

Stonewall Jackson Dam Removal
John Redabaugh Oral History
Date of Interview: November 12, 1984
Location: Lewis County, West Virginia
Length of Interview: 00:38:11
Interviewer: MK – Michael Kline
Transcriber: NCC

John Redabaugh: Did you know that?

Michael Kline: Well, I was on crutches one time.

JR: Because you a hurt person?

MK: Yes, sir. [affirmative]

JR: You could hurt. That's what I'm saying. I'm not saying these dangers. I never knew anything, ever get in any trouble or anything. Of course, I don't know what's wrong with the boy. He's graduated in high school, didn't he?

MK: I think he did.

JR: Yes. He couldn't carry on a business, would you say?

MK: Well, he's in partnership.

JR: I know, with his mother. Well, did you know that that one time that was the biggest nursery in West Virginia? I remember Willard, that was her husband. I remember when his grandfather owned that. The hell they had that whole hallway in the nursery. There were three boys, [inaudible] and two brothers and with the old man. Well, they had some I don't know what they call it. Because he passed the lights on some different kinds of fruit and stuff that they had come up with. It was a big operation one time that it went up all off the floor. Anyway, then the other two brothers finally got out of it, and Willard's dad and him run it. Then, of course, when Willard's dad died, boy, well, he just went to park. There was no shelter. He's a good guy, but hell, he didn't. In fact, that night I went there, the family down there went hungry. They gave him a job with soil conservation and he worked on that, more or less to support the family or the nursery. It just went old. I don't think he had much then. He's always [inaudible] and stuff like that. Well, what's Barbara going to do?

MK: I don't know.

JR: Where's she at?

MK: She's at her daddy's house. She lost her pension.

JR: Do you mean that the government take it away from her? It couldn't be that. He was a veteran. He's been in the World War II.

MK: After they condemned their place and they give her the money. What was she going to do, turn the money down?

JR: Well, she claims he didn't know that she had the money.

MK: Well, I don't know. She had a lawyer.

JR: But according to the news, well, he invested that money. I don't know where he invested her money. I don't know.

MK: I don't know that either.

JR: I don't know.

MK: I know you're talking to him.

JR: But well, when they went up and she didn't even know she'd ever got any money according to what the report I heard. Because I don't know where I [inaudible] money. Maybe she did, maybe she didn't, but

MK: But even if she did.

JR: Yes. If she did, they didn't give no excuse but they all tried to work that out. They looked to me like it'd been something it would have been fair if they would have contacted her lawyer and told her that no, she was going to have to move. They didn't want to call her in for him to go talk to her and see if she would be willing to move. Then if they didn't, why they were going to have to take step further steps? Whether they did it or not, I don't know.

MK: Well, (Francine?) said, if they'd called her and some of the neighbor women, they could have went down there and maybe smoothed it out, and maybe got her to go smoothly.

JR: Well, she quoted different times that the lawyer told her to stay there, didn't she? Maybe she told you that.

MK: Yes, she did.

JR: She had told you know better than that.

MK: Well, no. I don't know what the lawyer told her.

JR: No. I was speaking out of turn maybe, but –

MK: I don't know what the lawyer told her.

JR: No, we don't. I don't know what [inaudible] told me to do. But she realized what we were up against, all of us. They always have the people out there who are not in that manner. Maybe, I don't know whether they ever did in any other places or not. They've been banned there before. But you do hear on national TV news every once in a while, whether they have people or like those [inaudible] the rights and stuff away from them. I know that because that was just news when you hear it. But you don't really know what happened. But that doesn't sound right to me. What's yours is yours. That's the way I figured that. What's mine is mine. I don't think that you can – but I don't know nothing about. But before they condemn anything, I think they ought to

be able to prove it to the general public. It's really essential. To my knowledge they need them to them put [inaudible]. It's essential for you. Now, what good will this thing do? What good is something to have about you? Name one thing it's done. It's our branching, maybe we have a little bit of flood control. Help, I mean just a little bit or Summersville, either one. But how they lived for hundreds and hundreds of years before that. As far as long as I remember, and that's several years, I don't remember anyone question ever getting drowned in the flood. They built that damn little thing over here at the power company building. I can recall there's been about three or four lives lost in that damn thing, people drowning. Well, I suppose something there's been people drowning that you know. That's losing life. There'll be people drowning this thing when it's down. Would you say? Sure. They will.

