

An Interview with

**Joe Dillard**

at The State Historical Society of Missouri in  
Columbia, Missouri

**16 August 2011**

interviewed by Jeff D. Corrigan



**Oral History Program**

The State Historical Society of Missouri

© 2011

Collection C3966

Missouri Environmental

CD 66



## **NOTICE**

- 1) This material may be protected by copyright law (Title 17, U.S. Code). It may not be cited without acknowledgment to The State Historical Society of Missouri, a joint collection of the University of Missouri and the State Historical Society of Missouri. Citations should include: Missouri Environmental Oral History Project, Collection Number C3966, [name of interviewee], [date of interview], The State Historical Society of Missouri.
  
- 2) Reproductions of this transcript are available for reference use only and cannot be reproduced or published in any form (including digital formats) without written permission from The State Historical Society of Missouri.
  
- 3) Use of information or quotations from any Missouri Environmental Oral History Collection transcript indicates agreement to indemnify and hold harmless the University of Missouri, the State Historical Society of Missouri, their officers, employees, and agents, and the interviewee from and against all claims and actions arising out of the use of this material.

*For further information, contact:*

The State Historical Society of Missouri  
University of Missouri  
1020 Lowry Street  
Columbia, MO 65201-5149



## 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: August 16, 2011  
Transcribed by: Teresa Bergen

5

**[Begin Track One. Begin Interview Three.]**

10

Corrigan: This is Jeff Corrigan, oral historian for the State Historical Society of Missouri. Today is Tuesday, August 16, 2011. I'm here today in the society's conference room with Joe Dillard. This is the third time that I'm interviewing him. Last time we left off by talking about Missouri in general, the stream and other water bodies, their cleanliness, their dirtiness, the fish and the animal populations. Are they in healthy check? How are we doing on development and growth? That's where we left off at. One last thing I wanted to ask you about the conservation aspect was, I wanted to ask you, did you know Charlie Schwartz?

15

Dillard: Yes, I did know Charlie Schwartz.

20

Corrigan: And then could you tell me a little bit about how you knew him? Maybe a little bit about his contributions to conservation in Missouri or what dealings you had with him.

25

Dillard: Yeah. I'm not sure what, the first time I met him, because he was working in Jeff City and I was working in Columbia. Probably the first time I met him was when I moved to Jeff City with my first move with the department, which was back in 1969. I knew about him before that because I'm pretty sure he made some talks at some of our classes when I was going through fish and wildlife. He, of course, he was one of the original people in the department of conservation. And I think he probably did about as much as anyone to help spread the word. Because he was a photographer and an artist. And a sculptor later on in life. So I didn't have that much direct contact with him, but I just knew about him. Of course, he was a friend with everybody. I know, you remember me telling you about taking the voluntary demotion. I didn't realize he really knew about that. And of course by that time I was back up here. I was in Jeff City one day and he was coming down the hall. And he said, "Joe," he said, "I'm really kind of glad and proud of you for being able to take that kind of a move." And it just kind of overwhelmed me. Like how would you know? And one of the few people. Most everybody was saying, "What the hell are you doing?" (laughs) but old Charlie, he knew what I was doing. He thought it was a good move.

30

35

40

Corrigan: So he was supportive of that.

Dillard: He was very supportive of it. Yeah.

45

Corrigan: That's good.

Dillard: And he would help you with almost anything. Yeah. He was always overcommitted, of course. (laughs)

5 Corrigan: Yeah. Did you know his wife at all?

Dillard: Not as well as I knew him. Yeah, I knew about her. Yeah. They were quite a combination. You know, they're both biologists.

10 Corrigan: I've been told they were quite the working team together.

Dillard: Yes. Yeah.

Corrigan: That him and Libby complemented each other well and kept each other on track.

15 Dillard: You know, it's amazing. Because Charlie was a little bit like Glenn. A perfectionist. So I'm sort of surprised, I guess, that the two were able to do all that and still be married. So I don't know who was giving and taking, but I'm sure somebody was. (laughs) Probably Libby, most of the time.

20 Corrigan: That's probably true.

Dillard: Have you ever met her?

25 Corrigan: No. No. I know that Joan had, I believe, some interaction with her when we did that exhibit here.

Dillard: Right.

30 Corrigan: Because she's in Idaho, I believe, now.

Dillard: Yeah. They moved out to Coeur d'Alene. Yeah.

35 Corrigan: Okay. So that was your main interaction with him. That he knew about your transition, your demotion, and was one of the few people that said that's okay.

Dillard: You know, I was really surprised, I guess, because I had forgotten that the cover on that one report you had was done by him.

