

PRESERVE THE AREA'S RURAL QUALITIES
(PARQ)

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
WITH
BOBBIE HAYES

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READYVILLE, TENNESSEE

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UNDER THE DIRECTION OF
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BOBBIE HAYES

Bobbie Hayes (nee Swarford) was born in Readyville, Tennessee in June 1942. She has lived there most of her life, but she also lived in California and Michigan at different times before moving back to Readyville permanently in the late 1970s. Her mother, Lillian Frances Swarford, raised Bobbie and her three siblings (two sisters and one brother) by herself after her husband died when Lillian was twenty-five years old. Bobbie's family has lived in Tennessee for many generations, and some of her family members worked at the Readyville Mill. She has one son, Darryl, and her family keeps growing with grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Bobbie has lived and worked very close to the Readyville Mill her entire life, including a time when she worked with mill owner Marie Carignan in a store on the mill property. She now works for WGNS, a radio station that broadcasts in Rutherford County, Tennessee, and she is also an Associate Minister at her church. She loves her community, and she has a deep passion for spreading the word about it and about the Readyville Mill.

INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

Growing up, Bobbie Hayes lived just “a hop, skip, and a jump” away from the Readyville Mill, and she still does. In this interview, Ms. Hayes recalls how she, her two sisters, and her brother would take a shortcut to the mill nearly everyday to play in the dam behind the mill. They would ride a log from the current created by the water turbine under the mill down the Stones River until they drifted near the shore. They would then pick up their log, carry it back behind the mill, and repeat the process even though none of them actually knew how to swim. Ms. Hayes remembers how much fun this was at the time but how dangerous it seems to her now. Their mother, Lillian, would fish behind the mill as a way to relax after a hard day’s work. She fondly remembers having worms ready for her mother when she arrived home from work and her catching “red-eyes.” The mill was a source of great fun for Bobbie and her family when she was young.

The mill was also a great source of income, services, and communal gatherings for the people of Readyville. Ms. Hayes recalls how members of her family, including her brother, worked at the mill and also how the mill provided her family with electricity and ice many years before others in rural parts of Tennessee ever had such luxuries. The mill owners who she remembers the most, George Justice, Joe Flipse, and Bill and Marie Carignan, all made great impressions on her in their dedication to the mill. Mr. Justice was close with Ms. Hayes and her family, and she has great memories of him and his generosity. She also had a strong bond with mill owner Marie Carignan and worked closely with her in the store on the mill property in the 1970s, later opening a bake shop with her in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Marie brought many back-to-the-landers with her to the mill when she and her husband purchased it, and they and other local artisans would sell their crafts at the mill. The mill became a gathering place for the entire community under both the Flipses, who would have events at harvest time every year, and the Carignans, who would have flea market-type sales at the mill.

In this interview, it is obvious that Ms. Hayes has a strong love and appreciation for her community and the people in it. She grew up very poor, so poor that she could not afford her schoolbooks and always had to share with her brother, but her mother and her neighbors did the best that they could to raise her in the best way possible. She is very thankful for that. She grew up in the time of the Jim Crow South, and she experienced segregation first hand in school. She and other family members had to be bussed to Murfreesboro to attend the Black high school there because there was not one in Readyville. Her son, while attending a desegregated school, also experienced racism from fellow classmates and even a teacher at one point. Still, there were White members of the community who

embraced Bobbie and her family, especially the Justices and Marie Carignan and her family. Marie and her sons were Jewish, so they shared a solidarity in being minorities in Readyville with Ms. Hayes and her son Darryl. Even though she experienced some racial tension at different points in her life, Bobbie Hayes remembers all of her neighbors with great kindness. She looks upon Readyville and the Readyville Mill with great affection, and she recalls many memories of living, working, and playing in this community throughout her lifetime in this interview.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Lauren Baud: This is Lauren Baud. I'm here with Bobbie Hayes at her home in Readyville, Tennessee. It is March 16, 2012. This interview is for Preserve the Area's Rural Qualities, a non-profit organization that is interested in preserving the history of Readyville, Tennessee and the Readyville Mill. Bobbie, do I have your permission to record this interview?

Bobbie Hayes: Yes you do.

LB: All right. Okay. Well, where are you originally from?

BH: Here.

LB: Right here?

