***Transcription sponsored by Cuyahoga Valley National Park***

**Anthony Nigro** [00:00:00] Three years where we've got to...

**Bertha Jones** [00:00:02] Excuse me, he's very hard of hearing.

**Tom Jones** [00:00:04] Oh, I hear you.

**Anthony Nigro** [00:00:04] We've traveled the last three years like up and down the canal, went through the national parks and studied canals, the rivers that run through, watersheds, the train aspect, and then we're up to roads now. And now we're just interviewing different people of their recollections and what they've done and gone through in the area.

**Tom Jones** [00:00:28] Is our conversation only to be associated to the canal and railroad or to the Cuyahoga Valley in general?

**Anthony Nigro** [00:00:37] Yes, yours is a little different. Like some of the other people we've asked to this point have been associated with like the Cascade Locks or the West Creek. But you guys have a unique situation, so we've had to come up with different questions concerning your situation.

**Tom Jones** [00:00:55] Oh, oh.

**Anthony Nigro** [00:00:56] So they gave us a little bit of background about, you know, your long family history in the valley. You currently live in the park in the house that you rent from the parks. And it says you were a Truxell... From Truxell Road fame.

**Bertha Jones** [00:01:09] [Laughs]

**Anthony Nigro** [00:01:10] And you grew up in a duplex in the Jaite complex.

**Bertha Jones** [00:01:15] No, that's not true.

**Tom Jones** [00:01:15] She was born there.

**Bertha Jones** [00:01:17] I was born there. I didn't grow up there.

**Anthony Nigro** [00:01:19] Okay.

**Tom Jones** [00:01:19] But you lived your whole life, though, in Boston Township, haven't you?

**Bertha Jones** [00:01:22] Yes.

**Anthony Nigro** [00:01:23] Good. Well we'll let you guys share some of your history and stuff like... And when we get done, this is a release so like teachers can listen to the tapes or historians to try to gather information about how the park was formed and that kind of information.

**Tom Jones** [00:01:40] We were chuckling as we were walking in that about twenty or twenty-five years ago, her father did the same thing that we're doing now. Now we're the matriarchs. [laughs]

**Anthony Nigro** [00:01:54] Okay, this is Tony Nigro interviewing Mr. and Mrs. Jones. It is Tuesday, June 24th. When were you born?

**Bertha Jones** [00:02:05] I was born in 1938 in June, and I was born in Jaite, Ohio.

**Tom Jones** [00:02:12] I was born in Cuyahoga Falls in 1932.

**Anthony Nigro** [00:02:17] Okay, so you were born here. How did you two meet?

**Tom Jones** [00:02:23] My father and I were building a park that was called Tamsin Park on Route 8 in Boston Township. It was a swimming and picnic and eventually campground. I had graduated from Baldwin Wallace College and completed three years in the army during the Korean War. And then—so I was all finished with the military—we were building the park and we needed a a variance from zoning commission in Peninsula, the Boston Township Zoning Commission.

**Bertha Jones** [00:03:00] No, Boston Board of Appeals.

**Tom Jones** [00:03:02] Boston Board of Appeals. Thank you. So anyhow, we replied for the variance and I had to... And the meetings were getting very boring, but the beautiful young clerk for the board was getting more interesting. And eventually I asked her for a date and we were married a little later.

**Anthony Nigro** [00:03:27] Give me some family history that pertains to your homestead in the area, like family history in the Valley.

**Tom Jones** [00:03:35] Well, I didn't... I was not a resident of the Valley until I was about 24 or 25 years old when we moved from Cuyahoga Falls to Boston Township. But Bertha, of course, was born there and has lived there all her life. She's a true Valley girl.

**Bertha Jones** [00:03:54] I was born in Jaite. My grandparents lived in Peninsula. And I was raised in Peninsula in my grandparents' home on Bronson Avenue. Previous to living on Bronson Avenue, my grandparents had a farm on what is now Truxell Road and the area in which they had their farm. That was a sheep farm is now Camp Mannatech. My father was born in the old homestead house there at Camp Manitowoc, which still stands, and sometime later, after my grandfather sold the land and moved to Branson Avenue in Peninsula. I grew up there after I married Tom and I built a home on Truxell Road just about a half a mile from where my father was born. And we had that home there until we sold it to the National Park. And now we took 20 years residency there, thinking that that was a big house. We had five children and we wouldn't want that big house when the children were gone. But we still love the house. And so we elected to stay there. And since our 20 years is up, we rent there that same home that we built from a national park on what is called Virginia Kendall Park Road. It's an extension of Truxell Road.

**Anthony Nigro** [00:05:19] What did your family do in the area? I heard you say sheep farming. Any other things like other relatives?

**Bertha Jones** [00:05:26] My father was... He was an only child. They had had one stillborn child. He was educated at Ohio Northern University and John Marshall. He was an attorney. When he married, it was during the Depression and he elected to go to work at a machine shop where he stayed because it became more lucrative to him during the war. So he stayed there, but they no longer had the sheep farm. And my mother was a stay-at-home mom. Have I answered your question? [laughs]

**Tom Jones** [00:06:06] She worked at Jaite.

**Bertha Jones** [00:06:07] Oh, yes. My mother also worked at the Jaite paper mill for some time, and I believe my dad did too for a short time also.