40 Corrigan: Yeah, we mentioned that the one time, that I noticed that when I was looking at, I had pulled your publications from our holdings. And the first thing I noticed was well, anytime I see a drawing in Missouri, in a Missouri book on wildlife conservation or wildlife or the department, I usually assume it's him and then usually see his little signature on the bottom there. So that's why I wondered if it was just a, if a lot of his things were used as almost like stock images or if he specifically did it for certain projects. Or he just had so  
45 much that people could pull from whatever they needed.

Dillard: I think that was it. Did you know that he actually did some work in Hawaii?

Corrigan: No.

5 Dillard: Yeah. He went over to study, well, several things. But one of the things he studied  
was that natural goose they have over there called the nene. Nene goose. And I've got  
probably three or four publications that he wrote based on his research in Hawaii. And I'm  
not really sure how that worked out with the department. I don't know whether he got a leave  
of absence. I'm pretty sure he was working with the department at the time he was over  
10 there.

Corrigan: Okay. Yeah, that's the first I've heard of him being outside of Missouri doing  
research—

15 **[End Track 1. Begin Track 2.]**

Dillard: And of course one of the fun things that he really did was the research on the turtles  
and their movements. He had a black lab that would go out and retrieve turtles. So he would  
mark them and use his lab then to go out and retrieve them on his property down in Jeff City.  
20 And he published two little books on their life history. And it comes to pass that the two  
main threats to turtles, box turtles I'm talking about now, are automobiles run over them.  
And if we have a dry summer and it stays dry all fall, they can't dig deep enough and they  
freeze to death in wintertime. (laughs)

25 Corrigan: Okay. It makes sense, but you have to think about it or really track that. That's  
interesting.

Dillard: I don't think there's hardly anything that Charlie didn't study in some fashion.

30 Corrigan: Yeah. Even in his artwork and photography and sculptures, it seems to be that  
there's a little bit of everything from birds to mammals to you name it.

Dillard: He didn't do fish that well. That was the only time that I had a kind of a negative  
thought toward Charlie. *The Fishes of Missouri* was written by one of the people that was on  
35 my staff over at the research section. And Charlie was going to illustrate the book. Well, he  
made one illustration in about two or three years. We said this is not going to work because  
we've got 200 fishes in the state of Missouri. So we finally hired somebody else to actually  
do the illustrations for that book. But I think it was because he didn't have that much  
experience with fishes. And he was just so busy doing everything else. Like I say, he was  
40 always overcommitted. Very productive, though.

Corrigan: Yeah. He does seem like he was quite prolific with being able to pump out stuff.

Dillard: And the one piece of art that he did that very few people know about still exists, I  
45 think Wendy Noren may have it in her possession. But it was a piece of art that he did over  
for LeFevre Hall. There was a black person over there, black maintenance man, whom

Charlie really liked a lot. And he painted him a painting. And it was, I can't remember what the title, the exact title. But it was sort of like "Thoughts of Heaven" or "Going to Heaven." And of course politically very incorrect. Because here he has watermelon and all kinds of things. And did this for this black man. But Forrest Rose realized, found the painting in an abandoned building on campus that was being torn down. And he went in and saved it. And of course he passed away. And I think Wendy Noren has that. And I think it's in two or three panels. I've been trying to get a digital image of it. Because like I say, most people don't even know it exists. And it really doesn't have that much to do about wildlife, but it's a really neat idea that, it was a compliment to the black guy, really.

5

Corrigan: Another aspect of his art that very few people had seen.

Dillard: Yeah. Or knew it exist, yeah.

15

Corrigan: Yeah. That's the first I've heard of that. Now moving on, I told you we're going to talk about what you're doing, what you're spending your time doing these days. And you're doing a lot. So one thing that we did talk a little bit was gardening, though.

Dillard: Yes.

20

Corrigan: We've talked about that you've been doing that for decades.

Dillard: Forever. (laughs)

25

Corrigan: And you just brought in some more produce today to the society. So you're definitely producing more than you and your family can consume, it sounds like. Now you just mentioned, though, before we went on tape, that you grow a lot of constants but that you're always trying to try something different.

30

Dillard: Right.

Corrigan: So you still have an interest in the unknown for you, right? And you mentioned this year, what was, you're growing what for the first time?

35

Dillard: Celery. Celery.

Corrigan: Celery. And then you also mentioned that you're growing a Missouri gourd.

Dillard: Right.

40

Corrigan: Can you talk about that? Where you got it from?

45

Dillard: Yeah. One of the people of the department of conservation came in with that last spring. And he brought in these little gourds that are about the size of tennis balls. Just completely round. Almost no stem on it at all. And I said, "What do you have?" And he says, "I'm not sure." So he cracked one open and sure enough there were some seeds in there. So

we went to the Steyermark's book on the flora of Missouri. And found out that there is such a thing called the Missouri gourd. I think it's also called the buffalo gourd. Grows primarily down in south Missouri. And that's where they found it. But I planted some seeds and I gave some seeds to my oldest daughter. So we both have now Missouri gourds.

