

EDWARD DAVIDSON
RED BIRD RIVER
15 October 1982

This the 15th of October, I am at the anapost Church on the Red Bird River. I am now climbing the bridge over to old man Edward Davidson's. I made a tape here last week, didn't come out, so I am going to go back over and redo it. I missed the films of his place. I guess I must have just lost a whole roll. The whole tape did not come out. I stood here one time taking a picture and the boys said, "You one of those robbers?" I said, "No, Mr. Davidson, I am not, why?" He said they had been losing their mail and stuff and he asked me how I knew his name was Davidson. I told him I knew this part of the country was settled by the Davidsons, they pretty well controlled it. I hope he is home when I get over there and I will try to get a new tape. It takes a lot of guts to cross this bridge. These boards are about eight inches apart and this bridge is sort of rickety. The side rails are cedar, some of it not over an inch and a half thick. Fortunately, there is a strong cable underneath or I wouldn't be on here. The river does not look too deep but if this bridge went down with me, they wouldn't find you until they got the wire out of your hair.

Dr. Garrett: Tell me, who were your dad and mother.

Mr. Davidson: My daddy was a Davidson and my mother was ...

Dr. Garrett: Levi Davidson. Who was his daddy?

Mr. Davidson: Morgan Davidson.

Dr. Garrett: Morgan Davidson. Yeh. Now tell me about your mother. Who was she?

Mr. Davidson: She was a Potter.

Dr. Garrett: Potter? Who was her mother?

Mr. Davidson: Richard Potter was her dad, called him Dick all the time.

Dr. Garrett: Dick, was he from Clay County?

Mr. Davidson: No, he was from back towards Leslie County, back in there.

Dr. Garrett: Now, did you tell me that Morgan was in the Civil War, your grandaddy.

Mr. Davidson: Yeh, he was.

Dr. Garrett: Where, in the Union Army or the Soutehren Army?

Mr. Davidson: Southern Army.

Dr. Garrett: In the Southern Army. Where did he serve?

Mr. Davidson: He rode horseback and took the men, you know and met the soldiers and killed them and all that kind ...

Dr. Garrett: Do you know where he fought? Do you know what battles he fought in?

Mr. Davidson: Oh, yeh, he fought (unintelligible) and the Point, shot some 50 soldiers there.

Dr. Garrett: Union soldiers?

Mr. Davidson: Rebels.

Dr. Garrett: He fought with the South.

Mr. Davidson: Yeh, and then he went into Ohio and made a battle over there and back into Virginia.

Dr. Garrett: Was he with John Hunt Morgan do you know?

Mr. Davidson: I don't know whether he was or not. Him and his three brothers went together.

Dr. Garrett: They were all Southern soldiers.

Mr. Davidson: Yeh, all Southern soldiers.

Dr. Garrett: What were his brothers names?

Mr. Davidson: Dan and I can't remember.

Dr. Garrett: Can't remember now. Now you were telling me that when they come in here they had to clean this country up and they let all the logs and stuff wash down the river. Tell me about that again, how they cleaned this up.

Mr. Davidson: They used take cross cut saws, you know, and axes, and they chopped and sawed together. Sawed the logs up in great big pieces you know and they didn't have nothin to pull them with and they just rolled them out to the edge of the river bank and then the tide come and they just rolled them in the river.

Dr. Garrett: All sorts of good wood, didn't they?

Mr. Davidson: Oh, yeh. Lumber and everything.

Dr. Garrett: Big logs of oak, hickory, walnut.

Mr. Davidson: Yeh, logs as big as that heatin stove there.

Dr. Garrett: You were telling me that your daddy was telling you about Indians that used to camp in here. Can you tell me about that?

Mr. Davidson: Oh, yeh. Over at my brother's house, they used to set their tepees up and they'd be gone near six days and nights and they'd come back and my grandpap and my daddy, he was about that high, you know, he was small, and they's bring him pieces of bear and pieces of wild hog, pieces of deer and things and come in here you know. When he'd come, they'd give the war whoop out there and he'd holler back at them, you know. Motion them out to the house and he'd go out there and stay with them, he'd come out there and eat.

Dr. Garrett: Where these Cherokee Indians?

Mr. Davidson: Well, they was a good tribe, I don't know what they was.

Dr. Garrett: How many were there, a lot of them.

Mr. Davidson: Yeh, there was about 15 of them, about 15 of em. Yeh, they was good old Indians.

Dr. Garrett: They would put up their lodges, their tepees, you said, out here.

