**Transcription sponsored by Cuyahoga Valley National Park**

**Ronald Dodson** [00:00:00] And I'm sure, you know, it's... You know with, with the things that we have in the environment, it had to be a lot cleaner. But, you know, I was asking Sandra about that 'cause she was a counselor here in 1967. And one of the things when we were looking at down at the pool and I says I remember the lake, but I do not remember there being a swimming pool here.

**Erin Bell** [00:00:28] Okay. So I was doing a little soundcheck while you're speaking.

**Ronald Dodson** [00:00:31] Okay.

**Erin Bell** [00:00:31] And so I think the way we'll start this is have each of the interviewers introduce yourselves and then we'll begin the interview. And you can start by stating your name.

**Ronald Dodson** [00:00:39] Okay.

**Erin Bell** [00:00:42] I'll introduce myself now. This is Erin Bell. I'm here at Camp Mueller on April 23rd interviewing Mr. Dodson. And I'm here with three young men who are going to be doing the questioning. So go ahead and introduce yourselves, fellows.

**Joshua Hill** [00:01:00] I'm Joshua Hill.

**Jonathan Nash** [00:01:04] I'm Jonathan Nash.

**Chris Jenkins** [00:01:04] I'm Chris Jenkins.

**Ronald Dodson** [00:01:05] My name is Ron Dodson, and I guess I am the interviewee.

**Erin Bell** [00:01:12] So whenever you guys are ready to start asking some questions.

**Joshua Hill** [00:01:17] All right. For our listeners, Mr. Dodson. Can you please state your full name?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:01:21] Ronald F. Dodson.

**Joshua Hill** [00:01:24] And what year were you born?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:01:26] 1948.

**Joshua Hill** [00:01:27] And where were you born? In what city?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:01:30] In Cleveland, Ohio.

**Joshua Hill** [00:01:33] Can you tell us about the neighborhood that you lived in where you attended Camp Mueller?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:01:39] The year. The first year I came to Camp Mueller was 1957 and we were living on 79th and Rawlings across from the big lot that used to be Rawlings Junior High School. It was actually there at the time. I actually attended kindergarten and the first and second grade at Rawlings Junior High. But that's that's where I lived. Well, yeah when I attended camp here.

**Joshua Hill** [00:02:11] So in addition to Camp Mueller, what other activities were available to your age group in your society?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:02:19] In... Where I'd... Well, we had a playground which was fully manned and maintained by the city of Cleveland. We actually... Back in those days, we had a... As I said, it was a full playground. We had social workers there or I guess what we would call camp counselors, playground attendants, who actually did that as a summer job. And I think that they were probably high school/college students and they were hired by the city of Cleveland to help us play. We also had baseball leagues like a little league that was also sponsored by the city of Cleveland. And that was a little older age group than I was in. But, you know, that was available to, you know, for young people at the time.

**Joshua Hill** [00:03:14] Well, thank you. How old were you when you attended Camp Mueller?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:03:16] I would have been nine years old. Eight or, yeah, eight. Nine years old the first year I was here. The second year, I was almost ten. My birthday's in July. So, I imagine that first second that first session was right before my birthday each year.

**Joshua Hill** [00:03:43] How many times did you attend?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:03:45] Twice.

**Joshua Hill** [00:03:46] Who made the decision for you to go?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:03:48] I'm not sure, you know, I was going to ask my mom that. She's in a nursing home and when I read about this in The Plain Dealer, you know, I was teasing some of my classmates and I says, well, what did I do wrong? Because she sent me and my sister here. My sister was a year and a half younger than I am. And, you know, I was wondering, I says, you know, what do we do wrong to for her to send us away? So I think my mother made the decision; but as I said, I'm not sure because we also had a cousin that came with us that first year. He didn't live with us, but he was at the same session. So I think it might have been more than one person in the family who made the decision.

**Joshua Hill** [00:04:34] Well, do you remember any memorable experiences?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:04:41] Here? Not really. I remember getting bitten, you know, bitten up, eaten, eaten up by mosquitoes here. That's, that's the one thing that really stands out in my mind was, was the mosquitoes. Now, the second year we were here, I do remember it rained most of the whole time we were here. And I had a miserable time. I did not want to come back. So I didn't volunteer to come back the following year because the second time was, was really, was really bad. We were just stuck in the cabins. Most of the time. And that was no fun for, you know, a ten-year-old.

