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GRASSROOTS ALONG THE UPPER FRENCH BROAD

The Valley People Versus the Tennessee Valley Authority

1961 - 1972

By Martha Gash Boswell

FOREWORD

The purpose of this study in local history is fourfold:

To tell the story of the Upper French Broad Defense Association and the conflict from which it developed and to clarify the opposition that confronted us, in the hope that our experience may be helpful to fellow conservationists in other efforts in the protection of our fragile earth.

To record the names and activities of many supporters of the UFBDA, some of them unknown or soon to be forgotten.

To pinpoint political situations that spelled frustration or step by step led to ultimate victory.

To reiterate the basic reasons for our opposition to the TVA project for the Upper French Broad.

N. B. Source material for this record is drawn from newspaper accounts, the *Congressional Record*, letters from TVA headquarters, letters from congressmen, the news letters and minutes of the UFBDA. Photostatic copies of important source material will be deposited with Alex Duris, executive secretary, UFBDA.

As this paper is largely addressed to the members of UFBDA, I have tried to use a homely style and have used for our members the names by which they were known to fellow workers. Dr. Jere Brittain was always Jere to his "Dam Fighters" and James W. Simpson was always Hap, friend and inspiration to all of us.

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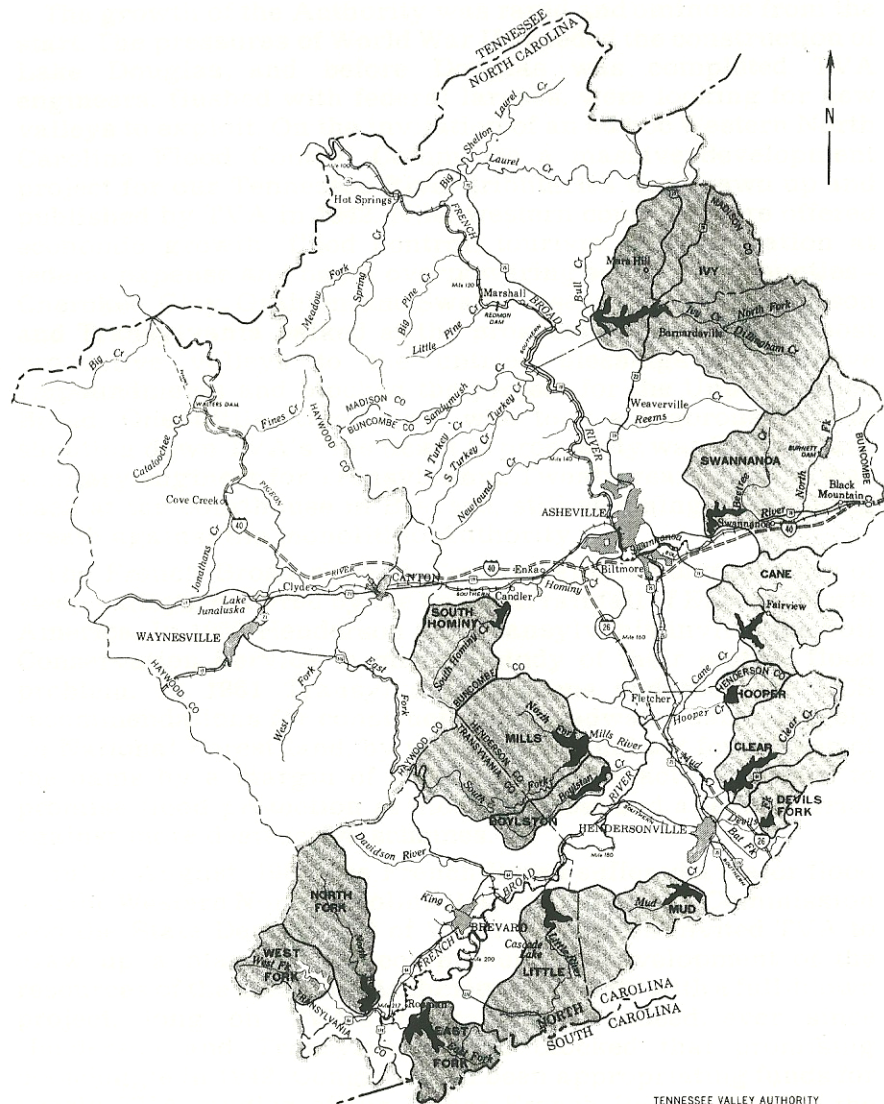
A study of the struggle of local citizens and their supporters against the proposed TVA development of the Upper French Broad, with emphasis on political developments in Transylvania County and the valley area, often overlooked or misunderstood.

By Martha Gash Boswell

In 1961 the Tennessee Valley Authority for a second time proposed to bring custom-built prosperity to five Western North Carolina counties—Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania—by federal investment of \$89 million in massive impoundments on the Upper French Broad and its tributaries. The struggle for control of our river and of the future of our river valleys pitted defiant citizens against entrenched official Establishment from Brevard to Washington. It was a genuine grassroots revolt against the many Powers That Be. And it succeeded!

Our conflict took many forms and some who fought year in and year out were not so much forgotten, as never recognized by their neighbors. Many stories of our local Davids are already lost, but I hope to preserve available stories of individual and mass effort against the TVA Goliath. The basic victory was won in the Asheville hearing of 1971—a clear moral victory that made political victory inevitable, if not in Transylvania, then in some neighboring county. But would it come in time? The political victory in Transylvania in 1972 was the necessary *coup de grace*, for political clout is still the only power recognized in Washington where the decision so often lies. So it is the political struggle, slow step by slow step, that may hold a special interest for other fighters on the ecology front.

This political history begins not in 1961 but in 1933, when Franklin Roosevelt, our most innovative president, established a federal corporation, answerable only to the President and Congress, to take over Wilson Dam and Muscle Shoals for development "with special reference to electrical power, irrigation, fertilizers, and flood control." Expectations for this hydroelectric power with Congress as a willing pipeline to the U. S. Treasury were undoubtedly high; but who could foresee that by the late '60's TVA's annual expenditure would pass the billion dollar mark? That added to multiple dams in Tennessee the Authority would control installations in Virginia, Kentucky, North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, and a toehold in Europe? Who could imagine that with all this hydroelectric power TVA would soon be generating more than



TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY
DIVISION OF WATER CONTROL PLANNING
FRENCH BROAD RIVER IN N. C.

PLAN OF DEVELOPMENT

90 percent of its electricity from coal; that its smokestacks would stain Birmingham and its strip mines destroy countless hillsides in Tennessee, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Indiana?

The growth of the Authority was rapid and ominous from the start. The pressures of World War II speeded the construction of Lake Douglas, and before Douglas was completed TVA engineers, flushed with federal largess, were looking for new valleys to exploit. On the invitation of an ad hoc Western North Carolina Flood Control Committee a massive development project for our Tennessee River tributaries was drawn up and published by TVA in 1942. Nine western counties were offered economic growth, flood control, tourism, and recreation at federal expense and on an overpowering scale. Four counties—Cherokee, Clay, Graham, and Swain—rose to the lure. Henderson and Transylvania balked at the prospect of losing their most productive valleys to the untried blessings of massive impoundments and blocked the project for the Upper French Broad. One Little River man, who took a vigorous part in shouting down TVA's free ticket to prosperity, was Walter Hart, sanitary engineer for Transylvania. Twenty years later he was back at the courthouse in Brevard, still storming with failing breath against the monolithic Authority.

The French Broad rises in Transylvania among clusters of steep valleys, battered by the heaviest rainfall of Eastern North America. In 1957 Henderson and Transylvania invited the Soil Conservation Service to make a study of their mutual flood problem. In 1961 Transylvania citizens endorsed the SCS recommendations for construction of headwater dams, largely on National Forest land, by voting an annual tax for upkeep of the dams by a margin of five to one. This action seemed to promise flood protection at moderate cost and a legal barrier against more destructive schemes.

But in August 1961 the French Broad suffered a major flood and the Western North Carolina Regional Planning Commission and the State Department of Water Resources invited TVA to draw up a plan for the comprehensive development of the resources of the area. The Authority was ready with a full-blown project, long on TVA's back burner. Indeed, ever since Henderson and Transylvania had blocked that promising boondoggle in 1942, Congress had been appropriating funds for yearly TVA studies of the Upper French Broad. By 1970 the taxpayers' total investment in this project amounted to \$ 1.5 million, even though TVA's 1966 recommendation turned out to be almost a carbon copy of the 1942 report.

The project would consist of 14 impoundments, 74 miles of channelization, and a \$6 million levee, a plum for Asheville, the major voting block. The impoundments and their development would require some 18,225 acres, obliterating the inner core of

six or eight of our widest and most prosperous valleys. At Hooper's Creek in April, 1971, Dr. Jere Brittain of Mills River made a telling summary of the TVA proposals, as seen from the threatened valleys:

"In 1933 TVA was created by Congress to control flooding, generate power, and facilitate navigation along the Tennessee River. The enabling legislation made no provision for comprehensive resource development by TVA. Yet, of a total of \$141 million in benefits claimed by TVA for the Upper French Broad project, only \$72 million, or about 50 percent, is attributed to flood control. The remaining \$69 million in alleged benefits arise from water supply, water quality control, recreation, and shoreline development. It appears that half the purported benefits of the Upper French Broad project may not even be appropriate activities of TVA."

