

Nicole Musgrave: So, we are recording now, and this is Nicole Musgrave and I am talking with Dee Davis. It is March 31st, 2023, and we are in the Oral Strategies office building in downtown Whitesburg, Kentucky and this is for the Carr Creek Oral History Project. So, I guess just to start, can you say your name and tell me a little bit about who you are?

Dee Davis: Dee Davis. I'm the president of the Rural Strategies Center for Rural Strategies. This is the War Room. You know when we first started, we were kind of campaigners. We worked on different kinds of social change campaigns, like trying to stop television series or whatever we were doing we just called them a campaign. So, we thought it'd be great to have a war room. So, this is our war room. But it's also now become the storage room and the lunchroom and whatever kind of room is needed at the time.

NM: Yes. Well, you have got the map that signifies war rooms.

DD: That's like the places we've worked since we've been doing this.

NM: Nice. Well, can you tell me a little bit about your people and where you are from?

DD: Yes. I was born in Hazard, Kentucky, as were both of my parents. I think three of my four grandparents, maybe four. I'm kind of a little unsure of where born in the, what's the act considered the Appalachian region. My grandfather Davis, whom I'm named after, he was born in Eton, Georgia, which I think may be outside of the Appalachian region. My family first came through Cumberland Gap in the seventeen hundreds. So, somebody's been around here for a while. I grew up in Hazard, went to Hazard High School, and went to college and ended up coming to work here in Whitesburg at Apple Shop. I think one of my teachers said, "That'd be good. That would raise the IQ of both towns." And so, I've been here a long time, off and on. I went back to school a little bit here and there, but I mostly spent my whole adult life in Letcher County.

NM: The focus of the interview is about the Carr Creek Lake and the building of the dam and so on and so forth. So, do you remember when you first heard that they were going to put that dam in?

DD: Yes, it was a pretty big deal. So, like a [19]57 flood, we lost everything and our family, the water came up. We were living in the bottom of a duplex. There were two, there's upstairs and downstairs. We were in the downstairs, and we lost everything. Water came to the ceiling. My grandmother lived up the street. So, we fled from our place up to her place, which was higher ground. But then the water came in there, and we went to neighbors up behind her house up the hill and stayed there. It was tragic for a lot of people who didn't have that much and lost so much. We weren't pauper. My dad had a job and my family had businesses. My grandparents had businesses, so we were always going to be okay. But a lot of people weren't. There was a trauma of the [19]57 flood. Then it was revisited again, the [19]63 flood, and then the [19]67 floods. There was a feeling that we had to do something to stop the floods. So, there was a real move to create these dams, flood prevention dams. So, both the Carr Fork Dam and the little Shepherd Dam were put on the plans, those were part of the plan to alleviate flooding. But there also was a bigger plan, which I don't think people were keenly aware of. So, at the time,

