

Interview with Everett Porter (Interviewed by J.C. Porter - 11-21-79)

J.C.: Tell me your life story

E: My life story? Gee-oh. You mean how mean I was and everything?

J.C.: Yeah.

E: Noooo. I don't want nobody to know. (laughing)

J.C.: Let's see. You were born in Elliot County, right?

E: I was born in Elliot County. I reckon. You know where Shady Grove is? I was born back in there - back in Shady Grove. Clark Hill or somewhere. I don't even remember.

J.C. - That's where your parents lived when you were born? You weren't raised there?

E: No. I wasn't raised there. I was raised in Smokey, back yonder. In Carter County. I went to Sheep Skin School, the first school I ever went to.

J.C. - Sheep Skin School?

E: Laughing. Yeah.

J.C.: What's that?

It was a school back there on the ridge. About half of the scholars come out of Elliot County and the rest of 'em out of Carter - come to the Sheep Skin School

I went there the first year I went. I don't know, might have went two years there. I don't remember just when - they finally moved us out of there and I went then to Union School about a year or two and then they changed it again and I went to Leatherwood School.

J.C.: Is that where they chased you off? Two boys tried to beat you up or that was your Dad - he ran as hard as he could to get away from em.

E: I don't remember about that. They had no record of that at Grayson. I don't know. The courthouse got burned at Sandy Hook. That sheep Skin School could have been in Sandy Hook up there in Elliot County but it got burnt and burnt all of their papers up and deverything and when I went to get my records and things, I went to Grayson to pick all that up and they didn't have any record of it at all, so it must have been recorded at Sandy Hook. They picked me up on Tick Ridge. That's all the record they could find on me. I don't know what happened when I went to Union there.

J.C. : How far did you go in school?

E: I think 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

J.C.: What d'ya quit for?

E: You'd know why I quit for if you'd been back there in them days walkin' about 4 miles to school and it rainin' and bad weather and all. It wadn't like walkin' out here and gettin' on a school bus and ridin' to school and gettin' off and goin' in and then comin' back out and gettin' on a school bus and comin' back home. We'd have to walk - a whole bunch of kids would have to walk - I guess between 3 and 4 mile - through the woods and fields and things and it'd come a rain and we'd be as wet as a bunch of rats. We didn't have the privilege of getting an education like they do now because we had a hard time.

J.C.: What was it, a one room school?

E: Yeah. Mm hmm.

G: That's all they had back at that time.

J.C.: And you went 1<sup>st</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> grade?

E: 5<sup>th</sup> grade was all that you went!

J.C.: It was?

E: Yeah. And that little school. You had to go to high school if you went higher than that, you see.

J.C.: Did anybody else that lived around you go to high school?

G: They didn't have high school back then, did they Everett?

E: Yeah. They did. They had high school at Olive Hill, now, but them country schools was all I went to. Tick Ridge and Smiths run.

J.C.: None of your brothers and sisters graduate from high school?

E: No

J.C.: Geneva didn't either?

E: There was very few graduated back then in my town back there. We was growin up back there and the next generation began to come on.

G: Where'd Geneva go to school up there, Soldier? No, it was Dry Branch, wasn't it?

E: They went to Dry Branch to school.

G: Right there in that house right before Francis lives - where ?? And Burchett lives.

J.C.: Do you remember that log school over by Jacobs where Uncle Everett went? He said he went to school in a log school house over by Jacobs and Andy Porter was his teacher.

E: You're getting back to far for me. I don't know anything about that. I never went there and even the log school house was tore down before I can remember. I don't remember the log school house. That Rock Spring School was a log school - that's where Dad went to school.

J.C.: Oh, it was?

E: Right up above Harlan's there, you know.

G: Did you ever go to Will Underwood's to school?

E: No, Dad went to Will Underwood when he was teaching. Dad said the boys run Will off when he was teachin.

J: Run the teacher off? Why?

E: They was mean! If they wanted to do something, they just told him to get out of that holler - just give him two minutes and half of his time was already up and said he just grabbed his dinner bucket and took off and never did come back. They sent 'em an old man up there to teach the school. Dad said he was a rough blooded fella. He come in and said "Boys - I come to teach the school and I'm gonna teach it! You ain't a runnin' me off. He tuck a big ol' knife out of his pocket and laid it up on the table and he said "if I have to fight it out with my fist, I can do it. I'll fight it out with you. He said, "I'll cut it out with ya" and he had a big ol' gun and laid it out up there and said "I'll shoot it out with ya." He said "But I'm gonna teach the school if I stay here. He said "They may take me outta here with my toes stickin' up, but you're not runnin' me off. Boy he said you could hear a pin drop on the floor. There was fellas going there 20 years old or more. When Will was teachin' they got out there and shot in a bush while he was tryin' to teach school and then they told Will he just had so many minutes to get out of that holler. Then they sent that guy up there. Dad said they never run that guy off. That guy sat down when he first went in and he said "Well, I'm a gonna make a rule. If I have to whip a fella, I'm goin' home with him to stay all night so he don't tell no lie on me or nothin'. I'm going to tell his Daddy about why I had to whoop him and stay all night with him. I don't want him going to misrepresent the thing. Dad said he done something and he whooped him. He said "he ain't going home with me!" As soon as school was dismissed he jumped up and he took off as far as he could run and run off and left him. He said when the other kids come in from school, here come the old teacher. He said "Mr. Porter, I had to whoop your boy today. Said "I have a rule

