah. And of course they had pews over there. And the schoolhouse was not set up really for that kind of situation. With just the desks.

Corrigan: Could you tell me about recess? What do you recall about—

Dillard: That was always a favorite time. (laughs)

Corrigan: Could you, when was it? Did you have it more than once a day? Can you just describe what you did?

Dillard: Yeah. We had morning and afternoon. Yeah. And we always liked to be outside. I still like to be outside. We did play games. And we did the throwing the ball over the schoolhouse. And it was Annie Over. And we played baseball. The thing we did have, though, was pretty good playground equipment. We had a slide and a swing and a merry-go-round. So I think that probably absorbed a lot of the time. And with less emphasis on games. Because those are the only two games I can remember playing there.

Corrigan: The Annie Over and baseball?

Dillard: Baseball.

Corrigan: Did you have enough people to play baseball?

Dillard: Well, yes.

Corrigan: Your version of it.

Dillard: Yeah, that version, right. (laughs) It was primarily hitting the ball and running. (coughs) Excuse me.

Corrigan: Did the teacher supervise? Or was she inside? Do you remember that? Was she out there with you guys, watching and playing? Or was she inside?

Dillard: I think Kathryn Baker and Lillian Mantzey—

Corrigan: Lillian. Okay.

Dillard: Lillian. Were out with us. I think Lena Adams, and I'm not sure her name was Lena, but Mrs. Trenton Adams, at least, spent more time inside. Of course, she was quite a bit older than the other gals. I think Kathryn was probably just fresh out of college. And maybe—

Corrigan: Kathryn. Was that Baker?

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: Okay. You just came up with her name.

Dillard: Kathryn, yeah. (laughs) Boy, I wish, I'd just give anything if she'd write a little ditty about her experiences there.

Corrigan: Do you remember all playing together? Did you all get along well, the kids in the school?

Dillard: Yes. I think in general we did. I don't recall very much tension or fights or anything like that. Everybody was kind of happy go lucky.

Corrigan: Was this about fifteen minutes in the morning and in the afternoon?

Dillard: I think so.

Corrigan: Did you also have a time at lunch, too?

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: Okay. What did you do during bad weather, though? When you couldn't go outside at recess?

Dillard: That's a good question. I don't really recall whether she had some organized activities for us or not. Actually, it never got that bad. (laughs) I mean, yeah.

Corrigan: I didn't know because of rain or snow or something if it was ever—

Dillard: If it was really pouring down, I'm sure we didn't go out. But if it was snowing, that was no problem at all. That was a lot of fun. (laughs) And you know, we had a pretty good-sized school ground, too. And it was right close to the store. But I don't recall going over to the store at recess. I suppose we probably did, because it was just adjacent.

Corrigan: Okay. I want to go back just a second. I just thought of something. Did any of the teachers – besides your regular curriculum – did any of the teachers incorporate things like music, art? Do you remember that? Did you have a piano in the school?

Dillard: Yes, we did. Mm hmm.

Corrigan: Did the teachers, did any of them play?

Dillard: Mm hmm. Yes, and we sang. And we did art projects.

[End Track 10. Begin Track 11.]

Dillard: One of the things we did, (coughs) excuse me, we adopted a Nature Knights program, which was a program—

Corrigan: A what? Say it again.

Dillard: Nature Knights.

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: Which was a program with the conservation department to get youth interested in conservation.

Corrigan: And could you describe what a nature knight was? Like what did you guys do? Or what was the activity?

Dillard: You know, I don't recall for sure what we did. But it all dealt with conservation. I think it probably, I do believe it included artwork. Drawing pictures of animals and reading stories about them. I don't think the program, it no longer exists. They replaced it with something else.

Corrigan: Okay. But so you did have things like that, though. Kind of extracurricular activities. Art and music and—okay.

Dillard: Of course the highlight of it all was if the teacher allowed you to erase the blackboard.

Corrigan: Well that was my next question is, did you have any chores?

Dillard: Or carry in the coal.

Corrigan: I was going to ask, did you have any chores at the school or what had to be done. And you said carry in water? Coal? It was coal? Okay.

Dillard: Yeah, it was coal by the time I got there. It may have been wood earlier, but it was coal.

Corrigan: And so cleaning off the chalkboard was a privilege.

Dillard: Oh, yes. Yeah. That was special.

Corrigan: What about, did you have to clean the erasers then outside?

Dillard: Oh, yeah. That was, I got to go back outside.

Corrigan: Was it typically the older boys that would carry in the coal and water and that? Do you remember?

Dillard: Yes, I think primarily. The best I can remember.

Corrigan: Did you collectively have to clean the school every week?

Dillard: No, I don't recall—well, yes. I don't know that we had to, but I know we did help. I can recall help, you know, sweeping the floor.

Corrigan: So was the school kept up nicely?

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: Okay. Now how long was your lunch each day? And did the kids go home? Did you stay there? And I'd like to know what was a typical lunch for you?

Dillard: I think it was a half hour, but I'm not really sure about that. And we did take our lunch most of the time, even though we lived nearby, mainly because we wanted to stay on the school ground and play. But everybody had their own lunch pail. Some of them brought it in a little gallon bucket with a lid on it.

Corrigan: Did you have an actual lunch pail?

Dillard: I think we did. Yeah.

Corrigan: Who prepared your lunch? Was it your father? Your mother? You?

Dillard: I think my mom prepared most of those.

Corrigan: And what was a typical lunch for you?

Dillard: It would be a sandwich and maybe some fruit.

Corrigan: Okay. Was this a bologna sandwich?

Dillard: Oh, yeah. (laughs) We ate lots of bologna.

Corrigan: Okay. Because you said you had fried—

Dillard: Fried bologna for lunch.

Corrigan: For lunch. And then you said bacon in the morning, correct?

Dillard: Yeah. Other than that, we didn't have very much meat for living in the country. We just, it was mostly potatoes and beans and vegetables.

Corrigan: And a lot of what you grew yourself.

Dillard: Oh, yes. Yes.

Corrigan: How, just a quick question, a side note, how big of a garden did you have?

Dillard: It was pretty good-sized. I'd say it was probably thirty by forty.

Corrigan: Okay. And how's that, skipping ahead a little bit, how's that in comparison to your big garden now?

Dillard: My garden now is forty by forty.

Corrigan: Forty by forty, okay, all right. We'll get to that later, at the very end. So you have been gardening your entire life. But we'll talk about that at the end.

Dillard: I told my wife, when we go to the home, I'll still be gardening in a little box or container someplace.