**Joshua Hill** [00:05:17] Okay. What did you enjoy the most at Camp Mueller?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:05:20] I enjoyed being able... I enjoyed being out in a wooded area because I don't know if you're familiar with the 79th and Rawlings area but that would have been, you know, really the inner city at the time. We didn't have... The biggest park that was available to us was Woodhill, which is Luke Easter where the skating rink is. So I went up there on Sundays with my grandfather, who was a postal worker in the post office. Workers had a Sunday softball league. And I would go up there and, you know, I enjoyed hiking around the park while they were watching the softball games. So, you know, I thought I was in heaven when I came out here and I just had all these woods. So that was the most enjoyable experience I had out here, was just hiking through the woods. There were times when they would have to send a counselor out to find me because I'd be out walking somewhere and they couldn't understand how I could, I could find my way back. And, you know, they thought I was lost. I was never lost. I always knew how to get back to the cabin. But yeah. That, that was the most fun I had here was just being able to hike through the woods.

**Joshua Hill** [00:06:32] Okay. So what was the thing that you least enjoyed here?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:06:41] The second year being rained in. Not having any outdoor activities. You know, we couldn't swim, you know, and we couldn't I couldn't go hiking, which, which, you know, I wanted to do, because it was raining so hard that week that, that I was here. And then when I finally was able to go out, it was just like everything was soaked with mud. But there was nothing that I did not enjoy. I had a great time, you know? It was nice to be away from home, you know, away from the city. Yeah, it was just a great experience for an inner-city child, you know, during those years.

**Joshua Hill** [00:07:23] So is there anything to do, like inside the cabins, or no there was nothing to do?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:07:27] I don't think. I don't remember. I think that there were some activities that we had, you know, just like busy work. You know, they I think they even had a book, Things to do on a rainy day. But, you know, when you have four in a row, I think you, you get to the end of that book in a hurry. So we did have things to do. You know, just so we would not be so agitated, you know. But, you know, there's only so much you can do to keep an eight-year-old busy or a ten-year-old busy indoors. But, yes, they did have some things that they had scheduled for us put it. That was plan B and plan C.

**Joshua Hill** [00:08:22] So how long did you stay?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:08:25] I think I stayed here a week, at least a week. I'm not sure. I know the second time, you know, when it rained and it felt like two weeks. [laughs] So, I think the sessions were... I'm pretty sure the sessions were a week apiece. I can't be sure. That's a long, long time ago. Yeah. When you're that age and you know the age I am right now, one of the things that get fuzzy over the years are time frames in intervals.

**Joshua Hill** [00:09:06] So how did you, I mean, how did you prepare yourself for your visit to Camp Mueller?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:09:13] Oh, yeah. I was talking with Sandy about that a little while ago. I mean, it was just so exciting. They give you a list. They gave us a list of once we made a decision and signed up to go. They would give us the list to give the parents a list of the things that you have to take with you. So many pairs of pants, so many underwear, toothbrush, blah, blah, blah, blah, all your necessities. And, you know, I think that that was, you know, that was the thing that sticks out in my mind was the preparation. Double-checking, and triple-checking, and quadruple-checking to make sure that we had everything that we needed on the list. Yeah, that was just, you know, to me that, that was the highlight of the preparation. You know, until the actual morning where they, they dropped us off. Yeah. I just you know, I remember looking at that list, you know, probably every night for two weeks in a row, going through it, making sure I had everything in my duffel bag that I needed to bring.

