

Nicole Musgrave: Recording here. So, we are recording. This is Nicole Musgrave. I am with Kyra Higgins. We are at her grandparents' home in Redfox, Kentucky, in Knott County. It is March 31st, 2023. This is for the Carr Creek Oral History Project. So, I guess just to start off, can you say your name and tell me a little bit about who you are?

Kyra Higgins: Yes. My name is Kyra Higgins. I was born, I think it was Whitesburg Hospital. But [laughter], I've grown up in Redfox. This has just been the place that I consider home all my life. I've done a lot of different work, but right now, I'm working with Appalshop. We want to learn more about the lake. [laughter] I'm here because I live near it and have some stories connected to it.

NM: Can you introduce who else is in the room with us?

KH: Yes. My grandparents are here with us. I have my granddaddy Jesse, and then my mama Dickie. It seems so strange to call you all by your name. [laughter]

NM: Well, can you just paint me a picture of what it was like for you growing up in this area?

KH: Ooh, I've got to think about that one. I know when I was little, what me and my siblings used to do – because I have three siblings – most of the time, when it would get in towards the afternoon, we would walk towards Redfox Park. It cracks me up to see posts about people saying, "Parents say, 'You better be home before the streetlights turn on.'" That was my grandparents [laughter] and my mama telling us that we needed to get home before the streetlamps turned on. That if they were on, we better be home in the next few minutes, or we were in trouble because we stayed out too late. I remember I liked to walk a lot. My other siblings didn't. So, I would take them out most of the time, walking up the holler here at – or we used to walk on the roads getting back and forth sometimes. But then we had a call. I don't know. Was it somebody that called papa, or was it somebody else? Because I just remember mom told us to stop walking by the highway and things as much because somebody had made a threatening call talking about, "You better make sure to keep those girls in the house because people were watching," kind of thing. Yes. I remember that a lot because I was the one that really liked to walk places. Sometimes, I would walk by myself. So, I had to stop doing that. I tell people it's hard for me because I'm somebody that likes to stay at home. All my siblings had friends that they would go stay the night with and stuff. I was like, "No. I'm good." [laughter] So, I was very much a stay in my room, read bunch of books. I liked watching Turner Classic movies with my mom some evenings because she would have it playing all the time. I remember the summers and things, the really good weather. [laughter] I think it's odd now that I don't remember much about the winters. It's probably because I don't want to because I didn't like it when the electricity went out. Yes. That's most of my memory, just a lot of walking. I really remember the summers, waiting for the bus in the mornings. We were late a lot of times for the bus. I remember our bus drivers were very gracious to wait on us. Yes.

NM: What sort of things did you do during the summertime?

KH: During the summer it was just – because it feels like most summers, Jessica, which was my oldest sister, I think she always had something that she was doing. It always wound up that she

was in a program that had summer events going on and activities, or she'd be staying with a friend. Then my little sister, we had a neighbor that she was friends with that she would run around with all the time. I just stayed home. Then the church that's at the front of our holler that I finally realized why it's called Cody Bible Church because I always thought that was a strange name. It was in one of the towns that was destroyed to make the lake. It was called the Town of Cody. They have a summer program where they have people come in from a different city, I can't remember which city. So, they'll bring in teens and a group of folks and hold a program that's about three or four weeks that you can go to in the morning and evening. They provide meals. So, I would do that whenever they came through. That was about it for me until I did the Appalachian Media Institute in 2015. [laughter] I think about that. Then the next summer was when I did the field academy [laughter], which is the group that took me up into the hills places. [laughter] Yes. That was my summers. I would just mainly stay home. To me, I was just grateful not to have to get up in the morning.

NM: Yes, like most kids, [laughter] wanting to sleep in. [laughter] Well, growing up so close to the lake, what sort of memories do you have from your childhood about the lake? Is it a place you went to? What was your relationship with the lake growing up?