Corrigan: So was that pretty typical of most kids' lunches there? Sandwiches?

Dillard: I think so.

Corrigan: You did say there was water at the school.

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: You all had the same dipper.

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: Okay. And you said you attended from third grade to seventh or eighth grade?

Dillard: Yeah. I think I finished the eighth grade in Chillicothe and I really don't remember why that was. I think I went half year.

Corrigan: Okay. You finished eighth grade in Chillicothe.

Dillard: And then went to high school there.

Corrigan: In Chillicothe.

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: Okay. Do you keep in contact with anybody that you went to school with? Do you run into them when you're back in that area? Did people typically stay in that area? Or—

Dillard: No. Typically, there was a lot of moving around. I was absolutely astounded at how much movement in a community like that. Of course, there were a few that were born and raised there and are still there, but tremendous amount of movement. Matter of fact, this one gal I interviewed, she said it seemed like every spring we just had the spring shuffle. People would just move around. Sometimes just within the community.

[End Track 11. Begin Track 12.]

Dillard: But I've been in contact with a gal who went to school there before I did. And like she said, she was there for a while. They moved out to California and then came back. (laughs)

Corrigan: It's kind of where the work was, wasn't it?

Dillard: I guess. Yeah.

Corrigan: Was the rock quarry the primary employer in Blue Mound?

Dillard: Well, no. Matter of fact, most of the employees in the rock quarry, other than the WPA one, which was defunct by the time we got there, actually came from other places. The person that started, restarted the rock quarry there, was from Carrollton. And most of the employees came from Carrollton. It's surprisingly how few people it actually takes to run one of those. But there are some locals that do work there.

Corrigan: Okay. What was the lady's name that you said you interviewed and were still in contact with that attended there?

Dillard: Jean Bennett. Matter of fact, she sent me two photos. Photo of when she was, I think, first, second grade of the whole school, which you guys now have in the archives.

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: Then her eighth grade graduation photo. I think there was five people in that one.

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: And you also have a copy of that one.

Corrigan: Okay. Now do you feel like you got a quality education while you were there?

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: Did you feel that you got enough—I don't want to say attention, but one-on-one, did you feel there was, it was small. Did you feel like you weren't neglected because there was eight other grades going on?

Dillard: No. I think that was one thing about Kathryn Baker and Lillian [Mantzey], too, is they made sure that you got the individual attention that you needed. Positive or negative. (laughs)

Corrigan: Is there anything that, any subject or activity you did there that just really sticks out in your mind that you really enjoyed or was your favorite? Did you have a favorite subject?

Dillard: I don't believe so. I just really enjoyed it. I'm a strong believer in education. Still am.

Corrigan: Now kind of looking back and reflecting on it, what influence do you think attending a one-room schoolhouse had on you? Did you think, because when you went back to Chillicothe, you had already seen a lot what was coming. Now when you went back to Chillicothe, it would have been different. You would have been in a single grade class situation. Do you think you were better off in the one-room schoolhouse where you saw everything that was going on? Or do you think the individual classroom, each grade, was a better fit for you? It's probably what you got in high school.

Dillard: I really cherish my time there in the one-room school. I think it just gives you a broader view on everything. Like you say, you can absorb what's going on in the classes above you, and actually pick up something from the smaller ones, too, as far as that's concerned. If you just keep your eyes and ears open.

Corrigan: Now you said when you first got there, there was about ten kids. Is that roughly about the average number of students that were in the school at any one time when you were there? Ten?

Dillard: Yeah. I think probably no more than, probably no more than nineteen, maybe.

Corrigan: Okay. So there was a peak there.

Dillard: It varies quite a bit, yeah. I have records from 1932 until the school closed in 1955. And I don't think there was ever over thirty students.

Corrigan: So the school closed—

Dillard: There probably wouldn't be much room more than for thirty students.

Corrigan: So 1955 is when the school closed.

Dillard: I think '55-'56, was the last year.³ And it was sold then to that minister who converted it into a house. He got killed. He was walking across—see, the school sets here on one side of the road and the church directly opposite on the other side. And he was walking from, well actually, he was walking to his house out from the mailbox and a car run over him.

Corrigan: Probably, was that the highway Z, was there a lot of traffic on there?

Dillard: Not much. That was one of the nice things about living in Blue Mound. Well of course, we were off the Route Z on a gravel road. Which at that time was not named or numbered. It's now Livingston County LIV 430. But the only two cars that came by our house in any given day was the mail—

[End Track 12. Begin Track 13.]

³ The 1956-1957 session was the last year.

Dillard: —person and maybe the school bus.

Corrigan: So there was bussing in Blue Mound. To get other kids there?

Dillard: No. Actually, the school bus didn't come until later. And then it came from Chillicothe. That's right. Yeah. Yeah. But no, there really wasn't that much traffic. People just stayed put.

Corrigan: Okay. But unfortunately you said he was killed by a car though.

Dillard: Yeah. Right. There's kind of a hill right there. And there isn't a stop sign.

Corrigan: Okay. Now is there any story about the one-room schoolhouse that we didn't get to, that I didn't ask you, that sticks out in your mind about your few years there? Or topic? Do you, I'll let you think about that a second, but I have another question. Do you, were the parents heavily involved in that community?

Dillard: Yes. Yes, they were.

Corrigan: So education was—

Dillard: Very important to people, yeah. I have very pleasant memories. Extremely pleasant memories about the one-room school. The whole experience with the teachers and the students.

Corrigan: And did your parents put a value on it, too, that education was important?

Dillard: Oh, yes.

Corrigan: Did your mom, how high of an education did she have?

Dillard: She had an eighth grade.

Corrigan: Eighth grade. Okay.

Dillard: My father had a third grade.

Corrigan: Yeah. You had mentioned that. Okay.

Dillard: They just wanted to make sure that we got a good education.

Corrigan: And your brother was slightly older than you, so—

Dillard: Ten and a half months. He was just a grade ahead of me.

Corrigan: So he would have went to the same school as you did, Chillicothe, then the one-room schoolhouse. And then back to Chillicothe and for high school and that?

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: Yeah, if there's anything else you want to share about the one-room schoolhouse, you can. If we didn't cover anything. We can come back to it, too.

Dillard: Okay. Yeah.

Corrigan: Okay. So then you went to Chillicothe High School. And how was that transition? You went from ten to twenty people at a time to, how big was Chillicothe at the time, the school?

Dillard: I think, well, my graduating class was, was 100.

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: Or 101. Something like that.

Corrigan: So a big jump.

