

Carole Daniels, Ed Daniels & Clara Haizlett

Where: Conducted remotely via Skype

Date: September 16, 2020

Location: Mill Creek, WV, Charleston, WV and Richmond, VA

Interviewer: Emily Hilliard

Transcription: Emily Hilliard

Length: 36:46

Ed Daniels of Mill Creek is leading a 2020-2021 [West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship](#) in **agroforestry/forest farming** with [Clara Haizlett of Wellsburg](#). A ginseng digger and cultivator since he was young, Daniels and his wife Carole own and operate [Shady Grove Farm](#) in Randolph County where they grow [ginseng](#), goldenseal, ramps, cohosh, and industrial hemp, among other plants. Haizlett, who was an intern in The Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage’s [“American Ginseng: Local Knowledge, Global Roots”](#) project, plans to start a forest farm on her family’s land in Brooke County.

In this interview, which was a remote “site visit” for their apprenticeship, they discuss their respective work, apprenticeship sessions, and hopes for the future of the agroforestry tradition. Learn more about their apprenticeship: <https://wvfolklife.org/2020/10/21/2020-folklife-apprenticeship-feature-ed-daniels-clara-haizlett-agroforestry-forest-farming/>

CD: Carole Daniels

ED: Ed Daniels

CH: Clara Haizlett

EH: Emily Hilliard

DanielsHaizlett9.16.20_01.wav

00:00

EH: Alright, to start off, why don't all of you introduce yourselves and tell me who you are, where you're from, when you were born and where you're located right now?

CH: I can go! I'm Clara Haizlett, I was born in Williamsport, Pennsylvania in February 24, 1998. I'm currently kind of in between places, so I'm living temporarily in Richmond, VA, but my permanent residence is in Bethany, West Virginia.

EH: Yeah, that's great.

CH: Cool

CD: My name's Carole Daniels. I was born and raised in Randolph County, West Virginia. Born in Elkins, West Virginia on January 14, 1968. And...

ED: My name's Ed Daniels. Born and raised here in Randolph County, West Virginia. Have always had the interest in the outdoors and love to be able to share it with others.

EH: Nice. And are you in Randolph County today?

ED: Yes.

EH: Nice. Alright, so Clara, why don't you tell me a little bit about your background and any pertinent details of your family that lead you to an interest in forest farming?

CH: Yeah, so I grew up on my family's farm in Brooke County, West Virginia. And that's a farm that's been in my family for I guess I'm the 3rd generation there now. And my grandfather was a dairy farmer and my parents just had like kind of a homestead-y type farm. We didn't do a whole lot of cultivation other than just like corn and vegetables in the garden and chicken and goats occasionally. So I didn't really learn a whole lot about farming or forest farming when I was young, but just growing up on a farm, I was outside all the time and in the gardens or in the woods, mostly in the woods. I really didn't like gardening because I had to weed--I didn't get to do any of the fun stuff, I just had to pick up the discard plants. So I didn't really grow any appreciation for gardening much when I was younger, but I always loved being in the woods and the property where I grew up on was strip mined and deep mined throughout like the last century and so it's seen a lot of degradation environmentally and so I always grew up like playing in the little orange streams around the property and just kind of seeing the invasives creep in and take over. And especially in the last, I think it's always been like that but in the last 10 years, since I've been more aware of how that process isn't actually natural, and how the forest wasn't always that way, I've become more conscious and concerned of the trajectory of the health of the forest on the farm and also throughout West Virginia. And so, yeah, I've, from there I mean I've always loved the outdoors, and then I started, I studied environmental studies and international relations in college and then I think my interest in forest farming really sparked, I didn't even know what it was really, until I did the Smithsonian internship with the Folklife Center about American ginseng and that just kind of opened my eyes to what the potential of the forest in our region and what they could look like and what they have looked like in

the past and what kind of steps we can take to kind of reverse some of that degradation and restore the health of our forests and also preserve those traditions that have come out of a human relationship with the land in our region.