KH: There's some stuff I don't remember. But I do remember my older sister mentioning that we used to do family reunions out by one of the parks at Carr Creek area. I don't remember that. [laughter] But I know she was like, "Yes. We used to have a lot of them there." Then as far as for me, the parks, the schools would let us visit them sometimes. I had a friend that had a birthday party there and a like a farewell because he was moving that I remember at the park. Mostly for me, it's kind of hard because I don't like water. [laughter] I just don't. It took me a really long time to learn how to swim. It wasn't because of fear water I didn't learn. It's just I didn't think to ask somebody, "How do you swim? Can you teach me?" It would always be on field trips. As rewards, we'd get taken to pools and things. I'd always just be chilling on the corner holding onto the wall. People are like, "Oh, well, you can do this. You can do that." But it was not enough time to learn. [laughter] So, I was always weary of being on decks and things. I don't think I've been on a boat other than one of the meetings that we had trying to organize some things for one of the Kentucky rural-urban exchanges. Other than that time, I don't think I've been on a boat on the lake. I used to swim in the lake, but I don't anymore after learning [laughter] about how it is not the best place to swim. [laughter]

NM: What have you learned about that?

KH: Basically, that there's a lot of stuff in the water that can make you ill. Even with our lake, they say that they keep certain procedures going. But by the way that it just looks, it doesn't seem like that's true. [laughter] I'm like, "Okay. Yes."

NM: So, rather be safe than sorry.

KH: Yes. It's funny because I had never connected. But there were stories told as a kid of kids saying they had seen the tops of houses under the water. I didn't think much about it because the lake is always – like they drain the lake every summer and stuff. There's nothing there. [laughter] But there would always be these stories of people swimming in the lake or going

further out than what they were supposed to and seeing the tops of houses or seeing like dolls and things. That was supposed to be the eerie, spooky thing that people would share with each other.

NM: So, that makes me think, you were saying before we started recording that you did not realize that it was a manmade lake. So, do you remember when you first learned that it was?

KH: That's a good question. I don't remember when I first learned because I think it just wasn't something that I had thought about. It may have literally been when I was in college [laughter] because I'm like, it would make sense for it to be manmade. But just where it's been there since, for me, all of my life, I hadn't thought about it being something that wasn't naturally occurring. So, yes. I don't know the exact moment. But I'm pretty sure it was while I was in college. Then finally connecting some of the stories that I'd heard. Because, me as a kid, listening to stories, I always got details mixed up, especially when it had a bunch of people in it because I'm bad with names. And always, in storytelling, it's always, "You know, so-and-so that's related to so-and-so." [laughter] So, I wouldn't always connect the details. I'm pretty sure I heard [inaudible] being there. I just didn't realize that's what I was hearing.

NM: So, what did you make then of those spooky stories about the tops of houses and dolls and stuff? What did you think of that?

KH: I thought that was really cool. [laughter] I was like, "What?" It was like this spooky thing. What was interesting to me, it wasn't something that I heard from just one or two people that I knew. It would always be this thing that you'd hear from the older kids. Because this was a story that I heard from one of my little sister's friends when we were like in the fourth or third grade. [laughter] You would hear the same stories from the older kids and things who probably knew that the lake was manmade, but we're amping it up. So, I just thought it was interesting. I did know they did mention Jenkins where they have their area that that one – I don't think that that was a connection that somebody had made by – I think that's another situation where there's not actual stuff left behind from what was there before. But people would talk about them in connection to each other like, "Oh, yes, and in Jenkins.

NM: Like in Jenkins, people find this in the lake?

KH: Yes. [laughter]

NM: Were there any other stories in that line that you heard growing up about the lake?

KH: There weren't. I just know there was a lot of parents' safety. [laughter] If you want to be in the lake, there's always a safety talk of some sort. Well, I guess that's not true because I will say a lot of people – I always had assumed it's a water thing or a lot of people that feel eerie about the lake in general. That's what I do remember as a kid, and even now some. For some people, it's like, "I can't describe why, but it kind of just creeps me out." Some people that'll go into stories. I can't remember them, but it was usually connected to something personal that had happened. But, yes, there was a lot of eeriness about the lake itself. It goes back into that spooky feeling and people being so sure that there are these creepy things happening in it and

around it and ghostly stuff. I do know one of my favorite stories right now is the story, The Big Fish.

NM: Oh, tell me that.