Dillard: Yes. Scary. (laughs)

Corrigan: How was that? You had lived in Chillicothe, but you were quite young.

Dillard: Yeah.

Corrigan: You guys moved back to Chillicothe? Or no, they just started bussing at that time.

Dillard: We actually, I think, I think we still lived in Blue Mound when I finished the eighth grade. And then we moved back to north and west of Chillicothe. Just out of town.

Corrigan: Just out of town, in the country?

Dillard: Yeah. And we lived there, as I finished high school. Yeah.

Corrigan: Okay. So you lived there through the rest of high school.

Dillard: But I think the biggest change was first of all being in a totally different environment with people you didn't know, having different teachers.

Corrigan: And a lot more teachers.

Dillard: A lot more teachers. Yeah. And just having to get acquainted with going to a different building, going to different classrooms.

Corrigan: Did you have a favorite subject in high school at all?

Dillard: No. Not that I recall.

Corrigan: What kind of activities were you involved in in high school?

Dillard: I did a little bit of track. Yeah. I think I was on the student council at one time, too. Had basically one friend. (laughs)

Corrigan: Now your brother was in the same school, too, right?

Dillard: Yeah. Yeah. And he had lots of friends. (laughs)

Corrigan: Was he in sports at all?

Dillard: No. And see, part of our problem with sports was—am I saying that right? No, I'm not saying that right at all. We moved in 1954 back to Chillicothe, which would have been my junior year in high school. Because I was thinking wait a minute, the reason we didn't get into sports is because we were still living in Blue Mound and we ride in with my mom in the morning, ride back in the evening. So we weren't there for practice. I got confused on that.

Corrigan: Oh, that's okay. Okay. So you were, okay.

Dillard: But the track thing, they had the practices in the afternoon rather than the evening, like football and basketball.

Corrigan: Got you.

Dillard: Yeah.

Corrigan: So you moved, so it was your junior year.

Dillard: Junior year.

Corrigan: That you actually moved to Chillicothe.

Dillard: Right.

Corrigan: But the rest was all commuting with your mom.

Dillard: Right.

Corrigan: Okay. Which, yeah, would make a difference. You'd work around her work schedule. Did you have to stay late, did you have to stick around the school until your mom was off work?

Dillard: No. That's when I'd go over to my friend's house. Yeah. I would walk over to his house. His dad worked in a bakery which was adjacent to the glove factory. So we'd go over to his house and get into his father's whiskey. We'd get the bottle out. Draw a little line on it.

[End Track 13. Begin Track 14.]

Dillard: (laughs) Then we'd fill it back up with water. I mean, it wasn't that much. Then we'd go down to the bakery, of course, and get some fresh bread. And go over to the creamery and get some butter. And have bread and butter. (laughs)

Corrigan: All right after school.

Dillard: Right after school, until my mom got off.

Corrigan: So his dad was a baker?

Dillard: Yeah.

Corrigan: What was his name, your friend?

Dillard: Robert Brotherton.

Corrigan: Robert Brotherton?

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: Yeah. Yeah, I was a really shy person. See, when I was growing up I had a fairly, what I considered a very rare disease called diabetes insipidus. That's when we were in Blue Mound. And I got, as I call it, a bad case of the dwindles. I just wasn't growing. And that was losing strength. I just couldn't even carry one of those syrup pails of water. And my mom said, "There's something wrong with that kid." So she took me to the doctor in Chillicothe and he said, "I don't have a clue, but we'll send him to Saint Joe, to the specialist." And they diagnosed it as diabetes insipidus, which is a water imbalance problem. Your pituitary gland is not telling the system what to do. So you just drink and pee, drink and pee. And they didn't really know that much about it in those days. But he was able to get some samples of a new drug which was injected twice a day. And they did that for probably a year and a half. And it jumpstarted the pituitary gland into doing what it was supposed to do. And I am what, seventy-four years old? And I've only met two people that ever heard of it.

Corrigan: Was it like an insulin shot, or no?

Dillard: No. It had nothing to do with—

Corrigan: Diabetic. Okay.

Dillard: (coughs) Excuse me. Not Sugar diabetes at all.

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: As a matter of fact, I used to give blood all the time and they'd say, "Do you have diabetes?" And I'd try to explain this and I'd find don't even explain it because it has nothing to do with it.

Corrigan: Okay. So you'd have—

Dillard: But anyway, that kind of put me behind in development. So I became really quite insecure, I guess, is the best way to put it, and introvertish. So that's the reason I only had this quote "one friend." I was just not an outgoing person at all.

Corrigan: Okay. But you had this fresh bread, fresh butter and whiskey after school. (laughter) Did his father ever catch on?

Dillard: No. Not to my knowledge.

Corrigan: Not to your knowledge. Okay. And you said the creamery was, it wasn't a dairy farm—

Dillard: Well, there was the glove factory and then a bakery and then a creamery. And that's where the farmers brought in their milk. And the creamery would separate the cream from the milk and turn it into butter.

Corrigan: Okay. So that was a pretty regular stopping point for you would be the—

Dillard: Oh, yeah. (laughs) We did that a lot.

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: Or if we'd just go to his house and goof off.

Corrigan: Till your mom was off—

Dillard: We didn't drink every day. (laughs)

Corrigan: Yeah. Okay.

Dillard: By the way, I finally, eventually wound up working at that creamery, too.

Corrigan: Oh, did you?

Dillard: Yeah.

Corrigan: During high school or afterwards?

Dillard: During high school. They had a program. I can't remember the name of it now. They still have those kind of programs where it's kind of a—

Corrigan: Like vocational program?

Dillard: Yeah. Right. Yeah, it was really kind of neat, though, because in this creamery, they had this great big vat of cottage cheese. And cottage cheese doesn't start out, it's dry. I don't know whether you knew that or not. It doesn't have any cream in it at all. So what we would do, we'd go out to the bathroom and come back. And on the way back, we'd grab a handful of that out of that vat and eat it. (laughs) And we also had a guy that could break locks. And so they had the ice cream locked up so he'd come by and say, "It's ice cream time." And he'd go pick the lock and get ice cream out and we would eat it. (laughs)

Corrigan: Was this, you said it was vocational during high school, was this a, where you'd go for an hour or two during high school, or was it after? Was it, I mean, was it during the day?

Dillard: I think, as I recall, I think it was after school that I worked there, I believe. But although I'm not too sure. It seemed like maybe you did have like a couple of hours each day. You'd have the classroom and then actually go do work.

Corrigan: So it's hands-on training.

Dillard: Yeah.

