

Nicole Musgrave: So, I'm recording now. This is Nicole Musgrave. I am here with Robert Young at his home in Hindman, Kentucky, in Knott County. It is February 6th, 2023. This is for the Carr Creek Oral History Project. It is a little bit of a breezy day today. So, we have got some beautiful wind chime noises coming in that sound really lovely. I guess just to start, can you say your name and just briefly tell me a little bit about who you are?

Robert Young: Well, I am Robert Young. People around here call me Bob. When I was a little boy, they called me Bobby Charles because there were three little Bobbies in the first grade. But anyway, I was raised here. I've been a student of music all my life. I started serving Hindman Baptist Church. I started out as an organist. It was a little left-footed organ. Mrs. Belle, (Viola Belle?), pastor's wife, played the piano, and I played the organ. It wasn't like being the organist, but at any rate, I started when I was twelve. Then all through high school, music saved me because I didn't know it until I was forty-five years old. But I've been told I'm a classic dyslexic. I didn't know what the problem was, nor did anybody else here in these mountains. They just thought I was dimm witty, and maybe I was. But I didn't learn to read very well. [laughter] When I was in high school, I did have a teacher who didn't know dyslexia from anything else. But she said, "Read out loud to yourself and it will help you." It did indeed. So, when I went all through college and then when I went back after many years and finished a master's degree, I managed to get through reading aloud to myself. If I really want to know something and remember it, I read aloud still. I pray out loud. I play the piano. I play and pray. I think that is probably one of the things about anybody who's dyslexic, that the audible side is really, really important. A lot of people never overcome dyslexia. I'm one of the lucky ones and I'm not sure why exactly. But I'm thankful that I have overcome it as much as I have. But I still suffer with a lot of it.

NM: That is a neat trick about reading aloud. I had never heard that before, but that is – yes.

RY: Well, that worked for me. Juanita Hall, one of my teachers in Hindman High School, she taught I guess junior English. I'm not sure what all she taught, but she was basically an English teacher. But she said, "Read out loud to yourself." I did and it helped.

NM: Well, maybe to start talking about the lake, I guess I am just curious, can you tell me a little bit – you started to tell me before we were recording about someone in particular in Redfox, so maybe you could start there. But tell me a little bit about what you remember about the communities that were over that way, that were there before the lake.

RY: Well, all my relatives are from Knott County. The great majority of them are from the Carr Creek area, except the Youngs. The Youngs came out of Lotts Creek, which is the other side of Knott County. But both my grandmothers, my grandmother, Hays, and my grandmother, Young, were Pigmans. So, I've got a double dose of Pigman blood. Maybe a little too close. I'm not sure. But at any rate, I'm kin to the Pigmans and the Hamiltons, which came in here and settled on Carrs [sic] Fork, Upper Carr in the Neely area. So, the Hamiltons, the Francises, and the Pigments and the (Hambergs?) and the Hammonds, all those names that are on Carr still were my ancestors. So, I have had connections there all the time. My grandfather, Young, had two sisters who married Hylton brothers. They lived in the part – anybody who would remember, when you come up 160 and you come into 15 over in the lake was the community of Cody.

Everything from way back up where Carr Creek Grade School is now from that area, all the way down to the Cody area, all those people, those are people who are relatives of mine. That property there was originally the Francis property. My grandfather, Young's mother was Francis. She was raised over there and all those people. Big families, and they were all related. The Hays, they were over closer here to Hindman. They lived in the Ivis area. But all my relatives are over there. I started to say about the Cody area. There were two large families of Hylton's. We always said Hylton, and I think a lot of them still do say Hylton. But it's spelled H-Y-L-T-O-N. So, I try to say it that way to keep it straight in my own mind. Because I went to college with some Heltons, H-E-L-T-O-N, and I don't want to get them confused. They may somewhere back there be the same. But I'm very proud of my Hylton connections. Even though I don't have any Hylton blood in me, I have a whole lot of cousins that are. Aunt Tilde, my grandfather, Young, sister, married Jesse Hylton, and they had seventeen children. They raised them all and educated them. They were very upstanding people and still are. What's left of them, family's dying off a sight. As they get older, they die off. My other aunt, Aunt Ollie, my grandfather, Young, sister, Ollie Young Hylton, she only had twelve children. [laughter] But she lived in that bottom too, right there close by. I'll tell you, one of the children of one of those – Aunt Tilde's grandchild, one of them was Yvonne (Bentley?), Who you may know. She worked at the *Troublesome Creek Times* for many, many years. She's retired. She was married to Doug Bentley. She's one of my cousins. I guess a second cousin. But her father was one of the people that lived in a big, beautiful, brick home there in Cody, and everything was around there. Aunt Ollie now had lived in a little plank building. She raised a huge family. But now, she's the one – you said, how did the lake coming in affect? She was still living. Now, Aunt Tilde was dead, but Aunt Ollie was still living. She has grandchildren still around here. But she was not – well, I mean, she was not bad sick, but she was not real good. But when they said, "You had to leave," she didn't want to go. But she ended up having to go. I'm not sure, but I believe they put her in a nursing home in Jackson. But I honestly can't tell you if that's a fact or not. I'm not sure where she went. She had children that live on Clear Creek. She may have gone there, I don't know. But I know that after she was uprooted, she did not live many weeks after they moved her. So, for her, it was tragic. A big bunch of Uncle Jessie's family, several of his family, some of – you know Shirley Maclaine in Whitesburg? She a child of Jesse and Tilde, or a grandchild, I suppose. A lot of people went to Whitesburg. The Tollivers went that lived in that area. A lot of people went to Whitesburg. A lot of people came to Hindman. Teda Belle Smith and the Helens, who you may have heard of, they came over this direction, kind of. Teda Belle had taught at Carr Creek Elementary. But the Helens were missionaries, I think, through Camp Nathanael. But I'm not really sure. Maybe they were the free church. I really don't know who they were affiliated with. They're both dead now, and so is Teda Belle. But people just scattered. Well, they had to. On back down the lake a little bit, the next thing after Cody was what we call the Smithsboro area. There was a church there. One of the missions of Hindman Baptist Church was Smithville Baptist Church. It was up there in the edge of what is now the lake. [coughs] Excuse me. There are the families all back down toward where the mountain comes across the (Cornly?) Hill, they called it, I think, where the dam is. Everything from the dam back up to Smithsboro Baptist Church, I know one person you may have already talked to. If you haven't, you certainly need to. It's Corbett Mullins. He was raised in that area, and he can tell you every house. Everything on down below Smithsboro toward [inaudible] and all of that, he knows all of that and Upper Carr. Up in Carr, because all those families that were affected, some of them just went up in Carr and some of them went up in, what we call Bergey's Creek.