Tennessee Valley, which had been very poor coal mining region, just like this was beginning to thrive. It was beginning to thrive in large part because the Tennessee Valley Authority had flooded out so much of East Tennessee and put in hydroelectric different kinds of power plants. There was cheap electricity, and it became a welcoming spot for businesses. My friend Jeff Whetstone, who made that picture, been the chairman of the photography department at Princeton. His family down around Wartburg were displaced by the TVA dams. There's a great movie, maybe it's called *Wild Rivers* or something I have to think about it. But about the displacement of Appalachian family and the old woman says, "It's not going to take a lot of force to move me, but it will take some." And the guy in the suit is saying, "This is going to bring more than there is." This was a huge issue coming out of the new deal is like, are you going to be part of a modern economy? Or are you going to stay with your old, impoverished ways? So, it was a cultural battle at that time as to the power of the state and power of the culture and, the clashes manifest themselves in different ways that were great for artistic depiction [laughter]. So, anyway, this has all gone on. Harry Caudill, who wrote, "*Night Comes to the Cumberlands*," was a big advocate of creating the TVA style project for Eastern Kentucky. He thought it was ideal, the ridges and that if we had the network of lakes like Tennessee or so that would bring prosperity. We were, and continue to be the first part of the country. So, when I was a freshman or sophomore, I guess a sophomore at University of Kentucky, I had a political science class I wanted to write about strip mining and write about poverty and economic development, all this stuff. So, a former editor of *The Hazard Herald*, and then a great journalist for the Courier Journal was named Frederick Lugard. He's credited for some of the pictures in "*Nights comes to the Cumberland*" once thought of as an environmentalist. He went to work to be the chief executive of the Kentucky Coal Association. He was a friend of my dad's like, were drinking buddies. So, when I was at UK, I asked him if I could have an interview I think I told you about. I wrote that about this, a longer piece, kind of thumb sucker for the Daily Yonder. But I wrote about it in there and going to scene. It was fascinating to me because he laid out this whole plan that the Coal Association had which was this bold idea. He talked about Alan Toffler and Future Shock and he kept saying, "It's not immoral for people to have to leave a place that can't support them." He talked about this extensive plan for displacement in Eastern Kentucky, and this plan was built around a kind of technology and that technology was gasification of coal. There was this thought that they were going to be able to gasify or liquefy coal in the ground, take it out in the same way they do gas, right. You know, liquid gas, right? They liquefy gas, and then they take it out in these big containers. This was his idea that they were going to be able to do this. So, there was a plan that included a series of dams and movement of water that the Red River Gorge area was going to be flooded. Then all the whole Kentucky river watershed was going to be turned into lakes. There were going to be connections that you could float out this liquified or gasified coal. But the technology kept failing. So, this was part of the plan but the plan was flawed, the main. That has happened sometimes when you've got these big plans, right? Government and business and put their heads together. So, there was a hope to alleviate poverty here, which at that time you had Michael Harrington's book, it was out. Then you had Harry Caudill book. There was this discovery by the networks of all these white impoverished people. You had Bobby Kennedy's visit, I mean, there had been all this spotlight put on poverty in Appalachia. A lot of that was John Kennedy coming to West Virginia. It was like Jack Willis' film *Appalachia: Rich Land, Poor People*. So, the American imagination had moved on to understanding that the kind of dust bowl poverty that people saw after the depression saw in the South with African Americans had seen in, with farm workers in the

Southwest, all of a sudden, the same kind of poverty was here with all these white people in Appalachia. Appalachians had been used in lots of ways from being noble pioneers in the 1900s being these ruffians that they couldn't control their own resources. Yes, there's lots of times, different powers that he had to reframe who Appalachians were. Well, this was a huge reframing, and it was a reframing of Appalachians as pitiful. The solutions to pitiful were prosperity or outmigration and so, this big plan hatched. It's somewhat like when I was talking to Fred Louis Gart. He said, "Here's what's going to happen." He was very confident that he was right. He said, "By 2000, there's only going to be one city in Eastern Kentucky, possibly two, maybe three." The one city that he was sure of was Pikeville, which I still don't give a shit for Pikeville. Two was Harlan, and three was Hazard. So, I had this hope that Hazard would hang on. But at the same time, you think, well, this is kind of idle, but Pikeville was picked as like a model city. I remember it on the NBC evening news Huntley-Brinkley, as they said, they were naming, it's like from Oakland, California to a place called Pikesville, Kentucky. They thought it was unusual that this small little town would be picked as a model city, but that was like the moving of the river, the whole transformation of that town. What Lugard was saying was "This was going to be the center of this coal economy and it's going to be a banking center. It's going to be a whatever, I don't know." But that a lot of people were going to be displaced. There was going to be a system of moving barges with gasified coaling, that pipe's not on the Kentucky River it's on the Big Sandy system. It would be all over Eastern Kentucky and I assumed that they thought that the federal government was going to pay for this transformation. So, this is a big plan. It didn't happen. And yet there were all these indicators that some people thought was going to get. You couldn't get a FMHA loan I mean, it's like the difficulty of getting these government investments in housing and all this stuff was, it's like, why is this happening? It should, why were they so restrictive? Why were they not making investments here? I guess conspiracy theory. But I always thought that there was this master plan the different parts of the government understood and then didn't get the memo when it didn't work. Right? In the same way I talked to somebody at Microsoft once and said, "Well, we believe that the country's going to be nine-tenths metropolitan, and da, da, da, da". Well, if they believe it, then Jamie Dimon and the big banks believe that. That means they're not going to invest in poor rural. You could say it's a conspiracy, you could say it's paranoia, or could you say it's just the reality. But they, build these models and then they invest toward the model, right, and we know it. It's like, I don't know what it is. You know eight, ten patents are coming out of a handful of cities. That's where the wealth is being created. Then you have residential wealth where people want to live in. It's like in the same way that the stuff that we see around rural American disinvestment, it was very intense around Eastern Kentucky disinvestment at that time, in the late [19]60s, early [19]70s. That's when I was in college, and that's when I went to do that visit. If this seems to be all over the place, is that's the way my memories are connected to each other. So, I came back to work at Apples' shop. I'd worked there for a slim as a film intern. But I came back to work at Mountain Review Magazine and to work a little with roadside theater in I think it was like less of [19]74, I think [19]75 was when I was mostly working. I came in, seems like we just published the last mount review of [19]74. So, it may have been [19]75, but somewhere in that era. They had already started all the preparation for the dam and then moving people out and stuff. I lived in [inaudible] or lived right on the Hazard side of the dam, on the downstream side of the dam. Right where spillway emptied out and this in an apartment below, a dairy bar and I delivered furniture there. My family had a furniture business. So, from the time I was in late grade, eighth grade all through high school. I delivered furniture. So, we'd go up there and go to Cody, go to