**Anthony Nigro** [00:06:14] Okay. Can you give us any experiences, what it was like growing up in this area?

**Bertha Jones** [00:06:21] For me, growing up in Peninsula was just like being home. I never walked down the street day or night that I was frightened or afraid. We were a pretty isolated Valley town and we had our own grocery store, our own butcher, our own little sundry drugstore, and several taverns. Everybody I knew were friends. My high school class only had twelve students in it. We were... All the people in the Valley were very active at school because that was our recreation. It was our education and our extended family. I lived very close to just about a half a block to the school. Spent more time there than any place else ever. Everyone on the street played together. We lived on Bronson Avenue and we had all ages of children playing kick the can, baseball, sled riding down the hill on the tops of the big boys. Had extended family and friends in the Boston Township area down in the little village of Boston because there were children there that I went to school with. Our families were close. We often bought milk and butter from the farmers in Boston. I loved school and about fourth or fifth grade I decided I wanted to be a teacher after I graduated from high school. In high school, I was a cheerleader. I was president in my class and only because it was such a small school. Everybody participated in everything. [laughs] I was in the band and music. But it wasn't just me, it was everybody. After I graduated from high school, I went away to college at Ohio Northern, went to Kent State University, and went back to that very same school where I grew up and taught there for three years, taught there three years, and I got married and became a wife and eventually a mother still living in Boston Township.

**Anthony Nigro** [00:08:24] What are some of your favorite memories?

**Bertha Jones** [00:08:27] Of my childhood?

**Anthony Nigro** [00:08:28] Yes, and later on.

**Bertha Jones** [00:08:31] One of my favorite memories is my grandfather's garden. He loved the outdoors and had a wonderful way with plants. He had all kinds of roses and flowers and tea roses and peonies and grapes of all kinds and cherry trees and apple trees and a huge vegetable garden. He was quite a gardener and I don't have too much recollection of him because he died when I was six years old. My grandmother Truxell was an invalid and I can only remember her in bed. My grandfather and grandmother on the Kaczmarski side—that's my mother's side—were from Poland and didn't speak much English, but she was a very good cook. You asked me what part of my good memories were?

**Anthony Nigro** [00:09:26] Yeah.

**Bertha Jones** [00:09:26] I think the memories have to do with the community. My friends were all close. I can remember in the evening going out and playing hide and seek, playing kick the can. One time I climbed a tree in front of our house and fell down right down into the ditch and knocked the wind out of me, and everybody in the street that was out there came to help me. I never felt that I was alone. But most of my memories are related to school. I loved school. I loved my teachers. It was a place that I could always be and always feel safe. I ended up babysitting for several families in the community and enjoyed the children, the little children. I guess Christmases were very, very important in our family. And I think that at school, probably cheerleading was one of the most important things that I did.

**Anthony Nigro** [00:10:33] Okay.

**Tom Jones** [00:10:34] Was your grandfather Truxell the Truxell the road is named after?

**Bertha Jones** [00:10:39] Yes.

**Tom Jones** [00:10:40] Oh, it wasn't your father. It was your grandfather.

**Anthony Nigro** [00:10:43] It was my grandfather and grandmother that lived on Truxell Road.

**Tom Jones** [00:10:47] I see.

**Anthony Nigro** [00:10:50] What areas of the national park are some of your favorites to visit?

**Bertha Jones** [00:10:54] Oh, I'm going to let Tom answer that because he's a photographer and he has crawled that Valley up and down much more than I have. [laughs]

**Tom Jones** [00:11:06] Which areas?

**Anthony Nigro** [00:11:07] Yeah, which areas of the park?

**Tom Jones** [00:11:09] I love every inch of the park. Of course, I know the southern part of the portion of the park better because we live there. And I have known the Valley for a long time. On Bolanz Road there used to be, near Szalay's farm market, there used to be a farm there owned by the Bobek family. And I knew them very, very well. And when I was a small boy, we used to go there and buy vegetables and things from them. So I've had a relationship with the Valley all my life, even though I didn't live there. But when I retired, I was a... I retired from the, eventually, from the Postal Service, and I became interested in photography. And I've sort of become a park volunteer and many other things to supply the park with a lot of photographs. So I've covered the covered bridge and the railroad and all the waterfalls, lots of pictures on the park hiking trails and and many photographs of the Towpath. In fact, I photographed the entire Ohio and Erie Canal Towpath Trail from Lake Erie to Dover. And that's... Well, it took four years to do that. That was interesting. One of the most interesting things about our background probably is the reason we ended up here getting invited to do this, I was this winter at Dennis Hamm's office. Do you know Dennis?

