

Nicole Musgrave: So, we are recording and I will introduce us. So, this is Nicole Musgrave and I am here with Debbie Halcomb. We are at her home in Redfox, Kentucky. This is for the Carr Creek Oral History Project. It is February 6th, 2023. So, I guess just to start, can you say your name and tell me a little bit about who you are?

Debbie Halcomb: Yes, my name is Debbie Frazier Halcomb. I used to live in Cody and I live here in Redfox. I work at Jones Fork Elementary School now as a family resource coordinator.

NM: So, just for context, for anybody listening to this, I just interviewed Debbie's brother Feller. So, Debbie listened to him chat. So, I am just going to ask her some of the same questions. So, yes, I heard a little bit from Feller, but tell me from your perspective about your people and where you are from.

DH: My dad was from Hot Spot, Kentucky, which is in Letcher County and now called Premium. My mom was from Vicco, Kentucky. My dad's name was Gid Frazier and my mom was Alma Frazier. They had a small grocery store and a garage at Cody, Kentucky, where the lake is now, the Carr Creek Lake.

NM: Yes. Tell me a little bit about what it was like growing up there and growing up there with the store and the restaurant and everything.

DH: Well, it was fun. My mom and dad moved there because I was six years old and was getting ready to start school. Before that, they had traveled the country. My dad put in natural gas into businesses. So, they decided to settle down when I started school. So, I went to Carr Creek Elementary. Was there just up above Cody a little bit, but not all the way to Redfox. There was Carr Creek Elementary, and I started school there about in 1962, I believe. Me and my brother both worked and helped at the grocery store and the gas station. It was a good life. I was at school a lot. My brother Feller hadn't started school yet, so he knew more about things going on at the gas station and stuff. But I had started school already, so.

NM: How old were you when the family moved back to Knott County?

DH: Probably, I was five. But when they moved to their place there in Cody, I was six years old and I started first grade.

NM: Where did they live before moving to Cody?

DH: I'm not even sure it was down below Cody, but it wasn't down at Smithboro. It was between Cody and Smithboro. Down around what we call the (Don Toliver?) curve is what we call it. We lived in a small trailer there, and my dad worked doing tires and stuff, working for people.

NM: So, Feller talked a little bit about working at the service station. Tell me a little bit about your experience working at the business.

DH: Okay. Well, my mom had a grocery store, so of course we got to sell groceries. We sold,

like, fresh meat and stuff such as baloney, ham and cheese. Then later on, she started making sandwiches. So, of course, being the girl, I got to help do that sort of stuff instead of the outside stuff. Then later on, she decided to start cooking some. So, they took, we had a screened in back porch, and they took cardboard and put around the back porch. She set her up a grill and we started cooking for people. We'd fix hamburgers and like Feller said, we'd cook soup beans on the cold stove and sold soup beans and cornbread, and then we would sell sandwiches and such.

NM: So, tell me about learning to make these things as a young person.

DH: Well, I don't know. I think you just watch your mom and it just kind of come naturally. She'd tell you what to do and how to do, and it just kind of came naturally that we just done what our mommy done. So, that's just sort of how it happened.

NM: Was there any particular task at the store or the restaurant that you did not look forward to?

DH: Dishes. I hated washing dishes and there was always lots of dishes to wash. [laughter] So, that was something I, evidently, was good at because I have done a lot of dishes seem like.

NM: So, what were your days like then in terms of balancing school and working for the business?

DH: Well, I don't know, it just came that that's something that we've done. You got up every morning and usually we caught the school bus. Even though we live close. It was a big thrill to get to ride the school bus. So, went to school. Then when you come home in the evening, they just always someone there. If they were somebody that needed groceries, you helped them collect the groceries and we just would check them out and send them on their way. We didn't know any different, so that's just what we did. [laughter]

NM: Yes. What sort of things did you do for fun then living in Cody?

DH: Well, we all had bicycles. Bicycles was a big thing because we had a big concrete driveway. So, everybody liked to ride, but you had to watch for cars. Then I had lots of animals. My dad let me have animals. I had cats and dogs and chickens and rabbits. We had horses and pigs and cows in the back because we had an old barn back there. We had a big garden, had grass, we had lots of grass, and we just always played outside. Mum would fix us a baloney sandwich and you stayed outside all day. So, that was just what we did. We just played outside.

NM: Any of the animals, were any of them like meat animals that you kept?