MK: Yes, they will.

JR: That's costing one life, it could be prevented. It's worth more than the whole damn project, wouldn't you say?

MK: I would say so. Has anybody died in this community as a result of this project?

JR: You mean in here from the result of it? Well, how you go prove that? I've played that as a big factor and heard of that.

MK: How so?

JR: [inaudible] taking their place. Did you talk to Jack?

MK: Not yet.

JR: Well, of course they've taken heads. But I would say that that was one of [inaudible] because she died of a heart attack. Well, Bill too, he died of a heart attack. Who knows it was one of the big factors in heart disease, isn't it? Where I got a lot of different ailments. Did you know that [inaudible] doctor? So, they told me a lot of ailments. Would you say?

MK: I'd say it does.

JR: So. It'll cause it'll cause [inaudible]. Did you know that?

MK: Cause cancer.

JR: Yes. When your body gets to where it can't resist anything by then, so it's [inaudible]. But now how you can't [inaudible] then another woman died, (Daryl Senna's?) wife. She was considerably a young woman. I'd say in her late 30s, maybe early 40s.

MK: Did she grieve over the thing?

JR: Yes. They said, but I don't know. She's a big fat woman. Said she is [inaudible] when she died. I think she died of a heart attack. I think. But those things, how the hell are you going to

prove? You can't prove stuff like that. No way. They can't prove it. So, it's pro or con either way you want to call it. Now there's a guy 80 years old and he's not able to help himself. They'll go kick him out.

MK: You said they weren't going to take him out and no chains.

JR: Well, you don't know. But they come in there and overpowering they would.

MK: Well, he said they'd have to be dragging him.

JR: Well, sure, they'd have to be dragging him. I reckon that boy have bar patrol there and give him [inaudible], didn't he? Somebody said he knocked the hell out of one guy. They had him down – two of them had him down on the floor wrecking the handcuff him.

MK: I wouldn't send that boy to hit anybody very hard.

JR: Well, you never know when the person gets mad. You've got a lot more strength than you have on here. [inaudible] really scared. Do you know that? If you were real scared and someone liked to tell you, but that's twice the message you get right now. Did you know that? I recalled my dad just down the road here. They were digging there whenever it's cold. They didn't have a coal mine. His brother and brother-in-law [inaudible] and my dad would haul the horse that [inaudible] wagon. He'd went back in just a little old scuttle hole right back in the hill short ways and he went back in there. When he went back after another road for some reason. They didn't see him or something. They told him, he said [inaudible] and they had some problems. He did and he set the prop before they told him to. My uncle [inaudible] they used [inaudible] with a pig. Maybe you heard them tell about that, of course, they don't do that anymore by hand. They put a couple shots up there in his face [inaudible] and get a broom just getting down. But that day, he's lying on his side on the floor just reaching back under [inaudible]. They just better back in there cutting it across the face of coal and did not [inaudible] he hit a seam, went across there and the coal just dropped, rolled right over and cutting my own hand. I heard my dad told them [inaudible]. It sounded like a bumblebee where he'd stepped on the [inaudible]. My dad and my uncle and they were small men. They grabbed that lump of coal and went down there. The next day they run it out and there's over 2 tons of coal in it. Of course, they didn't just pick it completely. They rolled it off and picked it up. Got a knock on it. When he died, I couldn't remember. I was just a kid when he died. It's black, you know, it's the coal that cut his hand. But they said, I've heard them both saying, my dad and uncle both said they stayed in the morning through that hump of coal and were scared. Of course they were small. They were pretty stout men at that time, built pretty well. Then to get on the coal, they run it out the next day and there's over 50 bushel of coal and did two times better.