**Anthony Nigro** [00:12:56] No, I don't.

**Tom Jones** [00:12:56] Okay, he works with the people who rent houses for the park. And he was talking to me about our contract for the year. And just a few days before I was in Dennis's office, there was an article in Akron Beacon Journal about Blossom Music Center selling off... I believe they had 800 acres and they were going to sell, I think, about 400 acres, something like that, which surprised everybody. But they didn't need the ground. And I just happened to mention to him that, I said, Dennis, you want to hear a very interesting story? And he said, sure. And I said, well in nineteen well, 1965, something like that, I said, at the time I was a musician playing part-time in the Cleveland Orchestra and I was at a rehearsal. And during the intermission of the rehearsal, Louis Lane, who was the associate conductor of the orchestra, came over and talked to me—he knew me—and he said, Tom, he says, the Musical Arts Association—that's the people who manage the orchestra—are looking for a ground for a summer home for the orchestra. And he said they have looked all over and they haven't found anything satisfactory. They've been looking mainly up in I think at that time, I think it was in Geauga County in that area northeast of Cleveland. And he says, I know that you live south of the orchestra and you know the Cuyahoga Valley. Do you know of anything down there that would be interesting? I said, well, right off hand I thought of the parcel that's on Akron-Peninsula Road across the street from Nathalie's Florist area. And I said it's a beautiful basin that's just perfect for a concert place. So anyhow, I told about it, then the orchestra checked it out, but it was too small. They wanted... They were talking hundreds of acres and eventually they did buy the... They got contact with a man named Darrel Seibert, who had... a builder who had control of six or eight hundred acres or something like that.

**Bertha Jones** [00:15:20] And was a friend of ours.

**Tom Jones** [00:15:20] And yeah, and we knew him because we were both in Cuyahoga Falls. So anyhow, the Cleveland Orchestra moved to the Cuyahoga Valley area because of just that one little conversation that Louis Lane and I had. That it was just one of those strange things that worked out. And here we have Blossom Music Center. Now, that was about 15 years before the Valley became a national park.

**Bertha Jones** [00:15:49] And asking about my favorite place, we live across the street from the Ledges on Truxell Road. And my father used to tell me stories about walking from the farm through the Ledges to what is now Akron-Cleveland Road where there was a small school to go to school. So I enjoy the Ledges and I enjoy going up there and walking around and and, you know, thinking of him mostly. He also told me about times after that. They had graduated that school and they were going to school in Peninsula where he would take the horse and the wagon and pick up students on the way and bring them to school in Peninsula. Those are fond memories for me. And so that's all kind of tied in with that area around the Octagon Shelter and the lake. And of course, the lake was built by the CC [CCC, or Civilian Conservation Corps], so that was a lot later than he lived there in the Ledges area.

**Tom Jones** [00:16:45] Are you familiar with the park?

**Anthony Nigro** [00:16:50] A little bit.

**Tom Jones** [00:16:50] Okay. Do you know where Truxell Road is and Camp Manatoc? Well... Now, Mr. Truxell, her father, and I were very, very close. We were just great friends and I spent a lot of time with him.

**Bertha Jones** [00:17:00] My father had no sons, so Tom was his son.

**Tom Jones** [00:17:04] So he used to talk a lot about—and I was always interested—about the Valley and life in there. But when he was born there, the area that is now Camp Manatoc, which is totally forested, it's, you know, big trees, it's a massive forest area. And he would walk from there out to State, to Route 8...

**Bertha Jones** [00:17:29] Which is State Road.

**Tom Jones** [00:17:29] State Road.

**Bertha Jones** [00:17:30] It's Akron-Cleveland Road.

**Tom Jones** [00:17:31] To school, to a little one-room schoolhouse, and he said when he walked from his house to this one-room schoolhouse—that's the full length of the Truxell Road—tt was all farms and there was no forest, no trees at all. Totally gone. And it's interesting. Now that was in one man's lifetime. He lived to be 76...

**Bertha Jones** [00:17:49] 78.

**Tom Jones** [00:17:49] 78 years old, and within his lifetime of 60, 70 years a forest grew up there. It's amazing.

**Anthony Nigro** [00:17:57] Yes, it is. What other areas of the park used to be privately owned by your family?

**Bertha Jones** [00:18:06] None.

**Anthony Nigro** [00:18:09] Okay. How did selling of your property to the parks take place?

**Bertha Jones** [00:18:17] Well, they came to us one day and said that our property was in the confines of their area to take for the national park. And did we want to sell it? And we said no. And they said, well, that's too bad, because by eminent domain, we're going to have you sell your property, which we did. We were so in favor of the park and realized that we could go for rent free and our mortgage would be paid off. And we had children going into college. It was eventually a good thing for us. Now, it's not such a good thing. We would rather have the house and have taken it as a... You... We had the choice of taking a life expectancy. And because the house is large and it is isolated from other people, we felt that we would, as we grew older, not need it. But now we love it so much, we really don't want to move. [laughs] But that's what happened. It was an eminent domain process.

**Tom Jones** [00:19:23] Before the park was there, you know, we never there were no coyotes in the Valley. We didn't... We seldom saw deer, no wild turkeys or anything. And all of these wild animals now have come in. And every morning I get up in the early part of June, look out the dining room window to see if there's a fawn being born right there by the... Which happens quite often. And this morning we saw, no yesterday morning.

**Bertha Jones** [00:19:47] Yesterday morning. Turkeys.

**Tom Jones** [00:19:48] At the front and...

**Bertha Jones** [00:19:49] We always see deer.

**Tom Jones** [00:19:51] So we do love it now. But at the time when we had just built the house and lived there only about five or six years when the park came in, when we first heard about [it], we were really upset.

