

David Cline Bird Haven Transcription

Interviewer- Anthony Green (AG)

Narrator- David Cline (DC)

David Cline Jr. (DCJ)

Alex Whitehurst (AW)

AG: We are here today on this 23rd day of March 2017. I'm conducting this interview with Mr. David Cline, about Bird Haven, Virginia and his experience there. Thank you for taking your time to do this interview with us.

DC: You're more than welcome. I forgot more than I probably remember, but I'm getting old and had cancer and all that stuff so. Alright go ahead.

AG: What is your tie to Bird Haven?

DC: Well my grandfather worked in the blacksmith shop. My mother worked in the finish department, and I would go down with my grandfather to turn the blower to keep the fire going. They had a post office there and the mail carrier would come from Mathias, West Virginia over there. Come across the old dirt road and then he would come to the Bird Have post office and then he would go to the Basye post office. Well I've lived here on this property; I was born here. My address changed three times and I never moved. It was Alum Spring, Shenandoah Alum Springs. They had a big hotel there, a three-story hotel. When that burned then they moved the post office to Bird Haven. Well then, I think, in 1952 or 53 they closed the Bird Haven post office and moved it to Basye. So, my address changed three times and I didn't move. I was part owner of Bird Haven from 2000 to 2010. About twelve years probably. And we were going to

develop it and then the economy got so bad that we couldn't sell lots and stuff so we had to sell it. I never worked there. I know a lot of people that did, but most of the people that worked there have passed away.

AG: You said your grandfather worked in the blacksmithing shop, a lot of the stuff was made out of wood, so what all would his job have been there?

DC: Well he worked for other people. If they wanted some nails made, back then they had cut nails. He also made ax handles, hatchet handles, he made hammers, he made hatchets, just anything. A lot of things in the shops down there was metal and if something would break then he would have to make a new piece. He did stuff like that. If someone wanted to come in and wanted some [pieces] sharpened or made, he would do that.

AG: And you said your mom worked in the toy shop?

DC: She worked in the finishing department, but I cannot tell you much about it.

AG: Do you have any memory of being where the work was happening, and seeing what they were doing? Or did you ever enter the shops?

DC: Oh yeah, I used to enter the shops when I'd go down there. We'd walked straight through the woods here, it's only about half a mile. We walked straight through the woods to get to where they worked.

AG: When that was occurring did you guys watch any of the work being done? Or did you guys just hang out?

DC: Oh yeah, there was one little building there that two people worked in, two men worked in, that was real interesting. They always had a big pile of shavings between them. But they cut out

the bowls, but they wouldn't do any finish work in that building they just cut the rough bowls, and spoons and, stuff like that. And then it would go to another division where they finished them.

AG: When you were a kid did you play with any of the toys that were made there?

DC: Oh yeah, Oh yeah. I don't have them; I wish I did. Yeah, I wish did.

AG: What toys did you play with that were made there?

DC: I don't know. Birds, bird houses, and stuff like that. It's been so long that I can't remember.

AG: You have a lot of the pieces made at Bird Haven. Is there one that is your favorite?

DC: It's my wife's favorite, all of them. She likes them all, yeah she likes them all. I wish I could have of gotten more. There was a lot more there that was carried off. But the Carr's bought it when it went up (for sale). What year did they buy it David? Do you remember?

DCJ: 2014... 13.

DC: 13, they have had it more than four years.

DCJ: I don't believe.

DC: Yeah they have too. But anyhow, they bought it. Tore the house down, the old house. Which was in good condition. But it wasn't good enough for them. So, they tore that down and had a million-dollar house built. And they tore the old post office down, and put it back like it was. And they fixed up all the buildings just about. They haven't done anything to the blacksmith shop yet. But it's still there. No, they tore one building down. That's all they tore down. The rest of the buildings are still there. And they say they are going to remodel all the old homesteads there too. When it was just Bird Haven, it was three other pieces of property there that didn't

belong to Bird Haven. But people lived there. The old houses are still there the barn is still there. My uncle bought what was called the Lloyd Barb place. Him and his son bought that and they raised cattle. I used to milk cows in the barn there. And then after Mr. and Mrs. Clark sold it Colonel Hamm. Let me think about this. I have to think about this. Well anyhow my uncle bought the Lloyd Barb place in which his son lived there. And then after Colonel Hamm bought Bird Haven off of the Clarks, my uncle sold the Lloyd and Barb place to Colonel Hamm. Then there was another place on down through the woods from there that Theodore Barb lived. And he sold his to Colonel Hamm. That's the way it got so much land to Bird Haven. Bird Haven wasn't that big when it was running. After they bought all these other three properties that's what made the seven hundred some acres.