KH: So, The Big Fish is supposed to be – in the lake, there's this big fish that nobody can catch. [laughter] It cracks me up because people will be like, even riding on the bus, I remember people pointing out the lake and there being big bubbles that would show up even though the water was calm around it. Like, "It must be the big fish." People will always give different descriptors for what color it is, what size it is. Some people will say that they've caught it, or they almost caught it. But there's apparently this big fish that lives in the lake that's elusive. [laughter] Nobody can keep a straight story on its description. As a kid, I remember anytime riding by the lake, I would just look to see if there were bubbles anywhere, if there was movement that hadn't happened before. There were a few times like something would ripple at the top of the water and then go back under. In my mind, I was like, "It's the big fish. I know it. It's there." Even some of the fishers now, like I have – let's see. My older sister has a professor who talks about – [laughter] He's like, "Yes, I know the story of the big fish." He's like, "I'm pretty sure I almost caught it once."

NM: So, it is not just a story that kids share amongst themselves. It is one that adults know and share too?

KH: I'm assuming so, if he knows about it, because that's – how I'd always thought about it was like the kids shared it among themselves. But then to hear that, it's like, "Oh, more people know [laughter] about the big fish in the lake."

NM: Interesting. I like that tale. [laughter] Well, I guess I am curious, what other stories have you heard about the lake from your family or community members?

KH: I know the ones that I do remember have been deaths that have happened at the lake. Because I know that's why (Ludrina?), I didn't know until speaking to her, that one of her brothers had died in the lake. Because I think how it went down is that, he went swimming in a part where there were plants that entangled his foot. Or he got stuck in the mud and couldn't get back up. Then we had somebody that – I don't remember because I'm not good with names.

Female Speaker: Your cousin, your second cousin, Anna, and Greg. Car went over the hill up in the [inaudible] Creek. They drowned in the lake.

KH: Yes. Those are the tales that I remember. For whatever reason, for me, no other part of the lake really sets me off other than the boat dock. I think it's really eerie through there. People will say things along the lines of, they're pretty sure that people have buried bodies down there. I'm like, "Oh, I don't like thinking about that. [laughter] But okay. Great." Those are the stories that I remember about the lake aside from the big fish kind of happenings.

NM: What have you heard or what have you come to understand about why the lake came to be?

KH: That's a rough one because looking into it online, the story follows along, oh, it's to help control with flooding. It's supposed to be a resort kind of thing to get tourists to come in. I can't remember the term, but basically, to have boats and things out on the lake. That's always the tale that is spun for it. But we don't really see that happening. The most there is, is that a bunch of sand was brought in. There's the beach on one side. Then on the other side, you have the marina. Which, if you ever hear anybody say the boat dock, they're referring to the marina. Most of it leans into those two tellings of, it was to help regulate with flooding, and to bring in more economy through tourism and recreations. There we go. But looking into how it was made, I would disagree. One thing that's just theory – I probably wouldn't ever be able to prove it. Because it's one of those things that once you get in the weeds of – there's always a bunch of people that it's something they don't talk about because they're scared to talk about it. One person mentioned how – I didn't realize until we were doing the research that a lot of roads that we have now were made during the time that they were also making the lake. Some of those roads really helped out coal companies. There are some people that, they'll just hint at it, but they won't say anything more. But they feel like it helped out other people as well. But they won't name names or give details. So, I find that part of it interesting that maybe there was more to it than just, here, let's take care of the flooding and things and help people out. I know from looking into it, it's like, this is an area where a lot of black people lived that no longer live here because that area was destroyed. You dispersed families and communities that had already this built-in culture that's now gone because they had to go somewhere else. Some people didn't have the money to rebuild or the materials. Even families themselves couldn't all stay together. So, you just have like a – some people are here. Some families are there. You never get to hear from all of them because you don't know where everybody is. Then another part that I think about as far as the building of it, I still wonder, why did they choose this area? That's what makes me lean into. It doesn't seem like it was out of the goodness of trying to control flooding. Because some of the research we've done is even people at the time doing calculations and evaluating said this was not the best place to put the lake. It didn't make as much sense for it to be here, but they pushed for it to be here. It's even stranger because you'll always see the Army Corps of Engineer listed as the ones who were over the creation of the lake, hiring folks, and getting it done. But then when talking to people, there were other workers involved that weren't hired by the Army Corps of Engineers. That's the hard part for me. It's like, they were working for them. They were probably in their twenties or thirties. We're talking about something that was built back in the [19]60s and [19]70s. We know these folks either are already dead or they're old. [laughter] They're up there. These are people in their nineties. So, it's hard tracking down anybody that would be a primary person to say, "Oh, yes, I remember that." Because that's the thing, like I said, all things that lead to it being something that had other purposes of why don't we also know about these other companies that were hiring folks to work on the lake other than just the Army Corps of Engineers? Or why aren't they talking about, "Oh, yes. We took on this project from so-and-so before us. These people were working on it. It's kind of something I learned because we had a question of how long did it take the water to fill up? Was it a big event that happened all at once? Did it take a while? The general answer is that it took a while. But we also found that there was an incident that was like a flooding all of its own. I can't remember if it was accidental or intentional, but part of the lake was filled in at a big burst. That actually did lead to accidents, and people died. Then the rest of the lake was more slowly filled in. The other big question that we've had that still hasn't been answered really – and the Army Corps of