Old Carr Church originally was close to the mouth of Bergey's Creek. Now, it is up in Bergey's Creek, Old Carr Church. It's the first established church in that area. It was established originally in 1827 by several of the families that I already mentioned to you, Hamburgs and Francises and Hammonds. Those families were living over there. The original land where it was, was on the Francis Territory. He's a direct descendant of mine, Thomas Francis. The whole idea, I think, I may be wrong – I was actually away from you. I was working away from here when all that happened, when that was deconstructed and made into a lake. But I was aware of it and how it was before. But I've chased my rabbit. I've lost my track. Oh, I was saying that I was not here when that happened, but I was aware of a lot of things. I was made to understand that damming up Carrs Fork would help with flooding in Hazard. Maybe it did. I'm not sure. But I don't think in the long run it helped much [laughter] because Hazard still gets flooded. But for whatever the reason, in some respects, it's a wonderful thing. We all love the lake. But there's been times – about two or three times, we had one in July. I think it filled up – the lake filled up over top of everything over there. Where the camp areas and all that, those little houses, they were underwater. I've seen that happen two or three times. They just don't let the water out quick enough. They work on that. [laughter] They have what they call a winter pool and summer pool, and they try because we often have floods in January. So, they try to get the water down low enough that if a flood comes. But they hadn't made it down far enough. [laughter] In July, it was still pretty full at that time of the year. Of course, now, our water comes from there. So, the lake is really quite a wonderful thing. But originally, down at the area that became Smithsboro, the Smith family lived there. A very old home. I think he was a William Smith. I'm not sure. But it was Smithsboro for a reason. That most people lived there was his children and descendants. But William Smith area had the Smith family. Then I'm not sure who the very earliest ones where the Hyltons lived at Cody. I think roughly William Carr, the man after who the Carrs Fork is named, it's my understanding that he was a mulatto. But that didn't have any bearing on – I don't know if he actually owned property. I don't know. But he was a long hunter and he settled on – and that's who it was named after. Then on up toward the upper end of that area, up where the campground and – not campground, the Redfox area, where Gwen and them live in that area. Back down toward Cody a little bit halfway between where Gwen lives and Cody was the home of Thomas Johnson, who had a big double log pen, two-story house. Big enough that he raised a huge family. Just about anybody in Knott County can trace their ancestry back to the Johnsons. Except me. [laughter] I don't have any Johnson in me that I know of. But an awful lot of people do. The old Thomas Johnson lived there. Had a huge family, and had a rather large house. It was kind of like a way station. People that would come through here that would, still to this day – people in Paintsville and Prestonsburg, that area. If they want to go to – sometimes they'd go all the way around to Pikeville, but if they want to go to Whitesburg, for instance, they'd come right through Hindman. That was, still in the very early days, that was the route that you took. So, people would time their trips so that they could stop in at the Thomas Johnson place. Get a meal and have a place to lay down and sleep and to put the horses up and get them fed, whatever. So, it was really a very important spot. It meant very much to the early people that come through here and that passed through during the – not revolutionary days. I don't know if there's anybody there then or not. But for sure, during Civil War days, it was a way station for people on their way to Whitesburg or back and forth.

NM: Was that building still around when you were a youngin'?

RY: That building was still around and may still be parts of it still. They moved it up into Pioneer Village. You know where that is?

NM: Yes.

RY: Now, the old Thomas Francis building, they called it Stamper building last, if you know where the campsite is not too far from the mouth of Bergey's Creek where the little building is, right there is where the Thomas Francis house was. Now, you may have seen it. It used to be up in the Pioneer Village. Several years ago, it was probably before you came here, they had the – oh, what did they call that group? Anyway, they had a LKLP, I guess is who owned it at some point. They had a sales house in there. I mean, they had pictures and all kinds of wonderful stuff. It's like an artisan center. People went to Pioneer Village to buy Christmas gifts and all kinds of wonderful things. Well, now, that house was originally built down there where the campground place is by Thomas Francis, my ancestor. His wife was Jane Hammonds. After she died, he had a great big house full of girls and two boys. I descend from one of the boys through my grandfather Young's mother, who was a Francis. All the girls and big bunch. Then he married another woman, Lourania. I want to think she's a Polly or a Hagan, I'm not sure which. Anyway, with her, he had four more girls. Now, this was probably after the Civil War. I'm not sure when it was. Anyway, two of those girls married Stamper brothers, and they both stayed in that house. So, it became Stamper house. A man that we all knew here and loved, and who is now deceased, Wiley Stamper, was one of the last Stampers that lived in that house when it was over there in that place. When they started building the lake, that house and the Johnson House were all moved up into the Pioneer Village.

NM: So, did they stay living in that house once it moved?

