

**Interview with  
Doris Peak  
by Michelle Meadows,  
July 5, 1997**

**Oral Interview MS 64-0567  
Special Collections  
Marshall University Libraries  
Huntington, West Virginia**

**Oral History of Appalachia,  
Marshall University  
Huntington, West Virginia**

Released Form signed by Doris Peak  
July 5, 1997, at the Simmons High School Reunion,  
Marriot Hotel, Charleston, West Virginia

Transcriber not identified  
PDF prepared by Lisle G Brown

© Marshall University, 2003  
All Rights Reserved

**Note:** In the original transcript there were blank spaces.  
These have been indicated by [blank space] in the following text.

## Doris Peak Interview

**Doris Peak:**... they were some of the first-, when the camp first opened under ... who'd they work under? What's-, Mr. Harriston. Tell me what you want to know.

**Michelle Meadows:** Okay. When were you born? [others in room talking simultaneously] Do you remember when you were born, what year?

**DP:** January the 21st of '27.

**MM:** Okay. Where did you grow up?

**DP:** Well, I was born in North Carolina. Burlington, North Carolina.

**MM:** Okay. Let' see ... you're married and you have-, how many children do you have? Do you have any children?

**DP:** Four daughters, two sons.

**MM:** How many grandchildren do you have?

**DP:** Six sons, four daughters, granddaughters. Six grandsons.

**MM:** Okay, now.... now this is the nitty-gritty. The first part was just the warm-up, okay? Do you remember about what time you started at the camp as staff?

**DP:** I started, my boss was Mrs. Jones, John B. Jones. Do you know John B? That's who I started under. And that was after the Lynch's left. I worked through, for the Jones' until they left. And then I worked for Mr. Chiles.

**MM:** Okay. Uh...

## Doris Peak Interview

**DP:** And Miss [blank space] was the cook, and Miss Jones, Miss Elizabeth Jones, was the assistant. She worked [blank space] You know Miss Elizabeth Jones, remember her? See, they're dead now.

**MM:** Okay. Let me see here now ... what did you do? (**DP:** What did I do?) Yeah, what did you do?

**DP:** I worked in the dining hall. I worked in the dining room. I set up the tables, waited on the tables. And I...help, assisted with some of the cooking, when needed.

**MM:** Okay. How long were you there for?

**DP:** For twelve summers. And the summers lasted from April to November, sometimes. Because we had state ROTC come up there, and, and we served them. So we, we had a count 'til it was real cold, you know, where we couldn't have it. And Miss was the cook, and Miss Elizabeth Jones was the assistant, assistant cook and dishwasher. And I was a waitress in the dining room.

**MM:** Okay, let me see here. Do you remember some of the things that the kids did? Like the activities, some of the kids did, or did you see much of that, since you ran the dining room?

**DP:** Well, some of it. I know they had a lot of arts and crafts. (**MM:** Okay) And we had a lot of programs. We had a, I had a stroke, I can't remember everything. (**MM:** That's okay) We had, at one time, we had this count, we had Taj Mahal, we had him come out there, and Stokley Carmichael came out there. You were a little girl. And we had this festival out here that was just grand. It was so nice. At that time, it was all black; it was a black camp. Once it closed, I can't even remember the year. Must have been '79, something like that, when it closed. And then the West Virginia U. took over? (**MM:** Division of Culture and History from the state) Yeah, yeah, took over. And well, they asked me to work for them. But I didn't. I didn't want to work no more. I worked under Mr. Chiles, Mr. Ritchie, you know .... nice guy, nice guy. And I worked under... .John B. Jones. See, Mr. Chiles came after Mr. Jones left. Mr. Chiles came. And I think Mr.

## Doris Peak Interview

Chiles stayed there until '79. And I believe it changed hands then. See, I had a stroke in January, so I can't even remember everything. (**MM**: You're doing fine) Okay.

**MM**: Okay. Were the people that you worked with, were they from around West Virginia, or did they come from other areas?

**DP**: They came from other-, West Virginia and

**MM**: Yes, or from other areas. (**DP**: mmm-hmm) So, they ... were they like uh, like do you remember any certain part of West Virginia where they were from, or...were they just from everywhere?

**DP**: They was from everywhere. I'm trying to remember... See, that's me ... see, this time last year I could have told you. See, I had a stroke in January, and I've forgotten some of it.

**MM**: That's fine, I totally understand. Okay. Uh...were there uh, was the camp a majority used for 4-H, or was it used for just like for Boy Scouts and...?

**DP**: [inaudible]... we had 4-h's and we had uh, a variety of camps.

**MM**: Okay.

**DP**: We had uh, at that time, when I worked for it, it was sponsored by ... West Virginia State College. And then it transferred to West Virginia... (State of West Virginia).