MK: Yes. When you have to do something. You'll find a way to do.

JR: I don't know. We've tried to [inaudible]. They didn't find him, did they, this man?

MK: Not yet.

JR: Not either. I'm not smart, but I know [inaudible] you can't. They've got it all. What the hell? What you're going to do about it? Nothing. We're about to know because you live.

MK: Up behind the courthouse there on Boundary Avenue.

JR: [inaudible] to know much about it I don't.

MK: Then you have to stop up there and say anything if you get over in town.

JR: I guess I'm moving up next to (Billington?) if all goes well.

MK: You're going to what?

JR: Move up next to (Billington?)

MK: Are you?

JR: [inaudible] Well, I had to have a game of money. [laughter]

MK: So, when are you planning to move?

JR: Well, I'm supposed to be down here by now. I stayed on spring. If there's any way [inaudible] then I can move to [inaudible], I can. I've got a silo there for a [inaudible] and my wife talked to you. I can't move in the fall of the year. You just can't do it.

MK: Have they told you to leave?

JR: Well, they've given me a date. Well, the first date was the 15th [inaudible] was going to give me 60 days and get out here. I told that woman I said, "Hell, I can't do that." She said, "I know you can." So, they set it up till November the 1st and I'm still here. So, I don't know. I've never got no money yet. It's under condemnation. I wouldn't take your damn offer. I've got the letter, that statement, they would condemn it within, I think it was the 5th of September. About within 120 days, which would be up in about January sometime if they would bring it well to us. It brought me up here. I asked them all the same thing. I reckon because of [inaudible]. I don't know if they've ever condemned that or not. Of course, he's kind of out on the limb in that situation. [inaudible] three shares in that and the rest of them signed it and he didn't. So, I don't know what procedure to do that because you'll have to get to court to get his part of it. I'd say with you, I don't know. I'm no damn lawyer. I don't know even how he's got this whole section here. I asked him on [inaudible] you're here except (Johnson?). But he had Jack [inaudible]. He's had very [inaudible] down here. But hell, that's expensive. They take a third of it.

MK: This share is a pretty good farm, isn't it, right here?

JR: Yes. Well, I don't know. It's all pretty good, but I hate [inaudible]. I think I can't [inaudible] more steps and not running anybody else down more units. [inaudible] most anybody else I expect. I don't know about the dairy guts here. [inaudible] because I don't know

with you all. I'm going to have to quit. I don't have no help to get out of here. Of course, won't be in the dairy situation over there.

MK: How long have you been in the dairy business?

JR: Too damn long, 38 years. I started getting bad mistake. I enjoyed [inaudible]. Not now, I don't, but when I first started, I made a lot of money. No big amount but kept my head above water. That's very good for a smaller operation. But when I come out of World War II, I come out in 1946, it was a bad mistake. I had two or three pretty good offers and my dad and mother are getting old. They want me to take over the place and in fact, my dad just spent a year after I got back. They want me to take over the farm. It was all horse equipment he had and it was all worn out.

MK: It was all what?

RJ: horse equipment.

MK: Horse trunk.

RJ: Yes.

MK: How long had he farmed it?

RJ: For this third generation on this farm my grandfather bought that. Well, he's over been hundred years. So, damn milk companies, they kept running after, of course, at that time, milk [inaudible] was pretty good. They wanted to fix up to a grade A milk. [inaudible] there'd be somebody from one company. Well at that time there's home dairy in here from Montana and (Fairmont Food?) from Clarksburg. He had a small set up here in (Weston?) where he sells all milk. He had about thirteen producers. So, [inaudible] to go along with it. Here I am, still trying to tag along with it a little bit. [inaudible] We've had dozens of milk, different milk. I told him last time we had talked. "Bill, we've had twenty-five years ago. You come out of the Weston [inaudible]." Then the car crossed up here [inaudible] and Aubrey, because Aubrey's so old. He knew that. He was [inaudible] about two years ago. There's one up above [inaudible] and down this creek. I said, "How many dairies do you think it was?" He said, "Probably ten." I said, "There's twenty-two different dairies."