Brittain then considers TVA "gifts" in a lighter vein:

"Here's Water Supply—but TVA controls it, and the user pays for it. Here's a game called Water Quality Control—the object is to dilute the pollution—another name for this toy is Reservoir Drawdown or 'Where did all the water go?'"

"Here's an especially clever one called Flood Control—it partially protects one acre of land by flooding another acre. Now, here's a beauty, with flashing lights and ringing bells. It's called Shoreline Development—but TVA decides who gets the shoreline and how it's developed."

Among many questions addressed to TVA were those stemming from the Asheville levee. This city sits on the highest bluff on our river with only a narrow fringe of flood plain, where major buildings, and many of the flimsy ones, rode out even the 1916 flood. After some \$50 million in flood protection upstream, why a levee for high-perched Asheville? "Because," replies TVA, "of the great loss of life in the 1916 flood." But "the great loss of life" was on the Green River, not on the French Broad, and Asheville's five deaths occurred across the river in Biltmore, on the open square where a stout Asheville levee would certainly increase the high water at time of flood. And if the bluff city of Asheville rates a \$6 million levee, what protection will be provided for Rosman, Pisgah Forest, and Biltmore, which are flooded by every spring freshet? Our contacts with TVA were peppered with such questions, for most of which TVA found no reasonable answer.

The French Broad county most in need of federal money was Madison, where a single impoundment was proposed. Indeed, Madison was the only one of the five counties that met TVA's own official criteria for federal development via TVA—low income and a shrinking population. As the director of Model Madison wrote in 1969, appealing for an early start on Madison's impoundment: "We are a 100% poverty area; 67% of our families have incomes of less than \$3,000 a year." So from start to finish Madison pushed for TVA's federal dollars.

Buncome was in an entirely different category. In this major county personal annual income exceeded that of even her most prosperous neighbor. Indeed, Chairman Wagner admitted that not only Buncombe, but the area in general enjoyed a "somewhat higher" annual income level than other western counties; but, as he reported in the Senate hearing of 1969, "income and employment growth in the Western North Carolina area is projected to be less than the regional rate in the 1960-1980 period." His prophecy was reinforced by Colonel Pickett, Director of the North Carolina Department of Water and Air Resources, also in a 1969 Senate hearing, who declared the TVA development the key project in the Appalachian plan, "necessary in order that economic development can take place." But we might note that in 1973 the same TVA soothsayers were prophesying that Buncombe, Henderson, and Transylvania, with no projected assistance from TVA, would more than double in population by 2020.

For Buncome three dams were decreed. The impoundment on the Swannanoa at maximum flood level would cover 1,170 acres and at minimum level, 620 acres. This would leave vast fringes of mud at the ebb, wipe out much of the fine farm land of Warren Wilson College and 75 valley homes. Loud protests rose from the college and the valley, but, intrigued by the promise of a \$6 million levee to protect Asheville's narrow fringe of flood-plain industries, and perhaps by hints of abundant TVA water, the city and the county embraced the massive project, apparently without a qualm. Asheville remained to the last absolutely indifferent to the projected loss of 600 families and 12,000 acres of highly developed farm land in her trade area.

In Henderson County six impoundments would require 4,840 acres, most of it highly developed farm land or suburban property, and 300 families would be displaced. In the Mills River valley 75 families would be displaced, and their historic church, founded in 1834, completely submerged. From the first no protest was louder or better documented than that of Mills River. But the officials of Henderson County heard only the chorus of endorsement from press and radio, from local, regional, and state bureaucracy. Like Buncombe, Henderson was fully committed to the TVA project, from beginning to end.

At the initial meeting of county commissioners with the TVA officials, following the release of the completed plans, Madison, Buncombe, and Henderson accepted the project without demurring, but Transylvania officials found that their worst fears fell short of the drastic proposals. Three major dams were triggered for Transylvania: one on the French Broad at Cathey's Creek would engulf the new \$3 million American Thread plant and flood part of Rosman; one would wipe out the prize-winning farm community of Little River; the third, once designated as the most important, would back Davidson River over the fish

hatchery and the Job Corps Center, to give protection to the Olin Industries.

As Hale Siniard, Jr., explained for the commissioners a year and a half later, "Transylvania voted against this project as it would take over one-third of our farm land, industry sites, and ruin our county." (*Transylvania Times*, December 14, 1967.) The Transylvania objections were so vigorous and so reasonable that Haywood County joined in voting No and Buncombe moved that the TVA reconsider the plan for Transylvania.

The county faced a desperate crisis, but there was no thought of a public hearing or open discussion. Keep it quiet; keep it in the inner circle; let our substantial citizens consult with Raleigh and Washington. For the Washington trip Olin furnished a plane and Representative Roy Taylor arranged a breakfast conference for the commissioners and their friends with the entire state delegation. Official TVA representatives were also included and the Transylvania objections remained so emphatic that TVA agreed to restudy possibilities for the county.

At the next meeting between the commissioners and TVA officials, November 30, 1966, the county was given a bitter choice—take the two major impoundments at Cathey's Creek and Little River or take the Little River dam and three headwater dams above Rosman. As the other four counties now approved the project, our commissioners were under great pressure to secure TVA development for the whole area. As Siniard reported, "We would accept the three dams and with regret the Little River dam."

Then word was passed in Brevard, and later corroborated in Siniard's published account of the negotiations, that TVA, having eminent domain on the tributaries of the Tennessee, could construct dams in Transylvania whenever and wherever the Authority desired; that our commissioners had moved to save the county from impoundments even more extensive. The simple expedient of refusing all TVA development was not considered. The continued support of our commissioners was proof for official Washington that there was no substance to reports of rising opposition. As TVA's representative in Washington pointed out at a Senate hearing June, 1970, "any of the county governments can withdraw their support on reasonably short notice." To the bitter end no single commissioner suggested scrubbing the whole TVA bargain.

Mills River and Little River were now "keys to the system." Mills River water was a useful bribe for Hendersonville support until the town discovered that TVA water rights were too expensive for their use. Basically, the stored water was required, as TVA's chairman, Aubrey Wagner, explained at a Senate hearing in 1970, "for assisting... in the streams of the area and in the lower reaches of the French Broad, including the

Douglas Reservoir." When the French Broad was channelized into a major sewer, much water would be needed "to dilute the pollute," as Jere Brittain phrased it.

Meanwhile, the Western Regional Planning Commission, an area advisory body, was replaced by a new organization with increased powers, the Upper French Broad Economic Development Commission, composed of fifteen members appointed by the county commissioners of the five counties. Although the Haywood river system had been dropped from TVA development plans, that county's three commissioners sat and voted as equal partners on UFBEDC.

The commission enjoyed the function of channeling federal funds and state grants to local projects. The fifteen members, picked for their political clout, became chief agents for soliciting funds, particularly from the bulging chest of Appalachia, for such diverse projects as hospitals, roads, public health, town sewers, speech therapy, and historical research. In Raleigh the UFBEDC was considered as fully representing the interests and will of the people involved—the valley folk—but the true function of the commission was defined for Congress in no uncertain terms. As reported by Chairman Wagner in routine Senate hearing, it "was established under state law specifically to work with TVA in development programs in the five-county portion of Western North Carolina. . . to work closely with TVA in developing the present plan." But the chairman should have used the word *implementing*, not *developing*; the plan remained TVA's to the last spadeful of earth.

At the outset our dual commissioners—the elected and the appointed—seemed fully justified in their support of the TVA. No public works project ever received more sweeping endorsements. L. D. Hyde, executive director of the Commission, could soon report, "Over 100 area organizations have endorsed the program," and he pointed out that the purpose of the 21 civic leaders, who were flown to Washington, was to request their congressmen "to give their support to construction funds for the project." (*Citizen-Times* interview, January 28, 1968). In every town the Chamber of Commerce, the service clubs, even Rotary in Hendersonville and Brevard, Wildlife, local and state, our bureaucrats from Rosman, to Raleigh, to Washington—all gave unquestioning support to the reconstruction of our river. Both of our senators and ten of our eleven representatives agreed. Our single friend was Representative Charles Jonas of Mecklenburg.

When the decision on the project was made public there were immediate storms of protest. At Mills River, led by Dr. Jere Brittain, the Community Club, the Twin River Youth Club, and the Mills River Baptist Church were united in opposition. In this valley 500 acres would be engulfed, much of it garden crop land, producing from \$500 to \$1,000 an acre. What sum would

recompense the Brittain, for example, for a farm gentled by their family for seven generations, or the Crawfords or the Moores? What pay for their 134-year old church and its splendid oaks, for a free-flowing stream, and deer browsing in the meadows on summer evenings?