AG: You talked about how you purchased Bird Haven, or purchased stock in Bird Haven. Did you do that because of your tie to the area?

DC: I did it because my wife couldn't talk me out of it? She was really against it. She told me I was going to lose you know. But the company that she was working for was the one that owned it. Which owned Chalet High timeshare. It's the same man that owned the Mimslyn inn in Luray, but he lost that too. I just thought it was a way to make some money. I mean if everything would have worked like we had planned out. Each one of us would have gotten our money back four or five times, but it wasn't handled right and they wasted the money. Everyone lost but them. Because we sold sixteen lots there and eight lots across from the airport. We sold 47 acres across the road for \$300,000. We lost; it all went some place but we never could figure it out. I think they had two or three sets of books.

AG: Do you remember hold you were when Bird Haven closed?

DC: I was born in 42 and I think it closed about 55 or 56. I was about... It was mighty close a little before then. I think the post office moved in 52. The reason they had the post office there they shipped a lot of packages from there.

AG: Do you remember what it was like? The atmosphere was and what the mood was when it closed? Of all the workers that were there?

DC: When they closed there wasn't but a few people there. I would say it wasn't over probably a dozen people when it closed. I mean the business just went off and people wasn't buying wooden stuff then. They was buying metal stuff. That's one reason they went out of business, no one to buy it.

AG: And the Shenandoah worker's community seemed like it would have been a tight knit community, especially in such a small area. Was that true?

DC: Now what was the question?

AG: So, the area is such a small area. The Shenandoah worker's community seemed like it would have been a lot of people close together. Is that how it was?

DC: It just sound, well you read that and you can really...it tells you a lot in there how it was formed. It's been so long I don't remember all of it.

AG: So, you spent your whole life in this area?

DC: Lived on this property all my life, except I was in the service for years. When I first got married we lived away from here about three years. Other than that, I've been living right here.

AG: In the service where were you stationed?

DC: I was stationed, well I took my basic at Fort Jackson, South Carolina and then I went to Fort Carson, Colorado. And then I went from there to Germany for two years. I was in missiles. The Redstone missile, the missile that put the first man on the moon. They flew us from Frankfurt, Germany to White Sands, New Mexico to part, we were down there six weeks. We went back to Germany. They deactivated the Redstone brought it back to the states. Put it in mothballs and sent it to Persia over there. I helped fire it the last time it was fired, the Redstone missile. Quite the scene.

AG: Once you were done with your military service, was there anything that brought you back to this area?

DC: I was just from here. I never. I came back and worked at a poultry plant from awhile. Worked over at FMC in Front Royal for about two years. Then I went to Blue Ridge Truss which is closed now. Out here at Basye, between Basye and Orkney. Worked there for 40 years. That's the reason I'm in this area. I was the production manager there for 32 years at Blue Ridge.

AG: What was the experience like working there?

DC: We built roof trusses, floor trusses, wall panels. Built houses, we built 50 couple houses on Bryce mountain when it first opened. My son worked for him for 17 years?

DCJ: 18

DC: 18. Had a lot of people. I remember one time when it was as many as 200 people working there. Now it's closed. The gentleman that owned it...started it. He was retired for the government. He was a federal marshal. After he passed away his wife...well I won't go any further.

AG: Does it give you a sense of pride knowing that you helped build a lot of things around here?

DC: I helped. About all the houses around here, we furnished the roof trusses. I built this house myself. I built it in 76. I moved in in 76. But then I built those two rooms. I forgot... probably 15 years later. Maybe a little longer. I done most of it myself.

AG: Do you know how many houses in this area you helped build?

DC: I don't know. I know for probably between 15 and 20 years before Mr. Fansler passed away, we was shipping over a million and a half dollars a month in product. So, just about every house around here. He started the business in 60... I think the same year that Bryce Mountain started, 65 or 66.

AG: Teddy told us a story about how some of the boys would go to where they stored toys in a building when they hadn't sold them. Do you remember those buildings being on the property?