DH: Yes. We butchered the animals. But I get tickled because my dad could never kill his pigs. Because he fed them all the time. Someone else would always have to shoot them for him because he couldn't stand to shoot them. Then we had chickens that we killed chickens. That's just what we had to do to live and such.

NM: Did you ever help out with any of that?

DH: Oh yes. Yes, I like killing. I like killing the chickens. You would have to put them in scalding water and pluck the chickens and we put them in the freezer. That was good eating.

NM: What about it did you like?

DH: I don't know, it was just interesting, I think. How you had to do that. When you had the hog killings, there was lots of people came and it was just, I don't know, it was different. They built a big fire and they would be eight or ten people around helping. Then we would make sausage. My mom and dad would can sausage, and we put meat in the freezer and just they used everything that they had. They used everything.

NM: Do you remember going to other families, hog killings, or do you just remember your family?

DH: Just my family. Just my family that I went to. But like I said, I was the girl. So, the girl usually really stayed around home. I didn't get to go as much as my brother did. My dad would take him along a lot. But as a girl, you stayed home more with your mom. [laughter]

NM: You mentioned having a garden. Did you help out with the garden too?

DH: My dad was really particular about the garden and he wouldn't let hardly me or my brother either one, help him in the garden. We could help him collect the food, but when it came to planting and doing all the hoeing and all that, he pretty much done that himself. My mom helped him too, but us kids, we tore up more, he thought, than what we do, than the good work we done. We might have done that intentionally, I don't know, I don't remember that did. [laughter]

NM: So, did you ever learn to garden?

DH: I do garden some. My mom, when she got a little older and stuff and we lived here, we garden some, but not big gardens like a lot of people do, like the fields of corn and stuff. No, but just a lot of tomatoes and stuff, like corn, enough corn to eat on and stuff like that.

NM: You mentioned canning meat. Did you help out with other kinds of canning?

DH: Yes. I helped my mom do a lot of the canning. That was I guess, they felt like that was kind of the girls work, but we did. We canned about everything. Yes.

NM: Was there anything in particular that you really enjoyed canning?

DH: Oh, I still enjoy canning. I can tomatoes about every summer and banana peppers, and we put corn up, corn and beans up a little bit, but yes.

NM: Is there anything in particular you looked forward to enjoying during spring, summer months as far as the garden goes?

DH: Oh always tomatoes. I'm a big fan of tomatoes. Really and truly any way you fix them or

have them. [laughter] We just like to good home cooking.

NM: Would you and your mom use some of the meat and vegetables you raise for the restaurant food?

DH: Yes, she did a lot of that. Especially, we always even when she moved up here for the restaurant, we always put green beans in the freezer. She always had fresh half runners. It was nothing for us to put up fifty bushel of beans a summer and we put them. She had freezers and walk ins and she put up a lot of that kind of stuff, and corn, yes.

NM: So, you were putting up more than like your family would necessarily.

DH: Yes. We put up for the business too. Then she would fix those because she always had fresh green beans every Sunday when she moved up here to the restaurant. But she had to purchase most of those. She would buy them like at Drive Fort Market in Letcher County or different markets. Food City after they came in, but yes.

NM: Was your mom known for any specific dish in the community?

DH: She was for a lot of dishes, but I think probably what most everybody remembers is her hot roast beef sandwiches with mashed potatoes and gravy. A lot of people call them beef Manhattans, but they were called hot roast beef sandwiches at our little restaurant. Then like I said, her soup beans and cornbread [laughter] was very popular. So, that was her two, I'd say most popular.

NM: If I were to ask other people who lived at Cody, what are their memories of the restaurant and store? What are things that you think would stick out in their mind?

DH: I think because it was kind of like a meeting place. It was there in the center of Cody, and we had a big front porch and everybody come to the front porch. Or when it was winter time, we had a cold stove and everybody gathered around the cold stove to keep warm. Probably that. Then she worked a lot of people. A lot of people in the community helped her. They worked in the store. They worked the restaurant. Young girls and a lot of my friends worked in the summer, and she paid them and they worked. Then a lot of the teenage boys worked for my dad at the garage and pump gas and that sort of stuff, really.

NM: Yes. So, do you have a memory of when you learned that the lake was going to be built and that you all would have to move.