BH: Right here in Readyville.

LB: Oh. When were you born?

BH: 1942.

LB: Oh okay.

BH: Yes.

LB: All right.

BH: I was born here in Readyville in Cannon County. In fact, at this same location.

LB: Really? In this house?

BH: Yep.

LB: Wow. So you've lived here your whole life?

BH: No. I moved away after I finished high school, I moved to California. Then I lived in Michigan after married. I lived in Michigan, but I moved back here in 1979. So I've been here ever since.

LB: So what are your earliest memories of the mill?

BH: My earliest memory is when we was children. I have three siblings. I have a brother and two older sisters. The mill—that's where we would go to swim and play in the back. It would be a sandbar. In fact, my brother and my sisters were baptized behind the mill. It was a place there where you could baptize.

My mom, she was a widow at twenty-five with four children, and her enjoyment was, after working real hard all day, was to come home and go fishing. She would fish sitting back behind the mill. When she would come home, we would have worms and things ready, and she would go fish.

We would just play in the water back there because we didn't realize how dangerous—now I wouldn't do that. When the mill was running and they would have water—when they was grinding—and the water would come through there real swift so it could turn the wheels to grind the corn. So what we would do—we would get a old log and hang on to it and float, and the swiftness would carry us down the river. It kind of washed us to the side. Then we'd get our log and come back and do the same and couldn't swim. (Lauren laughs)

You know where the mill is. We had a short cut that we could go across. We were up on the cliff, but between two rocks, it would be like a dirt that we could slide down. We would slide down this cliff. Well, in fact, my brother like to fell off that rock cliff one time—my sister, she had to grab him to keep him from falling. That's the short cut we would go to the mill every—we had a path, and that was what we did.

Then, later on, when I was in high school, I started working for Burnett's Grocery. Right there—the little local stores—Russell's Market now, but it was Miss Annie Burnett and Wilma Burnett. Mr. Justice that run the mill—he used to bring flour and meal and everything.

I remember King Patent [King of Patents flour, the product of the mill]. My granddaddy loved King Patent flour—that was the name of it. You used to get meal, flour in material—in cloth bags, but it would be a pattern. My mom would buy those patterns and make dresses for us out of that material. So she always tried to get enough of the same type of flour. Back then, they tried to—they was recycling and didn't realize they was recycling because they was bagging in things that people could use again. So we would have dresses made out of this cloth that the flour used to be in. Our undergarments would match with little ruffles. I mean, they could look at a dress in a magazine and actually cut a pattern. Made our clothes from it. I remember growing up I wanted a store-bought dress. (both laugh) I didn't realize how blessed I was to have someone that could sew for me. They were pretty. In fact, I ran across a picture not too

long ago of me with my little King Patent dress. (both laugh) Had a white collar with little ruffles, you know.

I realized that, you know, well we was poor but we didn't know we was poor because the mill generated electricity for this area before a lot of other people had it, and then it was a ice factory also. So we could get ice when some of the other people—before they did because they generated electricity and made ice. Then, you know, we could get our meal and flour there.

Ray Justice—Mr. Justice's son, he had a snake that would stay in the mill, you know. He called it his pet snake, but we thought it was there just to keep us from rambling. He had it—that controlled the mice and things to keep them from getting in the—

LB: Oh wow.

BH: In the corn and things. People then would use whatever they could, you know. When I was working for Ms. Burnett at the store, I just learned—she taught me a lot about buying and how to buy and how to keep your inventory up and how to invest back into the inventory.

The people here in Readyville like Mr. Justice, they were important to you. You know, what they learn. Although if you seem that you were—they thought you was interested, they would take time and explain why you would—because I always had a lot of questions. I would always ask them questions like when the belt would be feeding, “Well, how do you know when to stop it? How do you know how much water to run through it?” I mean, it was just amazing to watch that process, but we had to watch from afar because of safety features. I guess—that's mostly what I remember is about the mill and the dam.

Now my brother, he used to work down there. James [James Swarford] did. He—[to James] James, how long did you work for Mr. Justice?

James Swarford: I don't know.

BH: You don't remember? Yeah. He's older than I am. He would help him load and—

LB: Oh really?