DC: Yep, they're not there anymore. If they make more than they would sell. One great big building, a three-story building. That has been remodeled and everything. You ought to ride down on your way. I don't know, the gate probably be closed. I think they leave about four. If you do go down, when you get to where the house and things is, you can see house over to the left. You go on around to the right and the office is a two-story building on the right. What's his name? Chris. Chris is his first name. He is the manager. You see they use my property. I've got a road that runs all the way down through here. It's on me they use that. And back when Colonel Hamm bought the Lloyd Barb place, he bought a right away between me and this other subdivision. Bird Haven has got a right away up through there. But I told him instead of cutting them trees and stuff just use my road. Because there is enough dust down one dirt road, instead of having two dirt roads right there. I got to wipe my eyes. Since I took those treatments, my

eyes water all the time. The treatment done something to my heart, I don't know what yet. I reckon they fix one thing and mess something else up.

AG: On the property, I know there was a lot of woodworking. Do you remember anything else about the property? What the surroundings were like? Since it was a bird sanctuary.

DC: No, Teddy's daddy used to tap the sugar trees. Some of them on the property. Back years ago. And cook it down and make maple syrup. My uncle farmed what was known as the Lloyd Barb place when he owned. In a matter of fact, his grandson was disking the field down there with the tractor one time and he made a turn and the tractor come on back on top of the disk. But he didn't get hurt at all. The disk kept him from getting hurt. The front end of the tractor come back and hit the disk. It was one of those pickup disks. And he didn't get hurt at all. Yeah, I use to milk cows down there in that barn. That has before it was Bird Haven.

AG: You milked cows. Were there any other animals on the farm?

DC: They raised cattle. Now the Carrs raised a lot of hogs when they first bought it. Hogs, chickens, ducks, and sheep. But they don't have anything now.

AG: Did you work with any other animals other than the cows?

DC: Chickens. Teddy's daddy was a chicken farmer, he pulled a lot of people that owned the hotel at Orkney. Built nine chicken houses. Teddy's daddy was the overseer. I reckon he told you that didn't he? No. Yeah, he was the overseer. I was living in that old house. Me and Teddy would ride with him up there every morning. In the winter time there would be frost on the windshield. He would take his hand and put it on the windshield and get one spot that he could see through, and that's what it would look like when he picked me up out here. Never would clean the frost off of it. He would just take his and one spot on the windshield he could see

through. Run out of gas one time. He said “I can’t be out of gas, I just put a gallon in here three days ago.” Well, back then a gallon in gas in them old vehicles went a long ways. His daddy was something. He had his hip replaced. He couldn’t hardly walk, but he could really get upset oftly quick. And we could make him upset oftly quick. Is someone going to talk to Teddy’s brother, Curtis?

AG: I’m not sure about that. We were just given one person each, that’s all I know.

DC: Yeah, someone talked to Richard. There’s an old lady down in Jerome. I don’t know. Betty Funkhouser, Mike’s mother. I don’t know if she ever worked at Bryce’s or not. She is about 83 or 84. I can’t remember if she worked down at Bird Haven or not when it was going. But just about everyone around that worked there are gone. I don’t know of anyone that worked there that is still living.

AG: Do you remember playing on the site at all? Teddy had mentioned...I believe he said you and some other of the boys would take boats and put them in the creeks and rivers.

DC: Them little wooden boats. Yeah. And then we had a way off from the old big house we had a swimming hole. It was pretty deep... it was probably five feet deep where we would go swimming in the summer time. Yeah, we played in the creek with them wooden boats and toys. I tell you it’s been so long ago. I forget.

AG: You said there were only twelve people working by the time the ...

DC: I don’t really know if it was that many

AG: Do you remember when the production started to decline? And why? Other than the lack of demand.

DC: It must have been in the 40's. I don't know exactly when it started. I think it was in the 20's, it might have been in the teens. And I don't know if that paper says it or not. I don't believe it does. I don't see any dates on here except this 1930 up here. It says that had as many as 40 varieties of birds down there. I don't see anything. It doesn't say is how long it was there or when it was started.

AG: You mentioned your wife was interested in collecting these. How big is you all's collection from Bird Haven?

DC: This is about it, because you never see it for sale. And I guess a piece wood, people just threw it away. Now back right after the Carrs bought it, they had a sale in Edinberg with a bunch of stuff for sale from Bird Haven. But, they run everything up so high that I couldn't afford to buy it. They're billionaires.

AG: I know a lot of these pieces are collectible. Is there any pieces that you remember being made that you would like to see at some point?

DC: I got one bowl out here my wife really likes. Let me go get it. I think she likes that as well as she does any others.

AG: That is an interesting looking bowl.

DC: Yep. I think it's made out of one piece of wood. They used a lot of bandsaw blades.

AG: And probably a lathe.