**Bertha Jones** [00:20:06] Yeah.

**Tom Jones** [00:20:06] But in the long run, it has worked out. The park rangers are very kind to us and when we're away, they'll keep an eye on things.

**Bertha Jones** [00:20:15] Yeah. We built the house in 1970.

**Tom Jones** [00:20:18] So it's just... It's worked out very, very nicely.

**Anthony Nigro** [00:20:22] Were there are efforts made to prevent the park from taking the land by others?

**Tom Jones** [00:20:30] Oh yes.

**Bertha Jones** [00:20:31] Yes. [laughs].

**Tom Jones** [00:20:32] People in the Cuyahoga Valley didn't give up easily. [laughs]

**Bertha Jones** [00:20:36] And it's kind of a shame. I often tell Tom, as a teenager I could have driven two, or a young adult, driven to Akron and come home. And if I'd had car trouble or for any reason we're stranded, I knew everybody from Peninsula to Cleveland and I would have no problems with going door to door and asking for help. Now all I see where those homes were and those families were are weeds. It's growing up into trees and woods. And when I drive through the Valley, I have different memories. I have memories of who lived here, who lived there, what their names were, what their children was, what my association was with them. It's a little sad. And I, I kind of feel that it's sad for many of the people who gave up their homes—in fact, I know it is, having spoken to some of them—for the park. But those same people now come back to the park and use it also.

**Tom Jones** [00:21:35] Yeah, it's exciting to be in Peninsula on a Saturday or Sunday.

**Bertha Jones** [00:21:39] Yeah! [laughs]

**Tom Jones** [00:21:39] There are more people like on the canal now than there were when the canal was operating. I'm sure.

**Anthony Nigro** [00:21:50] What did the park do to make the transition easier? Did they do anything to help make the transition east when, through the whole process?

**Tom Jones** [00:22:01] Well, they were very kind and accommodating through everything.

**Bertha Jones** [00:22:03] To us, you mean?

**Anthony Nigro** [00:22:04] Yes.

**Tom Jones** [00:22:05] Yes.

**Bertha Jones** [00:22:06] Well, do they? Where we did have one snag. They offered us a price which we thought really wasn't...

**Tom Jones** [00:22:15] The market.

**Bertha Jones** [00:22:18] The market price for the house. And I have a very good... My father's best friend was Ernie Genovese, so he was a... Born in the Valley, became an attorney. They went to school together and he was an attorney in Akron. And so my dad said, why don't you call Ernie? So we called Ernie and he said, don't worry about it, I'll take care of it. We got a very good price and an excellent price. We were able to keep the land for a while during this transition. And in fact, Ernie never charged us anything for all the work that he did. And I know he did that for a lot of people in the Valley, but they were very kind to us. There was no pressure, particularly, you know, the relationship was good, except that we felt, and they finally agreed, that we needed more income from the property.

**Tom Jones** [00:23:14] We had a little... We had a quite a different view and background than most of the people in the Valley. There are some of the Valley residents that moved in in the '40s and '50s and '60s were new to the Valley and they were more cosmopolitan. But a lot of the old timers that lived in Peninsula and the farmers and all that were local people and had not traveled much. Well, when we were married, we were traveling all the time. With our business at Tamsin Park, it was closed seven months of the year, so we would... We went everywhere. We practically visited every national park and all that. So we had a great love and admiration of the national parks and our our Department of the Interior. But when I began to see the growth in Cleveland south in the Valley, the area where the big bridge goes over, what is that Route 8?

**Bertha Jones** [00:24:16] [I-]480, I think.

**Tom Jones** [00:24:16] 480? And industry starting to move down towards Rockside Road. And in Akron, they started to go up the Valley with buildings and all of that. And I realized that this beautiful Valley isn't going to last. So we did get together with a few other people, like-minded types in the area, and did a few programs or at least one program that I remember in particular at the Peninsula Library and made a presentation of what is our choice here. Are we... And at the same time, they were talking at that time of making a new limited-access highway from Akron to Cleveland through the Cuyahoga Valley. And...

**Bertha Jones** [00:25:06] They'd already put in the large electrical line system.

**Tom Jones** [00:25:13] Yes, Ohio Edison had that in...

**Bertha Jones** [00:25:13] Which we hated from the very beginning, and we thought maybe we could, you know, keep from having a lot more of that type of thing go through.

**Tom Jones** [00:25:22] So eventually we did this show and there were a lot of people that came and it was the first time they had ever thought about the Cuyahoga Valley being a park or set aside. And what I had in mind and a few other people was something under the auspices of the Akron Metropolitan Park system. Maybe ilike an expansion of Virginia Kendall Park and all that, and something under the control of Cleveland, but not anything on the level of a national park. So when that happened, we were delighted with that because we knew the Valley would be protected. And of course, it was a National Recreation Area at first. Then when it was upgraded, then it became under a more restricted and better controlled preservation, things like that. The park has been run very well. We visited a lot of national parks and most of them are suffering financially. The facilities are in bad shape, septic systems...

**Bertha Jones** [00:26:20] And roads.

**Tom Jones** [00:26:20] Toilets and ranger homes, and you go to visit the South Rim of the Grand Canyon, and yeah it's a disgrace to this nation what's happening. But Cuyahoga Valley has, because of its high visitation, it's funded a little bit better than some of the others. And it's been a joy to see the good job that they're doing at the park.