5

Corrigan: So it was an identified gourd. It just wasn't widely known?

Dillard: Yeah.

10 Corrigan: And how—

**[End Track 2. Begin Track 3.]**

Corrigan: —is it growing?

15

Dillard: Doing fine. (laughs) Got little gourds coming on.

Corrigan: So that's more of a fall crop then—

20

Dillard: Yeah. Yeah. And we're thinking about maybe making some ornaments for a Christmas tree by painting them and then just hanging them on the tree.

Corrigan: Now what else are things that you've tried that you don't normally do? In the past couple of years. What have you tried that's different?

25

Dillard: I've tried rutabagas. And that didn't work very well. I did try a regular gourd. And that worked almost too well. Wound up with about forty-some gourds. Probably the tallest one was like a foot and a half tall. And so we put those down in the basement. And almost all of them made it through. You know, they'd dry out on the inside. And then my wife shellacked them. And we're still giving gourds away. When you come to our house, you have to leave with a gourd. (laughs)

30

Corrigan: Now I don't know if we mentioned it before, but how big is your garden?

35

Dillard: It's basically forty feet by forty feet.

Corrigan: Okay. So a big square.

40

Dillard: Yeah. And it used to be larger than that when we were raising sweet corn. But the raccoons, we just couldn't keep them out, even with an electric fence, we couldn't keep them out. So we finally downsized it some, at least.

Corrigan: And is this all open? Is it, or do you have, is it partially covered in shade by trees? Or is it all open?

45

Dillard: It has a really good exposure to the sun. There are some trees on the south and a few on the east. But it probably gets, oh, at least six or seven hours of sun a day.

5 Corrigan: Now I've heard you mention, this is a couple of times ago when we were talking, you try to limit the amount of pesticide you spray.

Dillard: Right.

10 Corrigan: Could you talk about, you don't quite do organic farming, right? Or do you?

Dillard: Well, sort of. (laughs) I mean—

15 Corrigan: We didn't really get into that. I guess could you describe that, because you mention about having different insect problems, but that that was okay.

Dillard: Yeah. We usually just plant more. That's one of the reasons for a big garden. You just plant more plants. And once in a while I'll get really upset with them and use a little bit of Sevin, which is a pretty low, on the scale of insecticides, at least, pretty safe.

20 Corrigan: Do you and your wife do things like do you compost?

25 Dillard: No, not really. No. No. And we do have, I think I told you, we do have a small pond nearby. And so I bought a little gas-powered pump. And that's the way we water our pond. Our garden, I'm sorry, out of the pond. And I usually try to triple crop. I plant spinach and lettuce early. And then come back with green beans and tomatoes. And then later on in the fall come back with turnips. And maybe another crop of spinach and lettuce.

30 Corrigan: Okay. And you mentioned you're also growing black-eyed peas right now. And you brought in a bunch of cucumbers today.

Dillard: Got cucumbers, yeah. I got okra. Yeah. (laughs) We plant cantaloupe. We've had several nice cantaloupe. And plant sweet potatoes. I plant six plants each year. Six individual plants. And usually harvest a wheelbarrow full of sweet potatoes.

35 Corrigan: Really. Okay.

Dillard: And you put those down in the basement and they last almost until the next sweet potato seasons. (laughs) It depends on how many you give away.

40 Corrigan: Well that's true, too, I guess.

Dillard: And of course I told you before, we have three kids that live here in town. They don't garden at all. So that's part of where our excess goes to.

45 Corrigan: So between your kids and your grandkids.

Dillard: Yeah.

Corrigan: I know that you're constantly bringing them into The Society. So that's your outreach family.

5

Dillard: I think we've got thirty tomato plants this year. Of course we can those. That's the only one we can.

Corrigan: Okay. And do you plant, do you always try to, do you plant a variety of varieties? Or do you stick with the same kind?

10

Dillard: No. We usually have oh, at least four or five varieties. Sometimes seven or eight. Yeah, I'm always trying something new. Even in the tomato line.

15

Corrigan: And do you rotate where the crops are in your garden?

Dillard: Yes. Yes, we do. Yeah. We have one row that's constant and that's our strawberry row. So we have strawberries in there.

20

Corrigan: Okay. Okay. Now moving on a little bit—

Dillard: Oh, we do have, one thing I did try last year that didn't work out so well but it came back, which surprised me, was Swiss chard. We'd never had that before. It's really, really good. It's almost better than spinach.

25

Corrigan: So you're still, if you get seeds from it, you're willing to try it.

Dillard: Yeah, I'll try it. Yeah, I've just about run out of things to try. Well, till the Missouri gourd came along.

30

Corrigan: Now, moving on a little bit, one of the major projects you work on still today in your semi-retirement, we'll call it, because you're busier than ever, is—

**[End Track 3. Begin Track 4.]**

35

Corrigan: —your work with Blue Mound history. Now could you—

Dillard: Could we go back just a minute to the garden?