RY: No, no. When they moved it, I'm not sure LKLP, I'm not sure who orchestrated that. But it wasn't the Stampers, I don't think. I think they were just bought out, and that was the end of it. LKLP maybe. I really don't know when they started. I know that at one point, they were in charge of it. Or (Crad?). It might've been Crad. I'm not sure who it was. But somebody moved it and the Johnson Cabin. The Francis Cabin was in front. It was the first one that you go by. The Johnson cabin was up to the – I guess to the left of it, up on the hill, on across the branch. It was there and it was very bedraggled, the last time I saw it, and falling down. I hope somebody salvaged some of it. I don't know. They have moved now. The Francis-Stamper cabin, it's over in Leatherwood now. They moved it over there for the, I guess the Sons of the Confederacy. I'm not sure who did that. But when Weinberg was judge executive, they moved that building over there to become part of that. See, they have a reenactment, the Leatherwood. Anyway, they've moved it. That one is over there. I hope they took the Johnson cabin and tried to salvage it, but I honestly don't – I haven't been up in there. I don't know. I wish they would because that is probably the oldest house. Because the Francis cabin probably was built around 1827 because that's when Thomas Francis came into that area. But now the Johnson cabin is well before that. How much, I can't tell you. But it became Letcher County in 1843. Before that, it was Floyd County. All this area was Floyd County. Until in 1821, big portion of this and a big portion of most of what is now Letcher County became Perry County in 1821. All that area up where the Adams is and all that, I can't think of the name [laughter] of that area. Mayking area and all that holler, whatever that big, long holler is, that was all Perry County for a great long spell. When

the Adams came in there, that was Perry County. This was Perry County until 1843. Then Letcher County came in here and it took in Carrs Fork, the dam area, and over here, Hindman, and then up Troublesome. On the other side of this mountain, that way was Floyd County still in 1843. Then this stayed Letcher County until my grandfather was born in 1881 up at Ivis. He was born in Letcher County. That house and all that just recently went away. Then in 1884, Knott County was struck off. It took in a big portion of Letcher County, a big portion of Floyd County, a big section of Perry County, and a big section of Breathitt. Breathitt, after 1835 came way up here close on the Left Fork over here. So, yes. It's really important to know where these counties were at a given time because they had a bearing on everything.

NM: Yes. That is so interesting. I did not realize Breathitt was down this way.

RY: Yes. Breathitt came right over here – Leburn was in Breathitt County – portions of what we call Leburn. There was a tree. [laughter] I don't know what kind of tree it was. Big tree upon top of the mountain. That tree was the center of what became Knott County. Breathitt County came to that tree. Floyd County came to that tree. Perry County came to that tree, and Letcher County came to that tree. Some of the stuff that Miriam Moyer has written – I don't know. Do you know about her books?

NM: No.

RY: Oh, wonderful. [laughter] They call it Hindman Cornett's Mill because my ancestor, Cornett, was living there – Samuel Cornett. He was the son of the Revolutionary War soldier, William Cornett. That's a whole nother story. I've got some viking in me too [laughter] because the Cornetts are the same family as the Knutts from Scandinavia. So, I've got two Revolutionary War soldiers, Cornetts, that are in my ancestry. They were brothers, but they're from two different lines in my family. So, yes, I belong here.

NM: Yes. [laughter] Well, I am curious. Do you remember when you first heard about the plan to make the lake?

RY: As I said earlier, I was not actually living here at that time. In 1960, I graduated from high school. Do you know off the top of your head what the dates were for the lake coming in?

NM: I think the construction itself started in the early [19]70s. But the process for telling people that they needed to move and the process of buying the homes, that was happening more mid to late [19]60s.

RY: All right. That explains why I'm kind of dumb about it. Because I graduated from high school in 1960, went away to college. After college, I was teaching in Pulaski County. Then at the end of that period, I was called to a church in Barbourville, Kentucky to be the minister of music, education and youth. I wore three hats. So, I was in Barbourville until 1975. So, all of that time, the planning and the actual construction and all that, was pretty well underway and done when I came home. So, what I know about it was before that more than while it was going on because I was really not here. I knew about some specific things that happened. I have very fond memories of being in Cody and that area. A lot of Sundays when I was growing up, we

went [laughter] to Cody. We stopped at a little store. A man that run the store was a good friend of my dad's. We stopped there and we'd get a drink or something – a Coke, whatever. Then we'd go on up and we'd go on up, what is now the Redfox area across the hill. Go over to Isom and get – they called it – well, it is soft serve ice cream. Oh, I forget now what they called it, but it wasn't that. But anyway, we'd get that and then we'd go to – my dad was crazy about animals and farms and all such as that. They had a stock sale in Isom, and that's a big to-do. So, we'd go. Hawkins had the little place where the soft serve was and we could buy a hamburger or whatever else. But that was how we spent a lot of our Sunday afternoons going to – we seldom ever went on beyond. Occasionally, we went on over into Whitesburg because I had some relatives over there too. People that was my dad's friends when he was growing up here lived over there. So, we went on Whitesburg occasionally, but not very often. Mostly, we saw the animals and listened to some auctioneering. A man from Hindman usually was the main auctioneer. Ivan Childers. He was the grandfather of James Brock Childers. You may have heard of him here, and Sweet Childers, who was at the funeral home. Ivan was in the funeral home business too, but he was an auctioneer and a delightful person. So, we had reason to go there because dad loved that. We always had hogs, and sometimes, that's where he'd get one. We had chickens and ducks [laughter] and turkeys right here in Frogtown, honey. But, yes, going over that direction was a big part of my growing up. I enjoyed being there. Sometimes we would go by and visit Aunt Ollie. Now, Aunt Tilde died when I was a little boy. I went with my Grandpa Young to that funeral. I may have been, I don't know, ten maybe. I doubt if I was that old. I don't really know. I just remember being with him and being in the old Cody Bible Church that is no longer there, of course. That would be underwater if it was. So, all that area was very important to me. But truthfully, I was not here while all that was happening. I was kind of sheltered from it. But when I came back in 1975, I learned a whole lot of stuff then. But that was pretty much after what you are interested in. I wish I knew more about it.