**Bertha Jones** [00:26:43] Also, our children—we had five children—were very recreation--minded. They skied. They all were raised down near that ski run. From seventh grade through twelfth grade, they taught down there, ski lessons, and they were ski patrols and bike riders. So we were accustomed in their teenage years to a lot of recreation, and we thought it would be a recreation area. It hasn't expanded as much as we thought it would, but that lent us to agree with it much more also.

**Anthony Nigro** [00:27:15] So what year did it go from being a recreation area into a national park?

**Bertha Jones** [00:27:20] Oh, whew...

**Tom Jones** [00:27:20] I'm not sure.

**Bertha Jones** [00:27:26] I wouldn't... It wasn't too long.

**Tom Jones** [00:27:29] I'm guessing 1995.

**Bertha Jones** [00:27:31] I was gonna say about ten years ago, but I don't know for sure. I wouldn't be able to be quoted on that.

**Anthony Nigro** [00:27:36] Okay. When did you become interested in photography?

**Tom Jones** [00:27:42] When I was in the Army. I bought my first camera while I was in the service and, which was a very nice camera which right now is at the bottom of a lake in the...

**Bertha Jones** [00:27:54] Boundary Waters.

**Tom Jones** [00:27:55] In the Boundary Waters of Minnesota. [laughs] I fell out of a canoe with the thing in my hand.

**Bertha Jones** [00:28:00] [Laughs]

**Tom Jones** [00:28:00] But anyhow, I owned a camera all my life and took pictures and all that. Then when I retired, the they had already organized the Cuyahoga Valley... [crosstalk] The National Park Association had organized the Cuyahoga Valley Photographic Society, and they were offering some weekend courses with the biggest names in the world coming in. Art Wolfe and David Muench and...

**Bertha Jones** [00:28:33] Schell.

**Tom Jones** [00:28:34] And Robert Glenn Ketchum, all that. So I thought, well this sounds pretty nice. So I start taking some courses. And then I then I met Jim Roetzel, who was a teacher of photography at Hudson High School, and he was the one, I believe, one of the founders of the camera club, the society. So he just opened my eyes to photography and things just blossomed out. So now, and now it has become a very important part of keeping me from getting any older. [laughs]

**Bertha Jones** [00:29:09] Well, plus it it augments our income.

**Tom Jones** [00:29:13] Yes. Yeah, I always... I make scenic notecards of the Cuyahoga Valley, little green cards, and I have them in little racks in twenty different stores in the area.

**Anthony Nigro** [00:29:26] When did you first begin photography in that area?

**Tom Jones** [00:29:29] Photographing the area?

**Anthony Nigro** [00:29:31] Yes.

**Tom Jones** [00:29:31] Well, when we built Tamsin Park, I did a lot of photography there for our brochure and advertising and things like that.

**Bertha Jones** [00:29:40] It was in the '50s.

**Tom Jones** [00:29:41] We were... We were at Muir Woods. It's a little Redwood grove just north of San Francisco, across the Golden Gate Bridge. We were standing in there and looking and we saw some nice postcards and greeting cards that were made by local photographers. And she made the comment that we already had the National Recreation Area, Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area. We already have that established. And she said to me, Tom, there aren't any postcards or any pictures of the park available anywhere. You ought to try that. So we came home and I made one card with a picture of Brandywine Falls, went over to Saywell's Drugstore in Hudson, and they said, wow, we'd like to sell it. And so eventually I think I made about ten different pictures of of different waterfalls and the covered bridge and all that. And they have sold very well. Now I sell about ten or twelve thousand of them a year and hand make every one of them.

**Bertha Jones** [00:30:41] But you have more than ten pictures.

**Tom Jones** [00:30:42] Now, yeah, I have over over probably 200 different...

**Bertha Jones** [00:30:46] Images.

**Tom Jones** [00:30:47] Images now. The Photographic Society has turned out to be an outstanding organization. I don't think there's any group of photographers that are as of high caliber as this group in all of the state of Ohio. I go around, do a lot of, in the wintertime slide shows on Cuyahoga Valley and see the work of others all over, and Cuyahoga Valley Photographic Society is excellent.

**Anthony Nigro** [00:31:20] Is there somewhere people can see your photography?

**Tom Jones** [00:31:25] Well, at eight Acme Stores, six Giant Eagle stores, some drugstores, Mustard Seed Market at Solon, in Solon and at Montrose.

**Bertha Jones** [00:31:42] Learned Owl bookstore in Hudson, Sheraton Suites in Cuyahoga Falls, so... We aren't in card shops.