**Joshua Hill** [00:10:17] You said they dropped you off? How did you get here?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:10:20] My mom brought me down, dropped me off in the parking lot at Phillis Wheatley. And I remember the big bus, the yellow school bus was waiting for us. I think it was a big yellow bus. And, you know, that was a departure day. And, you know, it's just real. And it was, you know, being dropped off. And you see all these other kids, you know, doing the same thing in the same state of anticipation that you're in. Literally climbing the walls, you know? Can't wait till the bus leaves. But she had mixed feelings because I think at that time, you know, that was the first time I had been separated from my immediate family. As I said, my sister did come with me for the same session and I had a cousin. So I didn't feel totally alienated. But still, you know, that's your first time away from home, away from, you know, the adults in your family. But, you know, it was more looking forward to experiencing the unknown. So I think the, the good, the good feeling overrode the bad, you know, as far as there was no fear. Just the high state of excitement. I mean, I was really pumped up to be coming out here.

**Joshua Hill** [00:11:40] So you were you said that you kept on checking the list. That shows anxiety.

**Ronald Dodson** [00:11:45] Absolutely.

**Joshua Hill** [00:11:45] How anxious and what were your actions the night before departure day?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:11:50] I don't think I slept. Excuse me. I don't think I slept much. Yeah, it's I, I'm pretty sure, you know, just knowing me, my personality even then. Yeah, I'm sure [that] I was probably going through my bag or the suitcase, you know, rifling through that all night long, checking it against the list. So, you know, there was a certain element of OCD, you know, obsessive-compulsive. [laughs]

**Joshua Hill** [00:12:27] Do you have any other favorite memories about Camp Mueller that you want to share?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:12:32] Well, really, you know, I don't have a lot of specific memories. But, you know, all I can [I'll] tell you this because this was my first experience being out in a big park environment. You know, there were no fences, there were no buildings, no noise, you know, no traffic noise, no nothing. Just woods. You know, this is the beginning of my love affair with the Cleveland Metroparks system. You know, what they call the Emerald Necklace. You know, I, you know, you could not keep me out of the Metroparks. You know, I would beg my mom, you know. And, you know, it was like every three weeks during the summer, you know, we were either going to South Chagrin or North Chagrin Reservation. And, you know, this... I just loved, you know, being out in the woods, being able to climb up and down cliffs and walk along riverbeds and look at little tiny animals and reptiles, you know. So, you know, I think this was like the beginning of my experience, you know, being able to appreciate nature and the environment, which unfortunately a lot of kids don't have that. They do not, don't have that opportunity today.

**Joshua Hill** [00:13:52] Later in your life, how did you, did you ever think about camp?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:13:55] I used to go camping later on in life when I joined the Boy Scouts just because of the camping program. You know, when I was in junior high school. In my first year of high school, I actually took a camping trip with my best friend out to South Chagrin Reservation. I think it was in the 9th grade. We rode our bicycles from where we lived, like around 140th and Kinsman. We rode our bicycle, just the two of us unsupervised. We were both Boy Scouts and stayed out at South Chagrin Reservation for a week. Just the two of us. We rode into Chagrin Falls. You know, as I said, you know, no supervision and we had a ball. And, you know, it was like, like later on in life, you know, I was never afraid of the outdoors, you know? I'm, you know, not, I'm not afraid of animals, wildlife. So, you know, overall, I think it was really a very beneficial experience for me.

**Joshua Hill** [00:15:00] What did you tell other people about it?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:15:00] I'm not sure if I shared the experience with anybody. What's interesting now that you ask is that when I saw the article in The Plain Dealer a few weeks ago publicizing this event, the reunion, I posted it on my Facebook page and I got some very interesting responses from some of my friends who I did not know, my peer group. They all, you know, a lot of them attended this camp. Now, a lot of the people that I did not get to know until maybe after I was twelve or thirteen, fourteen years old, were here at the same time I was. One of my friends in particular, he says, you know, I was there in 1957 and 1958, but I didn't meet him until I was in high school. So apparently it was an open secret, you know, in the inner city. But, you know, as far as discussing the experience, I don't remember even running into anybody later on in life when I was there in school that I was able to share the experience with. So it was just my sister, myself, and my cousin. And I'm not sure we talked about it after we got home because, you know, once we got home, you know, we had to worry about getting ready for school. So it was just something that you kind of filed away. And, you know, that was your little secret and says, well, I had a great time, I want to do it again.

