
Tonda Barker Trivette

North Carolina 1960s Counterculture Oral History

4/19/2026

Growing Up in Love Valley

My dad built Love Valley when I was six years old; he was a general contractor who had dreamed since childhood of creating a Western town. He incorporated it in 1962, but he had already built the town back in 1954, and before long we were hosting rodeos and horse shows.

We moved up to this little community in rural North Iredell County, and it was wonderful—we settled into a tiny one-room shack with no electricity and no running water. The original town sat down below, around the arena where the rock festival would later take place. My dad first built Love Valley in 1954, and he eventually incorporated it in 1962. The same year he cut into the side of the mountain and moved the whole town up to the ridge where it stands now. Daddy served as mayor for years.

Growing up in Love Valley was interesting because every summer we were expected to work. In our family, work mattered. By the time I was twelve, I was running concessions at the rodeos, and later I even had a little clothing store in one of the downtown buildings—I bought all the clothes, boots, and hats, sold the merchandise, and kept all my own books.

We'd come home from school every day, climb onto our horses, and disappear into the woods to play cowboys and Indians, chasing each other around until dark. It was fun—we had a good time. I went to the county schools until my junior year of high school, and then I left for Raleigh to attend Peace College.

Dreaming a Festival into Being

Daddy had been watching the news and kept saying, 'These kids just need a place to come.' They're wandering around, they're lost. All these hippies are just lost—they need somewhere to go.' He'd heard about Woodstock, and one day he said, 'Why don't we do a festival?' Now, that was not my idea—I had no desire to go to Woodstock—but he told that story for the rest of his life.

He said, "What do you think, kids? Maybe we could do a little festival here. We could have a few people, book some bands."

We knew a man named Bucky Odom, who was the booking agent for the Allman Brothers. He said, 'I've got this up-and-coming blues-rock band that could actually headline your festival. He offered to bring them up to Love Valley so they could see the place for themselves and decide what they thought.

The Allman Brothers thought Love Valley was the coolest place they'd ever seen. We sat on Mother and Daddy's front porch talking and laughing, and they said, 'This is great, we've got to do this.' Then they told us, 'Here's what you're going to do: you're coming to the Atlanta Pop Festival. Come through Macon on July Fourth, we'll leave you tickets, and we'll show you the ropes. We'll introduce you to the lighting people, the sound people, everyone you'll need.' After that, we hardly slept, trying to pull everything together and get the bands lined up.

People started coming in to volunteer, offering to do whatever needed doing. We ended up with around two hundred volunteers who helped build the stage.

We printed tickets, and our main outlet was a head shop over in Winston-Salem. The guy there printed bogus tickets, and in the end, we only collected about \$25,000.

The Festival Unfolds

Everybody came straight from the Atlanta Pop Festival to Love Valley.

Friday night was beautiful. We sat up on top of the arena, looking out over nearly seventy-five thousand people gathered down around the stage. The acoustics were perfect, the stars were shining, and the music drifted across the valley. I don't think I've ever been to a concert since that felt any better. But on Saturday morning, we woke up to a sight I'll never forget—people everywhere, cars in every direction, body to body. You couldn't move. We had a fence around the place, but it didn't matter; they came in walking, climbing, pouring in from every side. Our best guess was over two hundred thousand people, just judging by the town and the valley—you simply couldn't move. There was no way to keep them out. On Sunday it rained a little and the mud came, but the kids had fun in it, and honestly, it was still nice.

It was peaceful. The kids were kind, and nothing felt disruptive. The music was so good—truly wonderful—and the whole atmosphere had this unmistakably Southern feel.

The Lost Documentary

Daddy had already been talking to a movie crew. Dale Hennessy, a Hollywood art director, wanted to come film the rock festival. He brought a crew of about twenty people—film, lighting, and sound. The sound team set up in a log building down by the arena and turned it into a soundproof recording studio.

We negotiated at my parents' dining-room table. My husband and Mother and Daddy sat there for a year, talking through that movie deal over and over, because there was no money to pay for it. They talked and talked, trying to make it work. In the end, we wound up with the rights to the film—I own the rights to it.

It's never been edited, but it definitely exists. It's out there somewhere kept in a secret place. They even sold it once or twice just to raise money. The Allman Brothers have a five- or seven-minute piece of it, and part of that footage was used when they were inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. The last I heard, maybe twenty years ago, it was sitting in a vault in California. I keep thinking, why are you hiding it? Bring it back out—let's do something with it.

A Legacy That Faded Into Legend

There's no acknowledgment of it. They want to sweep it under the rug—nobody wants to admit the rock festival ever happened. The area is so conservative, and people were embarrassed by the idea of hosting a rock festival with hippies and drugs in a North Carolina community. They wanted to bury it, to pretend it never happened, because they didn't want anyone to know something like that took place here.

There's no historical information about it, nothing that recognizes Love Valley. But that's history, a Western town being built in North Carolina is history.