Corrigan: Other kids did other things?

Dillard: We got paid for it.

Corrigan: But other kids may have done other things like carpentry or something else.

Dillard: Oh, yeah. Right. Auto repair. Yeah. Welding.

Corrigan: Okay. So a lot of hands-on vocational training.

Dillard: Right.

Corrigan: And you worked at the creamery. Okay.

Dillard: Yeah. I also worked at the glove factory, too. In the summertime.

Corrigan: Okay. So you did have, outside of, in the summers, you said you mowed lawns, too, when you were younger.

Dillard: Yeah. One of the things we did, too, when we were at Blue Mound, was work in people's gardens. My mother would drop us off then pick us up on the way home. And weed gardens. We cleaned up—

[End Track 14. Begin Track 15.]

Dillard: —chicken houses. I've just worked my whole life. I don't know anything else. (laughs)

Corrigan: But just all the odd jobs that had to be done, whether it be weeding or—

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: Okay. Did you ever have to go collect eggs?

Dillard: Yeah. Of course we had our own hens. And one of the things that we did when we moved to Blue Mound is there was a small house. I don't know whether it was actually lived in or not. But I guess it probably was. But we bought that and moved it down to our property for a chicken house. And that was one of the neatest experiences, particularly with my dad. He had worked on the railroad and saw—how are they going to move this house. Well what they did is they jacked it up, cut down a couple of cottonwood trees, took all the limbs off. Slid those under the house. Put another tree on each end of those two that's under the house. And he took railroad spikes and spiked those logs together so it's all now one unit. Now I'll never forget that, because he had a railroad spike driving maul. Which had a head that was probably no bigger than maybe a quarter on each end. It was, you know, about that long and pretty heavy. And he would drive that with a great big arc. He would come almost from his heels all the way over and hit that spike. And I don't think he ever missed that spike at all. I was just really fascinated by that. Because you'd think once in a while, at least now, I keep hitting my thumb with a hammer on a nail.

Corrigan: And to have that much arc of a motion.

Dillard: Right. But you had to in order to drive that spike. Because it was pretty good-sized. And those logs were like eight and twelve inches thick. So then what they did is hook the chain to that. And a team of horses, and pulled it down the gravel road into our property.

Corrigan: So the logs in the center were rotating, correct? Or, no?

Dillard: No. they were just setting—they're skids.

Corrigan: They were just dragging it—okay.

Dillard: So they jacked up the house, put two logs this way and then two logs on top of those to stabilize them so they didn't splay out.

Corrigan: And then just drug it.

Dillard: Yeah.

Corrigan: Okay. Like a sleigh, almost.

Dillard: Just like a sled. Yeah.

Corrigan: Okay. Got you. And the team of horses did that.

Dillard: Yup. Team of horses.

Corrigan: Was it, it wasn't a very big house, was it?

Dillard: Not, no, no, it wasn't that big. But it made a really nice chicken house. We put the roost on the north side and then all the laying boxes on the south side. We had quite a few chickens then. I remember going in there one day and there was a big old black snake in there swallowing eggs. (laughs)

Corrigan: Had to take care of that, then.

Dillard: Had to take care of that, yeah.

Corrigan: Now did you, that seems like, did you have an abundance of eggs?

Dillard: Oh, yeah.

Corrigan: Did you sell them?

Dillard: I don't remember for sure. I think maybe we did some. I'm not sure. But we had plenty to eat. Because like I said, we had quite a few chickens.

Corrigan: Okay. Well yeah, you did mention that earlier. Was that a staple, eggs in the morning? You said you fried up bacon.

Dillard: Pretty much. Oh, yeah. Bacon and eggs, yeah.

Corrigan: All right.

Dillard: Well, you heard me say we also had bantie hens and guineas and ducks. So we had, yeah, we had all kinds of eggs. And the guineas, are you aware of a guinea? What a guinea is?

Corrigan: Yes.

Dillard: A chicken-like object.

Corrigan: Yeah. Yeah.

Dillard: They're kind of more humpbacked. And the rascals are really wild. They live in the trees. And really the only good way to get one to eat is just shoot it. Because you can't catch it. They're too fast.

Corrigan: Now when you were doing your hunting, to go back just a second, were you shooting with a rifle?

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: .22 rifle.

Corrigan: .22, okay.

Dillard: And we also had a .410 shotgun, which I still have.

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: Yeah. Which is a small caliber.

Corrigan: I didn't know, I guess we didn't talk about, did you do any trapping ever? Or was it all—

Dillard: No. It was all hunting with a dog and a gun.

Corrigan: Okay. And when you were fishing, were you using a cane pole or were you, did you have—

Dillard: Pretty much. Pretty much a cane pole. We finally graduated to rods and reels. But—(laughs)

Corrigan: Okay. But when you were younger, a cane pole.

Dillard: Oh, yeah.

Corrigan: So were you always on the hunt out for a good pole?

Dillard: Yes. Yeah. And a bunch of worms. Or grasshoppers. Those were good bait, too.

Corrigan: Okay. You'd just collect those around your property?

Dillard: Yeah.

Corrigan: Okay. So getting back to high school, and I think we'll take a break right after this, you did graduate from Chillicothe High School.

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: And that was in 19—

Dillard: Fifty-five.

Corrigan: Okay. 1955. Okay. And you said it was about 100 kids. Did you know at that time that you were going to attend college? Or that was the plan?

Dillard: Yeah, that's kind of interesting. Before we go there—

Corrigan: I wasn't going to quite go to college yet. But I was curious like were you on the track to do that?

Dillard: No. No, not at all. I don't believe so. As a matter of fact, I don't recall just when that all occurred. But I did want to tell you that Jerry Litton was my classmate.

Corrigan: Was he? Okay.

Dillard: Which is really interesting—

[End Track 15. Begin Track 16.]

Dillard: I sat in a speech class with him. And it was so obvious that guy was going to go someplace. He was so natural. And of course then the instructor realized this, too, and really did work with him. Yeah.

Corrigan: And he was the same grade as you then?

Dillard: Yes. Yeah. Yeah.

Corrigan: Okay. So you could tell at that time that he was a natural born speaker?

Dillard: Oh, yes. Yeah. And really a well-liked guy. As a matter of fact, I kind of had some thoughts about going for the gal he finally married. But he had a brand new '55 convertible Chevrolet so [makes dismissive noise] I wasn't—(laughs) I had an old beat-up Ford. So I wasn't in the running on that one.

Corrigan: And at that time, he would have been living out on the Charolais farm?