**Joshua Hill** [00:16:34] One quick question. Did you enjoy the food there?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:16:36] I did. You know, the, the only thing I did not like about the meal experiences, we had to walk so damn far from the cabins to get down here to, to eat. And, you know, that was no fun. You know, when you're hungry, you got to walk down that hill. And, you know, they knew. But, but the food was good. Yeah, I had no complaints about the food. I think whatever they put on the plate, I cleaned it off. The one thing about being out here and, and the open air, you really work up an appetite. So you're not going to complain about the food when you're hungry. But overall, it was good.

**Joshua Hill** [00:17:24] So were you in the same cabin with your sister and your cousin?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:17:26] No, I'm not even sure. I don't even think I was in the same cabin with my cousin. My sister was, I believe she was down the hill. I believe she was on a lower level than I was. But, you know, from what Sandra with my friend Sandra was telling me that we were really on the other side. You know, we were just across the ravine. So maybe that's why I think she was at a lower level because to get to where she lived, I had I knew I had to go downhill. And I think my cousin was in a different tent or a different cabin. And that was another thing. I'm not sure. I'm not even sure we were living in, in cabins. We might have been in tents. I'm, I'm not sure. Yeah, we may have been in cabins, but it, it sure did seem like we were, we were in tents.

**Joshua Hill** [00:18:21] Okay. So would you guys do things like listen to the radio?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:18:25] No, no radios. This was before there was this was before transistor radios were popular. And I mean the big bulky transistor radios, transistor radio back then was about the size of this and it only had AM. And the range was very limited, you know, if you were more than four blocks away from the radio station, forget it. So we weren't interested in that. You know, we didn't have video games. There were no TVs. TV was still in its infancy believe it or not. So, you know, back then we played all summer, you know, we weren't at camp. We were outside doing something. We were playing baseball. You know, during summer vacation. We left the house after breakfast and didn't come back until the street lights came on. Now, it was really convenient for me because we did have the supervised playground area directly across the street. So when I was a very young kid that age, that's what we did. You know, and there was supervision at that playground, I think, until like five or six o'clock in the evening. So, you know, staying at home, playing video games and, you know, texting your friends, you know, that technology did not exist. You know, we would be perfectly content to play with the box that the new refrigerator came in. To build a fort. You know, we used to climb trees, steal fruit from the neighbor's fruit trees, but they're in ride our bicycles. I'm still an avid bicyclist, you know, today. But yeah, you're not as far as the technology, electronic technology. No, they didn't [encourage], I think they encourage us to write letters. They made us at write at least one letter home during the time we were here.

**Erin Bell** [00:20:22] What kind of things did you write in those letters?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:20:26] I don't know. I'm sure I told my mother that I was having a wonderful time. They pretty much... I think they... They coached us on what to put in the letter... Just in case. But that was not censorship, because when I was in the Air Force in basic training, they did the same thing. They told us what to write. [laughs]

**Chris Jenkins** [00:20:45] So would you guys, like, learn songs?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:20:51] Yes, we did. We learned songs. I have one specific memory that I do have and I still get a kick, you know, when I think about this. At the end of the session we had. We had a play. And so we all had these parts in the play. And, you know, we put it on down [in] the mess hall. And I do remember whatever part I had in the play, my line was teehee.

**Chris Jenkins** [00:21:29] So would you have like sports tournaments like you versus another cabin?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:21:34] We did. And I'm not sure what we did. You know, I don't know whether we played softball. I'm almost sure we played volleyball. But, you know, keep in mind that I was only eight years old, nine years old, and I was really small. So, you know, I probably was not that good in sports. And maybe that's why I kept wandering off, you know, going through the woods just because I'd never got picked for the sporting teams because I wasn't that athletic. But I know that we did have some sort of competition between the different cabins that did go on. And, you know, that that was a lot of fun, too, because, you know, it got everybody in the camp. And I think we had activities at night where we may have had a campfire down here, where we'd all the whole, everybody, all, everybody in the camp got together. I don't know if we did that every night or not. We may have, you know, what might have been something that went on every night.