NM: Well, what sort of things did you learn when you came back, or what did you hear from people that were here during that time?

RY: Well, just things like about Aunt Ollie. I knew that Uncle Jesse and his family went to Whitesburg. Then we had another bud Hylton. His brother was my dad's first cousin. He was sheriff of Knott County at one time. I think he lived on Beaver. I'm not sure when he left over there, but I don't know if it was because of the – I don't know. But I've already mentioned most of what I found out when I came back in [19]75. So, I was back in [19]75 and then I left in [19]78 or [19]79. Went to Paintsville. I was there for five or six years. But I had bought this house. My dad lived here part of the time while I was over there in Paintsville. But this house was in my family. I was brought home here to this house when I was born in Hazard in the hospital. Oddly enough, in 1942, caesarean section was not real common. There were some. I was one of them. There was one at least, but it was odd. My mother stayed in the hospital six weeks after I was born because it was hard on her. Actually, I'm told that she had died for a few minutes at one point. But I came home to this house. My Aunt Hattie and Uncle Kurt, they were both my aunt and uncle – my blood aunt and uncle. Uncle Kurt was my Granny Ollie's brother and Aunt Hattie was my grandpa Gussie's sister. There was one other couple. You haven't been here long enough to have known about Alma Pigment. But Alma Pigment's mother was a sister to my grandfather. Her daddy was a brother to my grandmother. [laughter] So, they were three out of the Hayes family married three out of the Pigment family. They were next door to each

other. So, all those children were double first cousins. So, all the children that came out of this house were my mother's double first cousins. One of them was Helen. I always called her aunt. She's not really my aunt, but I always called her aunt. But while mother was in the hospital in the Hazard, Helen and my aunt Jan, mother's sister, cared for me, I think more than anybody. Aunt Hattie, who was Helen's mother, she told me that they kept me in this room upstairs, I think. They had pushed me up too close, Aunt Hattie thought. I think they had me in a dresser drawer on the floor, pushed up too close to – there's a heater – a gas heater up there. It's still there, but it's red tagged. We can't use it. But it was on when I was there. Aunt Hattie said, "Well, they were going to roast his head." He was too close – [laughter] Anyway, this little stuff doesn't matter.

NM: That is funny. [laughter]

RY: But Helen now is dead. My aunt, Jan, is dead. But unconsciously – well, maybe consciously on some level, I always loved Helen almost like my mother. There was a close bond there. It might have been all coming from her, I'm not sure. But I loved her and her children. Now, some of them live in Stanton area and some of them live in Lexington. I'm very close with all them. They're sweet, sweet people. But everybody's dead. My mother and my dad. I only had one brother. All my aunts are dead, and uncles. It's just me and my children, and Gail and her children. Now, Gail, she has a brother still living and a whole lot of cousins and nieces and nephews and so on. But my brother only had three children. Well, I'm close with them. But I'm at the top of the tier. Everybody's younger than me. That just happens. That's just the way it is.

NM: Well, and that is why you are the one that has the memory of these things from times past. You talked about how – yes. You do have all these memories of going over to Cody. I guess I am just curious if any other memories come to mind about spending time in Cody. As a youngster, what sort of things did you do over there when you went to visit?

RY: Well, I just passed through mostly and stopped at the little store. But occasionally – very rare occasions, I remember being on Doc Hylton's front porch. It was a nice brick home. It almost looked out of place there because here was this beautiful brick home. All the other little houses were just little boxes and...

NM: Made out of wood?

RY: Yes. Well, little wood homes. But neat and tidy, but small little houses. Aunt Ollie's house, I don't know how many rooms it had in it, but she raised twelve children. Both those families, the Tilde set and the Aunt Ollie set, when you have that many children, a lot of times, one of them or two of them will be sick or be retarded or some – none of them were that I know of. They were all raised to adulthood and educated as well as you could be in this area. So, I remember one time visiting Aunt Ollie with my grandfather. They were brother and sister. I didn't know Aunt Ollie real well. I knew about her more than I knew her. But my grandfather and I made us a little journey. We went over to Cody, I think, and then we went over to Lotts Creek. We done some traipsing around one day. But when my grandfather and I walked up on the little porch, Aunt Ollie came out. She was a great, big, heavy woman. Not very tall, but kind of grandmotherly. When I saw her fall in grandpa's arms, they just – brother and sister, they

hugged. I thought they were never going to quit hugging. That made an impression on me that I'll carry the rest of the days how important family is. So, we went in. We weren't hungry. Not one bit. Me and grandpa, neither one. But, honey, she pulled out everything she had in her oven. She laid out a meal you wouldn't believe. One of the things I remember she made – she had had mashed potatoes. She had taken those mashed potatoes, cut up onions and green peppers, and just made potato salad. Boiled eggs. She made potato salad out of mashed potatoes. I thought that was the best stuff I ever – I thought I could eat every bit of that. Part of it was because she'd hid it, and part of it was because it was really good. [laughter] But now, little things – little snitches like that's all I know about it.

NM: Do you remember what else was on that table that day?