40

Corrigan: Yeah. Yeah.

Dillard: I wanted to point out that for successful gardening around here, you have to protect yourself against animals. So we have a two-foot chicken wire fence around the bottom that keeps rabbits out. We've got a three-strand electric fence that mostly keeps the deer out.

45

When we first started, I had a battery-operated electric fence unit. And I would have to go up at night and turn it on and go back in the morning and turn it off. About four or five years

ago, I had an electrician run a line out there and put a dawn to dusk light sensor on there. So it turns the fence on automatically at night and turns it off in the morning. But you have to, each spring, you have to retrain the deer to the fence. Because deer are really not vulnerable to the electric fence except the end of their nose and their tongue. Their hair is so thick that it doesn't shock them. And of course the hooves are so thick. So what you do is you take a little piece of tin foil and put peanut butter in the middle of it and wrap it around the fence. And of course the deer really like that. And they come up and lick that. And they get shocked. And so you're pretty good for the whole summer. But like I said, every spring you have to retrain them or they'll get in your garden.

5

Corrigan: Okay. And where did you learn that tip from?

10

Dillard: Somebody at the office told me about it.

15 Corrigan: Is that usually the problem that most people have around here? Say, in Columbia?

Dillard: Deer and rabbits.

20 Corrigan: Deer and rabbits. Because there is a lot of, there is a lot of trees and there is a lot of wildlife in this town.

Dillard: Oh, yes.

25 Corrigan: And is that usually the biggest problem that people have is that they have an open, if they don't have a fenced-in backyard.

Dillard: If they don't have a fence, yeah. I think the most deer we saw at one time in our yard was eleven. I mean, we have a lot of deer where we live. Well, most people do in town. Around this area. Or in Missouri, as far as that's concerned.

30

Corrigan: Yeah. Okay. So somebody from the department told you about that. So wrap peanut butter in tin foil. Put that on the electric fence.

35 Dillard: Yeah. The other thing they told me which really, really works, you know, when we first moved out to our acreage, my wife liked roses. So we planted roses up the yin yang. Here come the rose bushes. Got the nice blooms on them. One morning you go out, the blooms are gone. The next morning, the whole bush was gone. Those rascally deer eat them right off the top of the ground. So some years later, a guy at the office told me well, and of course we bought all the stuff at the store, paid the big price for it. It didn't work. He said,  
40 "It's very simple. You take a couple of eggs and powdered milk and a little dab of dishwashing detergent and put that in water. And you put that in a bottle and shake it up and spray it on the plants you don't want the deer to eat. They won't touch it."

45 Corrigan: So eggs—

Dillard: Powdered milk and a little bit of dishwashing detergent.

Corrigan: Okay. That combination will take care of it?

5 Dillard: Yup. And the only problem is, every time it rains it washes it off, so I have to put it back on again. So that's the way my wife keeps her flowers going. But you're not supposed to put it on veggies, obviously, because of the eggs and—

Corrigan: Yeah. Okay. So the rest of your plants that aren't behind your protective barrier.

10 Dillard: Yeah. And Forrest Rose used to work for the university. He was in extension and wrote articles. And right before he died, I told him about that. And he wrote up an article called "Joe's Deer Juice." (laughs) But the poor rascal died before they ever published it.

15 Corrigan: Well, and it seems like people would want to know something like that. Because it's not a chemical. It's not, you can easily prepare it—

Dillard: Right. Yeah. Very inexpensive.

20 Corrigan: It's very cost-effective, too, because you're going to most likely have those ingredients in your house, too, so you can mix up a batch quite quickly. No, I'm sure that is a good tip. And I'm glad you said it on tape here so we can get it on here, so people can listen to it.

Dillard: So let's go back to Blue Mound.

25

Corrigan: So Blue Mound history, I mean, can you tell me where did the idea come from? When did it start? You know, do you have support for it? I just kind of want to hear, because it is an online history website for Blue Mound. But I'd kind of like to hear where it came from. Where did the idea come from?

30

Dillard: Well I can almost tell you the exact day and moment. I was working in Jeff City at kind of a high-pressure job. And to relieve the tension, I started doing my memoirs. And every time I did, I kept thinking about the time we lived in Blue Mound. We lived there from 1945 to 1954. And I got to looking around and I said, I wonder if there's anything written about Blue Mound. I couldn't find anything. The only thing I found was this little book called *Not Much of Anything: A History of My Life*, by Johnny Hoyt, who lived in Blue Mound.

35

**[End Track 4. Begin Track 5.]**

40

Dillard: And it really is mostly about his life. But he has quite a little bit in there about the days when he lived there, about Blue Mound. And I thought well, that really is too bad. Maybe somebody ought to just put together a history of Blue Mound. So I held my hand up, said, "Okay, I'll do it." (laughs) But that's where it really got started was just thinking about all the wonderful times that we spent out there, and the fact that nothing had really been written about it.