BH: Deliver when he'd go—they did it all. He'd grind, he bagged. Then he would—he would go deliver it to the different little country stores all throughout

in the back of a pickup truck. It was nothing real fancy like they have now. I mean, you can't even imagine. (laughs)

LB: Yeah. Um-hmm.

BH: At that time, we thought we was uptown so to speak because we had electricity around here and we could get ice. It was just things that we had that—excuse me [reaches for tissue]—that other people didn't get for a while. Then this neighborhood at the Readyville Mill—it generated income for other people. The people would sell their corn to Mr. Justice, and then Mr. Justice would give jobs to someone. Like my brother, he was young, but he could help bag or tie up the bags or—everything was manual, not automated like it is now. So, it was that physical labor that he could use those boys to, you know, and it gave them something to do.

After I moved back here—now this was the—what was Marie? The Carignans had bought the mill, and we got to be friends because she had some boys the same age as my son. They was real, real close. She made a store there. She would bake bread and go to flea markets and things. So I would help her bake bread, and then I would help her in the store. So I learned how to bake bread. Then we opened up a store in Murfreesboro. It was called Whole Grain Bake Shop.

LB: Oh really?

BH: Yes. I don't know have you read the copy of the book that she written—

LB: Oh, no. I don't

BH: Um-hmm. It's called *The Miller's Table*.

LB: Oh okay.

BH: I need to dig that out for you sometime. There's some pictures in there of Mr. Bob Taylor. He was a icon here in Readyville. He was raised and born here—I think during slavery times. So he had a knowledge of all of this. He witnessed it. She had this mill, and she tried to preserve some of the—like in the book, like with Daddy Bob, you know.

Because Marie, she was Jewish, and we, being African Americans, you know, she—it was segregation here at that time. We kind of just blended. Kind of stuck together at things. She opened up some doors that maybe weren't very popular in sharing with the Black, but it gave people insight of what they had here. That they had just taken for granted.

LB: Yeah.

BH: You know, and Daddy Bob—like what you're doing now—she had interviewed him. She always talked to him, and in talking he would tell her stories. She shared that in her book. When people was reading it, you know, they'd been knowing him all their life, but then to realize all this knowledge that the had that nobody really tapped into. Like his mother-in-law, we called her Mammy Zan [Zander Weatherly]. Well everybody around here would call her Aunt Zan because she was another one—she knew about when the mill—she knew the first people that—and she would share with us. She would tell us that when the Civil War was, she said that they would be out playing, and they would here that the soldiers were coming. They would run and hide, and they remember hiding in the mill and up on the corn.

LB: Wow.

BH: Yeah.

LB: Did she remember the mill being destroyed during the Civil War?

BH: No. Well, I can't remember her sharing with me of that. I remember a lot of floods that Mr. Justice—bless his heart—that he had to always—the water would get up. Then sometimes we would go and help him try to stack stuff up. Then it just depends—it would get too high, and it would get the corn and everything wet. Then he had a lot of setbacks because of flooding, but that was just something that went with that type of business at that time being. You had to use the river to generate the power, so quite naturally sometimes it's going to cause floods. I remember right there at that store, the water was so high one time it got up in the store, and we had to come out the back and get in a boat because we was inside—stayed too long trying to stack things up. We had to come out and get in a boat to get out. This was something that we just kind of got used to. Then when I was working at the store—the race that runs from across the highway?

LB: Yep. Um-hmm.

BH: Well, I witnessed more wrecks there. In fact—he was a Hollandsworth I think that had a wreck there, and he drowned in the race. Then we was at the store one day and this had lady come in, and she had left her child in the car. Well, the little girl took and moved the car out of park, and it rolled back into the race. It just so happened that it was no water that much in it at that time, and they were able to get her out. It's been several wrecks right there where people

have lost their lives right there at that race. These are just some of the things that I remember, you know.

Just trying to think about when the Carignans had their store. Well, she sold quilts, and people around the neighborhood that was still doing hand quilts and things—well, they opened up a market for people that was coming in—the tourists. They was buying these quilts. I guess it was more like what you would call a consignment. If you had something you wanted to sell, you would take it down to Marie's, and she would hang it up. Somebody come through and look at it, and if they see it and they want it—I know my grandmom, she had a lot of antique churns and butter churns and things that. She just said well she didn't need all that anymore, and, in fact, she sold all of that. Marie would have it sitting around the store, and it looked good. Somebody would come in and want to buy it, and so she would sell them. Yeah, and, in fact, I still have some quilts and things that we was making because I got into quilting after I came back home. Because when I was little, my mom and them would be quilting, and I never did want to quilt. I didn't want to sew, but as I got older, and when I came back home and people was into quilting again, I was interested in that. That was something that they used the mill for. You know, to—the talent that was here in this area and Woodbury that people—well, you know—like basket weaving.