Red Fox, occasionally, a lot of that. The people there mostly traded with Cody Furniture and Hyman, or with more or so, probably with Martin's department store in Vicco. We got some business there. It's also hard to understand now if you drive through there, looks like the roads are good. The roads were not good, so everybody had to go through Cody. That was the town and Cody was barely a wide spot in the road. There was a gas station there, which was its most distinguishing feature. I don't even think that gas station had – I don't know it was a grocery there. I don't know how much, there were some few houses there I don't really recall much commerce there. Then Red Fox was a bigger community. It had up the hill there and what's now along the fifteen wasn't there, but there were farms all up in there and small houses. I mean, gardens, not farms so much like we think. But at one time, there were farms up in there, bigger, bigger gardens. I remember more like after it'd been emptied, right? Because I was an adult then, I remember seeing the place after it'd been cleared out, and a lot of homes had been moved. The Kirk Creek High had been moved, all the stuff had been moved up the up on the hill a little bit. Mr. Steel lived on Wolf Pen, which was not affected there was a lot of it. There were a lot of people who were displaced who didn't like it. Then I wasn't aware of a kind of universal anger because I think a lot of people thought this was going to bring some prosperity or bring something. I don't know. I just wasn't aware of it. As a sixteen-year-old delivering furniture, I'm more aware of like where you get pickle bologna and a pop knee-high. I saw things. So, there were people who were engaged in that struggle a little bit, but failed. Then one guy who I remember, and I need to see if he's still alive, he was my age. His name is Jake Messer. We worked with him. He was an activist against drip mining. There were the people who ran Cordia school, who fought strip money in Knott County and who were really kind of heroic and, fought off Bill Sturgill and fought off these more ravenous companies. But, for us who were by then in my twenties and those of us who were activists, we were also out drinking, mating. We were out whooping it up. So, there was kind of a great kind of resistance or defiance that came with it not being part of the mainstream, not being part of the narrative that we wanted to reset everything. I think in Appalachia at that time, there's a powerful feeling that the, that the stereotypes had taken their toll, the pejorative way. The rest of the country thought of the region had been a harmful, and that those of us who were from here were going to be defiant and, we're going to fight back. We didn't know exactly how to fight back and a lot of our fighting back had to do with drinking a lot of beer and talking about it but that's what we did. There were some different acts of defiance sitting in front of bulldozers or messing up some operations. But for the most part, it was mostly us being willful, talkative, defiant, protesting...

NM: Sitting in front of bulldozers of the dam being built or that more strip-mining stuff?

DD: No, of the strip mines.