Dillard: No, no. He would have been still in Lock Springs at that time.

Corrigan: Okay. Okay. So the Charolais farm, was it Charolais? Was that the cattle?

Dillard: Yes. Yes.

Corrigan: Charolais cattle. That was afterwards, then?

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: Okay. Because I know that—

Dillard: Not too long afterwards. But, yeah.

Corrigan: Okay. Because I know that was, his story is that, you know, that was a very small, little tiny operation that then bloomed into a huge—

Dillard: Right. Huge. Yeah. You bet.

Corrigan: —multimillion dollar operation. But that wasn't planned from the beginning. It wasn't—and if I remember right, he was an only child?

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: I believe he, okay, he was. And his parents were both farmers. But, so you could tell in your speech that he was going to be a politician—

Dillard: He was going to go someplace. Yes. Right.

Corrigan: —and a legislator.

Dillard: And a good one. (laughs)

Corrigan: And a congressman.

Dillard: Yeah.

Corrigan: Would have been a senator had he not been killed.

Dillard: Yeah. Probably would have been president. I don't think there was any doubt about it. He would have gone all the way.

Corrigan: Do you remember that? Were you still following him in politics after that? When he was—

Dillard: Yes. It was really interesting, because we invited him to speak over here at the student union at our Fish and Wildlife conference. Probably, I need to look that up, but probably no more than a year before he died. And he gave a talk on the environment. Which you guys have.

Corrigan: Yes.

Dillard: Because I tape recorded it with a little tape recorder. And I brought it over and they converted it onto a DVD, or a CD, or whatever the process is. I don't think they had that speech.

Corrigan: Okay. I know we have a lot of things from him, but it's been—

Dillard: I don't think, there wouldn't have been any way they would have had that speech, I don't think.

Corrigan: Probably not.

Dillard: And Governor Bond was there the same day. So I taped both of them. And you know, we went off into a room and had a little chit chat, because we knew each other. And a photographer took a photo of us. And by doggies, that, I have not been able to find that photo anywhere. I know I told that guy to send me a copy. And I've contacted the Litton Foundation. The only possibility is the photographer actually came from Ag school and they don't have any record of it. So I, unfortunately, will never have that, I guess. But I would really like to have a copy of that. But anyway, we were on vacation the day that he got killed. Or died in that plane wreck. Which was really so sad.

Corrigan: Now he was heavily involved in FFA.

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: Were you involved in FFA at all?

Dillard: No, no, we really didn't go that route. We were involved in 4-H.

Corrigan: You were involved in 4-H?

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: Okay. That was my next question, because usually those two tend to go together.

Dillard: I have a third place prize for my muffins. (laughs)

Corrigan: Okay. Were you in 4-H very long?

Dillard: Yeah.

Corrigan: For the whole way through?

Dillard: Primarily when we were in Blue Mound. When we left there, that was the end of that, yeah.

Corrigan: Do you remember the name of your club?

Dillard: No, I don't. Not offhand.⁴

Corrigan: Okay. But you'd have the fair every year. Was that something you attended always?

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: Where was the fair held?

Dillard: It was in Chillicothe.

Corrigan: Okay. Chillicothe. Okay. That was probably the source of a lot of activities.

Dillard: Right. Yeah.

Corrigan: Okay. All right. Well, let's take a break right now.

Dillard: Okay.

Corrigan: And I'll pause the recording here. [pause] It's back on. Okay, we took a brief pause there and we're back now. And before, we were still talking about high school a little. And then before we get to college, a little bit, a few more questions I was going to ask you about outdoor activities that you did. You said we did some hunting, the fishing. We talked about that. What would your fondest memories of spending time outdoors be as a kid? What activities do you, is it the hunting and fishing you remember the most?

Dillard: There's hunting and fishing. And also the, when they moved in with the rock quarries, they would abandon various pits and they'd fill with water. And so we did a lot of swimming. And of course by that time, we were buying cars.

⁴ The club's name was Liberty.

[End Track 16. Begin Track 17.]

Dillard: And I bought an old car. It was a 1932 Dodge, which was the first six-cylinder Dodge made. And a guy down south of Blue Mound had that. And he wanted, I think he wanted fifty dollars for it. And I said, "I'll give you twenty-five." And we settled on \$37.50.

Corrigan: So you bought your first car for \$37.50.

Dillard: Yes. My brother had, I think he had an old Model A. Yeah, I don't know where he got it. But we'd take those old cars down to that rock quarry. And back off and run down and hit the water.

Corrigan: With the car.

Dillard: With the car until they drowned it out. And of course, big splash. Pull it out, let it dry out and then do it over again. (laughs) Hey, you're talking two guys that are ten and a half months apart. And what one didn't think of, the other did. I mean—(laughs)

Corrigan: And that was in around high school—

Dillard: No. That was still in grade school. Or getting toward high school. Yeah.

Corrigan: Okay. Do you remember what kind of gas mileage you got back then?

Dillard: No, no, no. We didn't go far enough to burn that much gas. That's one thing. Well, I'll go ahead and tell a little bit. Well, we'll tell the story right now. But it will come out later in college. One of the reasons that I didn't make it in college the first time, really, I wasn't socialized. My family, we had never eaten in a restaurant. We'd never stayed in a motel. We didn't travel, and when we did, it was just kind of a day trip. Or we would spend the night in the car. I remember one time we went out west and actually stayed the night in a quote "tent city" where you just rented a tent. So we just didn't, you know, we were always sort of there. So we just had to entertain ourselves. We did make one trip to Ohio and one trip to Wyoming that I can recall. And those particular days.

Corrigan: Okay. Okay. Because your dad had done a lot of traveling when he was working, when he was younger.

Dillard: Right. Right. Yeah, he had done a lot of traveling.

Corrigan: Okay. So, okay. And how were you able to pull out these cars out of the water? I'm just curious.

Dillard: Well, we had two cars.

Corrigan: So you'd use the one—

Dillard: Yeah. Which brought up another interesting story. Because my car wouldn't start that well. (laughs) And we couldn't get it started one day. So we were pulling it out of the rock quarry on the little road before we got to Route Z. My brother was pulling me. And I was fiddling around trying to get it started and wasn't paying any attention. And he made the turn onto Route Z. And all of a sudden I was right in front of this guy's car. (laughs) Who hit us. Or we hit him. I'm not sure how you say it. But he was not a very pleasant person. It was really funny because I'd almost forgotten that. And I was dumpster diving in the Chillicothe newspaper archives, ran across this clip about my brother getting arrested.