EH: Mmhm. Now.

CH: You know like practical steps that I can take to restoring the forest on my family's land, and then also sharing that with other people. And I learn best by hands-on experience so this has been a really great way to just kind of directly learn from people who know and apply it directly to practice that I'm trying to fulfill on the farm in Brooke County.

05:30

EH: Tell me about the apprenticeship and what your sessions have been like, what you've been learning, the area of focus? This is for all of you, a question for all of you.

CH: I can go or Ed and Carole what do you think?

CD: Well you go first and...

CH: Okay! Yeah! So we started off virtual and that was a little tricky because I mean, like I said, I really like the hands-on stuff, so I was like "Oh man! We're just gonna talk about it." But we talked about it but then like, we talked about how to get started planting ginseng and goldenseal but then they sent me a package of ginseng seeds and goldenseal rhizomes in the springtime, so I was able to kind of like, and they also sent me a book which helped guide me through some of those practices and we went about like exploring different sites on the farm, so I would like take a video of a site that I thought maybe would be appropriate for planting those botanicals, and they would tell me like, "Oh yeah, that seems like a good place." Or "Maybe you should try a different place." So based on the other species that were there and kind of like the direction of the slope and just all of those different characteristics that you're looking for in planting those wild plants. So we did that and then I was able, I've been able to go up to Shady Grove twice so far. And in those visits we've done more hands-on stuff. In the first time I went, I did, we were planting hemp and then second time I went we were doing more ginseng work and we also did some also like homesteading-type activities. It was raining for a lot of the weekend, so we did some canning and mushroom hunting and also just worked on like ginseng--picking the berries and stuff like that.

EH: Nice.

CD: I thought it was nice whenever she sent us little videos or pictures of her farm--her family farm. That way we could, like she said, identify different locations or give her suggestions, but also she gave us some pictures of things for us to identify, whether it was companion plants or not. So that was--it was nice to see a little bit of the property where she was going to be planting and see where some of these plants and seeds were gonna be home to her in the future.

ED: Yeah they...

EH: Yeah, that's very cool.

08:23

ED: The virtual part of it there helped us because we did not travel to her farm and we just told her the general direction, northeast facing slope and told her the best terrain, you know, gently sloped without

having much water. Moist is good and then to look for the companion plants and what companion plants that she may find that would be closer in, near the ginseng. And so you know whenever you bring new product or new life into an area, it's also good to examine thoroughly what's there currently. Of course, her property [unintelligible] very well and it suited the area very well. But I believe someone may have in the years past dug seng there on that property, and there still may be some. Because that area just looked really very similar to most places I would find seng in the wild. So I felt that she did select a very good place to do her little botanical path and we tried to assist her as best we could when she came to our farm to show her what our methods are. There's different approaches for everyone. I mean, if you go into the Midwest you'll find people plowing it, disking it, and doing large farms. That's not our approach. You'll find some who do similar in the woods to create a woods-grown, but the wild seng and the genetics of that, we try to use what's called a dibble bar or a tree spade and plant them one at a time. That way there is a little more resistance to the root and it doesn't get real big real quick to look like commercial grown seng. As you transplant seng from the wild into a new area, that can happen there, but different ways to do that, and we taught her our method and I feel that she has a very good grasp on that and probably will follow through with the seng.

EH: Nice. And what are some of those companion plants that ginseng grows with?

10:41

ED: You asking me?

EH: Yeah! Or anyone really, but you mentioned it so why don't you go ahead.

ED: Well, you know, one of the best defenders of a ginseng plant is the nettle, the stinging nettle. A lot of times some of the animals and the people, humans, will avoid those areas due to the fact of the outcome, but you also find it near maidenhair ferns, goldenseal, may apples, Indian turnip. There's a lot of things that we'll find growing in these damp, moist, shaded areas.