DH: I can't remember it as just all of a sudden. It kind of just happened gradually, like people kept moving away. So, it kind of snuck up on you a little bit. But like I said, I was in school, so classes started getting smaller and your friends moved away because they were having to move because of the light coming in. So, as it just being boom, that it just happened. It didn't seem like that. It just gradually things kept moving. This, that and the other places would close down, grocery stores, would move. They were going out of business. We had a post office and it had to move. So, it was just a few things at a time seemed to keep happening just a little bit at a time.

NM: I see that makes sense. What did you make of it as a young person?

DH: Well, it was kind of exciting, really, in a way, because here were a lots of new people coming in that we didn't know, and they were coming from someplace that that was farther away than hazard. Very few people, unless something was really bad. Wrong you didn't go to Lexington or anything like that. So, like I say, it was kind of exciting because new things was happening and they were building new buildings around. We hadn't seen, you know, a lot of new stuff around. So, it was kind of exciting, really.

NM: Is there anything in particular that you remember being especially exciting?

DH: At one time when they was building the bridge down at over the lake, they set off. Someone set off a shot wrong, and it blew one of the piers down. That was very exciting. I went to Carr Creek High School. We had to walk to get home from school that evening because nobody could get by and nothing could go by there for a long time. It fell right across the road. So, that was pretty exciting. There was always big equipment and stuff you had never really seen before.

NM: Did you hear the blast from that?

DH: I can't remember it specifically because they did do blasting all the time, and that was a big concern. A lot of people complained because Carr Creek High School was on the side of the hill, and a lot of parents complained. They kept thinking they may blow the school. They were going up that way also with the dam. So, I guess you just got where you didn't pay much attention to the blasts going off. But they did have to do a lot of blasting to get to do that. But then in doing that, like when I was in high school, we didn't have a baseball field. So, at the upper part of the lake, up towards Carr Creek Grade School now, the people that were building the dam, let us use it for a baseball field for our high school baseball team. They got to do that out. Then on the weekends as a teenager, that where they had done all the road work and such was a good place for parties on the weekend. We used a lot of that for parties. I do remember that. [laughter] I don't know if that was a good thing, but it seemed good at the time when you were sixteen years old. So, yes. Yes, it was. There was lots of parties and they did let us use until they started holding the water back. We did get to use the roads and such.

NM: That just reminded me, when we had the tape off, you and Feller were sharing memories about some of the hot rods coming through. So, tell me a little bit about what you remember about people race in their cars around.

DH: Well, we were the road. We were the road between Hazard and Whitesburg and my mom and dad had the service station. So, we did have like a blacktop driveway, a big huge driveway because my dad worked on trucks and stuff all the time. So, people would race because it was a big, long, straight stretch from like one end to Cody to the other. They would race up and down there and all the boys, the teenage boys would always have shown off their cars and peel rubber, and down the road they'd go. [laughter]

NM: Were they an event, like did you turn up for the races?

DH: Well, it wasn't like a planned anything. No, it was just kind of here comes this guy with his big GTO down the road. [laughter] He had to show us what all it would do, because they would always be a crowd on our front porch. So, they had to show off their cars like that.

NM: I see. Nice. I was interested when you said that parents were concerned about like the high school potentially like just sliding off the hill with all those blasts happening. I am curious, like with construction of the lake and moving houses and all these things. What other concerns or talk to your members sort of going around the community?

DH: Well, just really the people moving away and then like they were afraid because Carr Creek High School was a very old building. I mean, it's still standing today, but it was very old. It was a community center at one time, and it was one room, and they just built on it. The neighbors come in and built it. So, I think we were backward people and they didn't really know what was going to happen, I think. I think they was just afraid for our safety mostly more than likely.

NM: During this gradual time period that you describe where neighbors and friends were starting to move away, did you have any friends that had to move away during that time?

DH: Yes, most of my friends did. A lot of them didn't move far away, but some did. I've had some that when we were going to grade school, they moved to Mount Sterling, West Liberty. They had to move to Hindman, to Whitesburg, to Hazard because there wasn't all that many places here to live, which some of them stayed pretty close. But then a lot of them did have to move too because at one time it was a booming little place. Then I think when I graduated from high school and I was the last graduating class of Carr Creek, they were twenty-five of us in our class.

NM: What was like a typical year up until that point?

DH: Probably forty to fifty kids. We would have like two classes of each grade, and then it just kept getting smaller and smaller. Yes.

NM: Yes. What do you remember thinking and feeling about seeing folks move away at that time?

