

**Interview with
Calvin McMillion
by Rose Simms,
July 12, 1983**

**Oral History Interview
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Calvin McMillion Interview

Rose Simms: This is an interview with Calvin McMillion and his wife at their home on July 12, 1983 by Rose Simms. Mr. McMillion when did you first come to work at the Camp?

Calvin McMillion: (speaking to his wife) Do you remember what year it was?

Mrs. McMillion: It was when President Roosevelt was president.

RS: It was the CCC?

MM: Yes.

RS: Could you describe how it was when you first went up to the Camp that year?

CM: When we first went in there, there was no brush cut in that section and they had nothing to work with. We went to the CC camp and borrowed tools to start work until we got some. When we went up there we didn't have a tool house. Crosby Cook, he was the big boss...

MM: He used to live at Edmond, but he left there and went to Lewisburg.

CM: And then he went to Florida. He said to me, "Wish you would go over to the CC camp and see if you could get some tools." So I went over and I borrowed some tools and brought them and started them to work. Then he says, "We've got to have a tool house and an office." "Well," I said, "I don't know where we'll get them." I was out yonder at Ansted, Hawks Nest, and a fellow said to me, "There's a pretty good building there, and I wish it was out of there." I said, "What do you want for it?" He said, "I'll give it to anybody who'll take it out of there." I said, "It's as good as gone." So we went back and I came on home. The next morning I went over there (Camp) and I says, "I got a tool house if I can get about four good men to go with me. to go get it." I told them where it was at and we went and loaded it and brought it back. In the meantime after I unloaded it, I took the tools back to the CC camp, and while I was there I said, "Now if we just had a tool house it would be alright." That was an office we got out there. He said, "Right there's one you can have if you move it." And I said, "Will you loan me the tools again?" I went

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back over and we went and got it and moved it in. That's when we started to work.

RS: How many men were working with you at that time?

CM: Well, they started out everywhere. Some had started cutting timber, some were making boards, some was digging ditches for the water system; Wallace Brown was foreman on that job.

Then we got a sawmill over there. He (Cook) wanted a sawmill to cut some timber with. He hollered for Burgess. Cook came over there one morning and says, "I saw this fellow and" he--has a sawmill he wants to sell." He says to Burgess, "I want you and Mr. Mac to go down there and see it. I want him to look it over." We went down there, looked it over, and bought it. We brought it up there and went to cutting timber.

RS: Did the men run the sawmill?

CM: Yes, the men ran the sawmill. They had a bunch running the sawmill. It was all going at once.

RS: Where was the sawmill located?

CM: Down at the foot of the hill; just before you get up to the Camp.

RS: Where the parking lot is?

CM: Yes, down there. We got started on that and putting that building up. We put that little old log building down there first. That was the first one we built; then we started the big one after that. The longest log was 56 feet, the shortest log was 4 feet. We hewed the logs, cut the notches in them, and hewed them off; cutting all of them in the same thickness.

RS: All the timber from off the land was used to build the Lodge?

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CM: That's right. There's some of the prettiest chestnut timber in there you ever looked at. Mac McClung, he was there. The last time I saw him he was blind. Earl McClung, I worked with him, he's dead. So many of them died.

MM: That Mac McClung, he's not dead. He's still living as far as we know.

CM: He lives next to Russellville. His wife's dead. Some of his people are taking care of him. I don't know whether he's still living or not.

RS: How long did you say you worked up at the Camp?

CM: Four years.

RS: What work was done by the time the four years were up?

CM: When the four years was up, the little log building was built and the big building was underway. It was done, we were doing the finishing work, painting the doors and windows. That was before we left there. Then we went in there and built the swimming pool."

RS: You started the pool?

CM: Yes, we done put water in it; all before we left there.

RS: Do you remember how much you made at the time?

CM: Well, do you remember?

MM: Well, we got enough to buy us a tractor.

RS: Did they pay you by the month

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MM: They paid him by the week.

CM: It wasn't very much.

RS: Did you live in this area?

MM: We lived right here.

CM: We lived down there in that other house. (indicating house behind their own)

MM: He built this one.

RS: What was your job? Did you have a title, or were you a laborer?

CM: No. Well, yes I was a carpenter. I was working a bunch of men. The building that the foundation was sitting on, I took a compass and I set the foundation how high they wanted it for them to set the building on. That was about the hardest job. I got more tired of that just standing around. I was using a compass getting it level and I'd have Burgess come out, he was pretty good with that kind of work. Crosby Cook was good, but I'd get Burgess to come out and check on me of an evening. He said, "I'm going to quit that. I'm going to turn it over to you." I did. I finished it up.

RS: The men that worked up at the Camp, were they from that general area? Did they bring people in?

CM: A big bunch of them from over here at Edmond, Lansing, some from Hell's Half Acre.

RS: Do you remember some of their names?

CM: Doppel Wendell was one of them and Mac McClung.

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MM: Mac McClung and his brother.

CM: I can't think. There's some more of them fellers from over in there, but I can't think of their names.

MM: Archie Higgins, he was from Beauty Mountain, Wallace Brown.

CM: Yes, Archie Higgins, Wallace Brown, he's dead. So many of them are dead.

RS: When you worked at the Camp, did you know it was going to be a 4-H Camp?

MM: Yes, a colored 4-H Camp.