EH: Ed why don't, you know I know we did a pretty extensive interview, but why don't you talk about what role this tradition has played in your everyday life?

ED: Well you know from a young kid, it's how I bought my school clothes. Started with shoes and then my jeans and therefore as I got a little older I was seeking a used VW bug! And a guy had it for sale forever and no one was interested but me. And he finally had come down to \$500 and I thought, boy, this is the year I'm gonna get my car! And I went out and I dug and dug and dug and I worked every evening after school and accumulated enough ginseng to buy that car. So my first car was purchased from the seng and some other roots too. I wouldn't say just seng. I sold some goldenseal that year, or yellow root. And I did get the money from the wild plants that I'd harvested. And it sort of set the tone for me to continue to do so throughout the rest of my life--not always for the monetary part of it, but something to put back as I acquired property, I decided I wanted to fill my property up with those wild plants. Never really thought about the medicinal side of it. I just enjoyed looking at how beautiful a ginseng plant or a goldenseal, ramps, they're all very nice in their time. You know? When the fruit's on or the berries and the leaves are just vibrant green, to me it's better than any flower I could plant. And at the same time, I acquired quite a wild botanical area and we had some rental property there and their young boy managed to go out and dig pretty much all the ginseng that I had that was up that year! And it was sort of detrimental, 'cause I had worked years and years to accumulate such a place and so in the last 6 years, we've found and bought--7 years--we bought a farm there in Pickens and we've managed to transplant most of the botanicals that I had planted--the wild roots and such--in what I feel is a safer location for now.

EH: Mmhm. What is next in your apprenticeship? What are you still hoping to get to that you haven't been able to cover yet?

14:01

ED: And your question is directed to me?

EH: That could be for you or Clara.

ED: I'll let... yeah.

CH: Um, yeah for me I'm interested, hopefully the next time I'm able to get up there, I'd like to get some rootlets and plant them on the property in Brooke County because in the springtime we planted from seed, and I hope they come up. I'm kind of nervous just because I haven't always had a green thumb in my past so I'm feeling like this is kind of risky business, but apparently the rootlets have a better survival rate and I'll be able to, I'd really like to see which ones do better, like the seed or the rootlets, and plant those in a different location maybe and now that I'm a little bit more familiar. Because I planted the seed and the goldenseal rhizomes without having met with them hands-on to see their methods for planting. And so now that I've seen it and I've done some work hands-on, I think I'm more confident in planting the rootlets and finding another good location up on the farm, so that's something I'm really looking forward to.

EH: Nice. Ed do you have anything to add to that?

ED: Yeah...

EH: Go ahead.

15:26

ED: I was gonna add to that. One of the things I would like to work with Clara on yet would be some of the things that she's spoke of as far as the seed, but one of the things you've got to remember, when planting ginseng seed, if you have a lot of oaks or hickory, lets see hardwood nut trees, there's a lot of squirrels and chipmunks and they are detrimental to the seed. They like the ginseng seed. Fortunately, in our area where our farm is located, we don't have too much. More of the maples, so I don't have the squirrels and the chipmunks that some people would have. So as we think more about planting more in the future of the seed, that would be something to take into consideration. Deer do browse off the young ones, so we went over with Clara as she plants even her rootlets, you know, if a rootlet gets nibbled off by a deer in its first two years, it probably won't come back. I don't know the real reason on that, but once it makes it to a 2-prong, if a deer nibbles it off, it has a better chance of survival. I spoke a couple times to Jim McGraw from WVU and he agrees. You know, deer browse is a big problem even up around WVU. So brushing it up as we call it, putting limbs crossways in around the plant to deter the deer from sticking their nose down there and just browsing at their own free will has deterred them a lot. And we're seeing a much better success rate on those rootlets and our adult rhizomes as we do this. And that's an approach that we have shared with Clara and I feel that she'll be able to do very similar to the same in her area, and it would probably give her a much better percentage of survival rate of seeds and plants or rhizomes.