Mr. Davidson: Yeh, and there was a mean tribe, you know and they'd (unintelligible), take your horses, turn your corn and everything. Uncle Dan, he killed him.

Dr. Garrett: How'd he do that?

Mr. Davidson: Old chief Red Bird, on the other side of the river. He waited from midnight on to daylight and when daylight come he had an old ...

Dr. Garrett: An old ball and cap rifle.

Mr. Davidson: Yeh, it was flintlock gun. First time he snapped it, he come up over the hill and when he come up over the hill, his horse throwed him and the horse run off and left the man so the man, my daddy said the man, Uncle Dan hollered over and said is he dead and yeh, he said, hes dead, if he ain't dead, get a rock and smack his head. Wanted him killed, you know. When he come in, when the hunter was comin in, they all patched up to get him back (unintelligible). They was never bothered no more by them. They was bothered no more.

Dr. Garrett: Did there used to be a lot of shooting up in this country wasn't there?

Mr. Davidson: Oh, yeh.

Dr. Garrett: A lot of feuding up in here. Who was doing the main feuding up in here, where the Davidson's involved in that at that time.

Mr. Davidson: No, no, the Davidson's weren't involved in it. Eversoles and Bakers.

Dr. Garrett: Whites and Allens

Mr. Davidson: Whites and Allens and old man Howard.

Dr. Garrett: Yeh, Howard. A lot of people killed in that weren't they.

Mr. Davidson: Oh, yeh, they'd kill them every week or two.

Dr. Garrett: You ever know of Boston Baker?

Mr. Davidson: Yeh.

Dr. Garrett: Tell me something about Boston Baker.

Mr. Davidson: I never knowed him, my daddy knowed him.

Dr. Garrett: Yeh, a lot of stories about Boston Baker, aren't there?

Mr. Davidson: Yeh. Peddlers come through here, you know, on horseback, so my daddy told me, and peddler, you know, stayed all night at peoples homes and Boston Baker, they claim, he's the one that killed him and pitched him over the _____ trail. And Boston went to die, he said he crushed him and he pitched him over that cliff and when he went to die said the big old Turk come right back crawling up the steps.

Dr. Garrett: A turkey.

Mr. Davidson: A turtle. He come right up the steps. That is what my daddy always said he told him, he was just small you know.

Dr. Garrett: Boston must have been pretty mean.

Mr. Davidson: Well, in the old days, you know, they was people like that.

Dr. Garrett: He was in the Civil War too, wasn't he?

Mr. Davidson: Yeh, I guess he was. I didn't know much, I didn't know.

Dr. Garrett: How did you all live up here in the early days, Mr. Davidson? Did you all make maple sugar and things like that.

Mr. Davidson: Oh, yeh, we made sugar, sugar trees and maples, we just made syrup out of the maple. We ground cane, raised cane, sweet taters, Irish taters, everything, everything you wanted to grow, you know.

Dr. Garrett: Did you dry a lot of foods?

Mr. Davidson: Yeh, dried our foods. Dried punkins, cushaws, and everything.

Dr. Garrett: Apples and beans.

Mr. Davidson: Yeh, and beans.

Dr. Garrett: Did you hill much stuff up in the ground?

Mr. Davidson: Oh, yeh, yeh, whole lots of potatoes and they was even a place under the cellar, under the floor here, where they was sweet taters in there and save some of them for seed and eat part of them, you know.

Dr. Garrett: You do any gingsenging?

Mr. Davidson: Oh, yeh, yeh. Ginseng wold bring 50¢ a pound.

Dr. Garrett: Were there a lot of snakes in the country at that time?

Mr. Davidson: I guess there was. When I was a boy, yeh, a heap of snakes. I mean, I got big enough to get out in the woods, you know. I hate a snake. There was five copperheads down here by that old trail back about two year ago, hibernate you know and growed up. Killed one out in the yard that was three foot long.

Dr. Garrett: That was a big one. Were there big fish in this river in the early days?

Mr. Davidson: Oh, yeh. Yeh, you used to step out there at the river, see em a swimmin.

Dr. Garrett: Big ones, all kinds.

Mr. Davidson: Oh yeh, all kinds. Yeh. Till they got to dynamiting and poison em, executin em, they was plenty of fish and now they...

Dr. Garrett: You worked with oxen in the early days?

Mr. Davidson: No, I never worked with em. I worked with mules, the old cave.

Dr. Garrett: I imagine you dad worked oxen in his days.

Mr. Davidson: Yeh, in his days.