45

Corrigan: And what time period are we talking about?

Dillard: 1999.

5

Corrigan: 1999. Okay.

Dillard: That's when it all got started. So I've been working on it ever since, off and on, sometimes a lot heavier than others. Right now I'm not working on it that much.

10

Corrigan: Did you know it was, was the idea always to be a website?

Dillard: No. No. I was going to do a book.

15

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: And what I found out was, I kept finding new material. And probably eighty, ninety percent of what I found was right here at the historical society. And I'm not sure where I got on to that early on, but I just kept coming back and finding more and more information. So I thought hmm, maybe I'll just do a website. And that way when I find something new, I can just add it and do the book later. So I actually went over to the university and sat in a course on how to build a website. And of course they had Mac computers. (laughs) About mid-semester, I was still trying to figure out the Mac computer. Had no idea what creating a website was going to be. (laughs) So I finally just gave up and I thought heck, I'll just hire it done. And that way I can concentrate on the research and let somebody else do that aspect of it. And so I, I can't remember now whether I went online or I called somebody. But I had two different names and I emailed them both and said here's the project. Would you be interested? Actually, one of them was in Chillicothe and I never did hear back from her. But the other one is in Brunswick, Missouri; the current webmaster. And she emailed back and said yeah. Well, let me back up a minute. I actually worked with another person before I got that far along who lived, used to live in the area but now lives over in Kansas. And we worked together for about two or three months. But I soon realized that we were not going to be able to get along. She wanted, you know, once you gave her something, you couldn't change it. Well, you have to change things to make them right. And so that's when I backed off and went this other direction. But I contacted this gal in Brunswick and we could get along really, really well. So she does all the web mastering work. So I just send her the materials, she puts it on the web. And the actual server is in Breckenridge, Missouri, where it's, actually it's housed. That's the Green Hills Company up there. And she charges, the webmaster charges about fifty dollars an hour to put things up. And they charge ten dollars a month to keep it up on the internet.

20

25

30

35

40

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: Yeah. And I don't know, I haven't really totaled it lately, but I probably have spent close to three or four thousand dollars, maybe.

45

Corrigan: In the last decade?

Dillard: Well, yeah, since I started.

5 Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: I know my wife kind of got on me one time and I said, “Well at least I don’t collect Corvettes.” (laughs) But I did petition the State Historical Society for a grant and got a \$250 grant to continue the work, which I’m really glad to have. And I have a friend over in  
10 Independence, Missouri, who has given me probably, I’d say two or three hundred dollars, never having met the man. But he had some relatives used to live close to Blue Mound and found the website, really got interested in it. And every once in a while he’ll send me a check for my work on Blue Mound.

15 Corrigan: What’s the ultimate goal of the project? Are you, you’re still actively collecting, right?

Dillard: Yes.

20 Corrigan: Do you solicit anything from people that used to live there? Or if you can find someone that used to live there?

Dillard. Yes. Yes. And what I do, it’s amazing, once you get a website, you never know what’s going to happen next. I mean it’s just, it’s really kind of fun. About three years ago I  
25 got an email from a person over in Illinois that had a relative buried in Blue Mound cemetery. Well, of course I’ve got a CD that lists all the people that are buried there and I couldn’t find them. But I got to checking around and there is actually a Blue Mound cemetery in South Missouri. And I just happened to have a friend down there that went out and took a picture of the tombstone and sent it back. And he was just happy as a clam. But  
30 two years ago in January I got an email from France that said—

**[End Track 5. Begin Track 6.]**

Dillard: —Wayne Powers was born in Blue Mound in 1921. Can you tell me more about  
35 him? And I thought what the cat hair is this all about? So I emailed her back and said, “What do you want to know?” She said, “I’m working with a guy who’s writing a book on the deserters of World War Two.” I said, “Really?” And of course then I got interested in that. And I’ve been working on that for two years. And I’ve got, I mean, enough for a book on that guy. (laughs) But those kind of things just take you in all different directions. The most  
40 recent event was a lady down in Springfield, Missouri, found the website inadvertently when she was doing some genealogic research. And sent me a photo of the Blue Mound grade school class in 1942, I think it was. And man, I just, man, it was just, that was manna from heaven. Because that’s what I had been looking for. Matter of fact on the website I said, if  
45 you’ve got any old photos, any old receipts from stores, any diaries, anything, please send them to me. And occasionally something like that will show up. But of course once I got that,

then I immediately got that published in the Chillicothe newspaper in hopes that somebody in the photo would contact me. And sure enough, somebody did, finally. So, you know. (laughs)

5 Corrigan: Because you're starting with a small group of people in the first place, so—

Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: It's not like if you were trying to gather stuff on Columbia.