**MM**: Okay. Let me see ... do you remember anything about adults, the adult activities that occurred at the camp? Or were the adults strict with the kids? Do you remember anything, where the adults were separated from the kids meantime? Did they have like separate classes or activities for the adults?

**DP**: Yeah. Well, they had a variety. They had activities for adults, you know, staggered, boom,

## Doris Peak Interview

boom, boom. And they had children of different ages, like teenagers, up to twenties, I'll say. And that's been [inaudible] ... used to work out there, Mr. King. Do you remember them names? (Mmm-hmm) And who else? King, [blank space] from Beckley? It was huh? Mr. Crawford? You heard of Mr. Crawford? [someone talking with Ms. Peaks in background] Yeah. I worked during the times that some of them was there. [inaudible] ....you had that guy? That is, I was working out there during that time. And uh, man named ... a music teacher down at State.

**MM:** [blank space] Williams?

**DP:** Unh?

**MM:** [blank space] Williams?

**DP:** He used to come up there. But wait a minute, what's the man that died? Oh...

**MM:** [blank space] Williams?

**DP:** Not him. It's another guy ... that died. And he had uh, a daughter .... unh? What was the man's name? He was fairly young when he died. Carol would know if I could call his name. Oh, oh, oh. That died. He was over the music department. Did you go to state?

**MM:** I went to Marshall.

**DP:** Okay.

**MM:** Eunice Fleming? (**DP:** Yeah) You know Eunice?

**DP:** Yeah. Yeah, Miss Chiles was there. She was over the music department. Mr. King, who else....? Mr. King .... Tom Banks ... and who else? Do I know what I'm talking about, Carol? [talking to someone in the background]

## Doris Peak Interview

**MM:** You're fine.

**DP:** Uh-huh, but most of 'em are dead now.

**MM:** Yes, they're gone. We should have done this ten years ago.

**DP:** Did you see some of the pictures out there? They got some material out there that's mine. Did you see my picture out there?

**MM:** We have uh, the whole archives, came out to the camp two weeks ago. And they showed the pictures of people [inaudible]

**DP:** Now, some of those pictures what they got up there is mine. (**MM:** Probably so) I just haven't picked 'em up. Did you see me with a cannon

**MM:** Probably so. They've got a whole collection of pictures

**DP:** See, at one time, it was a black camp. There was probably the only black camp in this area. And then it changed up in, after West Virginia State College gave it up ... practically all white, very few blacks. And very few blacks come out there now. But it's a lot of whites come out there, like when they have do-wop Saturday night, it's like ten thousand or more be out there. But it maybe [inaudible] I go out there every year when they have it. And they're gonna have this multicultural festival though ... when? Middle part of this month? Middle part .... mmm-hmm. And when they have this multicultural festival, it's a, it's a variety of musicians come in there. Like blacks and whites. Ah...I was trying to think of this guy's ...they have some beautiful talent out there. But they have a variety mix of whites. Now they just uh, [inaudible] ... people that come out there now is white. [speaker not identified] Not a white. Yeah, they got this big program they call do-wop Saturday Night. That's when they have all these uh, people to come in there. They had Taj Mahal, you heard of Taj Mahal? (**MM:** Mmm-hmm) [unidentified speaker]

## Doris Peak Interview

**MM:** I have.

**DP:** You got the pictures from-, I mean, you got the brochure from Taj Mahal?

**MM:** We have a brochure from the summer, summer place and things.

**DP:** Mmm-hmm, mmh-hmm. They used to have Dr.[blank space] Williams. (**MM:** Williams, yeah) Uh-huh. They used to come up there and they used to have real, real nice....But now, it's even a bigger scale than what it was when we were.... See, when I worked out there, it was all black. But now, I'll say it's practically all white. You very seldom... .[unidentified speaker] If so, there's very few blacks there that come in there now. Because all the workers and things are white. I had a chance to work out there, I just didn't take it. They asked me if I would take it. But I wasn't in the mood for working out there again. I worked out there for 12 summers.

**MM:** So you didn't get to work-, you didn't work when it became integrated?

**DP:** Mmm-huh, but they asked me to. I could have if I wanted to.

**MM:** Okay. When you worked there, were you around .... were there any times when the kids, it was like .... okay, because a lot of people that I've already talked to, they've had been just with boys, and it was just strictly boys activities and then there was strictly girls activities. Did you see a difference in the camps when it was just boys being there? In comparison with being with girls? Did you see any differences in like what the kind of activities they did? Do you remember anything like that?