NM: Okay.

DD: So, but it was all seen kind of like as outside forces, even if it, even when it wasn't. So, the whole damn stuff, I'm kind of sketchy, it's just wasn't what I was. I remember talking to Jake about people being displaced, and he said, we tried everything. So, I would think he'd be worth. He was a contractor, a builder in Asheville last time I checked. It has probably been ten years ago since I heard about him. I can check and see if he's still around. But right now, I think he did okay down there. He was all fun. I know that there was a woman who had a radio show on

WMMT, called Nora Honey Cut. She was known as Granny Good Witch and, her son Johnny Honey Cut, I played a lot of ball with. When she died, I went to the funeral, which was over in Hyman and I was surprised to hear the stories there, but it was just so moving. It's like, I think she had a large family, one of the people got up and spoke at funerals African American men said that when he was growing up, that he was from a large family, and it sounded like one parent died they only got very sick. They had no way to feed themselves, and that the Honey Cuts' just took them all into their home, and they lived with them, and they lived with his brother and sister, and they you know, farmed together, did all that. So, Nora's been dead for a while, but Johnny's still in town he was flooded out pretty badly by this flood. They all had to go up on the second floor. But they live in that big house in upper bottom, with a swimming pool. I don't know what else it's called, but it's kind of you'll see it from across the road. It was there. So, he probably has heard those stories, and it'd be worth talking to. There was this woman who lived in Red Fox, who worked as a kind of house cleaner babysitter for our family. I have a brother's thirteen years younger than me and his sister's like ten, eleven years younger. So, my mom...

Male speaker: My name is Inigo Montoya.

DD: I got to take this. Sorry.

NM: Okay, I'll pause.

DD: This woman who worked, she was not much older than me, but pretty young. She was from Red Fox, and she came to work, and I think my mom helped get her in nursing school is my memory of this. Right? She would always be lecturing me about, I remember it is like not everybody's free in this country kind of stuff. Anyway, her name is (Dessie Bowling?). Then last I heard, she went to Lexington she was a nurse, and then moved to Lexington. I hadn't thought about her in forever a hundred years, but I was having to get the surgery on my nose. I was in the Lexington Clinic, and all of a sudden, I heard somebody called a name (Dessie Bowling?). I saw her go in and then I started looking for her. Then she came out and walked down the hall. I ran after her to find her and I couldn't find her. But I think she's in Lexington, and I think she lived in Red Fox at that very era. So, an African American who lived there, I mean this Williams who made the movie about the Appalachian was there. Christians were there. There are people who have those memories but probably don't want to get engaged in a narrative, which is not helpful for them. But I don't think she would be that hard to find. I think she's somewhere in the Lexington area. She was walking with the cane when I saw her, so I was like, she must've gone out into the parking lot, and I curved the wrong way trying to find her and I wish that I'd been more aggressive to see her. But it just kind of all came together slowly in my cottony mind. I think this is still true. Carr Fork Dam was set to take four feet of water off of Hazard flooding and I think, and the Kingdom come down was even going to be more. But that was opposed by Willie Gilliam, and he raised so much stink. I don't know how important it was. The Red River Dam was stopped by so much stink. There were people raising hell because they didn't want to be displaced. There was a pretty active group of people who were connected and around Blackie and Letcher. What had been that Hope Stuart Robinson School stuff, smart, smart people, middle class people who didn't want to have to move and there was a real attempt to get the Hazard Community College placed in Blackie at this old Stuart Robinson campus. That was originally the plan and then they switched it. So, I don't know if