10 Dillard: No. (laughs)

Corrigan: Where there's 80,000 people. Blue Mound is a small area. So have you been fairly, are you happy with the kind of results that you've gotten from people?

15 Dillard: Oh, yes, yeah. Right. I, of course, I always want more. But you know, you're right about the place, because it was never platted or incorporated. It was just a place. And I don't know, that's the common question I get, where did the name come from? And there really is no good information about where the name came from. But it was just a crossroads with a church and a store and a school.

20 Corrigan: And since it wasn't platted out and incorporated—

Dillard: There's no, no real, no records. Not really.

25 Corrigan: No records. Yeah. So it's really only in your memory and other people's memories and in the items that you have. So it's kind of, and I'm sure there's many places like that in Missouri, where it's this—

30 Dillard: Oh, yes.

Corrigan: —small little grouping. But it was a community.

35 Dillard: But one of the things this does show, though, is that if you're really persistent, it's amazing what you can find out. Because I've got a list of all the previous businesses that were there. I've got a list of all the postmasters that served there while they had a post office there. I found records from '32 until the school closed of all the students that went there and all the teachers that taught there and their salaries.

40 Corrigan: One question I have is, what are you still missing that you know of? Or what are you still searching for? I mean, is there stuff that you're aware of but you just can't track down?

45 Dillard: Yeah, probably so. I'm not sure. Nothing's coming right to the front right now. The main thing that I would like to have more of is personal recollections. Kind of like we're doing. And I've gotten probably eight or nine or ten pretty good interviews of people who

lived there before. And of course the stories are really fascinating. The kinds of things they did in those days.

Corrigan: And does one lead lead to another?

5

Dillard: Oh, gosh, yes. (laughs) Well, you know, I think it's kind of in the genes. I'm a researcher. I did fishery research and this is a little bit different kind. And the ultimate goal is to get it into a book form to preserve what history, or at least what we think it was out there. That's the thing that's a little bit frustrating, although I'm getting less frustrated all the time is one person said it was this way and some other person said no it's that way. So I just probably present both ways and let people take their choice.

10

Corrigan: Well, and that happens with oral history.

15

Dillard: Yeah.

Corrigan: It happens with other types of history. People have different accounts of the same events—

20

Dillard: Well, my brother and I lived there. And I ask him about things that happened to us. I was talking to him this weekend. I said, "Do you remember the time we found the old gun in the grader ditch? And the cylinder wouldn't line up with the barrel every time you spun it. But we put a bullet in it and got it lined up, we thought. And we tied it to a post and got a string to the trigger and backed off and pulled the trigger." And I said, "I can't remember whether it went off or not." And he said, "I don't remember that at all." (laughs) But he was telling me another story that I didn't remember.

25

Corrigan: Yeah, people remember different things.

30

Dillard: Right.

Corrigan: But its best, just as you said, you collect everything of people's recollections. And then you kind of let the other material you have kind of help sort it out.

35

Dillard: Right.

**[End Track 6. Begin Track 7.]**

Corrigan: It's probably not wrong. It's probably just a varying account of what happened.

40

Dillard: One of the things I'm working on right now, one of the interesting aspects, Blue Mound had three churches. The original church, I have good documentation on it. They collected the money for it and the pastor took off with it. (laughs) So they had to collect it again. They built the church and then some of the parishioners didn't like the fact they had music. So they built their own church. Which I think lasted for about maybe fifteen or sixteen years. And my understanding was the pastor got involved with one of the gals in the

45

congregation and that church disappeared. Well, in probably the '60s or '70s, somebody moved a little house up to the schoolyard behind the old schoolhouse, which at that time was not, you know, somebody had already bought it and converted it to a residence then. But he let them put that little house in his backyard and they made a church out of it. Well that went on for about two years. It's called the Open Bible Church. He got into an argument with the guy that owned the land. And the guy went back in the house and got a gun and said, "I want your church off my property." So they loaded it up and hauled it down to Carroll County. (laughs) So I'm trying to develop that story the best I can. And I've got quite a bit of information. But there's always just a little piece missing someplace. (laughs) The other thing that's driving me nuts is the schools. I've got a deed that a guy deeded property in 1851 to the Pleasant View School District. And that was basically what would have been the middle of the current cemetery. The school I went to is down at the crossroads of Blue Mound. But I know that there was another school. I've got a Chillicothe newspaper article in December of 1911 that said that the new school opened. That said the new school's now open and it's really nice. We've got a nice bell and the whole business. About a week later, there was another article that said the old schoolhouse was sold to Dan Barnes for fifty bucks. So I think, I'm pretty sure there was another schoolhouse. Well, let me back up a minute. The original school that was built was blown away in the great tornado of 1883. So I've been trying to trace that history of the schools in Blue Mound. There's some pieces that I've not been able to fill in.

