Nicole Musgrave: So, we are recording now. This is Nicole Musgrave. I am with Etta Gayheart. We are at her home at Wolfpen in Knott County. It is April 10th, 2023. 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?

Etta Gayheart: My name is Etta Gayheart. I'm elderly. I'm 80 years old. I stay busy with my crafts and whatever to keep my joints moving. [laughter] So, that's about what I do at the time. At my age, I'm lucky to do my housework. So, that's about it for the present.

NM: Well, Etta, will you tell me a little bit about your people and where you are from?

EG: Where I was raised?

NM: Yes.

EG: I was born in a cabin, a log house at Smithboro, Kentucky. That is part of the Carr Creek Lake. I was born January 4th, 1943. It was a nice community. But when I was 3 months old, my parents moved to another house, and that is the house beside of me that my sister lives in. So, I went to grade school in this little community. We had two grade schools, two churches, two grocery stores, and a bunch of kids. [laughter] I walked to school, but it wasn't very far. It would take fifteen minutes to go to school. But I went to a two-roomed school and I loved my teachers. They were so good. At that time, you had two rooms. Well, the lower grades, like the first through three was in one room, we would learn from what the teacher taught the upper grade. So, when we got to that grade, we knew a lot about that grade. I've had one of my teachers tell me that was the best teaching because she taught all grades really. But anyway, I went through the seventh at Smithboro. Then I went to Carr Creek High School with the eighth grade through high school. I graduated from high school in 1961. I loved my high school. We had fun. We didn't know we had it made, but we did because we didn't have a lot but we had a lot. So, that's that part. Then after that, I graduated. I was eighteen when I graduated. So, my parents couldn't afford to send me to college, so I needed to work. But I did work through high school on weekends for my uncle that had a grocery store there. I got paid $2 a day on Saturday. My dad lost his job when I was a junior in high school, so that helped. That paid my lunch at school, which was only 20 cents a day in high school. So, I saved that other dollar until I got about ten, and I could buy me a complete outfit of clothing. That sounds unreal now that you can get an outfit for $10, but you could in the [19]50s. So, I've always been prone to be independent and my dad taught me that. My other sibling said he never said that to them, but he always told me. He called me girl. He didn't call me Etta because I was supposed to have been a boy [laughter] and when I was born, I was not a boy. So, anyway, I guess that's why he called me girl. But he said, "Always be independent, and so you can make it on your own without a man. Get you a job and make your own money." So, I was lucky. The Food Stamp Program was coming into this county in [19]62. So, I was a state worker. You were hired by the state from Frankfort. So, I went to Frankfort and took the test. So, I became a secretary first, that was in [19]62. Then I worked as a secretary. They took several of us. Then in [19]73, they had this thing they called grandfather. If you passed the social worker test, you could get your social worker license without a college degree. I couldn't have a college degree because I was only nineteen when I started working. So, that was the hardest test I ever took. It had nothing to do

with my job, it was just, I call stupid stuff. But anyway, I think I made about seventy-five on it, and I was pleased to make that much. But anyway, I went into social work in [19]73. Then I worked there until [19]95. 1995 I retired at thirty-three-year service, and I was 52. Now, one reason I did is my take-home pay, the difference between my net salary and my retirement was less than $100 a month. So, I thought, "Well, it's not worth all the aggravation." I called it aggravation. So, I just retired and I've not regretted it. I've enjoyed it. My husband, he was a builder of antique cars. That was his hobby in the little garage in our backyard. He built Ford Mercuries, 1950s. We were [19]50s people and we liked it. Then he built me a 1936 Ford, which I still have. Now, he passed away seven and a half years ago. So, it's okay, I make it. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to do this.

NM: It is okay.

EG: But I miss him. We went to car shows. I don't know if you've heard of the James Dean, the actor. He was born in Fairmount, Indiana. It was a town not big as Hindman. Hindman [laughter], it was about that size. Didn't have a red light. But it had this huge park, bigger than the town. So, they started having a car show in his memory in the [19]80s. So, we went to that every year for thirty-three years. But I had a sister that lived in Marion, which is a town close by. So, we stayed with her for four days. So, that was what we like to do. So, that's about all I can tell you really. But we had a good little community at Smithboro. We loved it. Just a bunch of us kids that'd get together. We had this family that built a dairy bar early – I don't remember. It was in the [19]50s, I guess, when they did that. So, we would gather up out there. We just had fun. But it was a good life, very simple, but I enjoyed it.

NM: Now, I am curious to know a little bit more about your family. What did your parents do? What were they like?