that was all that was going in the flood zone, and it was all about zoning. I heard Willie Gilliam, they were trying to do something else around zoning here. It must've been in the [19]90s, or no, maybe late [19]80s or something. He came out. He was the old man, and he was bringing up the same stuff that he'd use to fight the dam. It was kind of wacky, but it's like opposed to zoning. A lot of people who have a piece of land don't want to be told what kind of house they can build or how they can use it. That has the pluses and minuses, right? But you can certainly twist people up about it. So, he was good at twisting people up. He was out to kill the big zoning plan, which also the mineral companies didn't want, because they don't want any regulation. They want to pretty much be able to kick people around in their own way and not have the local government involved. But, of course, they could just buy off the local government like they always have. So, I don't even know why that's a problem, but they were out in force. So, it's I don't know a lot, I wish I did. I wish I knew more but I do know that the intensity of the flooding was a big part of that. I also know when I first heard about this project, because I always thought of Cody is wide, and I thought that doesn't sound right to me. What a town is called and where the post office is, of course, you can be a vast area and a bunch of hollows where people go there to get their mail. You wouldn't necessarily see everybody who's caused that a residence, right? But I started looking just kind of going through the census data, and it didn't seem like there were, I mean, you can see who's displaced and I couldn't figure out. I put a lot of store in the way people remember things and I care about the stories we tell ourselves in order to hang on to our communities. So, so I appreciate it. But also, sometimes we hear a story and we want to turn it into the cause of the era, the zeitgeist. You know what I mean? It's like, yes this, can you just see that this is what happened? I don't remember it that way, that mean it didn't happen that way. But there's certainly been serious not migration of African Americans in Eastern Kentucky. My understanding of it was, when the mines first opened here, there were what they call pulling transportation. They would bring in, they were going to bring in hundreds, over a hundred thousand miners, minor family from Alabama here to mine coal. Then you have places like Lynch, which were US Steel mines that brought, that could bring in people from other places where they had mines and steel operations. We know that Lynch, because it was the great class, a football power in Kentucky, they would bring in [laughter] these ringers from West Virginia and Pennsylvania to bring in to play ball. But what happened a lot of the time was people were brought in because they had experience in the mine coal. Especially around unions, you hear a lot of this. We were all the same under all – the mines people weren't discriminatory. And you hear that in places like Jenkins, which was Bethlehem Steel US Steel mine, particularly there. But after World War II, the industry changed when the Joy Loader began to replace so many miners, the automation began to replace so many miners. A lot of times the African Americans were the first to be let go. So, particularly when they were working non-union months, right, they didn't have much protection. So, there were lots of different huge out migrations of African Americans. That's why you have the East Kentucky Social Club, you have all these places. So, that came from the industry. I don't think that the Army Corps of Engineers or somebody who's dreaming up a dam to take four feet of water off of Hazard was saying, and we can displace its vulnerable population. It's more like casualties of war. It's just inadvertent, unconscious. We're builders, we're building dams. This brings prosperity. These people are poor. We can compensate them for their homes. It may be sinister in retrospect. There may have been speculators who cheated people, but I don't believe what the prime motivation was. We're going to harm these people by getting huge investments from the federal government. It was more like, "Oh, God. This place is a mess. Let's get the engineers to fix it."

NM: Yes, that makes sense. Since the dam has been built, do you feel like flooding has eased in Hazard?

DD: Yes. Still they said it made a huge difference this time. I think it has, there hasn't really been a bad flooding Hazard since it was built. There was a flood not a few years ago, and it got a good deal of Main Street in North Main there in Hazard. But the kind of flooding that, the [19]50s and the [19]60s, this is not the same. This quickly get beyond my level of expertise. Right. You know there are all these scientists who have been swarming around explaining it. You've had a different kind of mining since then, right? You've had all the strip mining and the changes, the violence of the water flows and when you have these weather events. But a lot of places got it bad but it seems that the Carr Fork Dam mediated the damage down the river towards or down the creek towards Hazard.

NM: Yes. Do you have memories at all of the dam being built?

DD: Of what?

NM: Of the dam being built? Yes.