RY: Well, not a whole lot of – I'm sure there was some kind of beans. [laughter] There was always beans. There was leftover bread. It was all leftovers. But those potatoes made a really – they rung my chimes. But the thing that was most impressive was how pleased grandpa and Aunt Ollie were to see each other. They were right here in the county together. But grandpa, he was the oldest of that family, and there was three girls, Ollie, Tilde, Eddie. Might've been a fourth. I can't think who the fourth one was, if there was. But it was grandpa and sisters. He was the oldest. Their daddy was killed in a splash dam when he was about eight years old. So, his sisters were younger. Then their mother, who was the Francis, she married somebody else. When she married Tom Kelly, she gave her children, my grandpa and his sisters, to her sister, Aunt Cassie Francis Stacey, to raise. Aunt Cassie raised my grandfather and his sisters over down where the lake is, underneath Carr Creek High School. That was all Stacey property that had come out of the Thomas Francis farm. She was Francis and her daddy had lived there. But she aired a huge farm. She never had any children of her own, but she raised my grandpa and his sisters.

NM: You said, was it splash dam that you said?

RY: A splash dam, oh, yes.

NM: What is that?

RY: Oh, I'm glad you said that. That's a good question. [laughter] A splash dam is a log dam built – they would go in and the head of the Young Fork of Lotts Creek, the trees had been cut. All the trees – big trees. Some of them huge. They would build them into a dam. They dammed up the head of Lotts Creek right close to where the cemetery is in Young Fork of Lotts Creek, where all my relatives are buried. They dammed up the branch with logs, and they would build them so that there would be what they call a trigger log. The trigger log would be a shorter log, but it would be holding really, basically all the other logs. You'd take a sledgehammer when you got ready to take the logs to market. Now, to take the logs from market from the head of Lotts Creek, you had to wash them down all the way to the Kentucky River, down all of Lotts Creek, which is a long way. So, you had to dam up enough water that when you broke that trigger log, and those logs collapsed. That water took all those logs all the way to the Kentucky River. When they got to the Kentucky River, by the time they got to the Kentucky River or at the Kentucky River, they would brand every log. Now, my grandfather's daddy, Drury Young, his

brother, Uncle Alec – because Alexander was his name. They called him Alec, and Uncle Manford. Those three brothers all had logs that was in that dam. They were all branded already before they left up there. They branded them so everybody know whose log was whose. When the logs got to the river, they tied them together in a raft. They'd had food enough to last them a day or two, and they would ride the raft to Jackson and sell the logs. Now, that would none be possible if you don't have a splash dam. They call it a splash dam because when you get ready to do it, you knock that trigger log out, and it goes swoosh. Just washes all that stuff all the way down, Lotts Creek, down Young Fork, down Lotts Creek, all the way to the river, down it goes into the river. Not far from where the old hospital used to be, the Miner's Hospital in Hazard. If you know where it was – well, I wish I could tell you more about it, but I can't. But anyway, that's what it was. Well, here's the story about my great-grandfather being killed. The day came, and it was in February, I think, 1893. They said, "Today's the day we're going to take the logs to Jackson." So, they were all down at Uncle Alec's place, which was at the mouth of Young Fork. Yes, Young Fork was a big fork. That was at the head of Lotts Creek, come up through here. Then it forked, and everything from up here – there were two forks actually on Young Fork. It collected enough water that made a huge dam. I mean, the dam made a small lake. So, they said, "Today's the day we're going to go." They all had their little pieces of meat and [laughter] pieces of bread and whatever they had wrapped up in a little cloth to take to last until they got to Jackson and got back home. I guess they had to walk back home. I really don't know how they got home. Maybe they rented a mule or – I don't know. It didn't matter. But they were all down at the lower end of Young Fork, prepared and ready to go on a journey to Jackson. I guess Uncle Manford was the oldest. I'm not sure. I know that my great-grandfather, Drury Young, was the youngest of the three. They were all standing down there close to where Uncle Alec lived ready to go to Jackson. So, one of them said to my great-grandfather, "Drury, go break the dam and we'll be ready to go. We'll follow the logs down to the river and lash them together. Then we'll go to Jackson." Well, it was snowing and my grandfather went up in Young Fork to where the splash dam was. Before he could actually get to where the trigger log was – because he was found below the dam, which suggests to me that somebody broke the dam before he got there. But after a while, the logs came down and went on about their business. Uncle Manford and Uncle Alec said, "Where is Drury? Why didn't he come down with logs?" Well, one of them went back up to the house where he had been living. He had a half sister, Aunt Martha who was there. She was a teenage girl maybe. They said, "Martha, go check on Drury. He didn't come down. The logs came down, but he didn't." She went and she found him laying just below where the logs were. His face was still warm because the snow was hitting his face and melting. So, they had to go on. They went on and took the logs, went to Jackson. Lashed them all together and took them to Jackson and sold them and came back. But in the meantime, they had to go ahead and bury my grandfather. So, yes, a splashdown was a very big, big, big, big, big important part of those days of logging. You didn't have any other way. There was no place to haul logs. You couldn't haul logs very far with a team of horses. You couldn't hire very many. So, if you had a large quantity of logs, you had to splash them out. That's a wonderful question. Not many people know what a splash dam is. I mean, they don't use them anymore, of course.

NM: Gosh, what a story. Well, Bob, I am wondering if you can recall, when you moved back, were people still talking about the building of the lake? What were people saying about what that experience was?