LB: Yeah.

BH: She would have flea markets there, and people would come.

LB: Really?

BH: Uh-huh. It would be a big—and then it was some people that owned it before Marie was the Flipses. Now, I think they kind of restored the mill back to like it was. They went and found the regular stone wheels and things that—and they was here for a long time. They put a lot in it. They really did. When I moved back home the last time and it was in despair, it kind of hurt my heart just to see.

I'm so glad now that PARQ [Preserve the Area's Rural Qualities], you know, they worked. They started doing things to protect it like they kept the weather—the rain—out of it and putting plastic over the windows. Just doing what they could. I work at the radio station, so they would come. They would be on the radio, and they would be talking about it. There would be people that was calling in and remembering about the mill, so I think I may can ask Bart [Bart Walker of WGNS radio in Rutherford County, Tennessee] if he still have any of those interviews on tape where people was calling in—

LB: Um-hmm. Okay.

BH: And sharing when they was little. This is one thing about talk radio that when you open up the mic for that, you'd be surprised who's out there that have knowledge of things. Then one would call in, and they would share something. It was just amazing. I thought, you know, I live there. (both laugh) So it was always just felt like a little city to me because I was a little country girl anyway.

So, but we had so much, you know, and the people here—the Blacks and the Whites always did get along. We never did experience that, which some areas did. Like my grandmom, she was well-known in the community, and people respect her. She was short, but she was fiery. She said something, she meant what she said. (laughs)

LB: What was her name?

BH: Ordie. O-R-D-I-E. Robinson. Yeah. Yeah, she was just a very devout lady, and she was a disciplinarian. (laughs)

LB: Yeah. (laughs)

BH: So I think that was one out of the respect that the way we was brought up that—and people admired that. She always instilled in us, you know, you feel good about yourself. Always be willing—don't mind getting your hand dirty because you don't ever know what you may have to do to make a living. So if someone wanted us to help them do ironing, we would do that. Ms. Burnett, she's the one who started me in the store, and then she taught me what she knew. So I learned a lot about marketing from her, never knowing that I was going to be in the radio business. (both laugh) (phone rings) They call me a public relationist because I have a way of mingling with people. That's what we did here, you know. We was brought up in a community where we felt good about ourselves so that when we didn't feel that—we weren't intimidated because of color or gender or anything. (James talking on phone in background) You know, we knew then some things. I didn't realize how bad they were until I had moved away.

LB: Yeah.

BH: And then came back. Then I started experiencing a feeling like—oh, because when I went to California, it was totally, totally different. When I came back, you know. So I start doing things that kind of, you know, (laughs) helped bring about some change.

LB: Yeah.

BH: When I left to go to California and the whole—this will show you how they—Mr. J—all of them, everybody come to the store. They had some words to impart—wisdom. “Now, when you go there and go to get a job now, if anybody asks you, ‘Can you do this?’ you say, ‘Yeah,’ even if you can’t. Let them find out that you can’t.” (both laugh) They all had some words of advice to give me and some words of encouragement. I just think about that—that’s the type of community we lived in. That’s the type of place I was brought up in, and I’m just so thankful that we had the Readyville Mill. We had two sawmills. I mean, people may say we had it going on.

LB: Yeah. (laughs)

BH: We had a good relationship between the people, so that made a difference. Yeah. Mr. Justice, he always would have a garden, and I love okra. Every time his okra would come in, he would come over and he would bring okra. Then different ones when he was at the mill. When Mama would fry chicken or something, she would send us down to—(laughs) with him a plate or something. His wife and things, she could cook too, but this was just things you did. Not that they need it, but just something that you would share and do.