MK: Right in this community?

RJ: Just about nineteen over here down this creek. Twenty-two different [inaudible] for grade A milk. Now. I mean, how many do you think they are?

MK: I don't know.

RJ: There's two of them.

MK: The dam runs the rest of the mountain?

RJ: I wouldn't say it. It probably helped with it, but it favored older people and several of them are dead now. They got nothing to do with it. So, all found out if you can get back over how [inaudible] was with this dam area. There were several tons of milk over here every day and beef cattle and sheep, hogs. It was pretty thickly populated agriculture section. But now, you can drive around so you can see it. Because when the government gets all control of all of it, you don't want to be [inaudible]. The only one thing about it that [inaudible] no worry if they live a few more years, they'll know where their old homesteads went to the damn government. Pretty sad situation. But what the hell are you going to do? Nothing.

MK: Why does the government want to push the people off?

RJ: Why the government do so many damn different things? Why they do so many things? You can't even turn around about the government that you're around, they don't care what kind of damage you run. They got to know about it. That's being right. That's not pretty enterprise. Let [inaudible], suit yourself. Have a damn car company. They can't even build a car pit. They've got to be told how to build it. They don't know how. You can't build a farm, a piece of farm equipment. You've got to be told how to. Why did they know so that much? Where'd they get their information from? You can't do nothing. You can't even build a house. What did those people tell you? Where did they get their information from? That's the right thing or wrong thing.

MK: Oh. I had a terrible time trying to build an extension on my house. I'll tell you all that sometime.

RJ: I suppose you did [inaudible].

MK: I had an awful time.

RJ: You can even put a cabin in the house, have a toilet outside. Now they have a toilet inside and took the cabin outside, don't they? Well, you guys [inaudible]. You put up an outside toilet there.

MK: I don't think so.

RJ: I don't suppose anyway. They had hooked up the septic system. Then that you can't even put your septic system in that unless they tell you how to put it, can you? I don't suppose anymore. You can't drill well unless they tell you how. You can't even go well unless you get permitted. Do you know that? That's just happened recently. You got to have to permit because you have to pay for that damn permit. I'll tell you. You wonder if I don't have no children or nothing. You love these little kids and you wonder what the hell's in store. Do you ever stop thinking that?

MK: I have before.

RJ: I bet you and your wife many and many times have wondered. [inaudible] I wonder what in

the hell is in store for her? You know, they're going to have a rocky road someplace, aren't they? Down to the other way? Maybe starvation. You love those people over there and twenty years and now they're begging the food for? Some of them damn foreign country does the drought. You don't know with the chemical and stuff that's used today, you don't know maybe there won't be any vegetation on this sort of land to do sometime. Did you know that? Acid rain, your crops will fail on that. I know I could feel [inaudible], which we have to and it's hard to sell milk. He was telling me here just recently on this fall, he's coming down [inaudible] northern part of this state and over there to Maryland. He said he was coming down, I believe [19]50. He lives over here next to (Grafton?) and out of (Grafton?) on the evening instead of raining because he carries all different stuff with him to test water and ample and stuff like that. He had little paper things where you test milk for acid and stuff. It's raining. He just went over on the street and got one of those little paper tabs held out the window of the truck [inaudible] like pick up on the road. He held it out there and he got wet. [inaudible] So, you don't know the water you drink, it depends on [inaudible] right now. There's no pure water. I've said this and I'll tell you if you knew what kind of air you were breathing, you'd shut your damn mouth and never open to that. Did you know that?

MK: Yes. That's the truth.