DC: It must be white oak, I guess. I wouldn't have any clue. But they used a lot of walnut. There's some walnut trees down there. They were this big around when I was a kid. I used to pick up walnuts under them. You can imagine what they are now. Right in front of where the old

house was. I used to go down there and pick up the walnuts over the summer. Of course, back then you almost had to give them away because there was so many walnut trees around. Now you can't hardly find any walnut trees. There's a butternut walnut tree down there. It's the only one I know of around here. Instead of a round walnut it's round and it's about this long it's about that big around. It's called butternut walnut. But here's a time card. Francis Barb. There she worked 5, 8, 9, 10, 19, 20 hours, \$1.25. There's one, this one got \$2.50 for 10 hours. I just found this stuff laying around on the floor down there. This one night watch, guard the boiler. Eleven hours, \$2.75. Gilbert Barb, that was Richard's, the man that those two ladies talked to Sunday, Gilbert was his uncle. Let's see is this Irene Anderson, I don't know who she is. And here's some of the stuff out of the post office. This is another Irene Anderson. Five hours, it don't say how much she got...Oh there it is \$0.63. It's really interesting to just walk around and pick... Most of this stuff came out of the old post office. Here's some of those pictures and some of the cards they sent out to people. One cent post card. These here...like this man here he sent this card back and said "Dear Bernie" which is Mr. Clark, everyone called him Bernie. "Polly and I have been going over our needs here and are wondering if you could send us samples of the mahogany, black walnut, and yellow post bed. Then he says "Also on the chest of drawers, could you substitute a smaller oval hardware and call you made." I don't know I can't hardly read part of it. But these cards here are like this one sent back "We are ordering for the salad set. Please send some of these wooden pieces to 28207209 people are asking for them. Thanking of you." They must have had a store in East Albright, New Jersey. And they was ordering this wooden stuff to sell in their store. Here's one that says "Gentleman please advise us when you will ship our last order." This was (19)38. This is interesting stuff. And let's see. Here is one of their sales papers.

AG: When you were walking through Bird Haven was there any particular reason you picked all this stuff up?

DC: Just about every day I'd go down I'd just see something laying and I'd pick it up. That was after I spent all that money for nothing. Must be a picnic bench I guess there. If I'd see something laying I'd pick it up. And I wish I'd have picked more up.

AG: How often do you go through these things and just look at them and reflect?

DC: I looked at them a couple weeks ago. I have some phone books from 1952, but I don't know where I put them. I put them some place and I don't know where they're at. I'll have to look for them one day. I wanted to show you this. This is 1916. It's the price list for 1923 for copper tubing.

AG: And this was found at Bird Haven?

DC: Yep. Everything laying here was found at Bird Haven. But this... you wouldn't see that mailed through the mail today would you?

AG: You would not?

DC: with Putin's picture on it. I found this. I guess they had Blue Cross and Blue Shield. Look at the prices in that. I couldn't find no date on it.

AG: It's a lot cheaper than it is now.

DC: Holy smokes. It's like in 1958, I was in the hospital 29 days with pneumonia. And my hospital bill and doctor bill were \$600 for 29 days. Now it would be \$600 for half a day...or more. Because my cancer treatments was \$15,000 apiece. It's unreal. Let's see if I have got

anything else I want to show you. You want to read that. I wish I had another copy. I would let you have it, but that is the only copy I've got.

AG: You said your property butts up to the woods, or that you could walk through the woods to get to Bird Haven.

DC: Bird Haven. Oh, yeah. Right out here. There used to be a path down through there. They made a road out of it now. It came out down at Bird Haven.

AG: I could imagine since everything is so close that the trees were a lot similar to those on the Bird Haven property.

DC: Well they didn't cut all of it on Bird Haven. Because it wouldn't have been enough property. They had to have some of this maple and black walnut. They must of bought some of that some place else.

AG: Do you know where they bought it?

DC: No I don't. It's like I say. I was born in 42 and it probably closed in 50...I think 55. I wouldn't have been very old.

AG: Did your mom or your grandfather work there while you were alive? Or was it before?

DC: Yeah. I used to turn the blower for my grandfather down in the blacksmith shop. I remember he made axe handles, and hammer handles, and hatchet handles with a draw knife.

AG: Did he teach you any of those skills while you were there?

DC: No. We're talking 40's and 50's. In the 60's no one bought stuff like that. You went to the store and bought it. Back in the 40's and 30's you had someone to make it for you for maybe \$0.25. He always sat out on the porch and made those handles out of hickory. He'd cut the trees

in the woods and let it dry. Then he would make the handles. I thought of something else a while ago, but now I can't think of what I wanted to say.