Dr. Garrett: You're getting so short of breath. Mr. Davidson

Mr. Davidson got so short of breath and tired, I just terminated because he just wasn't feeling that hot. There is a lot more stuff I wanted to ask him but I didn't think it was fair and it looks like he is going to have to lay down for a while so I am going to go back into Oneida and Booneville and pick him up again at another time.

CONVERSATION WITH MR. HARRISON DAVIDSON

Dr. Garrett: I was talking with Dewey. You know, I have been interested in rafting up here and he told me to talk to you, that you were on a raft that went down the South Fork River.

Now, tell me, about where the raft was made and who was with you. He says that his father-in-law was with you. How about telling me.

This is Mr. Harrison Davidson. How old are you Mr. Davidson?

Mr. Davidson: 84 years old. Now, I can't tell you exactly whether that was a raft or not but, I think it was. It was raftn at the mouth of Bear Creek, I believe.

Dr. Garrett: At the mouth of Bear Creek.

Mr. Davidson: I believe it was, but now the picture was took down here at the nars and some say it was took over here as we passed the bridge over here too.

(nars = narrow)

Dr. Garrett: Who was on it with you?

Mr. Davidson: Me and Dan and Pitmann

Dr. Garrett: Dan who?

Mr. Davidson: Dan, my brother.

Dr. Garrett: Your brother, older?

Mr. Davidson: Older, way older than I am. And Pittman, thats my brother, he is two years older than I am. They is three of us and, I don't take, remember just exactly who the other...

Dr. Garrett: Where was the raft made up, mainly what was in it?

Mr. Davidson: Well, it was made out of oak and poplar.

Dr. Garrett: Oak and pop, where, on Red Bird.

Mr. Davidson: Yeh, on Red Bird.

Dr. Garrett: And you took it where? Where did you take it to?

Mr. Davidson: Took it to Beattyville.

Dr. Garrett: Did you ever go down to Bellevue. Did you ever raft down that one?

Mr. Davidson: Yeh, yes mam, yeh.

Dr. Garrett: High water, what time of the year. Tell me all you can about that trip.

Mr. Davidson: Well, we always just go straight on through, you know, unless this is a rerise. A rerise comes we have to tie up for a night, maybe a day. If it don't, we just go right on through. And, we was going down to Turkey Gap. At Turkey Gap we took and tied up and fastened it to another raft, tied them together side by side, and then took the men on the bow of one and one on the stern. Dan, he go to the stern and me and Pittman goes to the bow, and we went on down to Beattyville. And, when we got down there we just tied em to another raft, maybe 40 to 50 rafts tied up down thar, you know. We just slashed them up together, you know.

Dr. Garrett: What year was this?

Mr. Davidson: I swear, hits got me kind a puzzled. Let me study a minute. I studied the other day on this and I couldn't give you exactly - 30...

Dr. Garrett: About '38 or '39, somewhere about there?

Mr. Davidson: No, it wasn't that late.

Dr. Garrett: Earlier than that.

Mr. Davidson: Yeh.

Dr. Garrett: How many raft trips did you ever make down, did you tell me, down the river?

Mr. Davidson: I made 42 trips one time two trips, me and Irvin Hensley, little Irvin.

Dr. Garrett: Two trips, huh, in one year.

Mr. Davidson: Yessir, went right straight into Beattyville. We walked back to Sexton ^{creek} Street down there and then he had a pair of mules that would meet us down there and we would ride back home.

Dr. Garrett: Did you live here on Bull Skin then?

Mr. Davidson: No, I lived out there on Mulberry, down here in Oneida.

Dr. Garrett: Right in Oneida.

Mr. Davidson: That was in ...

Dr. Garrett: When did your roads go through here? When did you get the good roads through here, after the war?

Mr. Davidson: Yeh, a long time after the war. A long time. See, _____ Combs there, that man that died, lived right there. He was in the war, and the last (unintelligible) give down here, I signed up, the last war, I signed up to go, I lived at Red Bird at that time and I signed up. I wasn't married. I signed up at 17 years old to get to go. You see, in that day in time we had to go to the post office to sign up.

Dr. Garrett: That was World War I, wasn't it?

Mr. Davidson: Yeh. We would go down there and sign up and the war ceased before I got to go through.

Dr. Garrett: Yeh, before you got over there.

Mr. Davidson: Yeh.

Dr. Garrett: Mr. Davidson, I brought you some...Now Mrs. Davidson, you tell me about yourself. You had a little bit of a tough time in life too, women did, didn't they? Tell me who you were and where you were raised and who your folks were, Mrs. Davidson.