**Jonathan Nash** [00:22:39] So you got like prank each other and like raid each others' cabins?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:22:43] Yeah, I know that the older kids did that. You know, us younger guys, you know, we stayed out of the way, but, you know, that did go on. You know, I do remember, you know, hearing kids, you know, the older, older guys, you know, running through the campground, you know, yelling and screaming at night. And, you know, not knowing what was going on. You know, I just avoided it because like I said, it was something that seemed like it was relegated to an older group.

**Joshua Hill** [00:23:16] So what were the nights like?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:23:18] The night were, were real quiet, except for when the older kids, you know, we're out, you know, doing whatever they were doing. But, you know, I was so tired, you know, from the activities of the day; I had no trouble sleeping, even with the mosquitoes. So the nights were all I can say is uneventful, very uneventful, very peaceful, very restful.

**Joshua Hill** [00:23:48] Did you encounter any animals, wild animals?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:23:50] I don't remember seeing anything. Yeah. Nothing. The only thing I saw as far as wildlife was concerned were amphibians like frogs, and snakes, and the salamanders, and stuff. I don't remember seeing any four-legged mammals. I see more wildlife in the city of Cleveland in the middle of night than I saw out here in a week.

**Joshua Hill** [00:24:27] So how were, where did you guys eat by the way?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:24:32] We eat every meal down here. I do believe that we came down here for, for three meals a day. And I think that there might have been a couple of an [occasion] of occasions where they brought food to us. Where, you know, I don't wherever, wherever we were not in the cabin area. But I do remember them bringing food out to us on at least one occasion. And I think that was something special that they, they had set up that was just part of an outdoor activity.

**Joshua Hill** [00:25:07] Did you make any additional friends here?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:25:10] I'm sure I did. I don't remember ever, you know, keeping any of the friends that I made here. You have to keep in mind that, you know, we were from all over, all over the city or least the east side of Cleveland. So most of those kids. Well, none of them, or at least none of them I knew at the time. We didn't even go to the same school. So it was a real slim chance that you were going to run into somebody that you actually went to camp with after school started. You know, if I think that there was a couple of times when, when I did meet somebody [that] I was in camp with. But, you know, either they moved away or, you know, we went to different schools or whatever. So I didn't make any lasting friends out here.

**Joshua Hill** [00:26:02] Any additional stories of Camp Mueller that you would like to share with the fellow listeners?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:26:08] I can't think of any. You know, like I said, it was so long ago. You know what? I. You know what? The thing that I really want to impress on your listeners is that, you know, if, if at all you can find it in your heart or your pocketbook [to] give an inner-city child a chance to experience the outdoors in an unfettered environment such as a national park. And remember that this is part of the national park system. We all can't go to the Grand Canyon. But, you know, you can sure as heck come to Cuyahoga Valley National Park, which is in our own backyard. Everybody should have a chance to experience this. That's what I want to leave you with that thought.

**Joshua Hill** [00:26:54] And two... I'm going to tie two questions in along with this one. The first part of the question is if you recommended this camp to someone, how would you recommend it? And the second part of that question is on a scale rating from one to ten, how would you rate this camp?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:27:14] Well, really, I could not make a recommendation at this time because I haven't seen the place in, in, since 1958. You know, I'm looking at a facility with, you know, some people here. A lot of staff. So, you know, for me to rate it honestly, to give it an honest assessment. You know, I would have to come back when it was in session, and actually see the campers and the experiences that's if you want an honest assessment, that's what I would have to tell you. Maybe if I come back in the middle of July and stay out here a day and a half, I could give you an answer. Is that fair? Okay. And as far as your rating from 1 to 10, just from what I see the facility. You know, I have nothing to compare it to, but I like what I see. I would give it a seven and a half just on what I see, just the naked facility right now. I do like what I see. And the reason that there are no tens in my rating is there's always room for improvement.

**Jonathan Nash** [00:28:23] Do you have any photographs that you would like to share?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:28:23] I have no photographs from here. I wish I did. No, I don't.

**Jonathan Nash** [00:28:30] Do you know anyone that does that might be interested in talking to us?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:28:34] Yes, I do. And I'll put that on my Facebook page and hopefully they'll come and see you in the next two weeks. I will tell them about the interviews in and see if they have any shared experiences that they would be willing to share with you.

**Jonathan Nash** [00:28:52] We will be sending you a DVD with this interview for, that is available for your family's record.