Engineers would be our best bet I think at this point. But also, if there are news archives that have newspapers and things to figure out, how did they notify people that this was happening? There hasn't been a clear like, oh there was a letter in a mail. Or somebody showed up at the house. Or there was a community meeting. I know how that goes a lot of times because this isn't an area where those are constant things and regular in the community. So, they probably just do that as an excuse to say, "Yes. We notified the community," even though they did it in a way that wasn't really accessible to everyone.

FS: They got letters.

KH: They got letters.

FS: Yes. They sent letters. They sent letters to all the people that lived in the areas down through there to let them know that they were going to buy their properties to put in the lake. That if they didn't want to sell their properties, that they were putting their money into an account. That they were taking the properties whether they wanted them to or not. So, you had no choice.

KH: Yes. It's like, you either take the money or don't. But we still take your property.

NM: Yes.

KH: Wow. Okay. So, that answers that. Because that's the one thing with people that we've talked to up until now. They're like, "Oh, I don't know. I wasn't actually home when a lot of this was happening. I came back home into it." I'm trying to think of what else. Oh, and, yes, like I said, the hard part is we wanted a variety of people to speak to because we wanted to know people that lived in the area, people that did the work of moving anything that had to deal with making the lake possible. We also wanted to know, at that time, was there any statements from officials and why they would be supportive of the lake being made or not? That's been really hard to get that variety of voices and figuring out the surrounding of who all was involved in this and how did that affect them. We did have one person. I can't remember their name, but they did work with moving graves from the lake and talked about that experience and how it was very traumatizing. Because you're taking – you know this is important. These are people's families. But from what I remember – I could be wrong – is that part of it was not only just the physical of moving the bodies and the caskets, but also, the knowledge of some of the bodies were left behind. Some of them they didn't actually have names for. They don't know who they were. Another part of it is that he didn't feel like they actually notified the family as well. Like, this is where we're moving your dead loved ones.

NM: Yes. That would be tough to shoulder the responsibility of that. That would be really difficult. Well, Kyra, I am curious, you mentioned that there was a robust Black community here. The lake disrupted that in certain ways. I guess I am curious. That is a part of this story that I have not heard a lot about yet. So, what do you know about what the community was like for African American folks here before the lake was built? Was it primarily in Redfox? Or what do you know?

KH: Well, that's the thing, I don't. [laughter] I know only that piece of information because my sister worked as a CNA at a hospital. One of her patients had family come in. She was just telling them how she wasn't trying to stay as a CNA. She's trying to find other work because they were like, "You're really good at this." The brother started talking about jobs that he regretted taking, trying to encourage her, "Well, if you really feel that way, okay, then yes. Don't stay in this line of work because I've taken jobs I regretted," and started talking about how he took work at the lake. And that for him, he was just like, "I'll just say it." He said, "Some people are scared to say it, but I'll just say it. I knew, going in there, we were destroying this place because there were a lot of Black people." Because he's like, "For the place that I worked at, yes, there were White people there." But he's like, "Most of it were people and singing and different things, and that that weren't in other communities." And it was specifically to Black people. And he says, "It's not only that, but just it was a rough job that they showed up. They wouldn't know if they were going to work that day or not. You just had to show up. They'd tell you if you're working that day." I was like, "That's going to be a hard one to track because from that detail, I know there's no paper trail." [laughter] They literally paid them as they left. They didn't give them pay stubs or anything. He's also another one that talked about that first incident where it flooded and some of – I'm going to have to double check this to make sure I'm not remembering this wrong. Because from the paperwork that I've seen, it sounded like it was an accident. But the way that he spoke about it, it was intentionally done. They didn't notify workers that it was happening. He's like, "I just looked out that they told me to go home that day." So, a lot of workers ended up dying in that. I was like, "Wow." I'm still like, "Don't know this man's name. Don't know [laughter] any way of how to find him." Of course, she can't say the patient's name because of patient confidentiality. That's not information she could share.