DD: Yes. I mean, it was a huge operation. I mean there's this tragedy of this truck driver I think a young truck driver who was driving down the road to Cody in a tree that had been timbered slid down and right through the cab of his truck. People talked about that and that story lingered a long time because they took all the timber when they were doing it and I mean, it's in some ways, right? When you drive by the lake in its lowest pool, right? You can kind of see everything that was there. You don't see the houses that were there, but there were a lot of people had houses that were now would be in the lake, but you can kind of see the terrain. The roads were different, but at that same time, they were building the road to circumnavigate that area. So, it's not new now, but Highway 15 between Vicco and Whitesburg, then that old road along Carr Fork was that 421. I think that's changed a little bit, but you used to have to – so you would go down into Cody and up around. I remember visiting some people over in Heim and some kids playing in the creek, going where the crowd is. A little girl was talking about some snob in the crowd she must have been eleven or twelve some, but talking about a snob there in Hyman who was bragging about going to Vicco to get her hair done. I always thought, why would they go to Vicco? Because I didn't realize that Vicco was closer than going to Hazard or Whitesburg. So, there was this kind of commerce that went back and forth from Vicco, which is a very old town, and which had been at one time a metropolitan park of Perry County, which had African American school. I don't know, two or three schools in the area, and had been where the bank was headquartered in Perry County. It's because that's where the mining was. When I was doing social work, we worked with guys who'd been in the union, the old union hall there, and are all working. It had been fairly prosperous but it had the winds had changed and other parts of the region grew when it declined.

NM: Yes. Well, maybe one other question that is lingering in my mind is I have talked to folks about what the communities were like there that were around the dam. Lots of people have shared their memories. So, I am just wondering, you talked about going and delivering furniture

a lot as a young person. I do not know, are there just any stories or memories that stand out in your mind from spending time in those places?

DD: So, I got a pretty good memory, but sometimes it's hard, did we go to this house in Buen or was it a dwarf?

NM: Starts to blur.

DD: I couldn't speak with any authoritative sense of it, but I would say that it was a fairly well kit community that a lot of people had gardens. I think a lot of Knott County hadn't been developed, and mining hadn't been developed quite as much as it had in Perry County or some of these other counties at the time. So, I mean, I think at that time it was the poorest county in the United States. I think Knott County may have been the poorest county in the United States, like at [19]69, [19]70. So, I mean, I can say from delivering all up and down the area that I saw shit that people it's just hard for people to understand now, right? It's like, when I was a kid, you go up and down, Hazard would be like Calcutta, right? There would be so many people on the main streets of Hazard, and there would be all these cripple miners with tin cans begging. Because there was no social safety net, at that time. You had commodity cheese, and peanut butter, but you didn't have food stamps. It's like, and people were burning coal so, it was kind of it would hang and it would be dark in a different way in the communities. There was a little shopping center or Dollar General store. So, you would buy bolts or buy material at the dry goods store. There would be grocery store. There'd be a lot of things, and you would have to go to courthouse for different transactions. So, all these main streets were big and bustling. People would have to get in by bus if they didn't have a car, or they'd have to catch a ride and it was shoulder to shoulder. I had an allergy to these things, so I had to go get shots every week at the clinic when I was a little kid. God, it was intense. My mom worked at the hospital. It was intense just to see how many people were in tough stride is now. You could romanticize what it's like or think of, but there were a lot of people who were in rough situations. Think of going to school and maybe a third of the class would need or maybe a fourth of the class would not be able to afford their lunches. So, they would have those kids go work at the cafeteria. They would have to work for their lunch. So, they would leave early for lunch. It is just a different era because of color. A lot of kids – they were poor kids – were often people would say dirty ears. Dirty that was like a pejorative way to talk about poor kids. But often, some kids were dirtier [laughter] than others not like everybody didn't really take a lot of pride. Every time we were doing interviews, filmmaking, you have so many people say, "Well, we didn't have much, but we kept our clothes clean and we kept our house clean." This were huge means, part of the pride of being from the region and of being able to take care of yourself and hating the idea of being thought of as the other, even if you really had to take things to feed your kids. So, it was a different era. I think it's hard for people now to get back into that era, which was so similar and different at the same time, right? The prospects were so different and there were so many people struck. So, of course it looked exotic to news crews from New York City showing up here because it was so different from everywhere else and so, I do remember being there. I've seen people living in school buses, people who you couldn't, there would be so many flies on the ceiling of a house. You just saw intense poverty in people struggling to keep things going. So, I mean, I think it certainly, motivated me I did social work. I wanted to be, I wanted to come back here I mean, that was my home. It changed the way I understood this area made, it made



me angry in a way that I wanted to create some kind of change. But you want it to be thoughtful. You want it to be based on reality, not on mythology that it didn't fit the things that some of us saw and felt and understood, but also such as the world, right?