The "Dam Fighters," as Jerry called his cohorts, opened their campaign with petitions; Clara Babb soon counted signatures in the thousands. In Hendersonville Alex Duris began a one-man publicity campaign with letters that never flagged or ran thin or mealy-mouthed.

At Little River the Community Club was an early leader. Rev. B. B. Grubbs was followed as Baptist leader by Rev. Jesse Bailey; the Morris Hawkins family, the Roscoe and T. R. McCalls, the Ed Mackeys, the Joe Baynards, Newton Pickelsimer and John Merrill enlisted for the duration. Ethel Hawkins found support for her community suppers in almost every house in the valley, no housewife reluctant to contribute, even when the husband's official position barred him from active cooperation. Their petition was sent to Senator Jordan, 15 letters to senators and 75 letters to representatives, to shake doors in Washington.

In Brevard the pro-TVA forces were so strong—in City Hall, in the Chamber of Commerce, in the service clubs and business establishments—that at first the opposition seemed almost an Underground, surfacing in the Austin Art Shop, in Gene Ramsey's office, with Owenby Brothers, and Mary Jane McCrary, with our Brevard camps and Eagle's Nest, Sherwood Forest and Far Away Hills; with Walter McKelvey's white water friends and Jane Wright's Sunday suppers and Portia Clark's book trail from New York to Chicago.

Little River, like Mills River, had been chosen more than once the leading farm community of Western North Carolina. It was among the state leaders in income and productivity. TVA's impoundment would flood 2,035 acres, taking the Community Center, the neighborhood stores, 50 farms and two churches. A third church would be stranded on a mud-bank island, with a \$68,000 mortgage and a congregation of less than 30 families.

Senator Jordan was an unwavering supporter of TVA, but he meticulously forwarded every criticism of the project to TVA headquarters and then sent TVA's unflappable replies to the head critic. Other senators followed this good practice and Brevard soon had on file more than 18 justifications from Chairman Aubrey Wagner. In letters to Senator Jordan, dated December 1 and 22, 1967, Chairman Wagner states: "The TVA plan would take less than 3 percent of the agricultural land in Transylvania County." And again, "Our studies show that about 1,100 acres of agricultural land would need to be acquired in Transylvania County." This is a far cry from Siniard's estimate of "over one-third of our farm land." TVA's own specifications call for about 4,000 acres at Little River for the whole

development, including the 2,035 acre pool, at least 70 percent of this being farm land. More than 50 percent of the Little River farm community would be required by TVA and this precinct, according to the official North Carolina crop report, supplied in 1967 over 17 percent of Transylvania's crop production.

It should also be noted that Mills River and Little River together produce yearly farm income of more than a million dollars. In a letter to Senator Jordan, dated March 8, 1971, Chairman Wagner does not question this production figure, but writes: "Annual benefits for the project exceed \$4.5 million." However, at the annual Senate hearing of 1970 he gives the annual benefits as \$4,798,000, but places the annual cost of the project at \$3,618,000, leaving an actual benefit of only \$1,180,000. Moreover, this so-called benefit is attributed to 14, not 2, empoundments.

The week after the commissioners met with our congressional delegation, Sitton Allison, president of the Hendersonville Jaycees, asked Representative Roy Taylor to arrange a similar meeting for the opposition. When this was denied, Allison, without encouragement, carried to Congress petitions "signed by 10,000 citizens," as he reported in an open letter describing his frustrating experience. Many of the signatures were gathered by Clara Babb and her helpers from Clear Creek, Crabb Creek, and Devil's Fork, who also raised a fund to send two neighbors, R. L. Roper and Evans Hamilton, to Washington, with the story of a true grassroots challenge to TVA. A substantial group from Transylvania, like those from Henderson, found no support on the Hill.

Our letter writers found support in unexpected places: from the two Udalls and Senator Jennings Randolph, from the House Minority Leader Gerald Ford, Senator Strom Thurmond, and in 1964 Senator Barry Goldwater, who actually proposed the abolishment of the TVA establishment if elected president. We found support in reports in the *New York Times*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and the *Wall Street Journal*; in the coverage given our local ecology in the *Charlotte Observer*, the *Greensboro Daily News*, the *Winston-Salem Journal*, the *Knoxville Journal*, and the *Atlanta Journal*. We had the early support of Governor Terry Sanford and of Governor Scott. What we most lacked was a thoughtful appraisal from our most immediate representatives, local state and congressional.

Rumors were rife, but there was no official word of what deals had been made behind the commissioners' closed doors. On November 31 the county commissioners and their appointed understudies were meeting to finalize agreements with TVA and grant wider powers to UFBEDC. Word of the meeting and its purposes had leaked out and 100 protestors, with signs denouncing TVA, were picketing the airport office. When entrance to the meeting was finally granted, B. L. Pressley,

chairman of the new French Broad Preservation Committee, presented dual resolutions: first against the granting of greater authority to the UFBEDC, and secondly against the substitution of TVA for SCS dams. Rev. B. B. Grubbs spoke at length of Little River's impending tragedy. The next morning complete acceptance of the TVA project was announced in the press.

Another picketing, led by Clara Babb and her Mud Creek friends, greeted Representative Roy Taylor, who was in Edneyville for a commencement address. Later fifty protestors from Brevard were denied admittance to a regular monthly meeting of the UFBEDC. This group was led by Charles Taylor and it is now necessary to review several earlier political events in Transylvania, which eventually led to organized opposition in a new direction.

Political effort for conservation measures in Brevard may be said to have begun in an obscure local protest that seems to have no bearing whatsoever on the infinitely greater conflict for control of the French Broad. But those who struggle on the fighting edge of environmental issues often find their battle strangely influenced by some remote, obscure effort to protect our fragile earth.

In October 1963, before the threat of TVA dams had crystalized, the Town of Brevard offered to sell the Bracken Creek watershed for a meager \$50 an acre. Bracken Creek is small, its flow insignificant, but it is poised strategically above Main Street and a low dam would provide a pool of some 20 acres, a possible factor in the event of drought or fire. Moreover, the steep woodland is in walking distance of town and might serve for park or recreation in the future.

One rainy Monday morning, just in the nick of time, a petition was circulated along Main Street and signatures of most of our businessmen were secured. Read by Becky Macfie that evening, the roster convinced an open-minded Board of Aldermen that their give-away was too hasty; the watershed was saved on the spot and several citizens had won a new sense of power and responsibility.

In April of '65 a new mayor and aldermen were elected and Brevard suffered its most serious disaster. In September the Town offered to sell the Brevard Country Club for a piddling \$80,000—cash, as the mayor explained, to buy a fire engine. This choice property, 125 acres already laid off in 135 lots, was to go for less than \$700 an acre, while neighboring lots were selling for \$3,000 and up. (Some of these 135 lots were soon to sell for \$8,000 and \$10,000.) No competitive bidding was sought. When this singular deal was discussed at the regular town meeting, it was accepted by some 40 persons present without protest, except for the indignant pleas of two women, who were dubbed "rabble rousers" on the spot. The sale was swiftly finalized; only one letter of protest had appeared in the local paper.

Progressives of both parties, however, were becoming dissatisfied with Town policies, particularly with regard to conditions in our Black community, where improvements in housing, roads, and recreation had been long delayed. Also there was growing uneasiness with respect to our commissioners and their hidden dealings with TVA. There was no organization of dissatisfied voters; no public meetings had been held except in the valley communities. But we were ripe for leadership and in May, 1966, this materialized in a most unexpected quarter. The Republican Party nominated Charles Taylor, on the point of graduating from Wake Forest Law School, for the State House of Representatives.

His platform was the first astonishment; it contained a crucial plank - Stop TVA! He had to campaign in three counties—Transylvania, Jackson, and Swain. Only Transylvania was concerned with TVA, but in all three counties election reform was an issue to challenge the support of many often-defeated Progressives, most of whom had probably never voted a Republican ticket. It was a challenge that inspired a rare spirit of cooperation and dedication in unexpected places. Young Charles Taylor proved to be both exciting and convincing in political encounters, and always ready to meet any gathering, large or small. He was concerned with issues, not politics, and he was the first and for several years the only candidate in Transylvania to campaign against TVA.

Our task was formidable. In the county registered Democrats outnumbered Republicans two to one; in the four town boxes the ratio was three or four to one. We would have no support from press or radio. The Democratic Party had complete control of election machinery and great skill in its use. But in the county precincts our candidate had a certain edge. First there were Little River and East Fork, both threatened by massive impoundments; they could be counted on for a strong anti-TVA vote. Then we discovered that young people over the county had worked with Taylor in 4-H Clubs, as a fellow student and then as area, state, and national leader. Among the younger voters, even in town, he had a powerful backing.