that if I have to whoop one of 'em, I go home with 'em to stay all night, so I come over to stay all night and tell ya how it happened.” and Grandpa said, “That’s exactly what he needed. If he needs a whoopin’, he needs a whoopin’ and he said I made a rule that if one of em went to school and got a whoopin and I find out, I give ‘em another one. He went and got a switch and whooped him again (laughing) Grandpa whooped him. He said he didn’t get nary other whoopin’ for awhile - he didn’t want no more. He said, “the teacher come to stay all night and grandpa whooped him again - that was enough!”

J: Was that that same teacher that had a gun and a knife?

E: Yeah. That there mean fella.

J.C.: What school was that at?

E: That was Rock Springs.

J: And that was over by Jacobs?

E: That was right up the holler from Harlan’s there, just a little piece.

Dad said them boys would get out there and them fellas would come along ridin’ on the road over there by the school and them boys would throw rocks at em and yell, “School butter, chickens flutter, rotten eggs for all you fellers” and then they’d just take off and run. One day this feller come along and he got back there and rared back on his horse and they said “school butter, chickens flutter, rotten eggs for all you fellers.” He kicked his horse. Then they already made it up that the next one to come along they’d throw him right in the creek. So some of em got down there by the road when recess or something was going on and when somebody’d come along, them fellers up there would holler at em down there and them boys would jump out and catch his horse. This one feller come along and they hollered down the road - he took off just a flyin on that horse and they hollered “catch him down there” - a whole bunch of boys just run out into the road and they stopped him. They stopped his horse and grabbed him and threw him right down into the creek. A rough bunch over there, I guess. 20 or 21 years over there goin’ to school.

J.C.: How high did your dad go in school?

E: I don’t know how far he got. He was like the rest of us and didn’t go very high, I don’t guess. Your education back then didn’t amount to so much like it does now. Anybody could hoe corn or dig a ditch or something. That’s about all we had to do. Now, you see, if you get a job now, you’ve got to have an education. Back then you dug ditches or something or cut sprouts or chopped wood or somethin and it didn’t take much education to do that. That’s about all you needed to have about all the work there was, you know. You didn’t have to sign anything. No red tape for your job back then, if you got a job. They put you to work right then. No you have to go through a big lot of red tape, you know. Go and get a doctor examination and so on and so forth and you didn’t do that back then. You’d just go and if they wanted to hire you, they’d just put you to work. If they wanted to fire you, they’d just say “you’re fired” and pay you off and you’re done.

J.C.: Grandpa was fairly well educated wasn’t he?

E: Well, he probably had a little better education than some of the boys, I don’t know. Now Sam made a school teacher. That’s the only one in the whole bunch that made a school teacher, I think. Sam, he taught our school. I went to school with him on Tick Ridge, there. I know one time he ??? I flipped a paper wad across - I sat on one side of the school house and this girl sat on the other side - right straight across from me. I’d write a little note and I’d wad it up pretty tight and flip it across and she’d catch it. Then she’d read it and then she’d write a note and

answer and she'd flip it back. And we go to doin' that and he noticed it. One time I flipped the note across there and he run back there and said "gimme that" and I said "No, don't you do that. Don't you let him have it." and he took it. So he tuck it. He read that note and he said, "Boy, this is the best one I've ever seen and I want to whole school to hear this." and he read it to the whole school.

J.C.: He was your uncle, wasn't he?

G: We got his picture in there with some other school teachers, in there on the wall.

J.C.: Who was the girl you were flippin' notes to?

E: Edra Kelly, I believe. I'm not so sure. That was one of 'em anyway. I guess I flipped several of 'em.

J.C.: What did you do with yourself after you were out of school?

E: I went to work as a rock crusher - about the first job I ever had. Down the other side of Olive Hill there.

J: How old were you then?

E: I must have been about 16 - 16 or 17 years old.

J: How long did you work there?

E: Oh, not very long. I don't remember. Then I think I went up to West Virginia and worked in the coal mines. I was about 17 when I went to work in West Virginia.

J: Where at in W.V.?