RY: Well, most of the people were disturbed still because they'd been displaced. A lot of them went to Whitesburg, and a lot of them came to Hindman, various places. Ladonna Collins could probably tell you something about it, if you hadn't talked to her. She used to be the librarian. She's retired. She lives up at Brinkley. Her daughter, Lisa Collins teaches in, I think in Perry County. I'm not sure where she teaches. She's a teacher. But LaDonna and her family came from Carrs Fork and settled up here at Brinkley. She's still living and she'd be full of information. She'd be a good person for you to talk to. Besides, she's a delightful person. You'd enjoy talking to her no matter what. But she could tell you some stuff, I'm sure, because her family was one of them that was displaced. But yes, a lot of people were disturbed and didn't get over it for a very long time. That's basically the talk that I heard. A lot of specific ones, I can't tell you. I know that family, Teda Belle and the Helens, they had lived upstairs in that Cody Church. But Teda Belle was part of the Smiths from Smithsboro. She actually had heired the place. When she was displaced, she had to leave her home for the lake. She went to live with the Helens who lived in the upstairs of the church. There was an apartment built upstairs over the church. Teda Belle went to live with the Helens. Then when they moved the church, which was a short time later – I don't think she lived in the church very long with the Helens because that all must have been about the same time. They came over here to Brinkley. The Helens and Teda Belle lived across the road from where Ladonna lives. They were people who were displaced from Carrs Fork. At Smithsburg Baptist Church, they thought they could move it. Honey, they had a whole church. They had it up on these blocks, and they were going to move it. They moved it a few feet and they was going across the creek – Carr Creek, I guess, it just collapsed. It just collapsed. So, they had to really start over. They went on down to where – if you've ever been down the road toward Vicco, you pass Smithsboro Baptist Church, that's where they moved Smithsboro Baptist Church to that place over there. Not far from the mouth of Red Oak, if you know where Red Oak is. A lot of people who lived up in Red Oak – that was not in the flood but it was across the hill from it – moved [laughter] and left the Collins family, Helen and John C and all those cousins of mine that she came out of this house right here. They went to Stanton.

NM: Why did they?

RY: I'm not sure. I'm not sure. I talked to Suzanne – their daughter, Suzanne, a while back. I said, "What prompted you all to go to Stanton?" She says, "I think my dad just wanted to." So, I don't know if it actually had anything to do with, but it was at that time. Because all those children were born and mostly raised [laughter] in Red Oak. They were great big. They went to Carr Creek High School. Of course, Carr Creek High School was ended as well, even though there was – the flood didn't run it off. But the Carr Creek High School, when they built Knott County Central High School, Carr Creek High School closed. Knott County High School at Keene closed. Hindman High School closed. Those three for sure. I was thinking there was a fourth one, but I don't know what it is. But, yes, the Knott County Central High School came out of that big move. When they first came, all the schools at Hindman, the Carr Creek people were a little uneasy and the Keene people were a little bit uneasy. I'm not sure why they moved except the Knott County Board of Education were wanting to consolidate, I suppose. So, there was some tension. The first principal came from Carr Creek. Hindman didn't like that and Keene people didn't like it. So, the coach – let me see. Who was the first coach? I forget now. I guess George Francis came from Carr Creek. Carr Creek coach was the first coach of Knott

County Central. So, there was some little reasons people – it took a few years for people to get that out of their system and kind of – now, they're well assimilated and everything's fine. But the first few years was very uncomfortable.

NM: Where did the tension stem from?

RY: Well, it's like you hear about it in Whitesburg quite often. Children that come – Letcher County Central, I guess now maybe, had some of the same problems, I'm not sure. But the people that was at, say at Martha Jane that went to Letcher County Central, which has been very recently in comparison. The people from down in the other lower end of Blackey area, that area, Letcher High school, see, it went up there. The people from one school resent the others. I know that a lot of people – one example was Terry Cornett and his wife. She was raised in town. Terry was raised out in the country in Letcher County. When they went to Whitesburg High School, there was a very strict distinction between the town kids and the country kids. They didn't have a lot in common. So, there was a little tension. It was stuff like that. It was not anything that was real. They already recovered. But, yes, the town kids, they get everything.

NM: You were a town kid.

RY: I was a town kid.

NM: So, what was sort of the reputation of the Carr Fork area, the kids there?

RY: Well, it was a way bigger community than Hindman. At Hindman High School, we had students from Beaver. Hindman High School had two schedules. The one started at – for us, it was 7:00 a.m. First period started at 7:00 a.m. for us. But the people in Beaver, it was 8:00 a. m. The timeline was on Jones Fork Mountain. So, when I was in high school, they moved that timeline until I was out of high school, I guess. I'm not sure. Anyway, yes, Hindman High School had two time zones. So, the first period started at 7:00 a.m. None of the Hindman people went at 7:00 a.m. We went at 8:00 a.m. So, the last period for the Beaver people and Mousie and all that area over there, they got out at 2:00 p.m. maybe. I believe they got out at 2:00 p. m. Sixth period. We went from second period to seventh period. So, it was like two sets of stuff going on.

NM: That is interesting. Yes. I know you know Carr Creek High School had the renowned basketball program. So, when you were growing up, what is...

RY: So did Hindman.

NM: Yes. Tell me about, was there like a rivalry? What was going on?

RY: Oh, yes. Yes. They loved to play each other because they loved lording over who was the biggest winner. But now, nobody anywhere ever come close to the glory of Carr Creek High School. Carr Creek High School won the state, and they never had a playing floor. They played on the dirt, but they won the state tournament. [laughter] Nobody else could ever say that. So, that in itself was – everybody else tried to be as good as them. Carr Creek was real special. It

was a special high school. Just some wonderful people. The people that was Morton Combs was the principal for many, many years. Mr. Johnson, who was my grandfather Young's first cousin [laughter], his mother was Francis, but he was a Johnson. He's a delightful person. Oh, I loved him so much. He married one of my mother's cousins. He married a Hayes. Neil Hayes. Wonderful people. Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful people. Arthur Pigment's wife, Ellen Pigment, lived right there in that house. She was one of the teachers at Carr Creek. So, we had big connections. Everybody was related both places. Me more than a lot of people because, well, it was all my people. I never did go over there. But when I started teaching for the settlement in [19]87, I was one of the music teachers for the settlement. I had several schools. I had Cordia, Carr Creek, and Beckham Combs. I taught Beckham Combs in Knott County, and I taught Beckham Bates in Letcher County. [laughter] But, yes, I had wonderful connections when I taught at Beckham Combs – the Beckham Combs School, which now belongs to a church, but it was a wonderful school. It sat on the property where Beckham Combs, the superintendent that was here for many years, was his home territory – home farm – his father's farm. So, we had all those connections around him and his family. His brother-in-law was a teacher. His sisters and – it's overwhelming. I can't even tell you little bits of it. You have to ask me the right questions, you understand.