So Brevard's four precincts, with about half the county vote, were the major problem for Taylor's Democratic supporters. As Democrats-for-Taylor we used simple strategies. Some Democratic women, led by the Scott sisters, and Republicans led by the Frank Sutherlands, gave coffees for Taylor, with emphasis upon enlisting possible Democratic workers. Other Democrats, led by Ruby Hooper, formed telephone circles that worked for weeks to recruit their neighbors with unexpected success. In this and later elections these groups were a substantial factor in Taylor's success.

Republican chairman Lewis Hamlin, Hap Simpson, Republican, and Elmer Johnson, Democrat, lined up workers of both parties in unprecedented collaboration. As single-minded

conservationists, many worked for only one candidate; but a vote for Taylor often attracted votes for other Republicans. Meanwhile, the Republican faithful, with Jane Johnson at the helm, kept the coffee hot and registration lists in order at headquarters, and made a notable contribution by announcing that no votes would be bought through Republican headquarters—and sticking to it.

The Brevard League of Women Voters had recently secured a new county registration, a major asset in our campaign; but elections were still held in turn-of-the-century style. Voters were enrolled in massive precinct books, always in the keeping of Democratic registrars. As a mild example of election practice, we might recall Brevard # 3, often subjected to heavy vote buying. In '66 this large precinct was blessed, from our point of view, with an excellent Republican chairman, Jean Hanna— young, keen, and spirited. Some "handlers" found her difficult at the polls—much too sharp of eye. In spite of re-registration ten of the dead were found on the #3 poll book. Then shortly before Election Day it was discovered the boundary line between #3 and #2 had moved south to Reservoir Road and Jean spotted 22 voters registered in both precincts.

If precinct work was challenging in Transylvania, in Swain, which had not had a new registration in 23 years, it was traumatic for Republican candidates. In Transylvania Taylor swept in more than 2,000 Democratic votes to carry the county by 1,583 votes. In Swain he was saved from crushing defeat by an inspired application of state election laws. By telephone from Judge Thad D. Bryson, Jr., he secured an order requiring that all election boxes be sealed immediately after count out and delivered to the courthouse for safe keeping until the official canvass. This prevented the possibility of adding or substituting ballots after the precinct count out, too often the custom on Election Night. So three Democratic counties sent their first Republican and first conservationist to Raleigh.

During his first term Representative Taylor introduced more than 15 bills, some setting legislative precedents in the state, one even in the nation. In the House, where 26 Republicans might expect to be smothered by 99 Democrats, he won passage of such progressive measures as a complete revision of discriminatory election laws, only to have his bills killed in the Senate by the senator from his district.

Absentee votes in Western North Carolina had long been an open scandal. Since the completion of her massive TVA impoundment, Lake Fontana, Swain's population had dropped 40 percent. In 1966 Swain was using registration rolls of 1942 and with a population of only 8,000, she had more than 8,000 names on her registration books. In 1963 the *Charlotte Observer* had published a study of state election frauds, particularly in the west, where 12 counties with 4 percent of the registered voters

had cast 35.5 percent of the state's total absentee vote in a recent election. The *Observer* documented votes cast by prisoners seeking favors, by the dead—some known only by tombstones—and by faithful Democratic dogs and horses. This brings to mind the fabled East Fork mule, said to have voted "right" for many years.

In May Taylor's bill to require loose leaf registration for the state and re-registration for Swain, after hard passage through the House, was killed in the Senate. Taylor made an address so fired with indignation and so explicit in charges of voting fraud, that state papers gave him ample and sympathetic coverage. The *Observer* went even further; on June 2, '67, the '63 study of state election frauds was reprinted in full. On June 24 Taylor's bill requiring loose leaf registration was passed, but the provision for a new registration for Swain was killed, again by Senator Brumby, "to save taxpayers' money."

In Swain the Board of Elections continued to deny bipartisan petitions for a new registration. So on August 10 Taylor, again backed by Judge Thad Bryson, Jr., prepared to file an appeal for a court hearing. The next day the Board of Elections ordered a new registration.

After Taylor's astonishing election no Brevard organization had invited the new representative to speak, perhaps not strange, as he so often ran counter to bureaucratic interests. Primarily to give Taylor an open platform and a hearing for the study he had made of the TVA program for the county, a small group of Democrats and Republicans, who had worked in his election, organized the bipartisan Citizens and Taxpayers League.

At first meeting of the new League, February 2, '67, with Arthur Smart as temporary chairman, Taylor presented his detailed analysis of the TVA project and of an alternate plan for flood control, based in part on Soil Conservation Surveys. He explained the new powers proposed for the UFBEDC, including the right to "acquire real property by appropriation," which really chilled his hearers. The substantial audience of 100 voted unanimously to oppose the TVA project and the granting of further power to the commission. L. D. Hyde, executive secretary of the UFBEDC, present as an observer, had stated the week before in a press interview that 95 percent of the valley people favored the TVA plan.

Strange as it may seem, the *Transylvania Times* published the full text of Charles Taylor's address in two half-page spreads. February 16 and 23, assuring us of local press support. But a few weeks later an editorial printed on the front page attacked Taylor in scathing terms for having revived the TVA controversy, settled once and for all in 1963. This ended our brief honeymoon with the *Times*.

In June a delegation led by Alex Duris presented petitions with 5,000 signatures to the Henderson Board of County Commissioners, asking for complete withdrawal from the TVA project and the UFBEDC. The response was nil. On December 1 the *Transylvania Times* carried the Siniard account of consultations with TVA officials and on December 5 the Citizens and Taxpayers League offered their petition to the Transylvania commissioners, and met with no response.

On January 1, '68, we were given a clearer view of TVA resources. The *Citizen-Times* bore a full-page spread, "Ec. Commission Boosts Five-County Area." The UFBEDC had "through its endorsement" obtained \$332,000 for Haywood schools, \$50,000 for Memorial Mission, and \$140,000 for the "Bald Mountain access road." L. D. Hyde reported that requests for Appalachian funds for '68 totalled \$2,984,015. No one asked what oversight was required for the dispersal of \$3 million a year in federal funds or why Appalachian appropriations should pay for a road for a real estate development. Such federal gravy from TVA's local spout made our task doubly difficult.

Charles Taylor was again candidate for the House and Herman West, of Murphy, who also opposed TVA, for the State Senate. Democrats-for-Taylor held a mid-town reception for candidates opposing TVA. The receiving line of Democratic women included leaders of our Black community, who had given exceptional support to Charles Taylor in '66.

The League of Women Voters announced a candidates' forum, but the Democratic candidates declined the invitation. By national rules the League of Women Voters was forced to cancel the meeting. As the Citizens and Taxpayers League was completely free-wheeling, we held a rousing candidates' rally with a dozen empty Democratic chairs. Taylor and West and several Republican candidates for local offices, aided no doubt by the Nixon tide, won the '68 election, Taylor by a 4,000 vote margin.

On February 7, '69, Hendersonville newspapers reported a meeting between TVA officials and the county people on the plan for Mills River, which stretched to four hours, in such a shouting match that thereafter TVA speakers and their echoes of UFBEDC refused all invitations to joint debate or discussion. At a planned discussion at the Asheville YWCA the executive secretary of UFBEDC refused to share the platform and when presented alone would answer no questions on the TVA project. At an environmental conference, on the demand of TVA representatives, our invited spokesmen were relegated to the floor.

This was a year of fertile ground work. Charles Taylor and Elmer Johnson kept in touch with the Budget. Hap Simpson and Elmer were preparing slides and diagrams for our most colorful

show. Hap visited Lake Douglas every month in the year, taking shots of acres of mud, of the bottom of the lake covered with snow, of the Coney Island blight along the shore, while Elmer flew over the lake for slides from a new angle. Ernest Foster prepared overlays that dramatically presented the shores of the proposed impoundment at Little River at various stages of the planned draw-down. Jere Brittain, Hap, and Elmer spoke at every opportunity and Alex Duris peppered the state papers with letters. Alex was also responsible for our popular bumper stickers: KEEP TVA OUT OF WNC. Brevard, Little River, and Mills River operated independently—a cause, but not an organization.

The crown of the year was Brittain's address at the December meeting of the Conservation Council of North Carolina, followed by a resolution for a public hearing and for TVA to "immediately suspend all activities" until impartial agencies assessed the total impact of the project. This was our first state-wide endorsement.

On January 1, 1970, the Environmental Policy Act, the Magna Carta of ecologists, became effective. Full justification for the impact of any major construction on the environment and the economy was now required. The tide had turned against the despoilers.

On February 12 Representative Charles Taylor met with Chairman Wagner and the TVA Board in Knoxville. He told the Board that the present plan was not in the best interest of Western North Carolina, that short of some kind of compromise, based on the SCS small dam program, a substantial public organization would ultimately defeat the entire project. The Board scoffed at the idea of defeat, but did agree to study the questions raised and to meet later with Taylor to discuss alternatives. On May 1 he met with TVA staff members in Waynesville, Chairman David Felmet and Robert Melton of the UFBEDC being present. No modifications of the TVA project were offered.