EG: My dad was a coal miner. He worked for different people. But I don't know how long he worked. See, he passed away at age 59. I think he started working right in his twenties. That's how we lived and he loved it. Now, my mom, she was just a housekeeper. But in later years, she cooked at the grade schools. She became a cook in the lunchroom. She worked at that several years. Then in [19]66, these houses were moved in here. That one, that's my home house. Then this was moved. Well, we all moved in here in 1966, all these houses around here. But there were four of us, four children. Had an older sister, the one that I stayed with when we went to the car show. Then (Debbie, Corbett's?) wife, she's the youngest. Then I have a brother between me and her. There are four kids. So, we managed. It's about what they did. In the evenings in Smithboro, we had a big – well, as big as it is now – a big front porch. Neighbors would gather on somebody's porch every evening in the summer and just talk. The kids and all, we'd all play in the yard. Then in the summer when everybody raised their gardens, we would have what you call bean stringings where they dried beans and they'd string them up on the string. We'd get together and help each other until dark to string those beans up and let them dry. They tasted good in the wintertime. My mom, she'd done most of the garden work because dad worked. She would freeze stuff, she canned stuff. We didn't know what it was to go hungry. That was good food. [laughter] They raised their beans, potatoes, corn, cabbage, onions, all that stuff. She managed to put it all in the freezer or can it. We worked. We had our jobs to do. There were no phones. We finally got phones, I don't remember what year that was, but it's like

a party line, four on a line. Everybody could listen in. [laughter] That was not good. [laughter] But anyway, we finally got phones and we got TV and that was a blessing. So, we just had a simple life, we laugh about it now. We didn't have indoor plumbing until I was a junior in high school. We didn't have a bathroom in the house. We bathed in what we called wash tubs. That's how we were raised. Boy, we were picky with that bathroom when we got it. [laughter] We all kept it clean. [laughter] My mom was a fanatic housekeeper. She wanted everything in place.

NM: What were your parents' names?

EG: What was their names?

NM: Yes.

EG: My dad's name was Watson Smith. My mother's name was Rhoda Owens Smith. Now, her grandmother was Indian. We know very little about her because he wouldn't talk about it. She deserted him. She just left him when he was young. So, he was raised by other people. He would not talk about it. So, we don't know. We do have a picture of her. She's definitely an Indian. [laughter] She looks it, her hair parted in the middle, big thick braids. We know her name and that's all. His wife, my grandmother, she could not get him to talk about her at all. So, we know nothing about that situation.

NM: What was her name?

EG: Her name was Lucinda. That was on the back of the picture that we had. My grandmother's father, they had a log house and it burned when I was really small. But somehow that picture survived. They had a – they called it a closet as you went in the front door and the house caught on fire, they just grabbed a few things, and that picture was one of them. It was a small picture and they had it enlarged later. But they lost everything when I wasn't in school age, so it was before I was 6 years old. But I do remember it. I do remember the house burning and I can see it today. I still remember because we'd go to grandma's house and she'd always have this good food in the warmer, they called it. They had a coal stove. They'd cook with coal. On top of that was this, we called it a warmer. It was oven-like and she would make homemade biscuits and have bacon where they'd kill their hogs. That was the best stuff ever. I couldn't wait to get to grandma's house. [laughter]

NM: Where did they live at?

EG: Pardon?

NM: Where did they live at, your grandma?

EG: Where what?

NM: Where did your grandparents live?

EG: They lived at Amburgey, Kentucky. It's called Irishman Creek. The house was the first, it's

called at the mouth of a holler, which that's covered with water now. It does not exist anymore. But we got our memories. I still remember. I don't know what else to tell you.

NM: Well, I just have got so many questions. You mentioned that your mother was a housekeeper. Did she clean other people's homes or you just meant your own?

EG: No, she just stayed busy with us, I guess. Oh, yes, she was picky. When we came in from school she said, "Don't put them books on that bed. I don't want that bed messed up." [laughter] So, we learned a lot from mom and dad, both. We learned independence and I'm so thankful. Like I told you my dad – and I never forgot him telling me that – to make your own way, that you can get by without a man. It's worked out. See, when I worked for the state, I paid in social security and retirement. So, it's worked out really well, that I can make it on my own. So, anyway, I can't think of anything else. There's probably a lot more, but I can't think of it.

NM: I think you said your father lost his job when you were a junior. What was that about?

EG: Well, see, then the coal mines were not a permanent thing. They would just close the mines if they didn't have the coal. If they run out, whatever, they just closed the mines. That happened several times. Then he would find another job. Then when he was where he worked in coal mines and they didn't have the proper mask to keep the coal dust off their lungs. He had one. I remember washing that. It was like a foam thing that fit over your nose. It would be black with coal dust, but he breathed that. He did get black lung from it. It helped make him disabled because the last day he worked in the mines, he passed out from smothering, so he couldn't go back in anymore. He loved to work and that bothered him that he couldn't work anymore. So, then he had to apply for social security and that took a year or more. Black lung, I don't know how long it took for that. I just don't remember that part. But anyway, he loved working. But they had no idea back then what coal dust would do to you. It made your lungs black, that's why they called it black lung. The X-rays, all the little veins, and all the little that your lungs have, became stopped up. They were hardened from the coal dust. So, that was not a good thing. But he passed away at age 59. To me, that was a lot young, 59. He was almost 60. But what happened then he had aneurysm and it was on his aorta artery and they couldn't stop the bleeding. So, that's what actually killed him, was the aneurysm. So, they were living here. We all had moved in here when that happened. Mom lived until she was 73 and she got cancer of the stomach. She only lived two weeks from the time we found out she had it. The doctors told us that – he said, "You don't realize it now, but it's a blessing." She had the real fast kind. It changed from day-to-day. He could see the big difference from day-to-day. In two weeks, she was gone. She had no stomach problem. She could eat a big onion. Onion could kill anybody, probably. [laughter] I don't know. It was just her time to go, I guess, but it happened suddenly. Then Corbett and Debbie bought the house and they moved in out there. So, we've been here since 1966. They've been out there since, I guess it was after mom passed away because she died in [19]92. So, about [19]93 they moved in.