NM: Were any of your family members displaced because of the lake?

KH: That, I don't know. The only story that I've heard about is papa having to move his house. Because he had already built his house in one of the streams that you'll see here that they wanted to lead to the lake his house was on. So, he had to move it and make it smaller.

NM: Did that stream have a name?

KH: It has a name. I don't remember the name of the stream. Is it [inaudible] Creek? Is that the name of the stream? Or is that just the name of the holler?

FS: It's just the name of the holler.

KH: Yes. I don't know the name of the stream.

FS: We just called it creek. They didn't have a name because it's manmade. These creeks up in here and down through here are manmade too.

KH: Yes. I know they have names. I just don't remember them. Because they put them on maps that people can look at, but I'm like, "That's insane. [laughter] They're just creeks to me."

NM: Do you know anything about the process of his home being moved?

KH: I don't know. I don't. Well, I do, actually, a little, because mamaw was telling me that he had to drive, I think it was somewhere in Jackson in order to get the check cashed. It was in increments. He had to go on more than one trip. It wasn't enough to actually really rebuild the home. What was it? Mainly just for the foundation where that's all it covered? It was just the foundation. He had to find the materials and the money for the rest.

NM: So, that is the only part of your family or kin network that you know of that had to deal with relocating?

KH: I think so. Because the woman that lived here at the front, was her house from the lake or –

FS: Who?

KH: The one that was just tore down.

FS: Grandma (Ruthy's?) ?

KH: Yes.

FS: Your grandmothers? [laughter] That was your grandmother.

KH: I didn't know that.

FS: Yes. Grandma.

KH: Great-grandma?

FS: She was, yes, great-great-grandmother.

KH: Great, great.

FS: Yes. That house was moved from down the lake area up here.

KH: They thought they have to do it – did they have to like...

FS: That was Jesse's grandmother's house. Your great-great-grandmother's house. Jess Richmond and (Lizzie?) Richmond owned that house. They had it moved from down at the lake where the bridge is. You know where the bridge that you turn off to go to Hindman? They moved it from there up to here. Then when he passed away, then he married my grandmother. That land over there belonged to Jesse's daddy. Jesse's daddy sold it to him so they have somewhere else to go to.

KH: The only other person I've heard talk about the lady – it wasn't a relative. I'm going to have to see if somebody at Appalshop could remember or help me out with just what vague details I have. He was an architect that helped build Appalshop. He remembers the towns before the lake



was made because he was in for just – it was a book signing and book selling of a book about murders that happened around the Appalachian Mountains, certain famous ones. I randomly walked into the library because it was a day where it was lunch. I just wanted somewhere to relax. He was like, "Yes." Because he looked at me, and he was like, "What's your name?" I said, "Kyra Higgins." And he's like, "Are you related to any Higgins?" I was like, "Yes." [laughter] I started listing some. He is like, "Okay. So, yes." He's like, "I stayed with," I think he said it was Paris.

FS: That your Jesse's daddy.

KH: Yes. I think he said he had stayed with him when he came through and was helping figure things out for Appalshop. That during that time, the lake wasn't there. And coming through this time, seeing the lake there was kind of shocking. Because he was like, "I remember what was there before. It's just so surreal to drive past it." But, yes. I've got to talk to people at Appalshop to see if I can track down, what was this man's name [laughter] and can we contact him. Because he might have photos. He might not. But he'd be an interesting person to talk to as well because he remembers things that were there.

NM: Has your family or neighbors, have they ever shared stories with you about what the area was like before the lake came?

KH: No. This has been the first time I'm getting to hear what was there before. I just told you, during this process, that's how I finally found out that Cody Bible Church was located in the lake. [laughter] That's how they had to move it out of the lake. So, it has only been through some of the interviews that a better picture has been painted of what was there. Because we talked to somebody, and they told us about shops that were open about – there was one church too that was like a missionary church. I don't remember what it was called.