Corrigan: And that was the reason.

Dillard: That was the reason! (laughs) I said oh, yeah, I remember that incident. (laughs) Yeah. There's a lot of incidents you won't get on this tape, I'm sure. I don't think we were particularly mean little guys, but we were active.

Corrigan: Active.

Dillard: Active little rascals. Yeah, we fairly frequently would raid, quote "raid" other people's gardens. Dig a few potatoes. Pull a few pears off the branches or something like that. We were famous for going out in the middle of nowhere and starting a little fire. We'd carry a little skillet and we'd fry up some potatoes or something like that.

Corrigan: So did you do a lot of camping? Did you stay out?

Dillard: Well, no—

Corrigan: Or just in the area.

Dillard: It was just in the area, yeah, yeah. We did a little bit of camping, but not much. I mean, it was pretty primitive, let me tell you. It was basically sleeping under the stars. I know there was a, one of the rock quarries, they had a place where they stored the dynamite. It was kind of, again, like a cave, yeah. A root cellar. And we had a little stash of sugar and lard and salt and pepper. So we didn't have to go all the way back home if we wanted to cook something when we were out.

Corrigan: So you just built a fire and you had a little skillet with you.

Dillard: Yeah. (laughs) Just always doing something.

Corrigan: So you were very resourceful then, I guess.

Dillard: Yes. Yeah, I think so. Yeah.

Corrigan: You could find a way to—

Dillard: Find a way to do it.

Corrigan: —to do it.

Dillard: Yeah.

Corrigan: And that continued on through childhood and through high school?

Dillard: We were pretty close until high school. And then we kind of went separate ways. He had a group of friends and, rather wild, I might add. And I had this one really nice, meek, mild friend of mine. (laughs)

Corrigan: So your, Robert was a lot tamer than your brother?

Dillard: A lot tamer, yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Corrigan: What was your brother's name again? John?

Dillard: John.

Corrigan: Okay. So can you tell me how college came about?

[End Track 17. Begin Track 18.]

Corrigan: How you decided upon going. How you decided where to go. I mean, I know you came to the University of Missouri here. And this would be in the late '50s. And you started as an engineering major.

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: But that soon changed.

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: But can you tell me about that process? Because you were the first person to attend college in your family. So can you tell me how that evolved?

Dillard: I wish I could. I really, really cannot get that to come back on when I finally made the decision to come. I can put it this way very distinctly about the family. They did not necessarily encourage me. They did not discourage me. I think my mom and dad both were really glad and proud that I would do this. But the only thing that I can come up with, Jeff, is that I had worked all my life. I had been working at the glove factory. I saw my mother who had worked there forty-two years. I think down deep I said I just don't want to work for somebody else for a living. I'd like to do something that I like to do.

And probably maybe the lure of being able to make more money by having an education. I really, really don't know. I'm just so glad that I did. But the other thing was, see, in 1955, when I got out of school, they changed the GI Bill. My brother got out of school the year before I did and went into the army. And I think at that time he sort of thought about using the GI Bill to go to school. But being the really super smart guy he is, he figured out that the cost of school, he'd never be able to make that back. Wrong. (laughs) He wound up working in a factory. In a place he didn't like. He didn't like his boss. He didn't like to come in. (laughs) But I decided to come to school.

Corrigan: Was that right after high school?

Dillard: Right.

Corrigan: So you finished and then the following fall you went—

Dillard: Right.

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: And see, what happened was, they changed the, I was going to do the same thing he did. I was going to go into the army to get the GI Bill. So I sort of had made the decisions I wanted to go to college, I guess, by that time. And they changed the GI Bill and that was no longer available. So I thought okay, let's skip the army and I'll work. And I'll never forget it, because it was kind of the first real job, I guess, I ever had. I mean, not that all the others weren't real jobs. But I remember very distinctly my father went with me. We went over to Macon to the highway department. And I don't know how I found out they had an opening. But he did go with me. And I was hired onto the highway department. And the idea there was if you worked for them every summer, they would give you a job. If you would go to get a degree in civil engineering. Because I guess they were kind of hurting, maybe, for civil engineers at that time. So to me, that sounded like a good deal. So I started working for the highway department that summer of '55. Came down here to school in civil engineering. I lasted two and a half months and dropped out. I just could not make the—I just wasn't socialized enough. All of a sudden here I was on my own, living in a strange town. (laughs) I mean, there was no question where I was going. And I don't know why there wasn't. There just wasn't. I mean, it was the University of Missouri, you go to the University of Missouri. Well I guess probably because of the civil engineering program, too.

Corrigan: Yeah, that probably was an in. Because you would have had other options, but not going to have the variety of majors that were available at that time.

Dillard: Right. So I stayed in two and a half months. If I'd have stayed another two weeks, I would have gotten half credit. But I didn't even stay long enough to get the credit. My grades were okay. I mean, they weren't super, but they weren't bad, either.

Corrigan: How were your grades in high school? Were they good?

Dillard: Yeah, pretty good. Yeah. Yeah. So I dropped out. And continued to work with the highway department. And I worked with them for three years before I went back.

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: But by that time, I'd started going with my future wife. She was going down here. So I was making a lot of trips down to Columbia to see her. I thought—

Corrigan: Were you living in Macon?

Dillard: No. Lived in Chillicothe. I never did move to Macon.

Corrigan: Oh, okay.

Dillard: I did stay there, though, quite a bit.

Corrigan: Okay. Well I didn't know if you, that's just where you needed to go for the highway department interview. Got you.

Dillard: Yeah, that was the, that was the, where I was hired. But see, I was on the survey part, and we were all over the state. We surveyed roads everywhere. Well, one of my favorite stories is staying in Macon. I stayed at a rooming house.

[End Track 18. Begin Track 19.]

Dillard: And on the second story. And as you go up, here's the bathroom. And there's a bedroom here. And then a bedroom here and a bedroom here. Well this bedroom was a single gal that was working there. And I had the bedroom back there and another guy had a bedroom here. We shared the bathroom. Well, one morning I got up, put on my boots, come down the hall, clump, clump, clump, got right in front of that bathroom door like that door there and I opened up. Here was this gal, totally naked! (laughs) She has a towel, so what does she do? She covers her front and goes in her room. And you know, we had talked a little bit. You know, we didn't have anything going at all. So I think it was like two days later I was going downtown, I said, "Can I get you anything?" I heard this voice say, "No!" Well we usually ate in the same restaurant. And I don't think I ever saw her there again. (laughs) It was so funny. She had to hear me walking down the door. I think she just waited too late before she got out of there.