Taylor prepared a study on Little River, "T.V.A. Revisited," showing by figures obtained from TVA headquarters, "an adequate flood control program can be had, even from T.V.A., without the destruction of the Little River Community." With Taylor's help we prepared questions for a meeting with our county commissioners, requesting that this be held in the courtroom to accommodate interested citizens.

The meeting was held on August 5 in the commissioners' office, many of our 63 petitioners standing in the hallway. Elmer Johnson was our spokesman. The commissioners declined to discuss the questions previously submitted, but promised answers next month. The September reply, signed by all three commissioners, recounted their efforts to save Little River. They held that no referendum would bind TVA, which had immutable right of eminent domain on our river. As to financial

commitment, they replied, "We have not made any financial commitment to the T.V.A. program." (Chairman Wagner's testimony: "The combined counties have agreed to be responsible. . . for the perpetual maintenance of stream channels." In Asheville, also, we could find no knowledge of financial obligations, though TVA claimed substantial commitments from city and county.)

As we received this negative reply, we learned that both county and city had just dispatched duplicate letters to Washington, repeating their full endorsement of the TVA project. The commissioners' letter was *private* and we could not obtain a copy.

Rosman, frequently buffeted by floods, had been promised the first TVA construction, but it was now announced that Mills River would come first. President Johnson had budgeted \$3.3 million for Mills River, but President Nixon had omitted this from his budget. Spurred by the faithful Senator Jordan, Congress appropriated \$300,000 for preliminary work, which was promptly clapped into budgetary reserve. Time after time Representative Jonas succeeded in cutting appropriations for the project, and when the Senate thwarted him the Bureau of Management and Budget was our salvation.

At Mills River and Little River covered-dish suppers were being held to raise money for possible court action. On June 19 Brittain addressed a joint meeting of Little River and Brevard workers under the sponsorship of the Citizens and Taxpayers League. It was clear that an area meeting must follow.

A preliminary meeting was held at the Mills River Community Center, September 8; Jere Brittain was named temporary president and Alex Duris, secretary. Permanent organization of the Upper French Broad Defense Association was completed at the Mills River Elementary School, September 19. The temporary officers were confirmed: Elmer Johnson was named vice president; Edward Mackey, 'treasurer; Martha Boswell, corresponding Secretary. Ed Mackey met with a serious accident and was replaced by Gola Hudgins. Hap Simpson was named treasurer of the legal fund and became our chief fund raiser. These officers served for the active life of the organization. Alex Duris, as executive secretary, is still our entire office force and still produces our invaluable news letters.

Hap Simpson and Elmer Johnson, with the professional help of William Greene, were largely responsible for dodgers, folders, and newspaper advertising, soon of prime importance. Hap and Elmer, having put together a brilliant show, gave over 50 performances, and appeared on the Asheville and Greenville, S. C., television. The *Greenville News* gave us our first editorial endorsement, attracting sharp objections from the *Asheville Citizen*, but the *Citizen's* Connie Blackwell wrought a full-page study of the French Broad problem, clearly slanted in our favor.

Elmer carried the gospel further afield and was heard over PBS from Chapel Hill and Washington.

Arthur Dehon, from Brevard when not from Florida, opened his Sherwood Forest quarters to students from the University of Georgia, who studied several aspects of the French Broad problem and gave eight graduate papers at the '71 hearing, the only input from college students. In Asheville Don Remer pressed our case before county boards and in the legislature Senators Briggs, Dent, West and Carrol Wilkie supported the unflinching efforts of Minority Leader Charles Taylor.

At Little River Rev. Jesse Bailey kept us in touch with his congregation of hearty workers through the regular church bulletin; Morris Hawkins was our spokesman at the Community Club and his wife preserved important records in her prize-winning scrapbook. From so many angles ours was a truly grassroots organization, operating in neighborly fashion from the kitchens of Mills River and Little River, from Austin Art Shop in Brevard, from Dorothy Rhoades' parlor in Asheville, through the Biltmore Forest Garden Club, and from gas stations and country stores along the river. It was from station and store that we gathered thousands of signatures for our petitions. Many who contributed yeoman service there, and later at the polls, were never enrolled as members, though our paid membership had passed 500 before Christmas.

Meanwhile this was a political year and Charles Taylor was again candidate for the House. We held our candidates' forum at Eagle's Nest Camp with the Alex Waites—quite a gala affair. Several Democratic candidates were present and were subjected to our ever-popular slide show. Taylor now had an organization capable of handling his candidacy and, as the Defense organization grew in importance, our League withered away.

Charles Taylor and Elmer Johnson visited Washington from time to time, keeping in touch with the increasingly helpful Budget Bureau. Elmer Johnson drew up a stiff block of leading questions for TVA, which drew five pages of explanations and the conclusion that the argument "could only be resolved after the completion of the T.V.A. project." Not a solution that we could live with.

The UFBEDC still held that a large majority of our river people supported TVA. To offer proof of this two remarkable documents were sent to some members of Congress and copies, one from Representative Jonas and one from Senator Jordan, came home to our association. The earliest, dated March 2, 1970, was prepared by S. V. Griffith, executive secretary of UFBEDC. It is intended to prove "that there is general approval of the impoundment," meaning Mills River, by residents "whose lands will be flooded." He found some who had "signed separate, confidential statements," but of the 75 families in Mills River he produces signatures of 12 brave souls, representing 9 families.

At least 3 of the names appear to be the work of the same good penman.

On July 8, perhaps to atone for the absurdity of the first document, the body of which is a tissue of inaccuracy, Chairman David Felmet issued an impressive list of corporate endorsements, ranging from the State of North Carolina to a Haywood County Volunteer Fire Department. The list seems factual for 1966, though odd errors were found in the Brevard records, but by 1970 a number of important organizations had already changed their allegiance. Mr. Felmet now names 21 residents of Mills River who endorse the impoundment. He finds two organizations which oppose TVA, the Mills River Development Club and the North Carolina Conservation Council. He names ten individuals who "have opposed the project mainly because they wish to embarrass politically those who support it."

1971— a great year for the Dam Fighters! In January Jere Brittain sent a four-page review of our work to our congressmen—on the Hill, it sank without a ripple; but in the State Legislature we were gaining friends. The estimated cost of the project had risen to \$114 million and \$2.5 million for Mills River was now frozen in the Budget Bureau. This year the annual expenditure of TVA passed the billion dollar mark.

On February 18, after visits from L. D. Hyde for TVA and a talk with Jere Brittain, the Swannanoa Branch of the UFBDA was formed with Dr. Gordon Mahy as chairman, Ernst Laursen as vice-chairman, and Dorothy Egger as secretary-treasurer. This soon became the Swannanoa Valley Branch with 100 members and our total membership passed 700. The financial support from the new branch and vigorous protests from the Eggers and the Stevensons were a real contribution to our effort.

On May 19 a delegation went to Washington with appointments to meet committees of the House and Senate. In the House, Chairman Joe Evins was too busy with guests to hear Jere Brittain's testimony—Jere could leave his statement on the table. At the Senate Subcommittee on Public Works, Senators Ellender and Jordan were ready with their usual patient courtesy. Jere and his documentation had ample play and some weeks later Mr. Bousquet, for some 20 years clerk of the committee, remarked that that testimony was one of the finest and the most thoroughly documented he had ever heard given before this committee.

The very next day Mr. Felmet, backed by Col. Pickett, was there to set the record straight. He admitted there was "token opposition. . . on Mills River. . . largely from what we classify in our area as 'birders,' and Sierra Club members who can't climb two flights of stairs to a hearing." He further defined "birders" as city people, transplants "that don't want any industrial improvement." After this lucid description of the opposition and

the assurance that the dam "will do little if any damage to the environment." Senator Jordan moved that \$4 million be appropriated for TVA's Mills River, with the words, "I guess they can use it."

The Washington delegation was fairly typical of our membership. There were the Britains, Jere, his wife and children; the T. R. McCalls, from pioneer families in Transylvania; the young Hinckles, Warren Wilson students and pioneer stock in Swannanoa; Carroll Wilkie, one of our youngest state senators, from Hooper's Creek; and our two retirees, Alex Duris of Henderson County and E. W. Johnson of Brevard, a retiree from a large corporation, and so perhaps the "birder" of the group.

After the hearing "Birder" Johnson had contacts to renew all over town, but the crown of the day was an hour with that war horse of ecologists, Justice Douglas, who was waiting with prime names and addresses and his own name, as an unlimited endorsement—one of our most fruitful contacts. Other favors of fortune were shaping up for us—a bit of legislative sleight of hand and an election in Brevard.

Several times Charles Taylor had framed a bill requiring TVA to grant the hearing requested since 1963. Now an innocent amendment to an inconspicuous bill required that a public hearing be held in the affected neighborhood before any construction was begun that involved the channelization of a state stream. This sly addendum passed unnoticed and the trap snapped shut. TVA shortly announced a hearing for August 31, at UNC-A.

Meanwhile, a mayor's election was held in Brevard that at first glance had little or no bearing on our conflict with TVA. But that strange affair was indeed a first firm step to victory in Transylvania for our Association. Strange, because those who won could scarcely credit the result.