DH: You hated it, but I don't know, we didn't talk about it that much. It was just something that was happening and it just had to happen. So, everyone just went along with it.

NM: Were there ways that you were able to keep in touch with folks?

DH: No. Not really. I mean, we really didn't write or anything, but now with Facebook, I have come in contact with some of my classmates that I went to grade school with that I haven't heard from in lots of years. [laughter] But now we have got back in contact with one another and talk about when we went to grade school together and things that happened when we were in grade school.

NM: How do you find each other on Facebook?

DH: Well, there's a thing that if you went to Carr Creek or if you remember Cody as a couple of different groups that are on there, and then just by word of mouth, you find out their married names and just kind of look them up and see. But yes, a bunch of my friends have gotten contact with me on Facebook.

NM: Yes. Facebook is great for that kind of thing.

DH: Yes, yes. [laughter]

NM: Well, yes. Can you tell me a little bit more about just things you remember about that period of having to tear down the business and the house or just or the period of building the lake. Like what other sorts of memories come to mind?

DH: Really, I think, just like I said, the kind of the sadness of all the houses being torn down and people having to move away. But then a lot of places like my mom and dad, with the lake coming in, they moved to a new place. The Hawkins, that had a grocery store across the road from us, they put in a new place at Hindman and they had a Hawkins grocery there. Just I don't know, and then John Pres coal company which was a big coal company that was there in Cody with us, they moved to Hindman. John Preston and you know so they moved out from Cody but still were close enough that we still got to see them and know these people. So, that's mostly what I remember. Like I said, I was in school a lot. So, [laughter] I don't remember as much as my brother. I didn't get out as much hardly as he did.

NM: Yes. Do you remember some of the workers that had to come in and help build the lake?

DH: I remember a lot of the workers that came in because, like I said, I worked in the restaurant part of it. I was a teenage girl, so it's kind of exciting because here were all these construction men coming in. That's sad to say, but I was sixteen, and they were cute guys. They were always nice to you and would always build you up. My mom and dad had them rooms in our back house. So, they rented that out. So, they were always people around. There was always a bunch hanging out at our place. My mom and dad was open and everybody was welcomed. So, that part of it I remember and that was kind of exciting. All my girlfriends wanted to kind of hang out at my mom and dad's place. They helped work so that they could hang around with all the guys too. So, [laughter] it was kind of silly. But yes, [laughter] it worked.

NM: Yes, but exciting for a teenage girl.

DH: Yes, yes.

NM: Well, I am interested. You showed me a photo a minute ago of where your place was. Then the bridge really high above and how the Army Corps would let you sort of on the roads until they started to hold in some of the water. So, yes, I guess I'm curious. I have not heard anything yet about like what it was like when they started then to hold back water and it started

to fill up. What do you remember about that?

DH: Well, mostly what I remember is they let me and my brother on a boat, go, and we went straight out to where we used to live, and we jumped off the boat and went swimming. But it was like a long time before they let us out there. But it took it quite a while to fill up too. But we had the new roads, so everybody was excited about traveling the new four-lane highway that we had, because always before it was just a little narrow two-lane road and such. So, that was exciting that we got to do that. Then after they started holding the water up, people all come to look and see. That was kind of exciting. But it took it a little while to fill up.

NM: How long?

DH: Oh, I don't know. It seemed like it took it forever. But as far as knowing exactly, I'm not for sure. I'm really not for sure how long it took.

NM: Would you say it was like days, weeks, months?

DH: Months, months. It took months, I think, yes. Or it seemed like months at that time. [laughter] But like I said, I was sixteen when we moved up here, so it took a little while for the lake to fill up.

NM: What was that experience like seeing these places that you used to live on?

DH: Play and we and you, I don't know, you kind of just watch to see how much it would come up. It was every day you was kind of checking to see where the water was at, to see how long it was taken. I can remember watching and seeing the water come up, but it was kind of sad. It was sad, really. Not kind of sad. It was really sad. But yet it was exciting too. Because it was something new, I don't know. When you're sixteen, everything seems exciting. I think so.

NM: But some mixed emotions.

DH: Yes. Lots of mixed emotions. Yes.

NM: The question I had just popped out of my head. Well, I was going to ask, I feel like I have heard more so from folks like around my age who are from Knott County different stories they have heard about what is underwater and certain things that have popped up from the depths. I am wondering if you have heard stories like that or if stories were being told at the time.