RJ: Then they're going about cigarettes hurting people. Bullshit. Cigarettes won't have hurt people. [inaudible] breathing, do you think? When I was a kid, I remember a little fellow growing up, old women, old ladies smoked the damn old clay pipe. You ever hear of a clay pipe? They used to have them and throw it and give them away. Get straight down and cook it down around the water, but they'd have them out in the damn paper box just twice be that case. They used to hide you up here at the store and give me one. I'd ask for it and they [inaudible] give me. Of course, [inaudible] they hell enough for the company. I'm not in charge. It just had a little bamboo stem made out of clay molding. Well, I've seen the old ladies smoking the damn thing for the hour. My dad, [inaudible], he was the only one who used tobacco. He smoked, but he didn't start at about thirty years old. There were eight of them. He'd burn up the pipe smoke. He'd burn the sides right out of them. He lived in an older age and everyone would be brothers or sisters that some of them outlived him, but not in age. So, how you know tobacco is harmful? If I would be [inaudible] about all these shit, he'd go crazy, don't he?

MK: Yes. But to be pushed off your place, that's a little different than acid rain.

JR: Yes. But we're living under that condition. We're living under that kind of condition today at the form of government we have. Then they wanted to all go vote. What the hell good to do? Go vote, people carry on that way. What is your profession?

MK: I work up there at the college.

RJ: Then you're a college professor.

MK: Well, yes, a little bit. I play music.

JR: Play music? What, string music?

MK: Yes, old time string music.

JR: Well, that's a racket in some of these TV show.

MK: No. I'm not good enough to do that.

JR: A lot of them are not good, but they [inaudible]. Did you know that?

MK: Yes, that's right. That's right.

JR: That's what counts in life anyway. It's not what you can do or what you know [inaudible] you get. If you're close to playing with some of these stars, they can pull you in if they wanted to.

MK: Well, [inaudible] that.

JR: Well, I'm not saying they could. [inaudible] There's some little band where all those guys started with nothing.

MK: I like this old time music. I take this thing and I go back in the country and I find old people that sing these old songs and play fiddle tunes and stuff. That's what I like.

JR: Yes. You don't even have to be able to play an instrument. Old timers, they didn't have amplifiers and all that shit, you know.

MK: Was there a lot of music back in this country years ago?

JR: Yes. That's where it [inaudible]. They had fiddle, banjo, guitars, stuff like that.

MK: People made those instruments a lot of times.

JR: Yes.

MK: They didn't have no place where to buy. [inaudible] buy with.

JR: What kind of instrument do you play?

MK: Just guitar.

JR: It's a nice pass time. You didn't want to kick out [inaudible].

MK: Yes. I'll come up here and play it up here too. That's cool.

JR: Did you have a band?

MK: No, I play with a boy from over [inaudible]. He's a fiddle player. He came over here and play with me. We brought (Ernie Carpenter?) from over at [inaudible] Dam where they built that. He was the last one to leave over there. He's a born a grudge all his life. Since [19]56, he's carried that around with him. What did you say about fighting in World War II? You said you thought you was fighting for it.

JR: I thought I was fighting to save this country from Nazi. But shit, what did you fight for? That's what we were told, just fighting to preserve the freedom of this country, the United States government.

MK: You don't feel the country has a lot of freedoms.

JR: Why, no they don't. What is it? Freedom is what you can do as you please as long as you don't harm them.

MK: You mean when they can come in here and tear up the whole community.

JR: Yes. They'll wreck a community just for someone else's wants. The way I look at things, I don't know. But I would hate to think that I'd have to jeopardize something that's yours for my benefit. Would you? Or vice versa, would you take them down and say [inaudible] something, if you wanted. I didn't want to give it up. You wouldn't be the right to put high pressure on me into giving that to you or even selling it to you, would you? When you knew that I wanted it.

MK: I try not to want what other people have. I'll make it to practice not to want what somebody else has got.

JR: You do.

MK: Why, yes. But I know what you're saying. I can't stand the idea thinking that somebody else's got to better me.

JR: I can't either. Well, whatever you want me to do, I'll try to do it. I'm going to have to [inaudible].

MK: I know you've got to work and I appreciate your time.

[end of transcript]