Nine days before the May election and one hour before filing deadline, Jane Johnson, a Republican stalwart, discovered a Democratic friend, Charles Campbell, had just filed as candidate for mayor. Within the hour Jane had led another Democrat to file for alderman; and the next morning four women and two men, with a typewriter on a diningroom table, no kitty and no visible support, sat down to elect two virtually unknown candidates, who were running against long-seasoned incumbents. We had the support of the few who had troubled to follow with dismay the practices of local government; we had a good number of retirees, because Bill Overholt sat at his telephone for hours to alert them; we had the solid support of the Black community because of the long and frustrating delay in securing funds for public housing. We did not expect our two candidates to win, but, luckily, neither did our entrenched opposition. We won by being so few and so obscure. Less than a thousand citizens troubled to vote;

won by 52 votes and his supportive alderman squeaked through. Total cost of the "campaign," less than \$100.

With the support of only one alderman Mayor Campbell was able to put Otis Jones on the Housing Authority and with Black representation at last, federal funding was possible and soon came through. At a Brevard meeting of the Defense Association Campbell endorsed our stand, the first area mayor to oppose TVA. On August 24 the UFBEDC was reorganized as the Upper French Broad Council of Government and mayors as well as commissioners were included. Brevard's mayor was chosen chairman and served for two terms. His influence never failed us.

Among Jere Britain's exhibits for the Congressional hearings was a graph showing population curves of our four counties "developed" by TVA and the French Broad counties that had rejected TVA prosperity. On the 1970 census a table was constructed that made the *Congressional Record* and newspapers from Charlotte to Knoxville. It was finally printed by a reluctant *Transylvania Times* with a letter from Arthur Dehon. The figures need no explanation:

Population	1930	1940	1960	1970	(1940-1970)
(After TVA Built 7 Lakes)					
Cherokee	16,151	18,813	16,335	16,330	2,483 Loss
Clay	5,434	6,405	5,526	5,180	1,225 Loss
Graham	5,841	6,418	6,432	6,562	154 Gain
Swain	11,568	12,177	8,387	7,861	4,316 Loss
Without TVA "Lakes For Growth" 1940 — 1970 Gains					
Buncombe	97,937	108,755	130,074	145,056	36,301 Gain
Henderson	23,404	26,049	36,163	42,804	16,755 Gain
Transylvania	9,589	12,241	16,372	19,713	7,472 Gain

N. B. Now that the great project has been dropped TVA "projects" that the population of Buncombe will double by 2020, while that of Henderson and Transylvania "will more than double, but the TVA seer "projects" small increases for Clay, Graham, and Swain. Completely unabashed by results in our western counties, the Authority views the population explosion in the whole Tennessee-North Carolina region as due to the TVA "expansion of industrial employment in the Tennessee Valley." (Quote from the *Asheville Citizen*.)

To the thrust of this table Chairman Wagner replied in a letter to Senator Jordan, March 9, 1971, that the Southwestern Mountain Region loses population because of narrow valleys and "because it lacks adequate highway, rail, and air access." If narrow valleys are the handicap, what happens when the few wider valleys are submerged in impoundments? (See our table!) Why in the grip of the Great Depression did our four western counties show accustomed gains, 1930-1940, and lose only after TVA construction? With such comparisons we were well-fortified and the Asheville hearing, scheduled for one day, could not accommodate all who wished to speak in three days.

The opening of the hearing was not auspicious. Of the first ten speakers eight were for and of TVA. The first testimony was thirty minutes of official TVA justification. Our attorney asked for equal time for Jere Brittain, but was told that our president would have five minutes like everybody else. For the opening TVA had full coverage by press and radio; our major speakers seemed to be scheduled at less productive hours.

An immediate advantage was won for us by Arthur Dehon, who had designed a yellow scarf and provided one for every "dam fighter." The brilliant triangle, worn across the shoulders, labelled every supporter UFBDA. The hall blossomed yellow, proclaiming that more than two-thirds of every audience opposed TVA. Another pleasant plus was the unfailing supply of prime country food from the valley kitchens in a nearby classroom.

Long days and evenings were not without amusement. Two strangers dropped in and asked for kerchiefs, but were persuaded to take front seats without our label. The little strategy paid off; they were invited to testify. Each rose and announced, "I give my five minutes to Dr. Brittain." When Jere was finally called he spoke for twenty minutes without interruption. The thrill of the third day came near noon, when the steadies were most weary and press and television were usually absent. Dorothea Rhoades was called, as scheduled, and suddenly a WLOS team was there and Dorothea was soon on the evening news in fine voice and glowing color. Her appeal was simple, warm, and beautifully turned; on local TV we could not have had an advocate with greater appeal.

Among those testifying for UFBDA were official representatives of the Sierra Club, the Conservation Council, Friends of the Earth, National Parks and Conservation, and North Carolina Wildlife. There were three professors from Georgia universities, eight graduate students from the University of Georgia, five faculty members from Warren Wilson, and a psychiatrist from Charlotte, whose professional studies were all based on local observation of our river as well as scientific skills. Fritz Albrecht of Brevard provided an elaborate statistical study of "The Influence of TVA Operations."

As earlier reports were cut to five-minute scope, many seem fragmentary, but came over with warm conviction, including testimony of Mills River children in verse and song. The official TVA *Record* includes all oral testimony—58 testifying for TVA and 281 in opposition. Many additional names are included in written testimony and petitions.

Major scientific studies, briefly introduced and filed for publication, were of great importance for our report to the Council on Environmental Quality. Dr. C. H. Wharton's discussion of channelization, the humanistic reports of Dr. James E. Brittain and Dr. George Mundorf, and the thoughtful papers of eight of Dr. Ronald North's students from the University of Georgia and flavorful reports of Annie Westall and Newton Pickelsimer are of special interest.

Sierra Club testimony was a model of clarity and Elmer Johnson spoke with fine variety for Friends of the Earth and National Parks. Those who sat through eight or ten hours of testimony for three days, often by speakers ill-prepared for ordeal by microphone, may like to recall a few highlights: Helen McKelvey who found the Humanities Building an inappropriate setting for the grim details of dam building; May Mattson, who offered a pleasant excursion into the geology and flora of our valleys. Ken Durant calculated that one acre, flood-proofed by TVA, would cost the taxpayers \$35,000. With the Moore brothers of Mills River we tramped through their good black soil—smelled it, savored it. Lehman Kapp took a serious view, Frank Sutherland and Douglas Wauchope biting views and Dallas Mathews an hilarious view of TVA economy. Of prime wit was Jere Brittain's search for the father of the UFB project—Jere wants "the name of the Father of This Plan" for a corner stone. He'll find the list of possible applicants is shrinking fast.

The *Asheville Citizen* found the hearing unique and unorthodox—applause and standing ovations went unchecked. Despite hundreds of flooded valleys, this was the second public hearing for TVA—the only federal agency exempt from this basic requirement. Area newspapers agreed that 90 percent of the speakers opposed the project, but the *Times-News* of Hendersonville put a finger on the expected outcome: "It is probably a very good thing that the decision on this project will be made by uninvolved objective environmental experts." Was the reporter describing Senators Ellender and Jordan and Representatives Joe Evins and Roy Taylor? Shortly Senator Ellender spoke for his team. On October 19 he wrote to one of our members, Nell Cuthell of New Orleans: "Public hearings were held. . . both proponents and opponents were heard. The decision was made that it is necessary for the project to proceed and funds for the purpose have been appropriated by Congress." Both Senator Jordan and Representative Roy Taylor were in Asheville at the time of the hearing, but neither came to hear the pros and cons.

Dear Governor Scott:

Just a card to say we applaud your very courageous act in declaring that the TVA draft statement on the Upper French Broad River project was **INADEQUATE**.

We sincerely hope that you will examine their final statement in the same manner as the initial draft.

Sincerely,

Name _____

Dear Mr. Taylor:

Governor Scott has recently declared the TVA draft statement for the Upper French Broad project inadequate.

At the recent public hearing held in Asheville a preponderance of witnesses spoke against the project.

In view of these developments have you had an opportunity to reassess your position on this issue?

Sincerely,

Name _____

Dear Senator Ervin:

WHY do the TVA plans for the Upper French Broad River in Western North Carolina call for channeling 42+ miles of this scenic and historic stream?

Channeling would destroy the ecological balance of the wide flood plain, a natural ponding area for flood water, equal to several large lakes. This is a beautiful recreation stream. Hundreds from summer camps, paddling clubs, Scout troops and others float it each year. Many fish it; many swim in it.

I OPPOSE THE USE OF TAX MONEY TO CHANNEL THE FRENCH BROAD RIVER. YOU CAN HELP US SAVE IT.

At home the impact of the hearing was not lost. Governor Scott, as reported by the *Citizen*, September 10, called for a new impact statement from TVA. "He asked that a new statement take into account the objections raised by his office and by various state agencies, as well as objections of citizens... who, he said, until lately have seemingly not had much opportunity to be heard." He found TVA expressed no concern for displaced families, gave no firm figures on agricultural losses, made misstatements on recreation, wildlife, and water quality.