Mrs. Davidson: Dan Smith was my grandma and my mother's dad.

Dr. Garrett: Where from, Buffalo?

Mrs. Davidson: Yeh, Steel Trap Buffalo.

Dr. Garrett: Steel Drive. Where was Steel Trap in Buffalo?

Mrs. Davidson: (Unintelligible)

Dr. Garrett: Was it on the left or right hand fork, remember.

Mrs. Davidson: Left.

Dr. Garrett: Left hand fork, I don't know about Steel Trap.

Mrs. Davidson: Hills with the hollers, where we lived at.

Dr. Garrett: Was living kind of hard over there then?

Mrs. Davidson: Yeh, it was pretty hard, plenty hard.

Dr. Garrett: You raised it all, didn't you? Getting out of there was a tough time. Now, we took a wagon trip this past weekend over there and the roads are better than the highways were when I was a kid but..

Mrs. Davidson: Good roads over there now.

Dr. Garrett: Yeh, pretty good roads, you can drive a car pretty much through there.

Mrs. Davidson: You couldn't drive a car through when I come out of there.

Dr. Garrett: Could barely get a mule through some of it.

Mrs. Davidson: Yeh, take a mule or something to come out of there.

Dr. Garrett: Did you all make maple sugar when you lived up there?

Mrs. Davidson: No.

Dr. Garrett: Not at that time. A lot of trouble over there, wasn't there?

Mrs. Davidson: Yeh. It was rough country back in there.

Dr. Garrett: It was rough. The Gabbards and lots of people, Bakers, lets see, lived up there, and Duffs, McIntosh's, Smiths.

Mrs. Davidson: I don't know who all did live up there.

Mr. Davidson: She left there when she was 15.

Dr. Garrett: When you were 15. You been living up in Clay County most of that time.

Mr. Davidson: She stayed with her sister, with her aunt down here.

Mrs. Davidson: I stayed with my aunt, down here at the Narrows. Yeh, we had a rough time.

Mr. Davidson: Ask her did she ever go barefoot to school.

Dr. Garrett: Did you ever go to school barefooted?

Mrs. Davidson: I sure have, barefooted in deep snows out.

Dr. Garrett: Where did you go to school?

Mrs. Davidson: Buffalo.

Dr. Garrett: Barefooted in the school. What school did you go to on Buffalo?

Mrs. Davidson: I just remember its a big school building.

Dr. Garret: Was it down on B-Branch there or Lucky Fork maybe? You don't remember which school then.

Mr. Davidson: She didn't go very much.

Mrs. Davidson: I didn't go too much.

Dr. Garrett: How long have you lived on Bull Skin?

Mr. Davidson: We moved here in '42.

Dr. Garrett: '42, where did Bull Skin get its name? Big and Little Bull Skin.

Mrs. Davidson: I don't know.

Dr. Garrett: Do you know Harrision, where it got its name.

Mrs. Davidson: I don't know who called it Bull Skin.

Dr. Garrett: Now, Edward is your brouther isn't he?

Mrs. Davidson: Yeh.

Dr. Garrett: Now, I was talking to him a while ago. He is awful short of breath. He needs some help right now, I think. He had been over the Antepast Church there and I sat and talked to him and he got so short of breath that I just let him lay down.

Mrs. Davidson: He had been to church over there.

Dr. Garrett: Yeh, he said he had been that way all the time and he... You are older than he is?

Mr. Davidson: Yeh, I am two year older than him, three years older than Edward.

Dr. Garrett: Harrison, your granddaddy was Morgan. Now was he in the Confederate or Union Army? Edward kind of indicates that he was a Confederate soldier. Do you know?

Mr. Davidson: Now, I do't know about that. I sure don't. I can't remember. See, I can hearsay, you know. Morgan Davidson died when I was just a boy, just a boy.

Dr. Garrett: But he was in the Civil War though.

Mr. Davidson: I don't think he was.

Dr. Garrett: Edward says he was, one side or the other.

Mr. Davidson: I don't belive he was. Unless I knowed for sure.

Mrs. Davidson: My daddy was named Charlie Gilbert, did you ever hear of him?

Dr. Garrett: Charlie Gilbert, yeh.

Mrs. Davidson: Preacher Charlie, that was my daddy. My mother died when I was two years old. My grandma raised me and now shes dead.

Dr. Garrett: Who was your grandma?

Mrs. Davidson: Annie Smith.