NM: I am curious, you mentioned your mom cooking at the schools and you also mentioned really enjoying your time in high school. So, can you tell me a little bit, are there certain memories that bubble up for you about being in school and in high school over at Carr Creek?

EG: Oh, yes. Well, we had a real good basketball team. That was our thing then. Our high

school won the state tournament in 1956 basketball. They were really good. We loved that. Then we would have proms every year. We had like they do right now, the junior proms. They were called senior proms then. We had two. When we were juniors, we could go, seniors also. That's really in high school, as far as in activities in school, it was more about studying. Back then we didn't have a lot of sports outside of basketball. But I still go down my little high school, it's still here. The Carr Creek High School is still there and it's in bad shape now and we don't know if we can ever get enough to restore it. My high school friends, there were four of us and we're all lucky we're still alive and we still keep in contact with each other. We're all about 80-year-old. I still keep up with my friends. I loved grade school. I just loved it too. Just had good teachers. I had one teacher in grade school that she would take a group of three or four of us girls home. She was not married. She'd say, "Girls, I'm going to take you home with me on Friday evening and we're going to party. We're going to have fun at my house." She had the cutest, little trailer. It was pink and gray. I don't know if you've seen that movie, Lucille Ball and her husband had that little bitty – [laughter] it's an old movie, but it was silver color. I called it a bubble, but it's not. Anyway, I just thought that was the cutest, little trailer ever was. We did because she'd make sandwiches and we'd play games. We had fun. We stayed up all night. Saturday evening she'd take us home. That was a teacher though. So, I hated to leave my grade school. I actually cried because I had to go to high school. But I loved my high school. High school's different, but college is different too, I'm sure, because I did not go to college. But I was lucky that I got my social worker license without college education, and I would not recommend it. I would not. I would go into something else because it's not safe nowadays for social workers. They can't go out by theirselves now. They have to have somebody with them. But we didn't have that problem because the people were not like that then. It's different times totally. It's hard to understand. When I was growing up too, a deal was a handshake, that's it. You made a deal with somebody and you had no paper and you kept your promise, but not now. You probably don't understand that, you are young and all that stuff.

NM: [laughter] Well, it is real sweet hearing all these memories. Thinking about the lake being built, I am curious, when did you first hear about, they were planning on maybe building a lake there?

EG: I was in grade school when they started talking about it. It was rumored that they're going to build a lake and take people's homes. But I was married before that actually happened. Some of the elderly people died. They worried theirselves to death about where they were going to have to leave their home and the area they lived in for all their life. We had several elderly people in Smithboro that passed away before they had to move. We just think they grieved theirselves to death, don't know. They were old. But anyway, it was hard. A lot of people left the county and we just started looking. My dad, he didn't want to go anywhere. So, they found this property. We call it bottom, just a lot of land. So, they bought the whole thing, he and my uncle. Then I took part of it and then they sold the rest of it off. But that happened in 1966. Those house movers would come in. They were from Middlesboro and they couldn't move a brick house with brick on it. It was nothing to see a house going up the road or down the road when that happened. But everybody hated to leave their home when you didn't want to. So, actually, I think it was a bad thing that you can't never go back home. It was really for flood control, so they said. Hazard got flooded since then, so it did not control everything. It helped, but it did not control. So, anyway, it was nothing. It was federal government. They would come

back twice, I think. The second time, if you didn't take their offer in a period of time, they would condemn your home. So, they did not pay very much at all. My parents got $10,000 for their property. They had where the house was and they had a big bottom across the road where the garden was. But that was more money then than what we would think about now. But they managed to move the house and whatever. My uncle built this house. It was only half this size, and he was a carpenter. I wanted it because he built it. We remodeled it two or three times and it needs it again. But no, I'm not going to do that. [laughter] But we paid $400 for the house. Those guys charged us eight hundred to move it and then we remodeled it. I think we borrowed $5,000 from the bank. That moved the house, bought the land, remodeled it off of that amount, which then money went a long way. But five thousand was a lot of money for us. But anyway, we kept it going. We added on a little bit more. But the house was built good. Those men said it was a really strong, well-built house. It was built with what we call sawmill lumber. It was extra thick. So, anyway, it's nice to have gotten it. We've been here since 1966.

NM: Yes, it is a long time.

EG: It's a long time.

NM: Where were you living before you moved here? Were you living in Smithboro?

EG: When I got married, I lived a year in Hindman in an apartment. Then everybody was moving. The houses, we had to move. They did then we thought, "Well, we'll find us a little house and have it moved because we didn't have a lot of income." My husband, both of us together, we only had $400 a month. He loved being a mechanic. He worked on cars. He worked in a garage for many years. Then later years he hauled heavy equipment, big tractor, and trailer for a company. He did that. He loved it. He loved hauling heavy equipment. Then he worked on his cars in the meantime. I'd do my little thing, my sewing. I used to sew a lot, made my clothes, and worked every day.

NM: Where did you learn to sew?