DH: I've heard stories and I heard someone not even very long ago saying about all the houses that were still under the water, but they took all the houses out, everything. They wouldn't let you leave anything, because the Corps of Engineers is very particular. I mean, it's just like you can't cut a tree now in the creek, and it was that way, but then they took all the houses and such out. I don't know, I've never heard. I've just heard that lately about all the houses that were underneath there. But all the houses were taken out and they had it completely cleaned and everything. You can kind of see that when the water goes down, that you can see that there's nothing really there. I'm sure now the, where the Old Carr Creek Elementary was, the



foundation was there. It was like a concrete slab, which it's been years since you've been able to see that. But like that kind of stuff they didn't take out, and I'm sure there's like bridges and stuff that they were probably still there. But that was about it. I don't think there's any homes that were there.

NM: Yes, yes. Do you have memories of what it was like when they were having to move the cemeteries?

DH: Yes, I can remember that. That was a big thing that was very controversial I think at that time, because that's just something that us hillbilly country folk or anyone really wants to happen to their loved ones. We had a little cemetery across the way from us, which was the Hilton cemetery. I remember us all being just really devastated when they had to do that. They moved most of those cemeteries up to one big cemetery, which is the Carr Fork Cemetery now. At the Hilton Cemetery, there was a pond there that was a fishing pond that people used to go fishing, and they had to drain that, which I always thought was kind of weird, that they drained the pond and they was putting water back in, but that was just something that they had to, I guess some one of their rules that they had to do. But I do remember them draining the pond.

NM: Yes. That is interesting.

DH: That's odd, wasn't it?

NM: Yes. Were there people that tried to resist the cemeteries being moved that you remember?

DH: I can't remember any, really that they laid down in front of a bulldozer or anything like that. But I think they did protest it very much, just like they did protest about selling their land. Because not only down at the lake did they take land, they took land all the way up this way because they had to build the roads also. So, it wasn't just where the light came in that they had to build the roads. This four lane is kind of close to where the road used to be, but this is not what the road was. There used to be a little two lane road that curved and wandered in and out of here. So, they didn't take just the land down at the lake, they took it probably five miles in every direction. They took the land and took the houses out, so. That way it didn't just affect for the water, but it affected for the new roads coming in also. So, it for like from Red Oak all the way up to Garner Mountain, they took the roads and I don't know how far up to Carr Creek Elementary or probably farther than that, even up to where the big Y's at, probably. It took all those homes, because there used to be homes all up and down the road there and all up and down the road here. So, yes, it didn't just affect where the water was going to be. It was the roads also.

NM: How did people protest if they did?

DH: Well, I don't think such as we know protesting as like they did, but they did try. They didn't want to sell their land. But if you didn't agree to it, then the government took easement and they sold their soldier land whether you wanted to or not, sort of like they do now with coal, minerals, or gas minerals, that sort of thing. They'll take easement on your land and take it anyway. So, it's kind of a government thing.

NM: Yes. Well, I guess maybe, first I wanted to ask, what was your understanding of why they were building the lake?

DH: It was to prevent flooding for Hazard and Dan, had lots of bad floods. There was a bad [19]57 flood and then I was a year old during that and my dad's mother was dying, and they couldn't get to her because of the [19]57 flood. It was so bad. Then in [19]63, we had a terrible flood when we first had moved to Cody. So, the flooding and at one time they talked about putting the dam or putting the lake in over in Letcher County, like down Blackie Way. So, they decided on this over here would be more help. So, that was what we was always told.

NM: Do you know why they chose the specific area that they did and the specific communities that they did?

DH: No, not really. I've not ever heard anybody say exactly why, just the two different locations is what I've always heard. Then they did this in other parts of the country too, because that's what happened with Jenny Wiley. That's why they put that one in too. So, I'm sure that's probably why Buckhorn Lake is in also, because that's three lakes that are awfully close together. But I've always just figured it was because of the flooding down in the lower part of the state.

NM: Yes. Is there any other like, talk you remember hearing or topics of conversation just around the lake being built?

DH: Well, we've always heard that they were going to put a big resort, because Jenny Wiley has a resort, Buckhorn has a resort. That was something that never did come for us. We did end up having the boat dock. People were kind of excited about that because we didn't have anything like that close to us. So, that was about really and truly that was that was mostly it. Then the new schools. That helped us a lot because we hadn't had new schools in years. So, that helped I think, too.