Corrigan: Just was a passing thought or something that it was something that happened so quickly.

Dillard: Yeah, wouldn't happen. Yeah. So anyway—

Corrigan: So three years at the highway department, though, surveying. Is that what you did the whole time?

Dillard: Right. Survey party.

Corrigan: You went all over the—

Dillard: Actually we were all over the state. We actually went into other districts. I surveyed, helped survey, Interstate 70 from Marshall Junction to Boonville one winter. And of course there wasn't any highway. We just went through the countryside. We were laying it out. But before it was built.

Corrigan: And that was in—

Dillard: Probably '56. We also surveyed Highway 65 from Carrollton down to Waverly. We surveyed parts of probably what later turned out to be I-44. But a lot of farm to market roads, too, in the country.

Corrigan: Okay. Did you enjoy that, being outside?

Dillard: Oh, yeah. Yeah. A lot of fun. And traveling. I'll never forget the first time that we traveled. Because I'd never been away from home, other than come down here. And this guy, we had to stay at hotels and motels. And I thought oh my god, what do you do? So I thought what I'll do is I'll just get behind this guy. (laughs) So one of the guys on the survey party went up and says, you know, "I'd like to have a room." And he got his room. So I said, "Okay, I'd like to have a room." I didn't know what to do.

Corrigan: You just followed the guy in front of you.

Dillard: Just followed the guy in front of me. (laughs)

Corrigan: Probably worked out very well.

Dillard: Yeah. And one of the really neat experiences with Hotel Florence in Brunswick, Missouri. It's still there. Hotel Florence, there are no locks on the doors. I've got the room. I said, "Where's the key?" There wasn't any. They never locked their doors! They might lock the front door, but the individual rooms didn't have locks on them. Of course all those back in those days were shared bathrooms, too. And the other funny story was up at Princeton, we were surveying up there. We stayed at the Moss Hotel, was an old three-story brick building. And just, of course no air conditioning, just hotter than all get out. So I went down on the city square to sit there and kind of cool off. And here come some of the local yahoos. "Come on, go riding with us!" Okay, so away we went. And just oh my, just scared me to death, because they were just out of control. So we got back to town and there was a watermelon truck parked there full of watermelons. And they said, "Let's get us a watermelon." I said, "That sounds like a good idea." They said, "You go climb up there and hand us one down." So I did. And of course, you know what they did is they took off. (laughs) I thought, "Boy, that was dumb." So I didn't know what to do, so I just went back and set on this bench. And pretty soon this guy walked up and

said, “It’s hot evening, isn’t it?” “Yep, sure is hot.” He said, “I’m driving that watermelon truck. Why don’t we get us a watermelon?” So I finally got my watermelon.

Corrigan: It was his truck and watermelon. Okay.

Dillard: Of course he doesn’t know an hour before that I’d swiped one of them for the local yahoos.

Corrigan: And they had you do it.

Dillard: They had me do it. Yeah.

Corrigan: So was that really an awakening to see all the state like that that you hadn’t seen before?

Dillard: Oh, yeah. And see, what that did, really, was socialize me so I was ready. Basically I think said I’d never go back to school because it was not a good experience. And it was really my own doing. But then when I started coming down here to see my future wife I think well, maybe I’d just go back to school. And I’d stay for just a little while. (laughs) So I finally decided to come back to school. And I came back in engineering and stayed probably a whole semester. And I got to thinking, you know, the highway—

[End Track 19. Begin Track 20.]

Dillard: —department’s not going to pay me enough to come back, to be able to afford to come back to school next year. Maybe I’ll just get me a different kind of job where I can make me some real money. Like construction work. Then the light went on. Well, you really don’t have to be in engineering unless you want to. And probably the smartest thing I ever did, I went over to counseling and testing and ran through a series of tests. You know, what you’d like to be when you grow up type of thing. And the guy said, “You really have a strong leaning towards the natural sciences. And why don’t you go over on campus and talk to some of these people.” So I went over to the school of fisheries at that time, fish and wildlife was in the little Stephens building at that time. And talked to Dr. Campbell and a few other people. And finally decided yeah, I think I’d really like to be in that area. So then I switched schools and didn’t have to work then again for the highway department. And actually got a construction job. And was able to make enough money then to come back the next year. So once I kind of got into it, then I thought well, heck, what I’m going to do is go right ahead and get me a master’s degree. Actually the last year of my undergraduate degree, I was dually enrolled.

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: Yeah.

Corrigan: So you, let's see, you received your bachelor's degree in wildlife conservation in 1963.

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: And you went straight through and got your master's degree in zoology? Is that correct?

Dillard: Yeah.

Corrigan: Okay. In 1965? So you just stayed through, just finished through? Could you tell then that the master's degree was what was going to be what was needed to really get out in the field and do the research?

Dillard: Yeah. Right. Because I had been kind of looking down the road like where I might work. And yes, it was a requirement. If you wanted to be a fisheries biologist, you had to have a master's degree.

Corrigan: Now right when you started and you were back in these natural sciences classes, did you immediately go to fisheries? I mean, you were exposed to lots of things. You were exposed to different parts of conservation wildlife and that. But did you always hone in on fisheries from the beginning?

Dillard: I think I did, I believe. And I'm a little bit hazy on that. Because I know later on, you had a certain time period where you had to commit to either one. But I really think that I was leaning that way the whole time. And I think probably because I had talked primarily to the aquatic people over there. Probably that guided me somewhat, at least.

Corrigan: So the talking to the testing center here and counselors really did steer you in the right direction?

Dillard: Oh, yes. And then later on, as our kids came to college and didn't know what they wanted to do, I steered them over there, too. And it really, it really helped all of them.

Corrigan: And you said your wife was attending here at the time?

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: What was her, what was her area of studies?

Dillard: It was home economics. Clothing and textiles.

Corrigan: And what's her name, by the way?

Dillard: Betty.

Corrigan: Betty.

Dillard: And like I tell people, if it hadn't have been for Betty, I'd still be in freshman English. (laughs)

Corrigan: And she graduated from here at the same time period, '60-something?

Dillard: Let's see. She got her master's degree in the summer of '64, I believe it was. Because see, we got married when we were in school. And we bought an eight foot wide, forty foot long trailer. Lived out in the Rainbow Village Trailer Park. Which is just south of I-70. It no longer exists.

Corrigan: Okay. Where was it? That was just south of I-70?

Dillard: What's the old restaurant out there that's no more?

Corrigan: Oh, Everett's?

