

**Interview with
John Seay
by Rose Simms,
June 29, 1983**

**Oral History Interview
West Virginia State Archives
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John Seay Interview

RS: This is an interview with John Seay on June 29, 1983 by Rose Simms. Mr. Seay, when did you come to work at Camp Carver?

JS: Oh, I guess it was about 15 or 20 years ago.

RS: Do you remember the year?

JS: No, I don't remember the exact year.

RS: Why did you come to work at the Camp?

JS: Well, I was asked to work for Westmorland Coal Company Camp, and, number one, the main reason was I liked to work with children.

RS: Where did you live at this time?

JS: Beckley.

RS: How were you hired for the job? Did someone recommend you?

JS: I was recommended.

RS: How long did you work up here?

JS: I guess, off and on, about 15 or 20 years.

RS: What was your job?

JS: Councillor and teacher.

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RS: Could you describe your daily routine?

JS: First we would start by getting the boys up; then after we got the boys up, we would have breakfast; after breakfast, we would clean up the cabins. At one particular camp I was nature study teacher, science and nature study. After science we would have recreation; after recreation, we would go back in and I would take another group in science and nature study; by this time we would have evening play. I was one of the teachers in sports; after sports, it was time to clean up for supper; after supper it was free-time; after free-time we would have what they called vesper service. Sometimes, I was in charge of this. After vesper service we would have campfire. Most of the time I was head of the campfire, or big chief of the campfire. After the campfire, we retired or had snack, and then we retired and went to bed.

RS: What did you do on your free-time?

JS: Well, on free-time we would supervise the children in sports or any activity that might be involved. PAGE 2

RS: Did you live at the Camp full time?

JS: Yes.

RS: Where did you stay?

JS: In the boy's cabin with the boys.

RS: Do you remember what your pay was at that time?

JS: No, I don't. It was a small amount.

RS: Was it a salary or hourly?

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JS: Weekly, but I can't really remember.

RS: Do you remember if you had any job benefits like health care or retirement?

JS: No, I didn't have that.

RS: Do you remember how many hours a day you worked?

JS: Well, it was all day, I would say, and it was five days a week. Of course working at the Camp, it was all day, cause you were responsible for the kids in the cabin. You had to watch them.

RS: How often did you have new campers coming in?

JS: Well, it depended on what particular camp it was, because some camps I worked stayed two weeks; then I'd get some every week. It depended. At that time there were different people bringing camps in. They sponsored students so sometimes the camps would last two weeks; sometimes a week. It depended.

RS: Did you work just summers, or year round?

JS: Summers.

RS: Did you get away from the Camp very often?

JS: No.

RS: You worked five days and stayed at the Camp?

JS: I worked five days and then I would come home for the weekend.

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RS: Was the Camp's relationship with the surrounding area good?

JS: I thought so.

RS: At the time that you were here, who ran the Camp?

JS: Well, Earl_Clay was one of them; and a man by the name of Chiles he was the last one; and John Jones. Another one, I can't remember his name, he's dead --- Hairston.

RS: The Camp at one time had about 500 acres of land. Do you know if the land was used for the Camp program, or did they have other uses for it?

JS: As far as I know the whole time I was here, it was used for the Camp program.

RS: The campers, did they come from West Virginia or from all over the United States?

JS: Most of them came from West Virginia, but the latter years I worked up there, we had some that came from Chicago, Illinois.

RS: Do you recall any especially memorable events while you were here?

JS: No not off hand, but the relationship with the students I enjoyed, and they enjoyed it so much they hated to return home. It brought a closeness of the students because some of them came from different communities, therefore, they made friends; particularly those from Illinois. Those were the ones I enjoyed, because they were coming out of the city. For some of them it was the first time living in the wilderness and things like this, and this they enjoyed. They hated to return to the city. Some of them I have received letters from. Some of them got together and got me a gift when they left.

RS: Do you have any personal photos or memorabilia about the Camp?

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JS: That's what I don't have; I'm so sorry I do not have.

RS: Can you think of any of the names of anyone that worked at the Camp when you worked?

JS: Yes, one lady, she's a Janet Reed now; and Rayphus Parham and Thomas Parham.

RS: Yes, someone else gave me their names. They were music and athletic directors.

JS: Right off hand I can't remember anyone.

RS: Do you remember any special things they had at the Camp while you were here, or did you just have campers?

JS: No, we had special programs, but I can't remember right off what they were. I think one of them was a Red Cross program which was very good. Someone from Beckley came and demonstrated Red Cross and there was another one similar to CPR, but it wasn't called CPR at that time. They gave a very good demonstration. There was a man that lived not in that area, but everytime someone would get sick, he would bring his ambulance and take them to the hospital. He gave a demonstration which was very good. There was another one who came from Summersville and gave a demonstration on nature study, definitions of plants and birds, which was quite interesting. Someone gave safety at the swimming pool, which was very outstanding. I can't think where he was from or his name. There was several outstanding programs that came in for the students. I think the telephone company came in and presented a program.

RS: Mr. Seay, I thank you for your time and for answering all my questions. That's all the questions I have for you now.