EG: Well, actually, I had one semester of home making in high school, that's it. One semester of sewing and that's it. I just got patterns and taught myself. So, I guess I'm self-taught.

NM: With the class at Carr Creek High School.

EG: The class was at Carr Creek High School. I remember what I made and it was a blouse and a skirt. Oh, I did not do a good job on that. I remember the blouse was sleeveless and one armhole was bigger than the other. [laughter] Mom fixed it. We laughed on that. [laughter] She said, "Oh, Etta one armhole is bigger than the other one." So, anyway, she could sew. She fixed it for me. [laughter] But I've enjoyed my life because I've stayed busy. Now, I'm involved in church and then we have the homemakers in the county. Of course, COVID coming along and that stopped a lot of our get-togethers. We're just now beginning to have some meetings again. Also, with church, there for a while we couldn't. They stopped churches from having church and it was bad. I had COVID last fall and we have no idea – I had all my shots, but I had a friend of mine's husband who passed away and I went to the funeral. The meeting the night

before, I think I got it at that funeral because I hadn't been anywhere else. So, anyway, I was in two weeks. Well, I stayed in a month. I stayed away from everybody a month. I was pretty sick about three, four days just like you've got a real bad case of the flu. Have you ever had the flu? You feel yucky. But it didn't bother my taste. I had a light case.

NM: That is good.

EG: But some people passed away with it. I lost some friends with it. I lost a nephew. There's my sister that I was telling you about who lived in Indiana, he was her son. He had health issues. Now, this is what my doctor told me; it attacks your weak parts. If you've got a health issue, it attacks that, your respiratory system. He was a real bad diabetic, would not take care of himself. But anyway, he didn't go out. He stayed home. But he had a doctor's appointment in another town and he stopped at a restaurant, him and his wife. He had to get it there because he got sick a few days after that. He lived two weeks, fifty, fifty-five. So, it's a bad thing.

NM: Gosh, I hate hearing that. I am sorry that you are feeling it though.

EG: There's a lot of people who lost their lives. But we never know. We called it a plague. [laughter] I guess that's what it was.

NM: It made me think of you saying how some of the elderly folks in Smithboro, how some of them you all thought they grieved themselves to death. I guess I am curious to know a little bit more about what it was like when you all were hearing the rumors of the lake coming in. Then when they started the process, what were people saying about it?

EG: They were worried. They did not know what to expect. See, the federal government set up offices in their local town in Hindman. They had workers that would come out to your house and survey and then they would go back into the office. They would determine what to offer you for your home. Then they would come back out and talk to you at least twice, give you two different prices. Then the third time if you didn't agree, they would condemn your house. It was hard to get any money after that if you didn't take the second offer.

NM: Was there anybody that pushed back and tried to get more money, tried to fight them?

EG: One guy refused to. Well, he didn't make any progress with them though. They had to make him leave. It was at a little town called Cody, Kentucky. He had a little grocery store. He was the last one to leave. They just gave him so many days to get out finally. So, you could not win with the government. You could not win with them. It was just take it or leave it, it's about what it amounted to. So, it was not a good thing. Older people when they lived in that area all their life and they were old as I am now or older, it's hard to try to find a place to go. They didn't want to leave the county. But we had this older lady, her name was Celia, we called her Mo. But [laughter], she was a sweet, old lady. She just grieved over it. I think she just grieved herself to death over having to move. Then everybody that left, we kept up with the people where they scattered to that lived in the Smithboro area. The last lady that lived there passed away not long ago. She was in her 90s. She was one of the older ones that survived. She done okay. She had health issues and she had to go to a nursing home years ago. But she was the last

one of the older people, older than me, my older generation, that lived. But anyway, I still got my memories of Smithboro. It's named after my maiden name of Smith. I don't know how all that happened, I don't remember. They just bought. One Smith bought one side of the road, the other bought the other side of Smithboro. They called it Smithboro because the Smiths owned it. Then they sold it off. Now, I have no idea when they named it Smithboro. I've not been told that. But it was Smithboro all my life and my parents' life. So, before that, I don't know. I've not been told what year or probably 1800s. It had to be 1800s because my grandmother was born in 1890 something and it was Smithboro then. So, it had to be before that. But we have no idea. I wondered, what did it look like? Was it wilderness or what? Don't know. Because I never asked. Young people don't ask questions to older people. They're not interested. So, I wondered many times, what did it look like when they came, where their family came from? We don't know that past my great-grandfather. So, I don't know. It's strange that you wonder how did they start? I don't know.

NM: Well, thinking of that, I am curious, how was it that your father and uncle came to buy this bit of land here to move to?

EG: Well, the family up this holler owned most of the holler. At one time there was not even a road out here. They had to come through the creek to get up to these houses many years ago. Amburgey's owned it that lived above this and they sold it off. They had auctioneers come in and they set dates that they would be selling property. Then if you were interested, you came. Dad and my uncle started down there on the other side of Corbett and Debbie's. Then you'd get whatever. You always sold it off in lots. They may be 50-foot lots, 100-foot lots. What you wanted, you bought it and that day you had to pay so much down, but now we didn't. But somebody priced that house over there. My aunt did live there at one time. Other people bought, we didn't. My uncle didn't buy all of this. He wished he had later because he could have sold it off himself and made more money. But I paid $1,000 for my property, which is not a lot. Don't need it. But anyway, I don't remember how much it was, just $1,000 is what I paid for it. So, they did that all over the county. People were selling land. Some grandparents went to a little community called Carrie, Kentucky. It's around Montgomery Baptist. You know where Montgomery Baptist is?