**Ronald Dodson** [00:28:58] Excellent.

**Jonathan Nash** [00:29:01] Do you have any questions, Mr. Bell?

**Erin Bell** [00:29:04] Sure, I have a couple of follow-up questions, although I think you guys did a great job. I'm just wondering, you know, this might be a tough question because you were so young. But I wonder if you could describe the social aspect of camp? How everyone socialized and interactions.

**Ronald Dodson** [00:29:21] Yeah, I can... You know, because of the experience I had in basic training. It was a lot like basic training. You're, you're all... You're lumped together on that first day or two. Then you're thrown into a cabin with a bunch of other people, you know, maybe eight or ten other guys, you know, your own age. And, you know, it's a learning process. You're kind of feeling each other out. You know, what is this one like? What is that one like? What is it that I don't like about this one or that one? And, you know, you learn, you learn. It's... You learn how to mutually [respect] people's, people's spaces, their space and their feelings, their property. I know that there were some incidents of, you know, petty theft. But, you know, that goes... You know, we had that in the Air Force, too. The bottom line is that one of the things that, that you learn from the experience that I can say now that I didn't know then, but it did help because it stuck with me. One of my favorite sayings is that it takes all kinds to fill up a freeway. And that's one thing that I got in the camp experience that bode me well all through school, which you guys have seen, you know, in your class in school. Same thing. You have the same interaction. Same likes. Same dislikes. Every place I ever worked, the military. And I think the camp experience was the first of that type of experience.

**Erin Bell** [00:30:56] Would you connect it directly to your choice to serve in the military?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:31:01] It didn't hurt. One of the things that it did, you know, I think it might be part of my psychological makeup is that I wasn't afraid to take on a new challenge or an adventure. I wasn't afraid to go away to, to depart with what I knew, what was familiar. So I, you know, it that helped. I know it helped.

**Erin Bell** [00:31:28] You'd mentioned kind of jokingly that when you found out you're being sent to camp, your reaction was, what did I do wrong?

**Joshua Hill** [00:31:35] Right.

**Erin Bell** [00:31:35] Could you just? Can you explain, talk about that a little bit more?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:31:38] Yeah. And, and this goes back to the fear. You know, not ever having been away from my immediate family. You know, I think that there was an element of rejection. Why are you, why are you kicking me out? And I'm not sure how much we discussed this. Now, one thing about, you know, growing up in a single-parent home with my mom and my sister is that we did discuss a lot with each other, not as equals. But, you know, it was just a matter of respect. She respected our opinions. So I think we talked it over. But, you know, when the moment comes when you know she's. When she took us down and, you know, drops us off in the parking lot and, you know, we're looking at her and she's looking at us. And, you know, it's like, okay, I got to get on this bus and I'm not going to see her for a week. It's like that, that goes through your mind. Oh, my God. You know, am I ever going to see her again? Did I do something wrong to deserve this? Now, the following year. You know, I was ready to go.

**Erin Bell** [00:32:50] I think I was distracted when you were talking about the preparation list that they sent you.

**Ronald Dodson** [00:32:54] Uh huh.

**Erin Bell** [00:32:54] That was when Mark came in to grab some stuff. What was on the list or did you already answer this?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:33:01] I told them what was on the list. Yeah.

**Erin Bell** [00:33:04] Okay, okay.

**Ronald Dodson** [00:33:04] You know, articles of clothing. How many of each. They instructed you how do you to mark your clothes, laundry markings, toiletry items, blah, blah, blah. You know, it was like a going to camp list is what it was.

**Erin Bell** [00:33:21] You had also said, and I had found this fascinating, that the camp was like an open secret in the city.

**Ronald Dodson** [00:33:28] Yeah. I don't ever remember seeing it either previously or after that. I don't ever remember seeing it advertised. You know, I, you know, I listened to the Black radio stations at the time. I don't ever remember seeing anything about Camp Mueller. I read the Call & Post as a teenager and a young adult. And I don't remember seeing anything in the, you know, in any of those publications about this camp, but everybody knew about it, you know? Well, so what can one say?