**DP:** There was ... when they had ... they had boys and girls, a variety like the girls, they stayed up over the dining hall. And the boys stayed down in the barracks. They-, it was a variety, it was a mixture. They never had, only time they had one sex, is when they had, the ROTC. They used to stay, WV State College boys used to come up there and train during the fall months, up until the last of-October. And that was all men. And you know, they practiced military maneuvers like....I worked that camp. I worked that camp for oh, five or six years, almost. And that last

## Doris Peak Interview

almost up until the end of October. And see, I worked that, I worked that alone. Because I had to set up the tables and serve them their food. And Miss was the cook and Miss Jones, who was the dishwasher and cook's helper, so the three of us, and, and Tom Banks was the handyman. He was Tom Banks? [inaudible] So, there's not nobody around much to tell you these things. Because see, most of 'em have died out. But Butchy, Mr. Chiles can tell you quite a bit.

**MM:** We've interviewed him.

**DP:** Oh, you have?

**MM:** Yes, we have.

**DP:** Okay. He's a nice guy. Oh, he is. Mmm-hmm.

**MM:** Okay. Did you consider the camp important?

**DP:** Yeah, yeah.

**MM:** Okay.

**DP:** I enjoyed it. I mean, I, it was hard work, ohhhh, it was hard work. Sometimes I didn't even get off work, sometimes like 12:30 at night before I'd even get finished. Then I'd go home, which was maybe 7 miles in the dark. I wouldn't do it now.

**MM:** [laughter]

**DP:** [inaudible] ....working was fun. You know, you met a lot of people.

**MM:** Okay. When you went home, was there any ... let's see, how can I phrase this question? Were there-, did you know about-, was there like a perception of the camp by the communities?

## Doris Peak Interview

Was there like a negative perception about the camp, or positive perception about the camp by the outside communities? Did they have-, did they say anything? Did you ever hear about anything about the camp? (DP: no, no) Okay, okay.

**DP:** Nobody complained. Because at that time, see that was the only thing that blacks had in the area. You know that, don't you? Your, I don't know whether you ... Mr. Chiles.... mmm-hmm.

**MM:** So they would complain?

**DP:** Would they complain? No, nobody would complain. See, at that time, that was the only outlet that blacks had. And they had picnics and they had couples come in there from different places. So most of it wasn't integrated. Most of 'em were black, because it was a black camp. And they had-, you know that they had other counselors that was white. But they went to Jackson Mill and other places. But that was the only camp that we had. You know, you know that, don't you? You don't know it, but your mother probably knows. And Mr. Chiles out there knows. But Mr. Chiles was the last of the blacks, you know, to, to run that camp. And before that, it was.... let me see ... Mr. Chiles was the last one, and then Mr. Jones was next to him, and then Mr. Lynch and then Mr. Harriston, and that's as far back as I can account for.

**MM:** Okay. Let me see the last thing that I have to ask, [inaudible].... fun. Okay, do you remember anything that struck you about the camp? Like share some kind of story about the camp that you can remember? I don't know, just maybe some of the things you did, something that kind of sticks out in your mind.

**DP:** No, no, I was too busy. [inaudible] ... setting up them tables and serving them people. [laughter] So, I was hopping. I had several girls that worked with me. But it's been times that I served like [blank space] people by myself. [inaudible].... all of it wasn't work, there was some fun. You know, you met friends, it was all right. Well, I was younger then.

**MM:** Was the pool still in operation while you were up there?

## Doris Peak Interview

**DP:** Yeah, yes, and then the pool went down and they condemned the pool and they drained it. But at one time, it was the only pool that blacks could go in swimming, in this area.

**MM:** Do you know anything about the trees? I see some of the old pictures of the trees, and they would paint them white at the bottoms of them.

**DP:** Yeah, they were whitewashing.

**MM:** White wash the trees?

**DP:** Uh-huh. See, they'd trim 'em, get 'em trimmed down. And then they would white wash them and make them look neat. You know, it was nice.

**MM:** They're beautiful white. [inaudible]... .made out of huge chestnut. And all the chestnut trees are dead. [inaudible] Thank you.

**DP:**...very nice and it still is. [blank space] the Multicultural Festival, the Multicultural has taken that over, more money has been contributed to the upkeep of that. Because there was a time it was such a little bit of money that was contributed to the upkeep of that camp, that we even had to bring utensils from our homes to even cook in, you know? Because it's those campers, because we didn't have, we have limited income. We didn't have, they didn't have nothing to buy nothing. So, anyway, but now, they got everything. But it's ... white operated now. But we didn't have all the things that they have now. Okay?

**MM:** Okay, that wraps it up [inaudible]

**END OF INTERVIEW**