NM: Yes, I know where Carrie is at.

EG: You know the little road that goes around to Montgomery Church?

NM: Yes.

EG: Just around that curve over there, my grandparents'. There were some houses left over the hill there. Now they bought a little house there, that's called Carrie. So, people just started looking and some didn't. Some left.

NM: So, folks like the Amburgey's who owned a lot of land, because the lake was being built and people were looking, was a lot of land just up for sale at that time because of what was happening?

EG: Not a lot.

NM: Well, not a lot. But the land that was, it was like they were…

EG: They had owned the land, I guess it'd come down from generations because they owned all of this. That's why that road over there that's called Burgeys Creek, that's part of the name Amburgey. So, in older days, the Amburgey's were called Burgeys. [laughter] They left the Ambur. So, they did, they called you Burgeys. That's odd. So, that's how. Then how this became Wolfpen, I have no idea. [laughter] Because I didn't know it exists really until we started looking for a place to go to. So, I don't know how it got its name. It used to be called Bath, Kentucky. They took that post office out many years ago. They said because you had to have so many people in an area before they would keep the post office, so they ended up combining it with Mallie. My mail comes from Mallie and that's above the shopping center. I don't live at Mallie, but that's where my mail comes from. So, that's it. They were selling, you knew they would. The auctioneers, they would display papers. We didn't have a newspaper then. They'd just stick it. You'd be knowing when and it was always on a Saturday when they would start selling land. So, that's how it happened. That across the road from me too, it was sold. I don't know who owned that. I don't think the Amburgey's owned that over there.

NM: Did you ever attend one of the auctions?

EG: No. I left it up to my dad when he came up here. I was 21, I guess, yes. I just left it up to my dad and uncle to decide what they thought I wanted. I told them I wanted enough to set a house on. So, that's what happened.

NM: So, this home that you said that your uncle built, was it in Smithboro and had to be moved?

EG: Yes, it was up just above in a holler called the Little Smith Branch. We had a Big Smith Branch. The reason it was big, it was longer. [laughter] It was longer. Little Smith Branch was shorter. So, anyway, that's where it was. Then my uncle, his daughter lived in the house and they moved to Indiana. They went to Marion, Indiana and got work, and they stayed up there. So, that's how we got it.

NM: I am curious, what was it like to move the homes? Did you have to pack everything up and secure the fragile stuff? What was the process like actually getting it moved?

EG: There was nothing in it. There was no furniture in the house because we were living in an apartment when we bought the house. The movers took care of everything, we didn't have to. We knew when they were going to move it. I worked that day. My dad took care of that. My husband and I, we just went on to work. Well, I guess I left too much up to dad. But anyway, this house had what then we called a fuse box. It's not called a fuse box now. Your electrical had fuses in it. It was on this porch. Those guys took the fuses out. They were little square things, had four fuses in it. It's not like that anymore. They laid them in a window that was here, there were different windows. He said those fuse boxes did not fall out of that window. They moved that house at least 12 miles. Any house they moved, it had to be perfectly level. He could not sway, it would break. Now, we did have our church to break, the Smithboro Church.

They were moving it to a little community called Sassafras, that's where it is today. But not that church, the property, they got it halfway down and it fell apart. The men that they were movers on the roof and they were close to a mountain, they jumped off that roof onto the mountain, or they would have gone down with the church. So, they said it was not built strong enough, so it demolished. They had to start over. But these movers were really good. They were from Middlesboro. They were nice people. They moved the house in and set it up where you wanted it and put square – we called it squaring. It would get leveled. They leveled the house, done everything. But it's hard for me to believe that the fuses did not come out the window because it would take nothing to make them fall out. But that's what they told us. A house had to be perfectly level and they had equipment to keep it that way until they got it where they were going. So, it was a simple thing if you'd go out on the road and you'd meet a house coming or going. But my mom was not satisfied here. When we first moved, we were the only two houses here at that time, none over there. We had close neighbors and a lot of light. But it was dark until we got – it took us six weeks to get electricity. That was horrible. So, it was total dark. They tried to remodel, we did too. So, we quit until we got electricity. But they were behind, they said, with all the work they had to do to hook everybody up. They had to set the poles because there was no electricity in this whole area, didn't need it. The power company had to come in and set these big electric poles and then come back and hook you up. Well, that was hard. That house was a lot higher off the ground. It was like eleven-blocks high. So, they didn't it come down with it when they moved it and added onto it. It's a lot bigger house now than it was then. But we did get flooded when we lived at Smithboro. But it never got in that house. The flood that came in 1957, it was the worst flood that we ever had. It got up to the top of the eleventh block of that house. Then you have a platform – I called it platform – about a block high. It got up to that much inside that house. That was the year that it completely destroyed Hazard, Perry County. That was in [19]57. So, that was the worst I've ever experienced. Flood water and mud, it has the most horrible odor. It's hard to get rid of it. It's just got that I call germy odor. I can't explain how it is. Then the second one for us is this one we had last summer. It got up to my walk out here from this holler. It was like a river. It was swift and it almost got in that house. It got up to the third step and there's four steps. It almost got in it. It destroyed their duct work. Their heating couldn't be done, they had to renew that. But still, we were lucky. My brother lost his home. It completely washed away. There was no sign of any plumbing, like your plumber. It was just like it was just swept off the earth and went on down there. This fell apart whenever. This Christian group, I forgot what they're called, they came in, they're helping. But they're building his house back. He will be back in it in about two months.