NM: Sure. Yes.

RY: You understand that. But as far as snitches of stuff, I can't think of anything specific right now.

NM: That is okay.

RY: But it was an interesting little – it wasn't like an argument exactly. But, yes, the people at Hindman kind of resented the principal and the coach both being from Carr Creek. But nobody made much of it. But they assimilated very well and it wasn't too many years. I came back to teach in [19]75, and I taught at Knott County Central High School. I taught choir and music appreciation.

NM: Is there anything else that you remember about what people were talking about or saying about the creation of the lake when you got back? Anything else that you recall?

RY: Well, only that there was always a little undertow of a chuckle that they run everybody out of Carrs Fork to build a lake to protect Hazard, and it didn't. It didn't. It may have made some difference, but not. They still had some big floods. They had one in July in Hazard. So, of course, [laughter] that flood was not to be compared to other floods. It was one of a kind.

NM: But even shortly after the lake was built, people were already aware that it was not really doing what it said it was going to do.

RY: I think they thought it wouldn't. When they first said it, they thought, "Well, that won't do that," and it didn't. But that was one of the things that I remember them saying. But maybe you'll hit on the right question. It'll remind me of something.

NM: No. That is okay. Did people have other theories for why they built the lake or why they chose those communities specifically to move out?

RY: No. But I'm sure there was a lot of questions about that. But I don't know what they were. I was not here. So, everything that I knew was secondhanded because it was that people told me what. My mother and dad were not – dad never lived over there, nor did my mother. But they both had relatives over there.

NM: Well, I guess I am curious. You sort of commented on this a little bit ago already. But how do you feel about the lake now? Do you feel like it was a worthy project? How do you feel?

RY: Yes. I think it was. Right now, it is the biggest thing good that came out of it. It didn't come [laughter] easily, and it was a source of contention too for many years. But the water system that is coming out of Carrs Fork Lake now is providing our water. Hindman water system was all deep wells. Then when they finally got the water system over there, we switched over now, and it's being pumped over here from the lake. There's been some little things. I was on city council at Hindman when all that happened. So, I was very much at the top of what was going on at that time. It was a political thing that offended a lot of people. I think they've pretty well gotten over that now because it is such a good thing. It's going to be sending water to Letcher County. I think that's a coming thing. I don't know how much and when. The lake people of Knott County pretty much enjoy the lake. I think that a lot of people love to go over there. They have these campers that come – regular people that come every summer and stay for a period of time. They've kind of [laughter] taken Knott County as a second home. I love going over there because I watch for the bald eagles flying around. They're flying around over there. You can see Canada Geese. They've got that little thing there where Gwen and Arthur lives. It's a park like place. The wonderful sheds for picnics and so on. In the big picture, it's all right. All the people who were displaced either have died or are all right with it now. Of course, there's a lot of people who never knew anything about any of that. They just know there's a lake over there.

NM: Yes. Well, maybe one last question that I forgot to ask you about. I was just curious if you have a sense of what the racial or ethnic mix of the communities that got flooded. What did that look like at the time?

RY: Well, after the Civil War, a man by the name of Elisha Breeding was a huge landowner over there. Owned all of what is Redfox and up to the top of the hill and down maybe some in Letcher County. I'm not sure where all his property went. But I know that after the war, he cut out, I think two hundred acres – maybe more, I don't know – for former slaves to come and build a house and live. Now, some of those families or the descendants of those families are still there. The Williams, the Hagens, the Christians. There's some other families who – I think there may be some Johnsons over there. I know that they're a sweet bunch of people and I love every one of them. Gwen is the queen of all of that right now.

NM: Gwen Christian?

RY: Gwen Christian, yes. She was an Adams. That's who the other family is. Adams is Hagens Williams. Those were the main ones, and then Christian. Look what's happened with her. She owns it. She owned Isom IGA – she and Arthur, and it was completely – and it's not opened back up yet. It will be open, I think, in April. But there was some talk that they're going to have the kitchen up and going sometime this month, and that they're going to return to doing catering. So, before they open up the store, they're going to go back to catering. See, that was one of the big things they did. See, that store was originally owned by Mike and Sheila Slone. Sheila's a big caterer, and she taught Gwen all about it. So, they're very good friends. When Mike got ready to sell it, they sold it to their manager, Gwen, who is as sweet as they come. She's a precious person. The students that were my students, that were the Black students of Redfox, I had a special place for them. Anybody who knows them does. But there's still a whole lot of white supremacists. They've infiltrated the Christian communities and that disturbs me beyond belief. How can it be? I don't know. There's a lot of people that they look at somebody that's different from them as bad. It's just, anybody's bad. Politics has gone bananas over that very topic.

NM: Was Redfox affected by the creation of the lake and the families that lived over there?

RY: Not as much as you might think, but there's been a couple of floods. Unbelievable. We had one flash flood several years ago that came out of that holler where the Four Star – and washed away most of Redfox.

NM: When was that?