EH: Mmhm.

CH: Oh sorry.

EH: Go ahead.

17:42

CH: I have another thing that I'm looking forward to, and I don't know if we'll be able to achieve this just because of all the challenges of education this year, but I am really interested in their Plant the Seed Program, and that's one of the reasons that I really wanted to work with them. And we've talked about it a good deal. But I think it would be really neat to be able to observe that interaction in a classroom. Ideally, not virtual just because I feel that that changes a lot of the dynamic, but I think it would be really cool to see how they convey that, this type of subject and this type of information to children and try to get them inspired. Because I'm really interested in like the, in the outdoor education and outreach in that realm, and I'd like to replicate that in my area, so I would love to observe that too.

EH: Mmhm. Yeah, how do you see the apprenticeship impacting the sustainability of this tradition.

CH: For me?

EH: Yeah.

CH: Yeah, well I think it's huge. I would have been too nervous to invest in ginseng or goldenseal or other medicinals without having some sort of guidance. And although I know a couple people here and there, especially through the Smithsonian internship, I really haven't met too many people who have been willing to kind of share this knowledge, because it is very labor-intensive and there's risk to sharing that knowledge and I think it's super important to have some sort of guidance in this practice. And through this, I've been able to share it with people in my own community, in my family. Like I planted on my brother's property who shares part of the family farm. But I planted with him and his son who's like 4 years old and his son was super excited about it, and I've been able to share it with friends. Yeah, it's like already been really a great way to share this knowledge and I definitely wouldn't have been able to, or been confident enough to get started on it on my own.

EH: That's great. Ed, do you have anything to add to that? Ed or Carole?

20:28

ED: Yes, one of the obstacles that we've all come up against is this virus and doing things as we had had planned. A lot of the Plant the Seed Program, not on my side but on other sides, have been cancelled and I do understand why. Everything from the West Virginia herb association and different meetings of conferences to teach and to get people involved into it as well as the school. But I have been approached here in the last week or so of some folks with some young kids that's now homeschooling and have asked to come to the farm and do small segments of an hour or two to get involved with getting their hands dirty. You know, whether it's ginseng, whether it's goldenseal, even the gardening with our high tunnel that we invested in this year, they want these kids to learn something. And a great time to do so. But the Plant the Seed Program, I've approached the county schools and right now, they're not really receptive to having folks come in and do such programs. Even the youth groups and the different places that we'd worked with in the past, everything's getting a little tighter. Actually, here in our county, I'm a bus driver and 3 bus drivers now have the coronavirus. Just confirmed yesterday.

EH: Wow.

22:09

ED: So the scare is still here. It's sort of building up momentum. We do want to do these class outdoor sessions, I feel that we can do a distancing and do smaller groups and we're looking at doing like 6 kids at a time. And what we've been approached with is folks who live in development communities, they've all decided not to send their kids to school anymore and they're gonna homeschool 'em and each parent in that development is taking a turn of their day to do sometime of a learning session, whether it be take them to a cave, or teach them how to fish, tie a fly, or plant a seed! So we have been approached on that and we're going to pursue with small groups and keep on going and see if we can't get some more kids into it.

EH: Nice. Yeah, it seems like the virus and the conditions its brought about in some ways has been more difficult for the apprenticeship, but I really like the idea of sending photos and videos of your land, Clara.

ED: I'm going to! I hope I don't overload you...

EH: (laugh) No, I just mean Clara sending her photos and videos of patches of land on her farm. It's almost--I'm not sure that would have happened if it weren't for the conditions that the virus brought about.

23:46

ED: But it was very helpful. You know...

EH: Yeah, yeah! That's what I'm saying.

ED: Going there, not that I didn't want to go, don't get me wrong, it actually helps us to visualize what the conditions are and every ecosystem's slightly different, but I think she does have a good place to grow some medicinal herbs.