E: UP to Logan and then I went up to Monaville. It was about 6 miles above Logan.

J: How long were you up there?

E: I didn't stay up there for very long. I went to Pine Grove Mine and worked over there for awhile.

J: How'd you happen to go to Logan? Did you know anybody there?

E: No I didn't know anybody, I went over there to the mine. They were minin' coal over there and a fella could go get a job in the mine.

J: You didn't go by yourself did you?

E: I think me and Willard Jarvis went. I don't know if Les was with us that time or not. We didn't work very long. We come back and then went back and Everett, my uncle, was working with Jerry Douty over here layin track with timbers and we moved from Tick Ridge up to Dry Branch at that time, so Everett wanted to get off of that trackin' timber and I'd come back from up there and I wasn't workin' anywhere up then and he asked Jerry to let him off of that there - he wanted moved to loadin' clay. Them fellers was makin' big money and he wanted to get into that. Jerry said "I can't let you off cuz' I ain't got nobody to track timber." He said "I'll get you a man that can do that - a man right out of the coal field"

J: Yeah. And he got you.

E: He said "if you can get me a man that can do the job, I'll let you off". Everett come over there to see if I wanted to take the job and told me "I'll get you a job now if you want it." I said "Yeah, I'll try it". So that's how I got my job trackin' timber for Jerry Douty. I worked a long time for Jerry. Then I went to the mine and worked there for awhile and then went to the Hayward brickyard and got me a job up there. I got me a job wheelin' - that was the hardest job - wheelin' bricks. I was workin' there when Grace and me got married.

J: How many hours a day did you have to work?

E: 8 hours

J: 6 days a week?

Yeah. I worked at the brickyard 10 hours, though. Well, the mines - let's see - the first mine that I done was 10 hours and then went to the brickyard and it was 10 hours. I reckon' all the work I done was 10 hours. I went to work at 6 o'clock in the morning and worked til 4:30 in the evening. Had my hour for dinner. Yeah, I guess it was all 10 hours at the brickyard and minin'. Course we didn't work - we'd get off when the miners all got their shift in. When they'd get done and quit then the mule boys would come out, but they was all getting paid for 10 hours but they'd come out and whenever they'd quit we'd quit and sometimes it would be 1:00 but we'd get paid for 10 hours because we stayed there and worked. When the mule boys would come out and made their last pull and everything, the track man, the timber man, the gin hands and all would come on out and all quit.

J: You were 24 when you got married, weren't you?

E: 25

G: No, you were 24 and me 22.

E: Well, I was born in 19 and 4 and we were married in 29 - that's 25.

G: January 29. You wouldn't have been 25 until July.

E: Yeah, I wadn't hardly 25. About 24 ½ (laugh).

J: How come you waited so long to get married?

E: Well, it took me a long time to talk her into the notion. (all laughing) She didn't say yes the first time.

J: She didn't? Well what did she say?

E: NO! (Laughing) We had to talk it all over again. I don't know what I done. It took me 5 years from the time I first started talkin' to her until we got married. She like to never... I thought sure I was gonna have to try somethin' else. (laughing...)

J: So where'd you live when you first got married?

G: We lived with Mom

E: We lived down there with her mother - how long, 2 or 3 years?

G: More than 2 or 3 years - we had the two boys and it was in October before Doris was born when we started building.

E: Then I built my house down there and we starved around there. In 1930, on my birthday, I went to work for General Refractories.

G: That was the brickyard company. Doris was a baby.

E: I went to work for the mining department and they built this road. They brought a steam shovel in here and I went and worked on the steam shovel - got a job on the steam shovel. We built that road - Smith's Run Road from up at Smith's Run mine up there where they had the mine. We built that road and I stayed on that road a big part of the time - we grazed that and kept it grazed and then I'd go back when we got the road all graded up, I'd go back to the mine and work up there. Then we got on the drill and I worked all over the country on the drill - over at Grahn and Cristy Creek and around.

J.C.: How long did you work for them?

E: 11 years Then I went into the saw mill business and got rich. (Laugh)

G: That was when your Dad was a boy - he could tell you about that.

J: Yeah, he told me he worked for you for what - a quarter an hour?

E: I don't know what I paid him - \$2.00 a day, wasn't it?

J: Well, that would be a quarter an hour.

E: He wanted to buy him a car. I said when you get old enough you'll have to get you a job.