Yeah, and I think that’s just about all I can remember. Most all is—well, one of the things is how it brought people together and stuff. Because we all had to have flour and meal, and so it was something that we all had to do. Then, by him giving employment to people and letting them—I can’t remember the man that used to drive the ice truck for him. Well, it wasn’t for Mr. Justice. It was for some more people. I can’t remember his name—who it was. I called my sister, and she said she couldn’t remember. She said, “All I can remember is how we used to get on the log going down the river and couldn’t swim.” (both laugh)

LB: Yeah. Um-hmm.

BH: And being baptized. I mean, that was something back then because of, you know, we’re very spiritual people anyway. To be on that sandbar in that river, it was a joyous occasion when we would have a baptism. In fact, Mr. Taylor, the one I was telling you, he wasn’t baptized until he was eighty-seven years old.

LB: Wow.

BH: So it was kind of a community thing when he was—that they came out for his baptism, you know, because he wanted to be baptized in the river. By that time, people was having baptisms at the baptories in the churches, but we still

baptized in the river. We still have people now that want to be baptized in the river. Yeah.

LB: So were there Black churches and White churches here?

BH: Yeah. In fact, there used to be a Methodist church right there on the corner.

LB: Okay.

BH: Yeah, and then you passed one that we was associated with. Before you turn off, coming to Readyville, there's a—in fact, there's a new church now over there, but they just built that last year. Ms. Burnett that I worked for, she went to New Hope. That was a Church of Christ church. The Lassiters, they was Baptists, and they would go to the one over in Leona. I mean, we all was [unclear], but we still come together in the—

LB: Yeah.

BH: In the community. Right in this little area.

LB: Um-hmm. What was the name of your church?

BH: It was Hickory Grove. Hickory Grove Readyville Baptist Church. Yeah. Yeah, and my sisters—they was all—and my brother.

Right in this little community here used to be—I guess it'd be about twenty Black families, but now just three of us.

LB: Really?

BH: It used to be a house next door, and it's tore down. Then the one over there, the lady—they never had any children, and so the property went to some heirs. They're not—they're just there. The only people is me and the Browns and the Taylors. We're still here. Yeah.

LB: Yeah. So when you were little, did you have White friends?

BH: Oh yeah. Cheryl Tasse—it's Spencer now. Benny—in fact, Delmon—I don't if you probably—Bragg, he lived right across from us for years, yeah. That's who we had to play with. My brother—that was because his friends was the Hiltons, yeah. We always played together.

LB: Your schools were segregated though?

BH: Um-hmm. Yeah. In fact, we had a school bus that we had to take us to Murfreesboro [Tennessee] to high school because we didn't have a Black high school in Cannon County. My sister—to go to high school—she had to ride the Greyhound bus.

LB: Oh.

BH: Then my aunt—when she graduated to go to high school, she had to ride the milk truck. Now a milk truck was a truck that would come by twice a day—in the morning and evening. Because people would milk cows, and they would sell the milk. Then it was a truck that come by and pick up the milk to take to the creamery. This is was the way they would have for us to pursue our education. We had to until things really started changing, you know. With each generation, it got a little bit better. Where my auntie was with the milk truck, my sister was with the Greyhound, and then I was on the school bus. Then my son, by the time we moved back here, the schools was integrated.

One of the things that amazed him when we first moved back is when they would let out a school for snow and things. He said, “Mama, why'd they let—” because we lived in Michigan (both laugh)—he said, “Why'd they let out school for snow?” I had to explain because of the hills and things that it would be—but he just couldn't imagine not going to school because of snow. Yeah, yeah.

LB: So how old was he when you moved back here?

BH: He was fourteen.

LB: Oh, okay.

BH. Yeah. Yeah, he was fourteen. Him and Kenny, the Carignan boy, they were real, real close. They were real close. Now when he was up here at West Side School, they played basketball together and then, when they would go on senior trips or something, well, Kenny and Darryl always stayed together because, like I told you, he was Jewish, and Darryl was Black. People kind of still didn't—some of them still didn't want to sleep in the same room. Then the kids didn't think much about it. It would be the older people, you know, yeah. In fact, I still remember when I saw Darryl's friends, and they were talking about his time of being away because he hadn't experienced anything different. So when he came back, he kind of had some adjusting to do because of some attitudes. Like I said, he was well-grounded, so he felt good about himself. So he wasn't intimidated by what people said or what people think, you know. You can't let that change who you are. You know who you are. So, being the only child, he had a lot of his

mom's spunk. (both laugh) You know, you bolster it in yourself, but when you feel good about yourself and you feel like, "Hey. I can do this. I can learn this," you know. I was telling him, "You know, if you have a teacher that you think is not liking you, just pick his brain. He can't stop you from learning. Only you can stop learning," I said. "So you show him by learning."