**Anthony Nigro** [00:31:55] Why did you decide to donate so many of your pictures to the National Park?

**Tom Jones** [00:32:00] Decide to do what?

**Anthony Nigro** [00:32:00] Donate so many of your pictures to the National Mall?

**Tom Jones** [00:32:04] Well, the volunteers are important for... You know, the big money has to go to the full-time professionals that run and maintain a national park. And I think it's... I'm an old fashioned person. When I grew up, when we studied civics in high school, it was about being a part of a community and donating part of your life to helping others and being there, and if I have the talent to take pictures. And the park has use for photographs. They eat up a lot of pictures with all the things they print. So I decided to volunteer, giving them photographs that... It's money they don't have to spend. And I like quality pictures. And it would also provide them good pictures. And it's a joy to be walking down the Towpath, stop and look at a bulletin board, and see eight or nine of my photographs. [laughs]

**Bertha Jones** [00:33:00] [Laughs]

**Anthony Nigro** [00:33:03] What changes have you seen in the park over your lifetime?

**Tom Jones** [00:33:08] The park only or the Valley?

**Anthony Nigro** [00:33:10] Well, the Valley... [inaudible] I mean, sure.

**Tom Jones** [00:33:16] It's an enormous change from the agricultural base. When you used to drive 631, that's Valley View Road from Northfield down into the Valley where it comes down and meets near the Frazee house, meets the canal. The canal at that time was in excellent condition because the factories, the steel mills in Cleveland depended on it for water. So they took care of it and everything there was all farming, totally farming. There were not the trees and the fields that we have now. When you visit the area south of south of Peninsula, that was all farming. I think one of the really neat things, the memories that we have was when.... And she saw all the time, I remember the first time my mother was driving into Peninsula and we had to stop at the train track. And I'm guessing this was about 1940 or '41. And we'd sit there at the train track and the train went by...

**Bertha Jones** [00:34:27] Mm hmm.

**Tom Jones** [00:34:27] There was a steam engine, a passenger train, and the car, first car right behind the coal car was a mail car.

**Bertha Jones** [00:34:36] Mm hmm.

**Tom Jones** [00:34:37] And in there were clerks swaying back and forth as the thing swayed, and they were sorting mail into, just like clerks at the post office, sorting mail. But what that train was doing as it was going up through the Valley, was collecting mail bags at every town...

**Bertha Jones** [00:34:54] Mm hmm.

**Tom Jones** [00:34:55] And that, those mail, that mail was given to those clerks. And when the train reached the Terminal Tower in Cleveland, the mail was all sorted, and mail that was put into the mailbox at eight o'clock in Peninsula that morning or nine o'clock was delivered in Cleveland by eleven o'clock in the morning. It came to Cleveland, mail bags out all ready to go out to the various post offices. So right now I think we put our mail in Peninsula post office. It goes to Akron. Sometimes Akron could go to Columbus, and then it goes to Cleveland, and we get maybe two or three-day delivery. [laughs]

**Bertha Jones** [00:35:35] I can remember that same train which my mother's parents lived in Cleveland, and we would ride the train from Peninsula to Cleveland to go visit or to go to Cleveland on a special occasion to shop. I can remember playing in Jaite, where my cousins lived in the house next to where I was born, and seeing the train stop at Jaite and take the mail bag off of the hook and go on and then continue on to Cleveland. At that time in Jaite, the post office was at the little general store where the office for Cuyahoga Valley is now.

**Tom Jones** [00:36:18] Yes. Mr. Debo's office is there.

**Bertha Jones** [00:36:20] Yes. And those are things I can remember playing in the fields and picking violets, and the smell... Those houses there at Jaite were mostly habitated [sic] by people from foreign extraction, and they had German, Polish, Hungarian. And the smells that came from all those houses were all different. But that same train transported a lot of people, and a lot of people in our town worked on the train. I can remember the only African American family that... No, that's not true. There were two families that lived in Peninsula, lived up our street, and Mr. Harris worked on the train. And I can remember seeing him walk—he never had a car—from our street clear down to the B&O [Baltimore & Ohio Railroad] and get on the train and work down there and then coming back at night. Much different than it is now.

**Tom Jones** [00:37:25] The biggest difference in the Valley, of course, is the vegetation.

**Bertha Jones** [00:37:28] Yes.

**Tom Jones** [00:37:29] Things growing up in the trees and the abundance of wildlife. It's hard to believe now with the park covering the problem of controlling deer population that... We never saw deer. Just never saw a deer before the park was there.

**Bertha Jones** [00:37:45] I can remember my father coming home on his way home from work and saying, get in the car, get in the car. There's a herd of deer down there. And we would all jump in the car and be so excited. You know, there might be four or five or six deer. And now we see them all the time without any problems. In fact, we had twin deer, twin fawns, grown, born right outside our dining room window two years ago and watched the whole process.

**Tom Jones** [00:38:12] What... As a photographer up very early on days that the light is nice and going out in the woods, I am slightly apprehensive when I see the first black bear in the Cuyahoga Valley. [laughs]

**Bertha Jones** [00:38:28] Yeah! [laughs]

**Tom Jones** [00:38:28] That's gonna change a lot of habits of a lot of hikers. [laughs]

**Anthony Nigro** [00:38:33] Where would you suggest the family go to enjoy a day in the park?

**Tom Jones** [00:38:38] To do a day in the park?

**Anthony Nigro** [00:38:40] To go enjoy a day for family?

**Bertha Jones** [00:38:42] Oh, I know what I'd say. I'd say get on the train, ride the train, and then hike that Towpath. Catch... Get off the train, hike the Towpath, catch the train on the way back. The children would really... Having been a school teacher, the children would really enjoy the train ride because they don't get to experience that anymore. I remember several years ago, before the park was in existence, the General, the train, the old what would be...