Dillard: Yeah. From Everett's that way was Rainbow Village Trailer Park.

Corrigan: And later on it was like a camping ground, I think.

Dillard: No, it was Rainbow Village Trailer Park. Oh—

Corrigan: Maybe later?

Dillard: No.

Corrigan: Okay. So it was trailer park. And basically it stops at the Nissan dealership today, which would be I-70 and is that Providence?

Dillard: Right.

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: And it's still vacant.

Corrigan: Yeah, it's still vacant.

Dillard: I've been absolutely surprised that somebody hasn't bought that property and done something with it.

Corrigan: So when were you married? 1960?

Dillard: Nineteen Sixty.

Corrigan: Nineteen Sixty.

Dillard: And our first child was born in 1961. And the people back home were saying, see, one, two, three, but it was—then we had two more about two years apart. (laughs) So we had two kids. And we both worked and went to school. Lived in that trailer. And my wife was pregnant with our third child when I got out of school.

[End Track 20. Begin Track 21.]

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: And he was born January 30th, and I went to work February one. (laughs)

Corrigan: Okay. So right after that. Was her master's in home economics, too?

Dillard: Yeah. Clothing and textiles.

Corrigan: All right.

Dillard: Then she went on to get her PhD.

Corrigan: Oh, she did. What was that in?

Dillard: It was in, well, she'd taken all the courses they had, clothing and textiles. So her PhD is in family economics and management. And you know, the rascals over here wouldn't hire her because she had all three degrees from here. So she went up and worked at Truman State for three years.

Corrigan: Truman State. Okay.

Dillard: Then they finally woke up and hired her back. At \$7,000 a year less. (laughs)

Corrigan: Than she was making at Truman State?

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: So she worked at Truman State and then she did, she worked here at MU?

Dillard: Yeah. Come back and taught clothing and textiles.

Corrigan: And did she do that for a long time?

Dillard: You know, I'm not sure how long that was. I think, probably, she retired in '98. I don't remember how many years that was.

Corrigan: Okay. She retired. So she was here for quite a long time.

Dillard: Oh, yeah. She is just a natural born teacher. She taught nursery school. She taught in the university high school. Did you know they had a high school here?

Corrigan: No. I guess I probably didn't know that. I know that a lot of universities do have those high schools. I don't know, I wasn't here, so—

Dillard: And she taught, Sunday school, she taught at Columbia College. So she, yeah.

Corrigan: Was she commuting to Truman State?

Dillard: Yes, and that was really interesting, too, because she had an apartment up there. They called it the Treetops. The people who had the furniture store had an apartment building. And the very top one they had furnished with some really expensive furniture. And they wouldn't let just anybody rent it. So she was able to rent that. But she was up there four nights a week. She'd go up on Monday morning and come back on Friday evening.

Corrigan: Okay. She did that for three years, you said?

Dillard: Yeah. And one of my favorite stories about that is that—she's a really good cook. I mean, really good. And so we always had this old-fashioned popcorn. You know, you'd get the pan out. You'd heat it up. You'd put the oil in and heat it up and put in the corn and shake it around a little bit. And you'd make it that way. And so I always liked to watch Monday Night Football. And of course, she'd make the popcorn. And she wasn't there on Monday nights. She said, "Well, I can teach you how to do that." I said, "Really?" She said, "Yeah." "That would be great." So she said, "Use this pan right here. And here's the oil. You put it in here and you get it nice and hot and you pour in the popcorn." I said, "Boy, that's pretty easy." So sure enough, one Monday night she left and I turned on the football game. I said, "Boy, I'd like to have some of that popcorn." I said, "I think I can do this." So I went in and got the pan. I poured in the oil. Went back in, watched a few plays, come back in and poured in the popcorn. Went back in to watch a few plays. And I thought, what's that funny smell? And I went in there and I'd poured in vinegar rather than oil. (laughs) I mean, the bottles look the same! Thank goodness for microwave popcorn. (laughs)

Corrigan: So you learned quickly—

Dillard: That will be in my book *A Full Cup of Joe*, by the way.

Corrigan: Okay. So she got back down to MU. And she was here. Okay. So you guys, roughly around the same time period you finished. Did she get her PhD later on? Or was it right after—

Dillard: It was later on.

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: See, well that was an interesting story, too. Because I had started work for the department. And had been promoted to the chief of research. And I did that for nine years. And I felt I did a great job. But I just had that feeling, I just need to do something different. And I was hitting my midlife crazies. And I said I'm going to, rather than changing wives, I'm going to change jobs. So I asked for a voluntary demotion. I don't think anybody had ever done that. They didn't know what to do. (laughs) They finally decided they'd create a position for me and get me out of there so they could refill it. (laughs) But it was so funny because that was about a two-year decision. And my wife, you know, we'd talk all the time. And she knew what I was up to and agreed with it. "Yeah, you'll probably be able to do that." So one night I come home, she says, "Well. You can go crazy, I can, too." I said, "What are you going to do?" She said, "I'm going to go back and get a PhD." I said, "The heck you are!" (laughs) And so she did. That was 1981 when she went back, '81 or '82, yeah. (laughs)

Corrigan: Okay. All right.

Dillard: And boy, she was so glad—

[End Track 21. Begin Track 22]

Dillard: —she did it. But she said, "I don't know why I did it and I would never do it again." (laughs)

Corrigan: And then you two have been here ever since in Columbia, right?

Dillard: Yeah.

Corrigan: Since then.

Dillard: We've been here since 1960.

Corrigan: '60. Okay. All right. And you've been, except for the little stint in Truman—

Dillard: Yeah, I actually came back to school in '58. Is that right? That would be about right, wouldn't it?

Corrigan: Late '50s, yeah, yeah. Yeah. That would, yeah, probably '59, because you graduated in '63. So that's probably about right.

Dillard: Yeah. Right. Yeah. Something like that, anyway.

Corrigan: Okay. But you've been in Columbia ever since then.

Dillard: Yes. Mm hmm.

Corrigan: Okay. All right. Well, I think this is probably a good place to stop today.

Dillard: Oh, okay.

Corrigan: Because I was going to, my next question is about the fisheries research biologist job in 1965. So we're right there.

Dillard: Okay.

Corrigan: I'd like to keep that with the rest of the jobs. Kind of in a progression there. And then, we're just a little bit after the time you wanted to stay here. So I think that will, I think I want to keep the career together with the publications. I think we covered everything beforehand. I think we'll stop here today. So let me go ahead and pause the recording here.

Dillard: Okay.

[End Track 22.]

[End Session.]