RY: It's been several years ago. Karen Washington, did you ever know her? I think she lives in Letcher County now. She's an African American. I'm not sure which family she came out of. She's a sweetheart. She's a teacher, I think. She worked with the adult learning here. She lived in a trailer. Honey, it just destroyed her trailer. Everything down through there where Gwen lived, all that was flooded. Then this last flood in July came out of the hill behind Gwen's house. Just about washed that house off. But I don't know. I haven't heard anything said about it. But you can see that it washed around that house. Awfullest rain I ever heard my days. I was here when that came, by myself. Gail was in North Carolina with her children who happened to come for a short visit and her great-grandchildren. She's got three great-grandchildren. [laughter] So, I was here. I was still not well. I was okay. She had taken the dog with her. So, he was not here, but I was by myself. I watched and listened to that rain and watched it come up, and I thought it was going to come up on the porch. It got right up to the top step – above the top step. I left. I didn't want to be in here when the water came in. So, I went, got in my car and drove up on the road and parked and watched with this little flashlight. It's had a change on me too. Even though it didn't come in my house, it was traumatic from start to finish. Then I got in my car and I drove down to turn around to park better. My light shone on the high school and the water was way up in the middle of the windows. So, all that affects who you are. I couldn't call anybody then. This phone wouldn't work. Cell phone wouldn't work. It was dark as pitch. I never heard rain like that rain and the stench. The water just come out of that holler. What was it that was so stinky? It was terrible odor. I watched it go across with my little flashlight. I watched it go across and into that garage in that house right there. It was up between three and four feet in that garage. She had a fairly new Cadillac. While I was sitting up there in the car, I heard this car

horn blowing and I could hear this motor going, "Vroom, vroom, vroom." Then the lights started flashing and I realized that it was her Cadillac screaming, [laughter] "Get me out of here." But I guess it had a computer. I'm not sure what the – well, I'm sure it had a computer. But that car was blowing its horn, flashing its lights, and revving its motor. Of course, she couldn't get to it. So, these computers, [laughter] in these new cars, they can holler, "Help," I reckon.

NM: Gosh. Yes. I've heard a lot of stories about people in the flood and just the scariness of the uncertainty and just having to wait without being able to contact anybody. It was just a real tough thing.

RY: Right. Then when it got daylight, there were people coming in. I could only get to right there. The flood was still up – it went in that house. It was way up and halfway up in the windows in that house right there.

NM: Just across the road?

RY: Yes. They've not done anything about it. My old house down the street is the last house before you cross the bridge, it was up to the ceiling in there. I said, "It's going to have to be bulldozed." It's ruined. That done something to me.

NM: Yes. It is a tough deal. It is hard.

RY: So, it got in the CDI building where the library is. All that was ruined. The elevator's ruined. But the interesting little thing they're saying now, I don't know – I'm not in a position to know for sure. But I'm told that Hazard Community College, who ended up with the deed, I'm not sure why, but the deed of the CDI building, well, I think it was because they were going to have the Crafts College – Kentucky Crafts College, and the academic segment of it was going to be handled by Hazard Community College. So, they had ownership of that building where the [dog barks] library was.

NM: Do you know you are barking at me?

RY: [laughter] Yes. He just barked because the door opened. [laughter] So, the scuttlebutt is – and I hope it comes true – that the Hazard Community College is giving the CDI building to the Hindman Settlement School. They were also giving the old Hindman High School, which was destroyed for practical purposes, to the Artisan Center. If there's anything good at all come out of any of this, it's that those two things happening. But it's going to cost a small fortune because the CDI building had some problems long before the flood. Heating and cooling was two of them and that's going to have to be fixed. The elevator's going to have to be fixed. Apparently, all that's in the works. But I haven't heard much. Bill Weinberg told me – he's the one that told me that the high school is going to be owned by the Artisan Center, which is a good thing. But now, Hazard Community College, they weren't going to put any money in either one of those buildings to restore them. So, the biggest thing I expect is that the elevator's going to have to be fixed, and the heating and cooling system for that building. But from what I'm told, the offices for the settlement's going to be upstairs on second floor. People coming through, just passing through, not going to go upstairs to an office. They'll have to get the elevator. Maybe it might

save that. I'm not sure. But – what's wrong, buddy?

NM: It will be interesting to see how it all unfolds.

RY: Yes. Yes. Somebody told me when I was first talking about it, "Well, don't worry about it. Things will come out better. It'll be better than it was." I said, "Well, maybe twenty years from now. But what about right now with people living here who've lost everything?" Maybe in twenty years, it will be all right. But what about in the meantime? I don't see how that justifies anything. Even if they do get those two buildings, that'll be a good thing. But it was fine just the way it was. [laughter] But oh, Lordy mercy, all the people in Frogtown. If you drive down through Frogtown, there's not a house down through there that's not been affected. Most of them are rear repairable. I mean, they're not going to – my old house is gone. The Ratcliff house next to it, they've already bulldozed half of it down. This one here, I don't know what they're going to do with it. It's just a pile of mold right now. It had some wonderful antiques in it. But the fellow that owns it, he's about lost it because one of these big companies where they come in and pay the taxes, they have ownership. They'll sell it back to you. But they'll sell it – they're going to make a profit. He's as poor as a church mouse. He's addicted. He's run through \$1 million, I suppose. His daddy had money. He's run through with it.

NM: That is a tough deal.

RY: So, I don't know. I look forward to burn it down. But I don't know.

NM: Well, let me just wrap this up here. I am going to get about thirty seconds of the sound of the room. So, while I do that, we will just sit here somewhat quietly. I will just ask you if there is just anything else you want to say about the lake, the communities that were there before, or sort of after the fact. But I will just go ahead and start sort of counting out to thirty. Was there anything else that is still on your mind or anything I didn't ask you about that you think would be important for folks to know?

RY: Can't think of anything. I'm sure there's stuff in there, but I don't pull it up too good. But it's been a great pleasure.

NM: Yes, likewise.

RY: I wish I could tell you more.

NM: Well, you have told me a lot and it has been nice getting to talk with you about it. But I will go ahead and sign us off here and turn the recording off. So, this is Nicole Musgrave talking with Bob Young on February 6, 2023. We are at Bob's home in Hindman, Kentucky. This is for the Carr Creek Oral History Project.

[end of transcript]