**Tom Jones** [00:39:11] Civil War.

**Bertha Jones** [00:39:11] Coal-fired Civil War General train came through the peninsula. And I tell you, that was really experience and, you know, shooting out coal all over the place and soot, like we were used to when we were kids. But now it's a different type of engine. But it would still be, I think, the experience of a lifetime for a family. You agree?

**Tom Jones** [00:39:30] Yes, yes. The Towpath is a marvelous thing. When I was in the Army I've visited, it... No, it was after there. Anyhow, I visited Italy and walked on the Appian Way, the famous Appian Way. And the Towpath reminds me of that. The Appian Way was originally an eighteen hundred mile long highway from Rome clear to England and laid with bricks or cobblestones the whole distance and had buildings of all types along it. And of course today they are ruins along that line it. And it's the same with our Towpath. It has old canal-era buildings and ruins to see...

**Bertha Jones** [00:40:12] Mm hmm.

**Tom Jones** [00:40:13] And the park has beautifully labeled each of them with, you know...

**Bertha Jones** [00:40:18] Yeah.

**Tom Jones** [00:40:19] The signs or explaining things. And it's just it's just a wonderful job that they've done.

**Bertha Jones** [00:40:23] Yeah.

**Tom Jones** [00:40:24] I'm hoping some time that possibly they can do like Canal Fulton and get one little section of the water where you can have a canal boat ride.

**Bertha Jones** [00:40:34] Mm hmm.

**Anthony Nigro** [00:40:39] Is there anything else you became involved with the National Park helping? Any other areas you volunteered in or...

**Bertha Jones** [00:40:51] Nothing more than the photography. I can't think of anything.

**Tom Jones** [00:41:01] No, not right now.

**Anthony Nigro** [00:41:04] What other things would you like to see the parks do?

**Bertha Jones** [00:41:10] I have a real problem. It's the policy of the national park to let fallen timber lay. And especially when the trees are not on leaves, it just breaks my heart to see all the wood just laying there, cluttering it up. I know it's the policy and I understand why they think that way and why it would nourish the ground and why it should rot in the ground, but it really bothers me to see the roadsides not clean of those types of trees. There's an abundance of woods in that Valley, and I think that the areas around the highways [and] around the roads could be cleared a little bit more. It is... It's an eyesore sometimes.

**Tom Jones** [00:41:59] We were used to seeing Virginia Kendall Park the way that Akron Metropolitan Park system [maintained it], which is an urban park thing where the national park system is to preserve land and try to revert back to its original condition, or if it's an old area like Yellowstone, all that, then to preserve as nature would take care of it. But the Akron Metropolitan Parks kept Virginia Kendall manicured. It was absolutely beautiful. Grass and there was never a downed tree. If something fell, they cut it up and it was wood used down at the... For the winter toboggan rides and all that. So we've had to adjust to that. But it's the way it is. And the national... In some ways it's good, I guess, for people to see what nature really is like and not cleaned up, you know, all the time.

**Bertha Jones** [00:43:00] It's a shame that when the park came in, they, it displaced so many people on the farms because right now they're trying to put farms in the Valley. And we had farms, we had beautiful farms, and we had people who[se] ancestors had lived in that Valley and they had maintained the land. And now those people are gone. And they would have had if they had not been displaced, they would have had the attachment to the land, to the farm area to keep it up. They were beautiful farms and we wouldn't have as much rubble and we wouldn't be getting goats in when we never had goats in the Valley. We had agricultural farms with cattle and corn and vegetable gardens, et cetera. I wish that had not have happened. Also, in the immediate time, the golf course in Peninsula is in question as to whether some day soon it may be sold and they're trying to decide what type of housing to allow there, etc. I know that there are people who think it should stay a golf course and I'm one of those people. And I wish... I don't think there is any way in which the national park could run the golf course, but I wish there were some kind of agreement to keep it. It's a lovely place. It used to be the Hensleigh farm. And I think what they've done there is valuable to the community. But if there would be some way to keep that as a recreational piece in the Valley without making it into, you know, a housing allotment, it would be very much appreciated. Along that line, I'd like to see more recreation in the area.

**Tom Jones** [00:44:46] Also, there are a number of very outstanding barns in the Valley that are rotting because of neglect. I understand...

**Bertha Jones** [00:44:58] And they're owned by the national park.

**Tom Jones** [00:45:00] Yeah, I realize the park has only limited funds and they have been restoring continually. But I would like to see somehow—there's the Cranz barns near the Hale homestead and the O'Neill farm on the east side of the Valley part way to Akron, it's a beautiful barn—to see some of those structures saved. We've lost quite a few barns in the Valley since the park has come in. And they were, they were in bad shape to start with.

**Bertha Jones** [00:45:30] I know of four barns just in Jaite that are gone.

**Tom Jones** [00:45:36] A hundred years from now, and the park expects to be here forever, a hundred years from now those barns will be priceless. They really would be, would be like our coverage. And the Cuyahoga Valley probably wouldn't be the same without that, without the covered bridge, you know.

**Anthony Nigro** [00:45:52] Is there anything you'd like to add? Okay, is there anything you'd like to share that we haven't covered? I mean, you'd like to add?