RS: Any of the men that worked up there, did they continue working after you quit?

CM: No, it slacked up, and they all quit for awhile. Of course, they had a bunch (campers) come in up there; the colored you know. They came in before we left up there. Burgess said some of them was girls.

There was two white women, just as white you couldn't tell there was colored blood in them. They was colored too.....Sentence was unintelligible..... "No," he says, "not only are there men here and these girls all, but we'll manage that. "Of course," he said, "we've got our tools all up in the loft of this building. We have to go up there and get them down, because it would make it unhandy for the girls." So they detailed me to go up there to get it and wouldn't allow any of the rest of them to go. I would go to the foot of the stairs and the woman there would say, "You go on." If she did, I'd go on upstairs and if she didn't I'd wait there till she told me. Some of them might have been changing clothes. There wasn't any of the rest of them went up there at all.

RS: This was when they had campers in there?

CM: Yes.

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MM: They were on vacations or something like that.

RS: Do you know who the director was at that time?

CM: There was just these two girls. There didn't look like there was any colored blood in them. Their hair was just as straight. Burgess says to them, "Who's going to bring them in here?" "We are." He says, "Ah, you all aren't colored." "Yes we are." That's what they said. They were just as nice as could be. Some nice colored girls.

RS: The Lodge, when you finished it, how many rooms were in it? Did they have the back porch on it?

CM: The back porch, no, they didn't have that on. They had one up front there as it goes into the side. They had that porch up. No, they didn't have that porch up when I left. They did that after I left

RS: The rock porch out front?

CM: Yes, they did some more work after they started back up. I don't know whether they ran out of money or what, but they shut down for a good while.

RS: Do you know who the land belonged to before the State bought it?

CM: Well, it belonged to Meadow River Lumber Company. They owned all that through there. They put it up there. (water tower) We were working up there and came by one evening when they were putting the water tank up. The boy, he went up there on that water tank and I started up and I got up about half way. He came back down to meet me. 'don't you come up here. Don't you come up here. Get back down.'" Well, there was nothing else to do but for me to go back down. It got on his nerves.

RS: Did they have the water system in at that time?

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CM: Oh yes. They had the bathrooms, that they would call them, where they would go and dress. They had it out there fixed up. We built it. They had a bunch from the Prison. They worked a bunch of them. Some of them was making signs. They would take their hands and make those signs as pretty as ever you saw. Some of them was in for different things. Some of them was there for pick pocketing. Some was there for different things. They was free to go. They would come over there to Winona of a night. Of course, I don't know if they knew it or not. They slipped off over there. I heard of them being over there. (laughing)

MM: Kind of like they did in the War. They'd slip off.

RS: About how many men worked up ;at the Camp?

CM: I expect in all, digging the ditches and everything, 30 or 40 men. Some of them was clearing.

MM: That was during the Depression and that was part of their project., The State furnished them. It was during that Depression and they'd have to slow up and wait awhile.

CM: Some of them was working there like they was, and they'd have just a little work project for getting to eat. Over here they was building this road here getting out rock over here at Edmond and Lansing. They was over in there getting out rock and they'd have a boss for so long. They'd cut him off, then they'd put in another man and put in another crew. They were cutting them off. One fellow finished up that evening, he was the boss then. The boss said to me, "In the morning, I want you to take over here to do the bossing and looking after the men." They was getting the rock out for these roads; Edmond road. So next morning when we went out, the same fellow gave me the orders not to take any tools out, he said, "Theyll be a man here; I don't know how many he'll take, but he's coming after a bunch." That was Crosby Cook from over here at Edmond.

MM: They took them from off the road.

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CM: We went from there that morning to the 4-H Camp.

RS: The stone they used up there, where did they get it from?

CM: They quarried it.

RS: Where from?

CM: I reckon just around where they could get it.

MM: Back over here where they had that quarry they got a bunch of rock out of there.

CM: They got rock there for.... I don't know where they got the rock for that.

MM: I bet they did. Over here where the Midland Trail is,-that was one place they got rock.

CM: They got that out for the road. I worked there. I did the drilling there. Right upon the hill there at Oat Blumes, they got rock out there to haul on Edmond road.

MM: That's out here on Spy Rock.

RS: The rock for the Camp they got from the area?

CM: I don't know where they got the rock at, but they poured the cement and dug holes out about that big a square (indicating about 2 feet) and dug them down in there about that deep (indicating about 2 feet) to put the cement in. Then they got a box and set it up there on the pole, and set the compass on that, took the level off of it and drove a nail in it. Then when they did that they poured it up to the nail. That's the way they done it to get the foundation. They went over there after we quit about a year or two, I don't know how long it has been, but they put dynamite under the corner of it and shot it and messed it up. Well, I went over there later,

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and they wasn't going to let me look around. An old colored woman from down to Winona, when the fellow told me I couldn't go, she said, "That fellow helped build this place. I know him." "Well, if you know him, let him go."

RS: They weren't letting people come up at that time?

CM: Not after that they shot it. They had to know who they was. That colored woman, she's dead now, she said, "I know him. He worked here. He worked here when they started this thing. I know he didn't do it." He said, "If you know him, send him on." So he turned around and told me to go on.

MM: They were supposed to stop the people that came up there you don't know.

RS: I thank you Mr. McMillion for your time and for answering all my questions.