Corrigan: Okay. So the ultimate goal is still to publish a book.

Dillard: Yeah.

Corrigan: When the information stops coming in.

Dillard: (laughs) Well, or, I'm getting a little more urgent as I get older. I better get this thing done. Well, I'm afraid now, I suppose if I was to pass on, I suppose some of the kids could get that off of the internet and go ahead and put it out. Matter of fact, I just gave a gal in Chillicothe this weekend a printout off of the internet probably eight or nine years ago. Because a lot of people I deal with don't do computers. So that's the only hard copy I have.

Corrigan: So you may want to print out the rest of it to have it at least in paper form.

Dillard: Have it in paper form, yes. (laughs) While I'm working all these angles. But I have done an article in the newspaper on the history of the cemetery. So I got that pretty well worked out.

Corrigan: Okay.

Dillard: It's just really a lot of fun.

Corrigan: So like you said before, it's still research. It's just a different type of research. But you find it enjoyable.

Dillard: I don't know when I got so much interested in history. But I really have gotten interested in it. I was just making some notes here a while ago. In addition to the Blue Mound history, I'm also self-appointed historian for the Missouri Natural Resources Conference. And have developed a pretty good history of how that developed. I'm also the official  
5 historian for the Missouri chapter of the American Fisheries Society. And I've got probably two file cabinets of their documents, which I will donate to the Western Historical Manuscript Collection before too long. I'm serving on the history committee in the department of conservation. And then the Blue Mound stuff. And of course my *Full Cup of Joe*. So that's some of the history projects I've worked on. Actually I wrote a really short  
10 history of the Missouri Women in Natural Resources and gave their records to the Western Historical Manuscript Collection.

Corrigan: Now you just mentioned the *Full Cup of Joe*.

15 Dillard: Yes.

Corrigan: Which is another project that you're doing. And you're putting together a book.

Dillard: Yeah.

20

**[End Track 7. Begin Track 8.]**

Corrigan: Could you kind of tell me like you did with the Blue Mound history, could you tell me when you started the project, how did it come about? How did you decide that you were  
25 going to do this? When did you start? And what stage is it in?

Dillard: (laughs) Well, it's hard to say when it started. Because I've always had, I thought, an unusual number of funny things happen to me. Either that or I just remember them better than most people. And I guess I'm getting a little bit of a label as a storyteller. And of course  
30 I keep telling these over and over again. And I have written them up, a few of them in the past. The Chillicothe newspaper puts out a special edition each month. And so I would write up some of my funny stories for them. Of course some of them happened there in Chillicothe. Well, the idea of, I kept thinking I really ought to write these up. I'm not sure that I've ever had a concentrated effort on that until last winter. I was telling another of my stories and my  
35 grandson said, "Grandpa, you ought to write a book." I said, "Well, what would I call it?" He said, "Call it *A Cup of Joe*." I said, well, that's pretty neat." So I said, "I'll just call it *A Full Cup of Joe*." So what it is, it's just a compilation of things that have happened to me. I think, what is the title, *A Full Cup of Joe: Sayings, Sounds, Sights and Other Little Snippets of Life So Far*. And one of the reasons I put the sayings in there, because I have a lot of the old-  
40 fashioned sayings that I use. And of course our kids, they didn't have a clue. They said, "Well, Dad, how do you know when to say those?" (laughs) I thought, oh, boy, you've got a long way to go if you don't know when to say them. (laughs)

Corrigan: So it was your grandson that came up with the title?

45

Dillard: Yeah.

Corrigan: Which grandson is this?

Dillard: That's the only grandson. That's Jordan Dressler.

5

Corrigan: Jordan. Okay.

Dillard: Yeah. Our six-foot-eight grandson.

10

Corrigan: Oh, that's right. Okay. You mentioned him previously. Okay.

Dillard: yeah. So it's his fault. (laughs)

Corrigan: Okay. So this is last winter. So the winter of 2010.

15

Dillard: Yeah. I started getting more focused. A lot of these were already written. But I started, I actually started making a list of them, make sure I didn't forget any of them. I still may be overlooking some of them.

20

Corrigan: And how old is Jordan? Is he in high school?

Dillard: Jordan is twenty.

Corrigan: Oh, he's older. Okay. Okay. So he came up with the title, then.

25

Dillard: Yeah.

Corrigan: We'll give him full credit.

30

Dillard: Give him full credit.

Corrigan: So how, what's your kind of general time frame for the book? Is it just you want to make sure you don't forget any stories? Or are you just kind of, you're still compiling them together?

35

Dillard: Yeah. I got them almost compiled, I think. I did contact Doug Ross, who was a graphic designer for the university, who is now retired, to do a cover illustration. And what I need now is to find somebody to help me with the design and layout. What I have in mind is basically something about this size. About a what, a five by eight—

40

Corrigan: Five by eight, five by seven. And it's about a quarter inch thick, it looks like.