NM: Through the Lake project, did the government fund the building of the schools?

DH: I'm not certain on that, but I would say so because they took the Carr Creek Elementary. So, I'm sure that helped build that probably, Cole Severance was probably helped with that also. But I'm sure they bought their land from them and paid. So, they got a really nice school out of that a two story, Carr Creek Elementary, that's there now. So, yes. Then the high school, even though they didn't destroy the old Carr Creek High School, they built a new high school in mid North Central. So, it consolidated a couple of other schools. So, it didn't just affect people in Cody, it affected the whole county really?

NM: Yes. What was it like for you being the last graduating class at Old Carr Creek High School?

DH: Well, it was sweet, but it was kind of sad, too. As us being the last graduating class, the class behind us was kind of upset because everybody wanted to be the last graduating class. But 1974, I graduated and I was the last graduating class. They were like, I think twenty-five of us is what I think was left. It wasn't like nobody lived at Cody anymore, but like they lived at

Ashman or they lived here in Redfox. They came from other little communities that would come into Carr Creek. So, yes.

NM: Was there any part of you that wished you had had the opportunity to go to the new high school or were you very glad to stay the whole time at the old high school?

DH: Well, I kind of wanted to go to the new high school because they had a swimming pool. We had a gym and that was about it. It was a big building. They had a football field. They had a baseball field. They had a lot more that things that we didn't, they didn't get to have. But I never regretted being the last graduating class of Carr Creek because, that was home. You knew everybody, was comfortable there. Like I said, the building is still there and they're trying to revive the Carr Creek. They're trying to do something with that old building now. So, the people that have graduated from Carr Creek are trying to do something with the building, so.

NM: Yes. Yes. I am curious too, what was it like for you when your family did move to Redfox? What was that experience like?

DH: Well, it was exciting because we lived in an, it was an old, we called it the old place. It was an older building that needed lots of work and such. So, we were getting to move into a new house with a new restaurant and my mom and dad – we had an ice cream machine. I tell everybody I gained fifteen the first little bit. We lived because we had ice cream and that was something we never had. Then we were closer to Letcher County and my mom got a lot of business from Letcher County, so. We were on the four lane highway. So, it was nice. Then when this land beside my mom came up for sale, my husband figured out a way and we bought land and moved next door to my mom. So, that made it even better.

NM: Yes. What do you remember your mom thinking and saying about the move and everything?

DH: I think she was excited about it too. But like I said, our business before was rough. So, she was excited to have a new house and a new place to start, I think. So, she was excited about it. She never did really complain or say anything much about it, so.

NM: Just went along for the ride.

DH: She was just a hard working lady and that's what she done.

NM: Yes. I want to peek at my notes because I remember I wrote something down. Well, you mentioned something with Feller that I thought was interesting about rats.

DH: [laughter] My dad and my brother and my uncle John, who was not really our uncle, but we called him Uncle John. They were the last people to leave down at the lake or down what was Cody. With that happening, the creek rats were terrible. My dad and my brother would say it, and they would shoot the rats while sitting in the house. What was left of the old house, they would have to sit and shoot. Because if you think about all these people that lived there, and then everybody moved away and there was nothing. So, these rats, they were huge, big creek

rats that would come in. [laughter] So, I guess they all drowned when they did hold the water up, I hope.

NM: Oh, my gosh.

DH: It was terrible. It was bad.

NM: I mean, like, where did they come from? Were there just some rats before and the -

DH: I never knew of us having, but there was lots of houses there and everyone had livestock and such. We had barns and such. So, I guess they just lived there. But then as they tore the houses down, they just were in the hills, I guess, because, yes, it was bad. I will never forget that.

NM: Did you see any yourself?

DH: Yes. [laughter] That's why I didn't go. I moved with my mom to the new restaurant, and they stayed down there to close the place out. Yes.

NM: You were not going to deal with that?

DH: No, no, no. I am not a rat person or mice. I don't like neither.

NM: Yes. Well, another thing too you had mentioned. You talked about a phone booth. What's the phone booth?

DH: Yes. Believe it or not, and even though this was, like I say, 1962, we had a phone booth.

NM: And this is at the old place?