You're not old enough yet. He said "Yeah, he was, too" So he went up to the Perry boys and bought him an old car and brought it down there. I had all kind of parts in there from old cars. I had my grist mill in there and I'd quit running the grist mill and the parts from a bunch of junk set in there. He took that old car and it didn't have no clutch and he couldn't throw it out of gear. The clutch wouldn't release on it and it'd stay in gear all the time - he'd give it a shiv. He'd get him a bunch of boys and away they'd go - they was over in Soldier one day - got over there and run it over the bank and he couldn't get it out hardly and was havin' a time trying to get it out - Tuck Moreland- He come along - he was the deputy sherriff. And he knew Don. He said "Whose car is that Porter?" and Don didn't have no license, you know. He said, "I don't know whose it is". (Tuck Moore left) Don said "boys, we have to get this thing out of here or he'll come back and haul it off". And they all got in there and pushed and pushed it out. When they got it in gear, they gave it a shove - he come back across the hill there and back down Dry Branch and put it in the garage just as soon as he got over here. He didn't get it out no more - it scared him out, ya know. So he sold it for junk. To the Cash boys. Harlan and them. So he went back up to Perry and bought him another one - bought him an old Dodge. He'd go over to Limestone to church over there - some little old girl over there he wanted to go over and see. He'd go over there to the Pentecost church. One night he'd been over there to church and he come back down the road. Frodes, the preacher that was down at the Nazarene Church - he'd been up after church was over - he'd took some people back towards Limestone home. He was comin' back down the road and he said he heard something going TOOT TOOT TOOT. He got around and here come that old Dodge just a flyin' Said he lost control of it just a little bit down the road. He had a jeep - Rose did. Said he seen that Dodge zig back across the road a time or two and he said Over the bank it went. It went right over in a culvert over there - right over into Albert Mundy's bottom and turned over on it's side. He stopped back there and jumped out and Don come crawlin' up out of it over on it's side and he said "are you hurt?" and he said "No, I'm not hurt" and he said "Whose boy are you?" He said "Everett Porter's" He said "well, I know him. He'll be up at Garvin Ridge Church - there havin' a revival up there - he'll be up there yet, I'll take you up there. So he left his old car layin' there and got in with him and he brought him up there. When we come out of church he was sittin' there. And I said "Well, when did you come?" and he said "a few minutes ago" and I said "where's your car?" and he said layin' down there in Al Mundy's bottom. I said "well, that's a good place for it. Won't run over nobody or get somebody hurt. You're going to get somebody killed - you ain't got no driver's license. I never even went over there to help him get it out or nothin. He just let it lay there. I tried to get him to get it, so I thought it was better layin' over there than it was out on the road, so he come on back home with me. Left his car over there. I never said "we'll go get it or nothin" It wasn't worth \$50. He gave \$50 for it but it wasn't worth it, I don't guess. He went and got Farrell. Farrell had an old Ford over about Soldier somewhere and tore the rear end out of it. He told Farrell to come and help him get his car out. Farrell said "the backend is out of my car" He said "Dad's got some down there - we can get one of them" I don't know when they come down there - night or day - I don't know when they got it. Farrell he got Roy's car up there and come down there and him and Donald got that rear end out of the garage and put it in Roy's car and they put it in the back end of that thing someway. I don't know how in the world they ever got it in there. It stuck out. The drive shaft part, it stuck out there about 2 or 3 foot. They just pulled the door to agin' that and tied it or somethin' another and took off up Dry Branch just as hard as they could go. They got up there on Dry Branch somewhere and got it caught on a bush or somethin over on

the side of the road and just tore it off and they took them posts up out of there and got it back in there and tied it back and went on and tuck it over there and got that old car fixed that he had and went and got his car out of there and brought it back over here and a few days after that I was over there at the garage and I missed that rear end - the whole thing was tuck loose there. And I thought "now what do you think happened to that" then I thought about them guys buying that old car for scrap and I thought "now they've got that I betcha" I said to Don, "Don, do you know them boys musta tuck that rear end" I said "it's gone - reckon they've stold that?" He said "Nah, Dad, they wouldn't a done that, he said" and I said "I know it's gone - somebody come in there and got that" Well, he didn't tell me he got it, ya know. And one day Jim Bolan come along and I was sittin there filin a saw. I listened at him and they were havin' a row. They were about to get into a fight. Jim said "If you don't watch it, I'm gonna tell your Dad about your stealin' that rear end" I heard him, but I didn't say a word - just kept workin' on the saw. One day, I said "why did you lie about that rear end?" and he said he didn't know nothin' about it. I said "I heard Jim tell you that he was gonna tell me. You've got it, I know you've got it." He said "Yeah, yeah, I've got it". I'd have let him have it - he shouldn't have stole it, he should have asked for it. He said "Well, I have to get it fixed."

J.C.: What's some of the pranks your dad always played on people? What about when he pretended he was dead and he put pennies on his eyes?

E: Yeah. I wasn't there, but I heard them talkin' about it. Some of them come in and he seen em comin' and he laid the pennies on his eyes and pretended he was dead. I heard some of them laughing about it, but didn't know much about it.

J: What about him eatin' a bunch of eggs or something?

E: I heard em laughin about that, too.