EH: That's great. This is a question for both of you so maybe Clara could start. What's your hope for the future of this tradition and what do you think needs to happen to realize that?

CH: I have a lot of hope for the future of this tradition, really. And I see it mostly in kids. Like Ed and Carole do. This summer I was able to, my partner and I, we ran like a small little 3-day summer day camp on my family's farm, just about outdoor education and we didn't do too much about plants other than like just plant walks every know and then. But they were just so excited to be outside and to be, yeah, getting their hands dirty and doing things, just kind of hands on and breathing fresh air and I think that they, seeing that really helped me be inspired to continue, kind of continue engaging with the youth of this community, just because there's so much disappointing news around this generation of being like so influenced in technology and no one's interested in the outdoors and I think that although that might be the case right now, I think it's really easily reversible in youth. Maybe not easily but I think there is a potential for it to be reversible and I think that potential lies in just interacting with the outdoors. And I think that learning skills like planting ginseng and medicinals is a really rewarding process and kids like to see rewards and they like to see red berries and they like to see changes in the earth and in different plants because it's exciting and I think it has the potential to capture children's attention like other thing might not, you know? And I think that yeah, just in the youth of the West Virginia community, being able to revive that tradition, there's definitely that potential.

26:34

EH: Nice. Ed, what do you think?

ED: I think the statement or I don't know if I'd call it the headline of our program, but Plant the Seed, I often bring this up. As a bus driver, I'm around a lot of kids. A lot of kids coming from broken families, a lot of kids are being raised by their grandparents. We're in a drug area here in the mountains and a lot of kids, the statistics of the 1st through 3rd or 4th grade grade-schoolers is 38% of them are raised by someone other than their parents. Most of 'em it's their grandparents or great-grandparents. Okay, so Plant the Seed, to me every kid's a seed. If you plant them right and teach them at a young age, you did your part. And eventually they're gonna remember that, and they're gonna go back to what you taught 'em. They might sway just a little bit, but they're gonna say "Wow, you know, I could be planting that ginseng seed, and by the time I get out of school, I'd have money for a car!" Or "I could plant a garden and raise some tomatoes and sell for \$3 a pound!" You know, there is opportunities for these kids that are growing up in a deprived life. And not everybody has to have a big farm and equipment to be a farmer. So programs such as this and my intentions with Plant the Seed is to educate the young, to get 'em more involved in what's out there, and show them that again, you don't have to have a lot of money to start something. You can go out there beside your garage and find the right side that's shaded and you can do a lot of things even with medicinals. Or you could go out underneath some trees at the edge of your forest and do the same. So again, you know, I'm trying to put back what I learned in life, but also put back what I took. You know, I, when I talked about getting that \$500 for that first car, I probably took too many pieces of ginseng and I realize that. But I think I've put back way more than I ever took.

EH: Mmhm. Clara, this is I think my last question, but why don't you tell me a little bit more about your plans for a forest farm on your property? Your family property?