FS: It wasn't a missionary church. It was sort of like a saloon down in the bottom and the top was apartments. The missionaries stayed up upstairs.

KH: But that's most of what I've heard about. Then just seeing some of the pictures that we could find online.

NM: Aside from the one home having to be moved, are there just any lingering impacts from the lake being made that you see on your family and community?

KH: Well, yes, it's rough because after finding out about the lake, I've always been told that there are people angry about it. But I've not met those people. There have been some that we've talked to that it is considered tragic that it happened in that way, but are thankful for the roads that were made because of it. But the angry people, I've not yet to meet. But that is something that I hear a lot of. There are grudges about the lake because of how it was done and that people were being told that it's supposed to be helping with flooding. But that's for Hazard, not for this immediate area. [laughter] The reality is that if something major does happen, we're the people that are going to get sacrificed, is this area. Then, yes. It's weird because I think as part of the conversation with Hazard people that are in Hazard, I was hearing someone referencing, saying,

"We're upset." I think it's because they had family that lived in the areas destroyed and that Hazard's just where they ended up being displaced at. Even though it floods less in that area, it's still very angering to know that they didn't have an option.

NM: Yes. It is interesting the idea of grudges still being held. I think that is something that I have – I do not know. Some people expressed that they still have a little anger. It is interesting the different responses people have still about it. It seems like there is a big mix as you are describing. Yes. Well, I am curious, and you have sort of already mentioned this, but how does your community talk about the lake now, or how do they relate to the lake now?

KH: For me, it's not something that becomes a topic for anything other than like, "Oh, maybe during the summer, that's a place where you go to hang out." [laughter] That's been the main conversation in some of these spooky stories that people will share. For me, the kind of conversation around the lake is just how people are upset that they keep telling the story of recreation and tourism, and it's not happening. It's not been happening for many, many years. It's not just something that's like, "Oh, we're getting started. We're trying to change things up to get it to happen." It's like we've been fed that same story for a very long time. At this point, it's untrue. [laughter] So, stop telling us something that's untrue. That's a lot of the convos that I've had with people, like really for recreation. Nobody really uses the lake. "What recreation?" Kind of comments. Then even with the beach, a lot of people were scared to use the beach because it became a place where people that use drugs hang out. Also, for a long time, there was a mine nearby. So, you would go there, and you could hear the mine explosions. People would have to usher you off of the beach for safety reasons. Yes. So, those are the conversations that happen. They're sad ones. Because I still think it's like, I don't like water. I wouldn't be the one participating in a whole lot of stuff. But it is a big space that could be used for things. Especially getting people to come in at certain times and add to the economy. Or at least get people interested in the area. When people are interested in something, that actually helps protect it in a way.

NM: Can you talk any further about what your visions or hopes are for the lake area and for the communities around it? What would you like to see happen?

KH: I would like to see events happen. [laughter] I think that would be a fun thing to have. Just events that could probably start out local and then start inviting out of state and things for people to come to. I don't know much about how people set up for nature stuff. I'm like kayaking is something very easy that can be done [laughter] on the lake. That could probably be fun to do, races and things. I can see people enjoying that a lot because there are a lot of people that are very competitive. [laughter] And there are a lot of people that want an excuse to make sure that their kids are out of the house and actually doing something that's not related to technology so that they feel they're not going to be stuck in that. It would give people more of an idea of what fun could be had. Because it's the space that there is a lot of fun things that you can do that if supported – because I know that's the big issue. It'd have to be supported by the state and the county to provide for certain materials because a lot of people, that's the worries. They can't buy the things to do these recreations. But if supported by the state and county and they're doing events, hopefully, it would bring in more of that opportunity.

NM: Sorry. My cable here is making a weird sound. Yes, I love the idea of events and the kayaking. That would be really cool to have kayaks available there. [laughter] Well, I guess I am curious, what else have I not asked you about, about the lake that you think would be important for folks to know? Or questions about it that maybe are still on your mind?