NM: Yes.

DD: A world where everything changes and, what I saw may be, what I remember may be, tinged by my own hopes or aspirations or discuss. So, I don't want to be too rough on everybody else, but sometimes you hear these narratives unfold, and you're just like, I can't be a fact checker. I can't just be the corrector all the time, but it's also like, Jesus Christ, where did you get that ?

NM: [laughter] Well, yes. You have definitely clarified a lot of things for me. I appreciate you sort of laying out some of the history of it all.

DD: I mean, I wish I knew more. I wish I was, but it's just not, it wasn't my territory.

NM: Right. But I think still, like your understanding of a lot of the higher-level stuff, like adds a lot to some of the other interviews that I have gotten for this. So, yes.

DD: Yes. I mean, and some of that may be off too, but I, don't think it's too strange because I do think there's a lot of corroborating evidence. It's just and I thought when I put that in the Daily Yonder, because it was like I remember Julie, who was one of journalist at the time said it was like the most read story. It's a long story about color industry. But it's like she was saying that the average length of time that people were spending with is like nine and a half minutes. So, I felt like if this is off or if this is crazy, I'll hear about it. But I never heard anything bad back, or nobody ever said this didn't happen. But it's maybe such a necessary study that nobody cares. [laughter]

NM: I guess there is always that possibility. [laughter]

DD: Yes. I think that is right.

NM: [laughter] Well, I guess just to wrap up, I just want to get about 30 seconds of room tone. Then I will just ask if there is anything else that is still on your mind that you want to share. But for now, we'll sit in silence as I get the room tone. Was there anything else still on your mind or anything I didn't ask you about you think?

DD: No. I was sitting and listening to the ambiance.

NM: Yes.

DD: It is like the...

NM: Overhead light. [laughter]

DD: Cent Lights. Yes. [laughter] I've been thinking I want to get a historical marker for the

great Badman Clay Jones is buried in the Hazard Cemetery. It's like, I've been thinking about this and I was thinking like my whole time, I don't know what I'm doing on the history commission, the historical. It's like, I'm thinking, "Oh, man. Only if I could do one thing before they kicked me off, it's like, maybe I could get a historical marker." I think that'd be cool. I was thinking about a lot of historical markers that could be put around Carr Fork you know, a lot of people, lot of stories. Mr. Steel talked about I think Herbie and Liz were living over there and they were going to New York or something. He said how casually they just went. He said he remembered that first time he went to New York. He was walking out with his suitcase to get the train. They let all the kids out from school to watch him walk by because he was going to New York City. That was such an exotic thing. That's right there on Carr and there's a great story. The most heroic story was the 1928 Kirk Creek basketball team that was in four overtimes with Ashland to win the state champion. Then they went to the Nationals. I think they made the final four of the national basketball tournaments but they didn't have uniforms. They wore just cutoffs and t-shirts. When they went to the finals, a doctor around bought them uniforms. But they all had to walk out to the train, right? So, all this area, which is now underwater, was all part of where they had to traverse and they became national heroes. That whole Carr Creek basketball team became very famous nationally. It'd be interesting if I'm making a play about it. I would say there are a lot of cool stories there, Mr. Steel. The whole story of his writing, Saturday evening post, they said that Robert Frost would come into the Harvard Review and demand more James Steele poetry. I mean, all that is right there. I mean, it's in that era area, and it's like stories of aspiration and stories of achievement. You wouldn't want to just to miss that if you were trying to tell a story of a people and of achievement, and disappointment and twists and turns along the way. Does that make sense?

NM: Yes, totally. Well, thanks so much for sharing all this and definitely giving me a lot to think about. I will go ahead and sign this off. So, this is Nicole Musgrave, been talking with Dee Davis. It's March 31st, 2023, and we are in downtown Whitesburg, Kentucky. This is for the Carr Creek Oral History Project.

[end of transcript]