NM: Where is his house at?

EG: Over at Hindman. It's above the telephone office. You know, where the telephone – that little area up through there. It looks terrible right now. It's a little on out through there, a little bit on the left, they're building. It's not as big as this house was. But anyway, they're building, they're helping him. He got free labor from this and they're a great group that has come in. Of course, he has to buy the supplies. But he lost everything. All they got was what they had on, 2:00 a.m. It's just a mystery, just washed the house off. A lot of things is we're just lucky that we still alive. [laughter] But we've been blessed anyway. We've been blessed. He lost a lot. He lost all of his personal stuff. But he's gained more by getting help with these people. Free labor is worth a fortune. They're really good expert carpenters. They're not just people off the street.

They know what they're doing. Each group, they have maybe eight or ten a week. Now, those men can do a lot of work in a week. Every week they've had certain things that man's going to do. They have a different group. One will do the electrical. They got drywalling, stuff like that. So, anyway, we are a small family. I've lost a sister and her husband and her two boys. Really all that's living is my brother. They're about nine, all of us together, counting the in-laws and stuff. So, our family's small.

NM: You mentioned that your mom was used to living where the neighbors were really close and you all would gather on porches at night and your grandparents lived really close. Then after you all had to move from the lake, your grandparents lived in Carrie, you were over here, and neighbors were scattered. So, I guess I am curious, were there ways that you were able to maintain connections with folks?

EG: Yes, we did.

NM: Tell me about that.

EG: Well, we would visit off weekends. Everybody was really busy of trying to get their homes set up, whatever. But we always managed to gather at someone's house, and telephones and always kept in contact with neighbors and found out where they lived. It was different. There were no more neighbors gathering on the porches because they didn't do that here. We still do. Our family does in the summertime or since the carport. As most of the time goes, Corbett and Debbie got a bigger house and it's the home house. Some house, not home place, but it's a home house. So, we get together at Christmas and in summertime and weekends. But we always kept up with families. If we had to travel – after the lake, it was just a different life. There was no more getting together too many on the porches. [laughter] People seemed like they passed away really quick. I don't know. I guess it's just not being satisfied. If you're not satisfied, you're miserable. I guess it was hard for them to comprehend all that. Even though they had a different place to live, it was not home. They used to never be satisfied nowhere else really but Smithboro.

NM: I am curious if you could talk a little more about what the transition was like for your parents. Did they raise a garden here?

EG: Yes, in the back and on the side. They were gardeners, but it's not as big. The soil was so good where we lived. There were no rocks. It was soft. There was a lot of rocks here. I was never a gardener. I didn't like working a garden, now, I didn't honestly. There would be more rocks in this backyard. We said all we have to do is when we would hold the garden, just pile up some rocks around the plant. [laughter] It wasn't that bad, but it was not good. We were used to good soil. So, yes, they gardened as long as they could. I don’t know. After dad passed away, she didn't do too much because she didn't have anybody to plow the garden. He had a tractor that he'd plow the garden with and he loved it. He loved to garden and she did too. It tasted good. But then in Smithboro, I hated to help work in the garden. I said, "I'll do anything. I'll cook rice," of which I did, but I hated garden work. She would make me, when I was little, weed the onion bed. They had an onion bed. I don't know if you know much about gardening. It's like they have a raised bed, we'd call it. They'd plant these onions in rows. Well, weeds are just

going to grow before anything. She didn't want any weeds in the onion bed. So, that was my job to get the weeds out of the onions. Some of the weeds would have briars on, be sticky. I hated that. It turned me against onions. I won't eat them today. [laughter] Unless I have to, I will not eat an onion. Then I had to help her with the corn. I don't know how old I was. But anyway, when she come together, the corn had to be just ripe before she'd go by the silk. She'd peeled the silk down and see if the corn was full enough to put away. Well, it was my job to hold the corn. I'd hold my arms out and she'd pile the corn in. She picked it, then she put it in a big sack. Well, I got stung by what we call a packsaddle. It's a worm. It eats corn. It gets in the corn. It's big like my finger. It's a big worm and it stings. Somehow, it was in one of those corn and she laid it on my arm and it stung me. I cried and cried. [laughter] I said, "You can do what you want to, to me. I'm not going to help with this corn no more." You know she didn't make me? [laughter] It hurt that the more you rubbed that sting, the more it hurt. I don't know how many stingers that thing had, but I never got stung by another one. because I didn't. But now I still like corn. It didn't turn me against corn. [laughter] But I remember that. Oh, she hated it really bad because she didn't see it on there. They'd get right in the top of the corn or the cob. That's where they'd be right inside that silk and just eat up a storm. [laughter] But they still exist too, because I know people that's talked about them. They may have another name, hell, but that's all I ever known about. They're called packsaddle. Though I don't know. I'm sure they got another name besides that.