DH: This was at the old place at Cody. I'll never forget it. It was red and silver and there was a phone in it. I don't remember how long it stayed, but I remember the phone booth because we loved to play in that phone booth. Mum would have to make us come in and get out of the phone booth. I'm sure the phone worked, but I don't know how long, I don't even know the phone company. The phone company now is Thacker and Grigsby, and as far as I can remember, that's the only phone company we've ever had in Knott County. But they had a phone booth there. I don't know if that was maybe a stop with buses. It used two buses would come through and such like the Greyhound buses would. Unless that was a place that they stopped and used phones and such, I'm not sure.

NM: Was it a popular thing for folks to come use?

DH: I don't remember anybody using it, but I just remember it being there because it was red and silver. But now that's being sixty years ago. [laughter] Because I'm sixty-six. So, yes. It's been a few years. But I do remember that phone booth, because I was amazed with the phone booth being there, and there kind of in our yard. [laughter]

NM: Not something most people have.

DH: Nobody. No, you wouldn't have that to play with. Well, and then a little rural town in Kentucky at Cody, you wouldn't think about a phone booth being there.

NM: Yes. Well, I guess starting to wrap up. I am curious, what do you think about the lake now?

DH: I enjoy the lake. I don't go to the lake like I thought I would. When it was first in, we did because my dad had the boat dock and my brother worked the boat dock, but I had to work. He also run the concession stand at the beach. When all my friends were coming to the lake and laying out in the sun and swimming, I was working in the concession stand. So, for a few years it wasn't that much fun. But I mean, I'm fine. I'm fine with the lake. I think it does save us a lot with the water and such. I'm not sure how much it saves the lower part of the state, Lexington, Hazard. I think it does save Hazard quite a bit because they used to flood so bad. It was terrible because I had an aunt and uncle that lived in Hazard and they was flooded all the time. So, I think it does save a lot of the flooding.

NM: Yes, you just made me curious. What was the beach like when it first opened?

DH: It was another very exciting place because we'd never had a beach and a lot of people. There was lots of people. We've had a few drownings at the lake, which is very sad, but it was exciting and it was a place for people to go and it was free. We don't have much around here for us to do. So, it was a place to go. I'm sure it's still, last couple of years we've not got to with COVID and such. I'm hoping that this year maybe it will open back up. I'm not sure after the flooding what kind of shape it's in. I know some of the campgrounds can't, because we have a couple of campgrounds. That's a place that even people here will go to the campgrounds because it's something to do, and close to home and such. So, I'm hoping it'll all get to open back up this summer. It's a busy little place in the summer, the lake is.

NM: Are there any particular memories or antics that stick out in your mind from early days at the beach?

DH: I don't know. It had lots of picnics. My family liked to picnic and they all liked coming to the boat dock because that's where my dad was at. So, we'd all have lots of picnics, lots of swimming. The beach, lots of friends, just lots of teenagers, especially in the summer that I don't even think they come as much now, which I don't know. I've not been in a few years, but I don't think the teenagers go as much as they used to. But that used to be the place for all the teenagers to come and hang out in the summer. That's where you met up with all your friends and just had a good time. It was open from like 9:00 till dark. So, they would close it down and everybody would have to leave. They had lifeguards and we had the concession stand and we sold hamburgers and hot dogs. So, it was just really a hangout that a lot of our kids didn't have a place to hang out growing up. So, yes, that was mostly it.

NM: Yes. It would have been fun to be a fly on the wall when it first opened.

DH: Yes. I remember a lot of the guys would try to swim across the lake. That was something that there was a few that didn't make it, and that's kind of sad. They really kind of cracked down on that. But that was the thing that they used to like to do, so.

NM: Yes. It is interesting.

DH: Yes.

NM: Yes. Well, I think what I will do is I will get about thirty seconds of the sound of the room. Then afterwards, I'll just ask you if there is anything else that is still on your mind, so we can just sort of sit here for thirty seconds. Was there anything else that I did not ask you about, or things that came up when Feller was talking that you did not get a chance to say?

DH: I can't think of anything right off. Not really. No, but I don't mind telling anybody what I remember. I remember things, and then I think and think and try to remember things so that I could let you know about. But it was just a good time. We had a good childhood.

NM: Yes, it sounds like it was a fun time.

DH: It was fun. It was fun.

NM: Yes. Well, great. Well, I will go ahead and sign us off. So, this is Nicole Musgrave, and I have been speaking with Debbie Holcomb at her home in Redfox, Kentucky. It is February 6th, 2023. This is for the Carr Creek Oral History Project.

[end of transcript]