**Tom Jones** [00:46:02] What are you folks doing with this?

**Anthony Nigro** [00:46:05] This is for teachers to use, historians. They're gonna... It's going to be available for them to look over and study...

**Tom Jones** [00:46:14] Oh, I see.

**Anthony Nigro** [00:46:15] Or future generations.

**Kelly Goodpasture** [00:46:17] It will be posted on the web, the interviews, so you can go to the web and access it.

**Tom Jones** [00:46:22] What website?

**Kelly Goodpasture** [00:46:24] You know, I don't... We don't know yet, and we'll find out for you. And it's going to be posted through Cleveland State University.

**Tom Jones** [00:46:29] Oh, I see.

**Kelly Goodpasture** [00:46:31] And you'll receive a copy of his interview in a couple of weeks and we'll have 'em make sure they include the website.

**Bertha Jones** [00:46:38] Yeah.

**Kelly Goodpasture** [00:46:39] And I'm not sure when it'll be posted but where...

**Bertha Jones** [00:46:40] I guess what I like to say is thank you.

**Kelly Goodpasture** [00:46:44] Oh, thank you.

**Bertha Jones** [00:46:45] Because I feel anyone who could, who could collect the history of our community... Peninsula means the world to me. It's just... It's just home. And it's changed so much. I mean, it's completely different than the Peninsula I know, but I still love it. Tom has been in the Valley since the 1950s and I still consider him a newcomer.

**Tom Jones** [00:47:14] [Laughs]

**Bertha Jones** [00:47:14] And there are a lot of newcomers in that Valley! [laughs] But I just think it's very, very important to have this history going far, far back. I know how much joy it gives me to think of what my father told me about the history of the Valley, and hopefully my grandchildren could enjoy that. So appreciate it.

**Tom Jones** [00:47:35] Here we... Wait a minute. We'll give you a little touch of the style of life. What was the... Hensleigh farm was it? Where present...

**Bertha Jones** [00:47:42] Oh... [laughs]

**Tom Jones** [00:47:43] Where present Brandywine Golf Course is...

**Bertha Jones** [00:47:47] Across the street.

**Tom Jones** [00:47:48] Yeah. Here they have the old Hensleigh barn, but they relocated it. It used to be right out on Akron-Peninsula Road, right near the corner of Truxell Road, and her father told me that when he used to walk from the Camp Manatoc area now where they lived to a high school in Peninsula, he would walk across the Hensleigh's fields and often pick up arrowheads, which I have a few of them. But he said every year the Hensleigh's farmhouse was on the river side of Akron-Peninsula Road and their outhouse sat on the banks of the river, and every spring when the flood time would come, they would go out and tie a rope around the outhouse and tie that rope to a tree. The floods would come, the outhouse would float out there, being held in place by the rope. It would float around, up and down, up and down, and the river would wash out the pit, and then the flood was over they'd set it upright and they were all set for another summer season. So that was lifestyle style in the Cuyahoga Valley in the early 1900s. [laughs]

**Bertha Jones** [00:48:57] There used to be another house, a farm. When you get off of Riverview on Truxell Road, south of Truxell Road right at the bend where the camp... Where the... Across from the entrance of Camp Manatoc now, there was a farm there also, and the old well is still there. So there were a lot of farms right in that area.

**Tom Jones** [00:49:16] Another good thing, though, the park is brought in are better roads.

**Bertha Jones** [00:49:20] Oh, yes.

**Tom Jones** [00:49:20] They're helping to... Their budget helped. The roads in the Valley are very, very nice now. It was not always that way.

**Bertha Jones** [00:49:27] One detriment that the park has is the little village of Peninsula has a very hard time sustaining itself. It doesn't have enough money and it gets a lot of use. You know, the roads get used, the facilities get used. A lot of people down there, I mean hundreds, more than I could ever remember as a kid. And they don't have the income because so much of their land has been taken, their tax base has been taken by the park. So every time we hear that the park helps with something with the village or the township, it is really much appreciated because there's an enormous burden on their... Not only their facilities, but, you know, the fire department, the police department. We just learned the other day that the Rangers are not on duty from eleven o'clock at night to seven in the morning. Well, the Peninsula Police Department patrols the whole township, so that means that they are responsible for that whole township, which is from the north end to the south, the east and the west, for that small—one man, sometimes—cruiser to cover for eight hours a day. So that needs to be... You know, some way or another these little villages, and I'm sure it's not just Peninsula, these little villages need to have help in sustaining them.

**Tom Jones** [00:50:46] The park put in a very nice public restroom.

**Bertha Jones** [00:50:49] Oh yeah.

**Tom Jones** [00:50:52] Near the train station, near the train station in Peninsula. That was a big help.

**Bertha Jones** [00:50:57] Yeah.

**Tom Jones** [00:50:58] It took a lot of pressure off the restaurants. Well, thank you, folks, for inviting us.

**Anthony Nigro** [00:51:03] Cheers.

**Tom Jones** [00:51:04] OK.

**Bertha Jones** [00:51:05] I read that and that's fine. I'll just sign it. This is just giving them a release to do whatever they need to do.

**Tom Jones** [00:51:16] How many people will you be interviewing?

**Anthony Nigro** [00:51:19] There were 75... [recording ends]