Yeah, so that was one of the things I think that what kind of helped us was that we had people in the neighborhood that was willing to—hey, if you're doing something wrong, they're going to be here to tell you. I don't care who it is. It could be the Tilford girls. If they see you doing, they're going to tell your parents or they're going to say something to you. I mean, that's just the kind of neighborhood we was brought up in. I thank God for that now because I think it made me a stronger person. You know, more accountable for if you do something wrong, you're going to [unclear] it because somebody's seeing you. (laughs)

LB: So do you know how far back your family history goes here in Readyville or in this area in middle Tennessee? Do you know long they've been here?

BH: I know my granddaddy, my grandfather, he was the one that—because he worked in the mine. There used to be a mine that—Hoover's or Yeager's Mine—I think it was Gather. The mine over in Porterfield [Tennessee]. Now my other sister, she would know—Lillian would. I can't remember because I just know—I'll be seventy my birthday, so, I mean. (laughs) Lillian was seventy—she's seventy-seven. I know it's been about eighty-something years or longer. Way longer than that. I am old. (both laugh) I just realized. Hadn't really thought about that at all.

Now that Taylor girl, she goes to the archives, and she gets all this information. My sister sent me some things the other day of where her grandson had gotten some information from the census, you know. I told her, I said, "It's so small. I can't read it." I couldn't make it out what it—

LB: Yeah.

BH: It's awful small. Janice, she does a lot of—she can get information from the archives. I guess if you wanted to pull that up, you probably could.

LB: Okay.

BH: You have some names if you wanted to re—and my grandfather's name was Unie Robinson. In fact, [pointing to drawing on wall behind her chair] this is my great-great-great-great-grandparents.

LB: Wow. (laughs)

BH: Now, Papa Gus, he looks like the woman doesn't he? (both laugh) Then Headie, she looks like the man. (Lauren laughs) Yeah. Those are my granddaddy's grandparents, yeah.

LB: Oh okay.

BH: Yep. Yep.

LB: Do you know where they lived?

BH: They was out of Liberty [Tennessee]. Liberty—Liberty over in Dekalb County.

LB: Okay.

BH: That woman. Because she was an Anderson. He was a Robinson. So Janice had did some research on that for me and got some information. In fact, we went to the Liberty cemetery and were just looking around. There's so many people with the same name of what's in our family. My aunt's name is Nonnie. There's a Nonnie on the stone—so those names come down. What they said it was how the Robinsons came about. There was two brothers that had had slaves, and they had the same by them being Robinsons. It was two different families of Robinsons because of the brothers. So we don't know. We can't figure out what our names were before. You kind of get to a dead end after—you can only go so far because it just run you into—and then we found out there's more mulattoes than you know [unclear]. All through the family tree, what we did get. So it's just like, well you can see that with the pictures.

LB: You were telling me that your brother worked at the mill?

BH: Yeah. He would help him load the truck and help him bag the flour and every—

LB: Was there ever a time when African Americans couldn't work at the mill?

BH: No. It was Mr. Justice. It was more like a family-run thing. It didn't take a lot of people to do it. Maybe he just needed help with you to bag it up and tying it up and helping load the truck and all. Going with him when he'd go to deliver it to carry the—because it wouldn't be in little five pound—it was twenty-five pound bags. Big—that you have to put over your shoulder. See that's how

people would buy it, so the little bags didn't exist then. Everything was in ten and twenty-five pound bags. So he would need help with loading and stacking, and yeah. No, not that I remember. It was what you call physical labor, so they would use Blacks or any of the other boys around here. That would give them a little money to do things. It wasn't like he was on payroll or nothing.

LB: Yeah. So during segregation or even after when you moved back in the late 70s, were there any like outward signs of racism, or were people generally accepting?

BH: Well, yeah. My son—that's what I was saying. He experienced that.

LB: At school?