Dillard: Right. Mine, I think right now, is probably oh, maybe fifty-five pages of this, of this size, in that kind of a format. It's not very big. It's not an overwhelming thing. I did decide, well, it's kind of a fun thing, too. Because I'm going to put on the back cover things they would have said about this book had they been asked. (laughter) My wife, "If I'd have known

45

this before we were married..." My children, "Is it too late to be adopted?" (laughs) PETA: "Oh my gosh, we wish he was a member, then we could get rid of him." (laughs) You know, things like that. Just silly things. And I also, I'm going to put, well I've got at least, well, a whole bunch of quote "favorite t-shirts." Our oldest daughter is responsible for most of those.  
5 But one of my all-time favorites is, it says, "My wife says I never listen to her. At least, I think that's what she said." Which is very true. (laughs)

Corrigan: So it's definitely in the working stage, your book. You almost have it compiled. So you're almost in the stage now where you're moving forward on actually pulling it  
10 together.

Dillard: Right. There's no particular timeline. But as soon as I can find somebody to help with the design and layout, then we'll get going. Yeah, I imagine within a year, hopefully.  
(laughs)

15 Corrigan: Okay. Now could you talk about some of the other organizations you're involved in? You just mentioned a few now. You're a historian. Whether self-employed or appointed for some of these groups. What else are you involved in right now?

20 **[End Track 8. Begin Track 9.]**

Corrigan: In the community or in church or—

Dillard: Not a whole lot. Between gardening and mowing six acres and taking care of a  
25 whole bunch of trees and working on research, on these projects—

Corrigan: Well and you're still working.

Dillard: Yeah. I'm still working three mornings a week. Yeah. I go to church every Sunday.  
30 We go down to the United Methodist Church downtown. But I don't do the McDonald's coffee room thing. (laughs)

Corrigan: Now within the next year, what's next after *A Full Cup of Joe*? What's next after, is it to continue working on Blue Mound, to pull that book together?  
35

Dillard: Yeah. Well, probably what I should do is, I did some of my memoirs up to a certain point. But then I got interested in Blue Mound and left those. So I need to carry that on forward. And then work with the wife on doing our joint memoirs. She's done one of those for each of our children, which is really, really great. Including photographs. It's just a, you  
40 know, just a Xerox copy. But it's really neat. She just started with their birth and then their childhood and carried it on through to today.

Corrigan: Okay. So more, basically more history work.

45 Dillard: More, yeah.

Corrigan: More research. More history work to come.

5 Dillard: One of the things I have to do, which is very, very painful, is to downsize my, the amount of stuff I have in our basement. Because I've got at least thirty-one, if not forty-one, of those record boxes full of stuff. When I was working on—

Corrigan: Those cubic record boxes? Like we have here?

10 Dillard: Yup. Yes. Not all of them's even labeled. (laughs) But I'm a saver. And I don't know whether I told you before, but one time I was working in Jeff City my job was to answer general inquiries. And I think my peak production was twenty-one letters one day. And that was like what, 1971, and I've still got copies of all of those.

Corrigan: Okay.

15 Dillard: And of course, well, that's another thing I need to do, too, is do a better job of organizing my own stuff to give to the Western Historical Manuscript Collection, because I've got it all. I don't know what value they'd find in it, but I've got it.

20 Corrigan: No, it's a lot of record keeping. That's good.

Dillard: Yeah.

Corrigan: Especially when it's organized. Compiled together.

25 Dillard: Yup.

Corrigan: Now is there any, kind of to round things out a little bit. We covered a lot of material over the last three interviews.

30 Dillard: Yeah. (laughs)

Corrigan: A lot from beginning to where we are right now. Is there anything that we left out or that comes to mind right at the moment that you'd like to add? Or that we didn't discuss a topic? Does anything come to mind? Or—we have covered a lot.

35 Dillard: Yeah. (laughs)

Corrigan: I'm sure some will come up right as soon as you leave.

40 Dillard: Oh, I'm sure that's, yeah. No, I can't think of any offhand. I really appreciate the opportunity to do it. I have to apologize to anybody that has to listen to this with my sinus problem. (laughs)

45 Corrigan: I'll go ahead and stop the recorder now. And again, I appreciate you three times coming in. It's been very enjoyable, though. And I definitely think this is a good addition to

5 this environmental collection. I think I mentioned to you that there just really wasn't anything on fisheries. Besides your work on Blue Mound history, there's not a whole lot, I mean we got your childhood story from there. So we can definitely document that and keep that. And definitely got a lot of history about the department both in Columbia and in Jeff City. So I think we got a lot of great information here. So again, I appreciate it. Let me go ahead and pause the recording here.

10 **[End Track 9.]**

**[End Interview.]**