29:12

CH: So I think right now because I'm kind of back and forth between the property, I haven't been able to spend too much time with it, but ginseng and goldenseal, it takes a while for them to come up out of the ground anyway. And also they're relatively low maintenance plants. You know, like you don't have to, if you're doing it properly, from what I've learned. But I, because it's on my family's farm, it's nice because I can have different people checking up on it and it also makes it a more communal effort. My mom is really interested in it and she grew up on a farm as well and never really did too much with forest farming or anything, but she's always loved the woods too and just hasn't really known what, how to kind of revive some of the forest that she's seen degraded, so she's really excited about it, especially because of that cultural and familial significance that land has in our family. To be able to see it healing and the potential for it to heal is really exciting. So I think that is a really cool familial effort. And like I said with my brother, he's kind of been able to check up on his little patch behind the house. And I'd like to see that spread throughout the farm. I think we need to do a lot of invasive species control there and I'd like to see us getting goats to kind of help with that and once the invasives have been cleared, more or less, which is gonna take [unintelligible], I'd like to see them replaced with native plants like ginseng, goldenseal. And as Ed mentioned, the places where I found on the farm, I do think are suitable and I think that ginseng was grown there or just wild there in the past. But there's a lot of places on the property that are just so overgrown with invasives. It's impossible to even look for ginseng or any companion plants that might have been there at one time because it's just autumn olives and bittersweet, and that part--there's a lot of work to do. But I'd like to see the whole property be just transformed and healed and restored through clearing of invasives and then replacing them with the native species. And then eventually having that be, serve as kind of a center--not a formal center but a center for other people to come and learn in the community. So maybe I can do like similar to what Ed and Carole have done with me of just teaching people who might be interested but don't really know how to start and giving them a place where they can work hands-on and see the practice and see the result as well. I think that's really important, like you can read about it all you want but unless you see what a forest can look like when it's been healed, I think it's kind of hard to believe that a place that's so overgrown with invasives can look, can be beautiful again. And I'd really like to see that happen on the farm.

EH: Nice. Well is there anything any of you would like to share? Anything else?

CH: I think I'm good!

ED: I thought it was really neat that Clara had an interest in our homesteading style. We do harvest a lot of stuff from the wild as well as our gardens and as well as just canning. You know, she took a big interest in that and she was just like the daughter that wanted to learn! And it was great that she took the time to spend with us, even on the rainy days, we figured out something to do and had to make it as educational as we could. We're not the sharpest knife in the drawer at everything, but at the same time, we're willing to share what knowledge we have.

EH: That's great. Yeah, it sounds like it's been really fruitful despite the difficulties with meeting in person at times.

CD: Yeah, that has been challenging, which I'm sure all the apprenticeships, you know, everybody's impacted by this in their daily lives. But it wasn't like you know, we kinda had a goal in what we were gonna be doing at each little workshop and little...and of course we had to modify and change that. So you know, hopefully at the end of this program, she's being able to capture the education that we were hoping that she could achieve. We're hoping we can do the best that we can do to help her learn as much as she wants to learn, if I said that correctly! (laughs)

EH: (laughs) Nice. Well thank you all so much and I know I got Clara's artist profile. I can't remember if I have yours, Ed and Carole.

CD: No.

ED: Carole's making [unintelligible] on that right now.

EH: Nice. So at some point I'll need to get a photo, either maybe ask you to take some photos, or maybe I can come up next time you guys meet, because I've been doing apprenticeship features of each pair on our blog. So I'll be in touch about that.

CD: Okay, and I have been taking pictures at each, well the 2 times that she's been there, so you know, if there's any specific type of photo you know, I'm always taking photos. Not only for this program, but just, I like to look back on it and see what you know, see what we've been doing.

EH: Right. Great.

CH: Cool.

EH: Okay, yeah, I would love to see some of those. Especially some with Ed and Clara together.

CD: Oh yes.

EH: That'd be great. I'll show you some of the examples of other features, so I'll put that in an email.

CD: Okay, and I have been noticing a couple of those, I think like on Instagram.

EH: Yeah, yep.

CD: Yeah, that's pretty nice so that you can show others what other apprentices are doing.

EH: Yeah! Yeah, I hope it's inspiration. I think it also is good for you guys and for the program to get other people thinking about what kind of apprenticeship they'd like and then you know, spread the word about the work you are doing.

36:22

CD: Right, right.

ED: Well we appreciate that.

EH: Yeah, of course. Yeah, thank you guys so much. I wish this could have happened in person, but so it goes these days. (laughs)

CD: (laughs)

EH: Well enjoy the rest of your day and I'll talk to you guys soon.

CH: Yeah! Thank you so much.

ED: Thank you.

CD: Thank you! Bye-bye.

EH: Thank you! Bye.

36:46

END OF TAPE
END OF INTERVIEW