**Erin Bell** [00:34:06] Where do you think the source of that was? That was, were your parents? Was your mother involved at Phillis Wheatley Association?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:34:12] No, my mother was. Now maybe it came from... She was a member. We were members of or attended St. Andrew's Episcopal Church. So I kind of... I have a feeling that, you know, there was somebody at the church because they were very community, community-oriented church and had fingers in, you know, a lot of different things. And a lot of their members were very civic-minded. So I, I wonder if this is where, you know, maybe where she heard from it or heard about the camp was through St. Andrews. I don't know. But I'm going to ask her. You know, I don't know if she'll remember. You know, she can't remember what happened yesterday. But I bet you she'll be able to tell me how she heard about this camp 50-something years ago. That's the funny thing about dementia. But... [laughs]

**Erin Bell** [00:35:11] And so coming back, what were your feelings when you pulled up the drive and got out of the car and looked around?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:35:18] I just said, oh, my God, you know, when I saw the dining hall there, I says, yeah, I remember this place. Then we started walking around and looking at the, the different trails. And I says, you know, yeah. It's coming back. So, you know, hopefully we'll have a chance to take in some more walks. Now I want to go up the hill and see if I can remember where I used to live up there.

**Erin Bell** [00:35:42] Did you notice anything that was terribly different? Have you ever been in this room?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:35:46] No.

**Erin Bell** [00:35:47] Okay.

**Ronald Dodson** [00:35:47] No. We went upstairs at the dining hall that, that area up there in that attic and I'd never been up there either. And, you know, it's just, you know, I, you know, I keep alluding to the fact that it was just so many years ago, you know, I forgot that I had attended this camp until I saw it in the paper three weeks ago. I forgot all about this place. It was something that had slipped my mind. But because of the fact that, you know, I saw the comments that my friends had on Facebook, a lot of things started coming back because they were sharing their memories of the camp. And I says, you know, that jogged me and I said there were some things that I do remember. And, you know, I remember the hiking and, you know, the preparation, you know, the point of getting ready to leave for camp. So and I'm sure as to the days and weeks go by, I'm going to remember some more stuff that, you know, were specific to my experiences here. But it just came as such a shock when I saw the name. And plus I had seen a documentary about this park on PBS twice. Like in the last six months, I've seen that documentary. And one of the things that was in the back of my mind every time I saw it, I said, that's where the camp is. You know, I knew it was in Peninsula. And, you know, so it was in the back, you know, in the back of the mind. But until I saw the article in the paper, you know, it really did not bring it to the forefront. So, I mean, there is a lot going on as far as my memories resurfacing.

**Erin Bell** [00:37:33] And, and I just have one last question, and it's kind of a strange one. But are there any sounds or smells that remind you of the park or that you recall?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:37:45] No, because there's a lot more noise here. You know, there is a road down here now in this time of year. You know with the, you know, with the foliage, you know, not in full bloom, you hear a lot of [the] ambient noises, you know, because the encroachment of civilization, it's noisier. That's you know, I don't hear any birds, very few birds, which, you know, is something that I do remember, you know, specifically when you got out of the van, you could just smell the lushness of the forestry. But because, you know, you know, we're only at the end of April. You know, we don't see that. And, you know, looking down the road there, you know, [at] that highway, I can hear the, the cars going back and forth. And, you know, that's something I do not remember. But, you know, I remember, you know, well, when we turned off the roadway and I saw the, the gate down there, I said, oh, my God, you know?

**Erin Bell** [00:38:45] Well, I don't have any more questions, do you guys have anything you want add?

**Joshua Hill** [00:38:49] That's about it.

**Ronald Dodson** [00:38:50] Okay.

**Erin Bell** [00:38:50] Do you have anything you'd like to add?

**Ronald Dodson** [00:38:52] No, no, I... You know, this has been a very pleasurable experience. And you guys did a great job.

**Jonathan Nash** [00:38:58] Thank you.

**Chris Jenkins** [00:38:59] Thank you.

**Erin Bell** [00:39:00] Thanks, everyone.

**Joshua Hill** [00:39:00] Thank you, Mr. Dodson.

**Ronald Dodson** [00:39:01] You're welcome.