BH: At school. I think because he had been in a different environment like, you know. One of the things that we found kind of hard because when we was in Michigan, he was majoring in electronics, and then when we came here, they didn't have that. They didn't offer that. He had to take classes that he had already had because it was required at a certain time, and they wouldn't let him. So he had to take shop here, and he did not like shop because he was into electronics. (both laugh)

He had a problem with the teacher there, but I let him know, "Hey. You know, I'm aware of what's going on, and I know this is not right." The teacher, he was saying that well, the way I let Darryl dress—said that some of those kids were poor and that I said, "He just wears blue jeans," you know. We always did iron and starch. That was one of the things that we was brought up—ironing clothes. We couldn't have no wrinkled clothes. So that's just one of the—in Black families—that they do, you know. He was saying because of the way that—and I don't know. I didn't think he—and some things that was happening, and I said, "You can't just dismiss it. That they were just being boys because, you being the teacher, I expect you to have control over your class." I had several meetings with the principal, and they understood where I was coming from because I wasn't angry. I was just letting them know I'm aware that, "Hey, this is going on. I'm letting you know that I'm aware of it." So they addressed it, and I told them, I said, "You know, I want that class monitored because if anything else happens, I will go before the school board." So I just let them know that I was aware what rights I had. The teacher, he apologized to me for some things he had said to my son. He said, "Well, you know, that's just slang." No.

LB: Um-hmm. Yeah.

BH: (laughs) Then, some people, they thought that, “Well you just going to stir up trouble.” No. I’m just standing up for my child.

LB: Exactly.

BH: Like I said, it was a way I think getting neighbors aware that hey, this is going on, and not only for him but for the next child that comes in behind Darryl to that teacher. So he needs to know that it’s just people that’s not going to tolerate that. I’m not intimidated by you. Yeah, so. So that was the only thing. When they found out that—oh, and Darryl was a good basketball player, but I noticed that his grades had started—and I requested a conference because I wanted to. I was sensing something, but he wasn’t telling me, and—because he had made starter. So the kids, they had started being bullying to him. That’s when I told him, I said, “You know,” and I didn’t know that they was taking him out of school to practice, and I said, “Academics first. Basketball second. Until you get your grades up, no basketball.” Then they realized, hey, I meant that because you’re taking him out of class to practice basketball. Then when I found out what the boys had done, the coach, he came and he told me, he said, “That won’t happen again.” I said, “No because he’s not going to be playing anymore.” I said, “It’s not that important to him.” So it was just some things that I think that they had to find out—that all Black people just don’t care for sports. It’s not just, hey, because there’s more to it than that. So when Darryl graduated, he was supposed to start to MTSU [Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, Tennessee], and he up and joined the Marines. (laughs)

LB: (laughs) Well—

BH: That made me actually sick. I mean, physically sick because that’s my only child. He told me, he said, “Mom, you’ve kind of spoiled me,” and he said, “I need the discipline, you know, because I don’t know what I want to do. I don’t want you spending your money, and I’m going to school and don’t know what I want to do.” So he spent twelve years in the Marine Corps.

LB: Wow.

BH: It really was something. Now he’s at Southwest Airlines. I have a good son. That’s what I’m saying about with the neighborhood like Russell and all them, they grew up kind of here together. So he, Russell, he knows. I told him, I said, “There’s so many generations of kids that by me working at the store, I’ve watched them go. That by me working at the store, you know, I get to see these children grow up and get married when I moved back.” Now my child, my grandchildren, as well as some of their children.

So anyway, when we get back to the mill—it was just like this old—it's still a landmark for people. That my sister—they live in Florida—this summer are coming, and we're going to plan a reunion for the people that lived here. We're going to come and go down to the eatery, we call it.

LB: Oh. Do you know when you're going to do that?

BH: No. Well, we had said for my birthday, but it depends on how these treatments [medical treatments] and things and everything go.

LB: Yeah. When's your birthday?

BH: June. My sisters, they—one's in Texas, and one's in California—but they come home and they stay at least six weeks. We go around and do—and now they can't hardly wait to come to the mill.

Yeah, so I'm trying to think if something else was at the mill. There was something. Oh, yeah. Mr. Flipse and them used to do the apples. In the apple season, they would have hot apple cider and people would come there for that. In the harvest time, they would have like a little flea market thing too. It would just be a country environment. Kind of what I think, how they do it on Saturdays now, only they're having their eating and the music, you know. Yeah, so.