AG: There is a lot of history in this area. Other than Bird Haven what were some of the other major manufacturing jobs that you know of?

DC: Well that had the old iron furnaces. Where they got the ore out of the ground dragged out here to Alum Springs. You probably saw it when you come by. Well the old furnace is there. And then to left of it as you are looking at it. It's more stone it comes out here but it's not as high as the furnace. Well, Teddy's daddy used to have a beer joint there. And he sold some bread, eggs, and stuff like that. But he had the beer joint downstairs, and he raised chickens upstairs. Couldn't do that today. I can remember an old man used to come in there and sit down, and Elmer would poor him a beer and he'd break an egg in it for him. Beer and egg. Elmer used to suck them eggs, Teddy's daddy. He'd just punch a hole in the end of it, and suck the egg out of it. We found a nest down here, he lived down the road here a little ways from me. Found a chicken nest, had nine eggs in it. Elmer sucked three or four of them, and we took the rest to the house and all the rest of them was rotten. He was probably sucking rotten egg. Now if you have ever smelled rotten egg, I don't know how he could stand it. Him and I used to make some white lightening. We'd tap these sugar trees, and we'd cook it down. And we'd use that instead of water, you got more white lightening out of it. And if you want to make brandy you don't put sugar in it. And if you got a 50 gallon barrel of mash with no sugar in it just apples, corn, whatever you wanted to put in it, you only got about three and a half gallons out of it... maybe three gallons. Well if you put 100 pounds of sugar in it you got thirteen gallons out of it. Ten pounds of sugar make a gallon of white lightening. I used to do a little stuff. Where's this going? Just the class?

AG: It's going to the Shenandoah library.

DC: In Edinburg?

AW: Shenandoah County Library.

DC: Who do you know that works down there?

AW: We don't have contact with them. We have it with our professor, who has been talking to them.

DC: What's his name? What is your professors name?

AG: Dr. Friss. Evan Friss.

DC: It's someone that works at the library, that I know, that's doing this. I saw him down at Bird Haven. I mean it don't make a difference, that's in the past. Elmer and I used to do that, and it a wonder we didn't get blown up. Because Elmer had laying chicken, and this man on Bryce mountain, the one that invented the seat belt, come by here and talked to Elmer about taking that chicken litter and making methane gas out of it. Well we dug a hole in the ground and put a roof over it. And we set this chicken litter in 55 gallon barrels down in this pit. And that chicken litter would make methane gas. But you can't see it, smell it, or nothing. We would use that to cook our white lightening with. I can't think of that man's name, but he invented the seatbelt. His wife, I think, still lives on Bryce Mountain. He passed away, but I can't think of his name. Yeah, I had an interesting life.

AG: You said your wife was the one that mainly wanted to collect these things?

DC: All of this stuff here, 95 percent of it... I bought this at a sale. The rest of this stuff I got at Bird Haven.

AG: Is your wife from this area too?

DC: Yeah, she's from Jerome. Which is about five miles on down the road. Yeah, she's working now. Got to keep her away. No, most of this came right from Bird Haven.

AG: So, it's just leftovers that were never sold?

DC: All of this came out of the shipping building. I got lucky I even got it because people was going in and taking stuff. Wasn't no locks on the doors. Just lucky to get it. Trying to think of some other stuff, but I don't know.

AG: When you bought stake into the property, how many of the original buildings were there?

DC: Oh, everything was there, but a lot of the buildings were ready to fall down.

AG: The people you grew up with around Bird Haven, do you still communicate with them? Do you all ever talk about Bird Haven and what it was like?

DC: Mr. Alexander, the one that bought it, he's passed away. I talk to some of the other people that bought in yeah.

AG: What about the kids you grew up with on Bird Haven? Like Teddy and all of them.

DC: Oh, yeah. I seem them all the time.

AG: Do you ever reminisce about Bird Haven?

DC: Sometimes, Teddy he don't like to talk like his daddy. And I don't like to talk much either. Really, Teddy didn't go down to Bird Haven, that I remember, much but he didn't have any working down there. I mean close. Like I say my mother named my oldest brother, he's passed away now. Mr. Clark, Bernard was his middle name, so mother named my brother Leroy

Bernard. I'm not too sure, but I think my mother might have worked in their house a lot of times instead of working in the factory. I just can't remember. They had a man that lived with them, a boy. He's passed away now, but he was a lawyer. And he lived there with them. And I just can't remember too much about it.