Hendersonville had withdrawn their request for TVA water, as too expensive. On October 16 the *Times-News* reported that the Hendersonville commissioners had asked TVA to redesign the Mills River project to place the dam upstream on National Forest land. But, no, they still found themselves "Basically in sympathy with the proposals made by TVA—" all for the proposals for the other fellows!

In November EPA, not particularly satisfied with TVA's home work, issued eight pages of drastic criticism. Representative Roy Taylor reported that he was waiting for the EPA assessment and the "testimony presented at the hearings." He received a shower—indeed a rain—of cards, reminding him of Governor Scott's forthright stand, but the UFBDA received no reassuring word from him.

A high-spirited meeting in Brevard marked our first anniversary. President Jere Brittain summarized the year in part as follows: We had a membership of about 900 and contributions amounting to \$6,500. We had recruited 200 witnesses for the Asheville hearing; sent delegates to Raleigh and Washington; printed more than 50,000 pieces of literature; prepared a 370-page statement for the President's Council on Environmental Quality. We now had the endorsement of WLOS and WSPA, of the mayor of Brevard and of Governor Scott.

For two years Alex Duris, Frank Sutherland and T. R. McCall had kept up a barrage of letters to local newspapers; Dallas Mathews had conducted a one-man crusade in the *Native Stone* and Don Remer had bombarded commissioners and city fathers with facts and figures on TVA in Buncombe.

On December 19 the trustees of Warren Wilson College passed a resolution opposing the entire French Broad project. When the faculty and trustees of Warren Wilson spoke out, the Buncombe County commissioners finally heard that TVA's Swannanoa impoundment would submerge 75 homes and the vital farm land of a county college. On February 3 the Board of Commissioners asked TVA for a review of the total project.

On January 5 the *Asheville Times* thundered, "Don't Kill the TVA Flood Program!" The Buncombe commissioners hastily backed down. They were not opposing the program as a whole; they were only concerned for the 1,170 acres of county land about to be flooded at Swannanoa. In the same spirit Transylvania

commissioners on January 13 requested TVA to use the Mills River appropriation to build the headwater dams above Rosman. But who on the four Boards of County Commissioners asked what effect the destruction of 14 of our prosperous farm communities would have on the economy of our area?

Governor Scott was firmly with us; Mayor Campbell was moving Region B in new directions. Mayor Whitmire of Hendersonville and some members of Asheville organizations were leaning in our direction. But with Representatives Taylor and Evins in the House and Senator Jordan speaking for the usually absent members of the Senate Sub-committee on Public Works, nothing stood between us and bulldozers on Mills River but the uncertain Bureau of Management and Budget. There was only one safe way out—political victory where victory would count. Transylvania had the opportunity and found the means.

Again it was election year and Charles Taylor, who had represented three Democratic counties for three terms, was running for the State Senate from eleven counties. Always breasting massive Democratic opposition, he had introduced the first no fault automobile insurance bill, fought the regressive intangibles tax, and played a major part in environmental legislation. He had received a 100 percent rating by the North Carolina Consumers Council and congratulations from major state papers and the *New York Times*.

Charles Taylor's bill to require a referendum on the TVA program for Transylvania had never broken through the blockade of the Senate powerhouse. For 1972 our ambitious target was the Transylvania County Board of Commissioners, as these three men had the unquestioned authority to stop TVA intrusion with a single resolution. The myth of eminent domain was credited only by TVA supporters; the grab for power of condemnation by the UFBEDC in 1967 had not even been allowed the courtesy of a vote in the State Legislature. Our members tried to draft Hap Simpson as candidate for the chairmanship of the Board of Commissioners and in self defense, with the backing of the Republican Party, he secured three candidates pledged to meet the challenge of flood control by more acceptable means than TVA impoundments.

Charles Taylor took on the nitty gritty of party organization, with the Rock House on East Main as command post for Republican regulars and Democratic supporters as well. Hap Simpson, firmly established in the confidence and affection of the county through his long service as leader of Junior Achievement and other civic enterprises, was chief architect of our environmental campaign and chief fund raiser for our candidates. Hap and Elmer Johnson designed publicity of compelling force and clarity and Elmer was our master of distribution. Florence Simpson and Ruth Johnson kept open house for the duration.

On September 14 the Citizens and Taxpayers League held its last and most successful candidates' forum. The Methodist Hall was well filled by a bipartisan audience. Elmer Johnson presided and Rev. Otis J. Wheelhouse, Jr., was the skillful moderator. Cecil Hill introduced the Democrats and Charles Taylor, his opponent for a State Senate seat, the Republicans. There were no empty candidate seats this time and candidates of both parties were well received; there was a friendly air and we felt that at last we had a significant forum.

On October 12 the Defense Association in the same hall celebrated its second birthday. Elmer Johnson presided and Jere Brittain was speaker of the evening. He opened with the statement, "I firmly believe that no dam will be built at Mills River." He spoke briefly of the Asheville hearing, for which more than 200 speakers had been recruited, and where for three days we had given an emphatic "No!" to TVA.

Brittain reported that Region B, successor to UFBEDC, had not endorsed the TVA plan; that state support was now limited to the redoubtable Col. Pickett. Our major opponents in Washington, the president held, remained Representative Roy Taylor and Senator Jordan, the latter on the eve of retiring. He noted that our speakers (Brittain, Simpson, Johnson) had spoken to more than 100 groups near and far. He might have added that we now had more than 1,300 members in some 20 states.

Then he read a number of questions that he had submitted by letter, and finally by telephone, to TVA headquarters and gave TVA's unequivocal answers: The 1966 project proposal still stands, is current, is a package; the TVA environmental impact statement, limited to Mills River, will not be ready before 1973, and release of the impounded \$3.9 million for Mills River "is not anticipated before mid-1973." He noted as "very important" TVA's statement that the entire record of the Asheville hearing would not be included in the official impact statement, as repetitions would be deleted. He noted, "Our repetition was NO!" He then stressed the importance of the coming elections and recognized the candidates present, who were our supporters. He promised continued preparations for court action and continued support of kindred organizations in other areas.

Reporters were present for Asheville and Knoxville papers and TV crews from WLOS and WSPA, both of which carried interviews with Jere Brittain on the morning news. Asheville, Knoxville, and Hendersonville papers gave us good coverage. No representative of the *Transylvania Times* attended or reported our meeting, but a list of donors of birthday cakes was supplied and carried by the *Times*. Our influence was seeping into the *Citizen's* editorial rooms; on October 30 appeared an enthusiastic if delayed endorsement of our river, "French Broad River Is A Unique Resource," which might have been written by one of our own buffs. It might be noted here that Representative Roy Taylor and State Senator Cecil Hill have

also made the same belated discovery.

The campaign for a Republican Board of County Commissioners was fought for several reasons: protection of our valley communities, ecology as a cause, a change in governmental practice, for party loyalty and party backlash. We had the now hopeful support of threatened communities, of the UFBDA and many retirees. We also had the solid support of the Black community, many of whose leaders were now living in Mickey Park, a new development, planned and organized by Charles Taylor. We had the leadership of Cornelius Hunt, soon to be elected as our first Black alderman, of Rev. F. H. Goldsmith, of Selena Robinson, an outstanding civic leader.

Our candidates had a strong statement of objectives and political philosophy. They would keep accurate and open records; hold meetings at convenient times and places; resume requirement of professional training for officers of the law. We find a new note in political advertising: "Limit undesirable commercial development. . . reduce flood damage, safe guard people and property and preserve the beauty of our county—we do not feel that TVA's Upper French Broad program fills this objective."

Our publicity men, Hap and Elmer, prepared an open letter to voters. Our eleven Transylvania board members, Democrats and Republicans, all signed an appeal to support the Republican candidates for the Board of County Commissioners, "our greatest opportunity to elect a Board. . . responsive to the peoples' needs and desires." The forthright platform of Ives, Folger, and Owen was enclosed.

At Republican Headquarters Jane Johnson was again in charge, ably backed by Marie Strasser, Cynthia White, and Jack Wyatt. From the Merrills on Little River, to Arthur Smart in Brevard, to Gordon Hardin at Calvert, to the McNeelys at Lake Toxaway—Republicans long out of power—a feeling of confidence spread.

At the fall meeting of the Conservation Council of North Carolina an unprecedented call for support of a political candidate was circulated for Charles Taylor as the leading conservationist of the Legislature. Taylor's Democratic voices were as busy as ever on Democratic telephones and Taylor swept Transylvania with 5,100 votes and our three commissioners were in the 4,600 range, while their opponents trailed by a thousand votes.

As the 1972 election was engulfed by the Nixon sweep that carried so many Republicans to unlikely heights, our victories in Transylvania and elsewhere were not properly credited to the growing interest in basic ecology. Not a single area paper put a finger on the UFBDA in spite of victories of our candidates in Transylvania and in Buncombe. The following Tuesday, however, we made prime news across the state and even to double columns in the *New York Times*.