NM: I will have to keep my eyes peeled for them and avoid at all costs. [laughter]

EG: I tried to tell them that I don't like them. They said, "I didn't see it." They said if you called a worm pretty, it was colorful. I said, "I don't care, colorful or not. I don't like it." But we had to work. In summers, we had chores to do. We had TV, but we watched TV at night. We didn't watch TV during the day. We had chores to do. We cut grass out. I had to iron and I still iron, a lot of people don't. I have the ironing board that mom had all her life. I still iron with that ironing board. I ironed when I was short enough, I had to hold my arms up and iron this way. That's how little I was. I couldn't see, I'd stretch my neck up because I liked to iron. So, I still use it and I still iron. A lot of people don't, but I do. It's more like pressing now since we have automatic washers and dryers. Mom just had the ringer type and you hung them out on the line and there was a lot of ironing to do to them. But who would wash on Monday, that's scheduled days, wash on Monday. I had a brother and sister that was young and they dirtied a lot of clothes, so we had a lot of ironing. I ironed on Tuesday and honestly it took me, seemed like all day. That was my job. I don't know what she did while I was ironing, nothing, I guess. Let's see. Wednesday may have been free. Thursday in the summer I cut grass. Friday, clean house. Weekend we didn't do much. But that was our week job. But I still iron. Like I say, it's more like pressing. But I'd stand on that porch and iron and I started collecting wooden iron boards and I've got a lot. I got one over there.

NM: Oh, yes. I see that. It is neat.

EG: I've got one in every room.

NM: Oh. [laughter]

EG: Well, I got mom's, that was my first one. Then when we went to the car shows, I would go to these antique stores and I found one at the James Dean Run. My husband, we had a 49 Mercury, they're a big car. I said, "Can we get that ironing board in the car?" He said, "Well, yes," and we did. We got it and we'd come home with an ironing board. I liked antique places and then I could get them cheap. I ended up with twenty ironing boards. I inherited one from a lady in Hindman. Her husband was Beckham Combs. He was a superintendent at one time. That house, let's see, somebody out from the old Hindman High School, this side of that is a big white house, old house. I think they got a greenhouse maybe beside of it.

NM: Oh, yes. I know what you are talking about.

EG: That's where they lived. Her mother, Virginia, was Beckham's wife's name. To me, I told her many times, they were the nicest looking couple. He was handsome and she was a beautiful woman even when she got older. But anyway, her mother lived with them and she lived to be some over 100. She gave me her mother's ironing board. I've got it in there leaned against the wall. She said when she passed away, she told her housekeeper, which I knew her well, her housekeeper, "That ironing board is Etta's. You make sure that she gets it." Well, her children didn't want it. They had started out the door with it to put it in the garbage. The housekeeper said, "No, that don't go in the garbage. I know who that belongs to." "Well, who would want this old ironing board?" She said, "I know exactly who wants that ironing board? You bring it right back in." I can't understand they didn't want their grandmother's ironing board. They just didn't like it, so I got it. I got my aunt's. Her daughter didn't want hers. But the rest of them I bought and they were cheap, $20 maybe. They're all different. You think an ironing board is an ironing board? But they each set up different and they're all wood. So, I've got some little bitty ones and I got some children one, the little girl ones. I sold a few, but I ended up with close to twenty. What they'll do with them when I pass away, probably junk, sell them in a yard sale, because I'm the only one in the family that likes antiques. So, everybody has their thing.

NM: Well, I am with you. I like antiques.

EG: Do you?

NM: Yes, I do.

EG: But everything I've got is old, honey.

NM: Yes, [laughter] I know. That is why I have been complimenting everything.

EG: That's a stereo. You remember? Above that, it's this, and they've been, oh gosh bless their hearts, they've been out – the family's dead. It was called (Calms and Drawn?) Furniture. It was at Garner years ago. It doesn't even exist anymore. They had great furniture. When we moved here, I said, "I want a stereo." It still works. It's got AM and FM radio and all that stuff in it, but I don't use it anymore. So, my TV went out a couple months ago. I said, "I'm not going to buy a TV stand. You're as good. I don't use that stereo." So, I got my TV sitting on that, use it for it.

NM: There you go.

EG: Because I don't use it. I don't play it. But everything is old. In the family room, I'll take you in there, show you, I was raised on that couch and it was mohair. I don't know if you ever heard of mohair? Well, my uncle that had the grocery store, he didn't sell a lot of furniture, but he would order it if anybody wanted, living room suites or bedroom suites, whatever. So, most everybody got him to get them a living room suite and they were all mohair. That was in the [19]40s. It was burgundy and gray. Some were blue and gray. Ours was like a burgundy seat and then the gray around the side. So, we were raised on that. We played on it. We done everything. So, when mom, they moved the house up here, she said, "I want that living room suite redone some way," because she had got a big living room. So, this lady over at Hindman had a poster shop. She said she would do it. So, they came and got just a couch and two chairs. She called me at work and she said, "Etta, I want you to come out here on your lunch break. I want to show you this frame on this furniture." I could not believe how thick it was. It was so heavy and still is. I can scoop one in, but no lifting. She said, "That is the best made furniture I have ever seen." I said, "Honey, they made furniture in the [19]40s. They made good stuff." That's what's on it right now, it's not mohair but I don't know really what kind of material it is. But anyway, that's what's on it. So, my mom, before she passed away, she said, "Etta is the only one that likes antiques." She wanted me to have that living room suite. So, that's how I got it. I took my carport out there and made me a family room for that living room suite. [laughter] I did. I told my husband, I said, "Park your car somewhere else. That couch and chairs are going in there." So, that's how I ended up with that. So, everything that we bought, like these end tables, I bought them from a local furniture store at Cody when we got married. That was [19]64 when we got married, so that's how old they are. Otherwise, everything's old. You have to do a little repairs every now and then. But I like old stuff.