KH: The big question that's on my mind that I think about a lot is, if it wasn't a good place to place it here, where were the recommendations of where else to place it? Then I think something I didn't mention, but in part of the research is realizing that, man – it's a number that I don't know off the top of my head. But the U.S. has a lot of manmade lakes and dams. [laughter] From certain amount of years, every day type of thing is the number of dams that we have. So, it's probably in the thousands. That's just a strange thing for me to think about. Not all of it is related to the time where people were thinking of hydroelectricity. So, it's like, what was the justification for making these? [laughter] Why so many of them? It's become a burden to some communities because dams need upkeep. There's a fear of them breaking. That has happened and destroyed lives. The other part that I'm just now thinking about is, as far as environment goes, there was a question before when we were looking at things, like, how do the things we make affect nature? Because we like to think that some of the things we're making are helping the situation. But nature knows how to take care of itself. [laughter] So, it's weird to think that we have to put something into place. It's really because we're trying to mitigate things that we've done. The lake is one of those weird things I had never thought about because people fish in it. But the fish there aren't the most healthy. It's not really recommended that you fish in the lake. And there's not as much of a variety as there was before. So, that was something I didn't know until looking into things. It's like, "Oh, that affected the wildlife. Not only the fish, but some of the wildlife that would eat the fish and depend on that."

NM: That is interesting. I had not heard that the number of types of fish has decreased. So, yes, that is really interesting. I guess maybe some people would attribute it to the big fish maybe. [laughter] [inaudible]

KH: [inaudible ] other ones to survive.

NM: Yes. [laughter] Well, I think to wrap up, I am just going to get about 30 seconds worth of the sound of the room. Then while I do that, I will just, after that, ask if there is just anything else that is still on your mind. So, we will just sit in silence. You can ponder if anything else bubbles to your mind. But I will just record that 30 seconds here. All right. Well, is there anything else still on your mind either about the lake or the before or after or just the area?

KH: I really want to find people that could talk about the Black community that was in the lake. Because we've not had anybody other than that one off [laughter] person that I don't even have contact with that's spoken about that that remembers it vividly. Because that was something I'd never heard about. Because it feels like something lost. I know too, it's maybe a part of this process that could be helpful for folks. I don't know if we'd be able to do it, but a type of tracing that when we do hear names or families, actually being like, "Yes. This is the communities they ended up in that we know of." So, we know that this is kind of the bigger picture looking at how far and wide out people were displaced. Because I know that's a part of it, is, I know I have family out there that I don't even know it's family. [laughter] That's for many different reasons.

But I can see this being something that someone would be like – they see that I'm like, "Oh, I know those folks. I didn't know that's what happened." So, that's something that I'm thinking about now. It could be kind of a picture tracing of things, if that's even possible. Thinking too, about the businesses that were in those towns, most of them didn't thrive after moving out of the town, even if they stayed in the area. So, that's something that I find sad, is that there were thriving businesses, and it took that away as well.

NM: The person that your sister talked with that you have referenced, were they Black or White? Do you know?

KH: Oh, that's a good question. I know she would mention if they were Black. [laughter] So, my assumption is that they were White. [laughter]

NM: Great. Well, just anything else?

KH: That's all.

NM: All right. Well, I will sign us off here then. So, this is Nicole Musgrave. I have been speaking with Kyra Higgins. We are at her grandparents' home in Redfox, Kentucky. It is March 31st, 2023. This is for the Carr Creek Oral History Project.

KH: Oh, wait. I just remembered something. Something interesting that also came up – because we've not heard from anybody that – the interviews that I've been a part of that – there was resistance to the lake. Not necessarily very much like people showing up and protesting. But this man is why I'm like, "There's got to be a way to find him or find more workers like him." He mentioned people showing up and standing in at places to stop work. And I'm like, "Why is this something that's not more likely known?" Because it makes it sound like they just came in and everybody agreed with it. But then when you look at the details, people were basically forced out of their homes with no choice. There's also a sense of like, "Oh, well if they really" – because that's the conversations I don't like when people are like, "Well, if they really wanted to do something about it, then there would've been this pushback." It's like, there was, but it's not talked about. It's not, as far as I can see documented.

NM: Well, maybe by some bit of magic, we can [laughter] find out who this person was or connect with them somehow. It seems like they were witness to a lot of really important pieces to this puzzle. Well, let me go ahead and turn this off here.

[end of transcript]