On November 14, one week after the election, the Tennessee Valley Authority announced that all plans were abandoned for the \$123-million project on the Upper French Broad. Chairman Wagner explained that wide support had existed for the project in 1966, but "an assessment today indicated that adequate local support and commitment no longer exists." From TVA not a reference to organized opposition or to adverse political action.

The press in varying degrees recognized the role of the Defense Association. The *Asheville Citizen*, weaseling a bit, admitted that "as the Upper French Broad Defense Association has amply demonstrated, a great many valid questions can be raised for which TVA could offer no completely satisfactory answers." The editor added, "we repeat the wish of Dr. Jere A. Brittain, chairman of UFBDA, that we reassess our great wealth of water resources in the French Broad Valley," and that city, county and state leaders will now provide "vigorous initiative in planning and developing these resources." While the *Citizen* still plugs for channelization, our river is at last recognized as "valuable beyond price." Down river the *Knoxville Journal*, our cobelligerent, chortles, "Stopped In Its Tracks!" in front page headline and finds the TVA withdrawal "an all too rare display of bureaucratic obedience to clearly expressed public will."

The *Greensboro Daily News* revealed its basic commitment to sound ecology. This more distant friend noted the election of our three commissioners "who opposed the dam system as part of their campaign. In the Transylvania—Henderson district, two State Senate seats and one State House seat won by opponents of TVA." Greensboro recognizes the UFBDA, "led by Jere Brittain, a sixth-generation resident of Mills River, as the "leading opposition." This was not our first notice in the *Journal* and on November 17 for a second time we had good space in the *New York Times*. Citing the support of national conservation groups, the *Times* marks the major role of the UFBDA and explains the "unexpected help from the Office of Management and Budget," noting that only \$100,000 of the \$4 million appropriated for the project had actually been spent. The omniscient *Times* overlooked some small change—the \$1.5 million appropriated for advanced planning between 1942 and 1970, while TVA studied our river as a possible target for development.

Our best publicity came from the *Charlotte Observer*, which in the ballad phrase "did us proud." Failing to reach Jere Brittain, the *Observer* found Asheville's Mayor Wood "saddened and surprised," but Brevard's Mayor Campbell "very happy." The *Observer* then secured an interview with Brittain on future planning for the river valleys, which he saw as a major objective for the new Region B, chaired by our Mayor Campbell. In the Sunday issue of November 26 Mark Ethridge III summarizes our long contest under the heading "'Democratic Process' Beats the

TVA." Ethridge notes that some will see the result as a spin-off from the general environmental concern, and adds, "But sooner or later nearly everyone points to the work of Dr. Jere Brittain and his Upper French Broad Defense Association as the primary force behind the movement to fight the TVA and the Dams." Jere and his UFBDA would ask for no higher praise.

Charles Taylor's major contribution to our conflict was two-fold. In the first place he defined our objectives in Transylvania, as Jere Brittain defined objectives, first for Mills River and its neighbors and later for the Defense Association. At the first meeting of the Citizens and Taxpayers League Taylor's review of TVA in Western North Carolina, his analysis of "projections" for dams in our county, gave us a basic understanding of the challenge before us. His alternate proposal for flood control gave us the faith that justice was on our side and that, however arduous the undertaking, in the end we could win.

In the second place from the State Legislature Taylor provided us with tools for victory. While he was never able to push his bill for radical revision of the state's discriminatory laws through the bureaucratic phalanx in the Senate, his bill requiring loose leaf registration assured his own reelection in '68 and '70 and opened new opportunities for both Republicans and opposition Democrats in many counties. And his happiest amendment forced the reluctant TVA to announce the Asheville hearing.

In line with his progressive election reform measures were Taylor's bills on automobile liability insurance, homestead exemption for the aged, his nationally acclaimed epilepsy revision, and the state's first ethics bill—defeated in the Senate by 3 votes. In the field of environmental legislation Taylor was the acknowledged leader in our overwhelmingly Democratic body, His Conservancy Bill, when adequately funded, will mark a new era in the acquisition of state park land. On the occasion of his defeat in 1974 an editorial in the *Asheville Citizen* marks him as the "State GOP's Most Notable Loss," and explains:

"In the legislature Taylor was the leading spokesman for the progressive wing of the party, and he built a reputation on his sponsorship of ethics, environmental and consumery legislation. He often spoke out against special interest. In working for better laws, Taylor served not only his party but the public. In this respect his defeat is a serious loss for the state." The *Citizen* sees him as logical nominee for governor or congressman, for "His potential is still there."

For Transylvania the death of Hap Simpson, March 9, 1974, was a great loss to the growth of civic betterment and of sound ecology, to which he gave the full measure of his strength and his enthusiasm. The UFBDA, meeting in Hendersonville in July, unanimously adopted a resolution to establish a park on the bank of the French Broad near Brevard, to be called the Hap Simpson Memorial Park. This will be established as a part of our

continued effort for the care and development of our river, as a beautiful and integral part of our community life. This action was affirmed by a resolution adopted by the Transylvania Board of County Commissioners.

As political activists we were able to play a part in giving to Transylvania a Board of County Commissioners who made great promises and who, with the help of many citizen volunteers, serving on boards and committees with functions and powers never before delegated to volunteers, were able to fulfill a substantial number of those promises. No Transylvania Board of Commissioners has ever received such recognition and so many awards. In our brief appendix we include a list of these awards.

Meanwhile, we still have our free-flowing river, now recognized as a priceless asset by many who opposed our commitment. We now have legislation, both state and national, promising some protection to our portion of this fragile earth. We know where to look for leadership and how to power a campaign. We fought for the French Broad for eleven years, with the support of only one North Carolina congressman. Our neighbors to the east have won their battle for New River, with the support of all thirteen members of our North Carolina delegation. We rejoice that an appreciation of our good, our beautiful earth is growing in our state, but hard battles doubtless lie ahead.. The conflict is unending, but the grassroots people along the French Broad should never hesitate to enlist, or despair, if the odds seem impossible.

APPENDIX

TOWN OF BREVARD, April, 1965

Mayor - Raymond F. Bennett *

Aldermen - W. W. Duckworth

Charles E. Johnson

Dwight Moffitt *

William D. Sams

Attorney - Cecil J. Hill *

*Served until 1971

TRANSYLVANIA BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS,

1968-1972

Chairman - Donald Lee Moore

Dr. Charles L. Newland

Hale Siniard, Jr.

Attorney - Ralph H. Ramsey, Jr.

UPPER FRENCH BROAD

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (UFBEDC)

1970

David F. Felmet, Chairman

Former Executive Secretary - L. D. Hyde

COMMISSION MEMBERS:

BUNCOMBE COUNTY

Dr. Arthur M. Bannerman

Albert M. Clark

Ralph A. Vogenberger

MADISON COUNTY

Clyde M. Roberts

Philip R. Elam

Jack Guthrie

HAYWOOD COUNTY

David F. Felmet

Joe Palmer

W. J. Abel

HENDERSON COUNTY

William E. Dalton

Kermit Edney

Lon R. Goodson

TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY

Robert Melton

Nathaniel Woody

Willis Brittain

AWARDS RECEIVED BY TRANSYLVANIA BOARD OF
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

1972-76

1. Certificate of Appreciation
Presented to Transylvania County River Improvement from
Black Mountain Jaycees and United States Jaycees.
2. County Achievement Award
From National Association of Counties For Management
Audit, June, 1976.
3. County Achievement Award
From National Association of Counties For Application of
the Mini-Computer to Accounting Procedures, June, 1975.
4. Certificate of Appreciation
Presented by Keep North Carolina Beautiful, Inc., 1975 - For
River Clean-up Project.
5. Special Commendation
For efforts to establish soil and water conservation
measures and protect the natural beauty of Transylvania
County.
Presented by North Carolina Chapter Soil Conservation
Society of America 1973

Resolution Re: Hap Simpson Memorial noted in Minutes of July
14, 1975, Board of County Commissioners.

Board of UFBDA, 1971 - 1972

BUNCOMBE COUNTY

Mrs. Willis Egglar
Mrs. Francis E. Field
Robert Gillespie, Jr.
Dr. William S. Justice
Ernst Laursen
Dr. G. Gordan Mahy
Dallas Matthews
Charles T. Rawls, Jr.
Donald E. Remer
Mrs. Verne Rhoades

TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY

Fritz Albrecht
Martha Boswell
Arthur M. Dehon
Morris Hawkins
Mrs. George T. Hudgins
E. W. Johnson
Bill J. Mayes
Mrs. Clarence McCall
Newton W. Pickelsimer
James W. Simpson
Mrs. Porter Tinsley

HENDERSON COUNTY

Mrs. Clara Babb
Jere A. Brittain
Alex Duris
James Greene
Leonard Lemmons
T. R. McCall
W. M. Sutton, III
Mrs. Betty Anne Wilkie