NM: Well, I wanted to ask you just a few more questions about the lake before. Maybe wrapping up, I was curious, do you remember when they started to hold back water and the lake started to fill up?

EG: Oh, I'm trying to think when they started filling it. Well, everybody was out. This one guy that they had to make him leave, it was [19]70s. We moved here in [19]66. Early [19]70s or maybe late [19]60s, they started filling it.

NM: Who was the guy that was trying to stay?

EG: (Gideon Frazier?). He would not leave and they had to make him. They give him so many days. He would not leave Cody and he was the only one left. Going to the mall over at Hindman, as you turn to go to – there's a little grocery store there, I think. The foreign people own it right now. It's on the right, just right there beside the Dairy Queen, this side of the Dairy Queen. They lived at Cody. She had a grocery store there at Cody, this lady did. She built. She didn't move it because she couldn't. She built one just like it over here. They bought property there and that house beside of it. So, she had a business there for a long time and everybody else left. But Gid did not want to leave. But we know he didn't want to, but he had to go. I don't know. I think he took them to court, he lost. You have to pay to go to court. But anyway, [inaudible] and all, no use of doing that. It's not worth it.

NM: So, then after Gid finally left, they started to hold back water?

EG: Yes. It was in the late [19]60s, I think, when all that happened. Everything was out. We had a creek. We called it a creek. They did not clean nothing out as far as dipping it. They just started filling it as is. I don't know. I guess that was their way of doing it. As far as cleaning out the area and making it deeper, they did not. Because in the winter, sometimes the water is low and you can see parts of the old creek. You came right down here. This is what we called the upper end. This is the end of this side. Then the spillway is down up at Cornett Hill. It was called Cornett Hill Road, where the little church is. I don't know if you've been in that area or not. That's where the spillway is. That's the end of it. That's the deepest part. I think they said it was like thirty. Oh my gosh, I don't know how deep it is. That's supposed to be the deepest part of the lake. But in the winter or if it's flood season, they'll let water out so it will hold flood. But now when it came that flood last year, the bath houses, bathrooms, everything, you could not see them. It was that high. They were completely covered. So, it's scary to live. My dad, he said, "All I want to do is get where there's no flooding." Because we were flooded, not really bad until [19]57. But we had high water about every spring. But it was never that high. But we'd work with Clorox and cleaning as mama's, oh, we got to get these germs out of here. We would just eat up the Clorox [laughter] trying to get rid of that odor and it's still there. But it never got up in the house, just that one time it almost did. So, anyway.

NM: Well, I am curious, maybe just a last question, I am wondering how do you feel about the lake now?

EG: Well, I'm okay with it now. In the beginning, I was kind of bitter honestly. Because they just came in and I don't know who decided that they needed a lake or flood control. They did not call it the lake. They called it flood control in their area. They picked the best part of our county to do that and they said they did. That was the best part of Knott County.

NM: Why was it the best part?

EG: There were more people and it was more central. It was the best, so they said, I don't know. It was most land. Anyway, it would be more convenient for the public to enjoy, I guess. But I got okay with it, but I still dream of Smithboro. I still remember every little thing about it. It was not that big, but it was big enough for me.

NM: You have dreams about it?

EG: I have before and when I'd wake up, I'd want to go back to sleep and pick up where I left off. [laughter] Have you done that before? [laughter] It was fun. I dreamed too that I was in high school. Dreamed this about being in high school. I thought I was so young and had so much energy in my dream. I didn't know I'd lost it all until I had that dream and woke up and I thought, "Oh, I want to go back." [laughter] We can't go back. But when you're young, you don't know you got all that energy until you lose it. But I know a lot of people who had it a whole lot harder than we did. But we only travel through life one time. I'm not having a good day.

NM: Well, we can wrap up. I will go ahead and I will sign this off here. We can be finished if you would like.

EG: If you got any more questions, I'll try to answer.

NM: Well, I was just only going to ask if there was anything else still on your mind that I did not ask you about? Anything you think would be important for folks to know?

EG: No, I can't think of anything. It's just a simple life. [laughter]

NM: Well, it sounds like it has been a sweet one for a lot of the time.

EG: [laughter] Yes.

NM: Well, I will go ahead and sign us off. So, this is Nicole Musgrave and I have been speaking with Etta Gayheart. It is April 10th, 2023. We are at Etta's home in Knott County, Kentucky. This is for the Carr Creek Oral History Project.

[end of transcript]