LB: So how many times a year would they usually do that?

BH: Spring and fall. Mostly in the fall when there's harvest. When, you know, and then the spring. I mean, well, kind of when the vegetables was coming in. People would come and they would have their little—they would have crafts and then they would have your food. Yeah, but mostly it was like the people that make chairs and bottom chairs and pottery. Terry was a coppersmith, and he would make utensils out of—I mean, it was just people. Then one she had would do pen and ink—I mean, it was just all so much—it would just bring in all of these people together. What we called—they would call the back-to-the-landers—yeah—when they moved here, they brought all this talent with them. They would come in, and they would do all these drawings and making all these things, you know, tie-dying. (both laugh) So they were part of that. In fact, they had these names like Leaping Lizards, and they would take different names. (laughs) This one family, he named his children Leaping Lizard and Hopping Grasshopper.

LB: Oh wow. Yeah. (laughs)

BH: Really, really smart. Really, really smart people. Some of them was over to the—in fact, Marie—that’s how she came in here. The Carignans—they came with the people from that Sunny-something Farm. What is that farm?

LB: Oh, in Summertown?

BH: Uh-huh. Yeah. That’s it.

LB: I think it’s just called The Farm. Yeah.

BH. Yeah. The Farm, yeah. They all was there at one time.

LB: Okay, yeah. I didn’t know that. I knew about the back-to-the-landers, but I didn’t know that lots of them came from the Farm though.

BH: Yeah. Yeah, Marie, she did. Yeah, they had—because her husband was Catholic, and she was Jewish. (both laugh) Then, you know, I was a Baptist. We’d laugh about that. Boy, we were a combination. (laughs)

LB: So what was Marie like?

BH: Marie, she’s Hungarian, and I guess she was actually more of a activist because she was really, really smart. Like with making the breads and she could come—what is this word? Interpreter? [Entrepreneur.] That do different things and always starting out doing different businesses. She could see a market for different things. Yeah, and start it. Like when she started the store and had the quilts and then when—I think this guy’s name was Terry that would make spoons and things out of copper. Then the lady that would come and do the pen and ink drawings. She would see where people would buy these things, and she opened up where people could display their works.

Marie, she loved my granny. In fact, those two pictures [points to two floral painting on either side of the room], she give them to Mom. Yeah, and then she was always bringing her things or seeing things, and she would tell her, she said, “Grandma, stop getting rid of your antiques.” She said, “Stop getting rid of them.” (both laugh) Yeah. My grandmama was thinking, well, she didn’t have room for all of this. Now they, like my grandkids, they don’t care for them, so I’m going to get rid of them.

LB: Aww. (laughs)

BH: No. I just asked them what they want to keep, and they told me, “Mom, Granny, go on and sell what you want to,” because I had people that’s been

wanting to buy different pieces. So I think I will because they're just not interested in them. Like when our generation, as the generations get—you probably have some things that your mom thinks you may be interested in.

LB: Yeah. Well, I'm a little more interested I guess because I'm in history than I guess—

BH: Oh. Well, yeah.

LB: I am interested in those things. (laughs) So, yeah.

BH: Yeah. My son, his wife, I think she thinks she might get stuck with them, so she tells him, "Go up there and help your mom get rid of that stuff. Get them on eBay or something." I don't need you to help me get them on eBay or Craigslist [websites for selling used items] or what—no. No. (both laugh) I'll find my own market. She laughed then. They laugh at me because I tell them, I said, "No." I said, "I'm still making decisions for my own."

LB: Yeah. (laughs)

BH: That's the reason I want to take care of it now. Like, I asked my nieces and things because I don't use it. Now our dinners—when I was coming up, it was a big thing. We all would eat together. I mean, that was just special. We didn't eat all over the house—you eat at the table. On Sunday, the preacher would come and eat dinner with us. I said, "I never get my dishes out." So it's just, now when my grandkids—come, "Oh Granny, we'll just use paper plates."

LB: Well, it works too. (laughs)

BH: I mean, but you don't—

LB: Yeah.

BH: You know, they don't—

LB: They don't have the same—

BH: Know how to set a table.

LB: Yeah. Um-hmm.

BH: That's the part that I miss. I miss that. Now, my little great-grandbaby, oh, the other day, I told her, I said, "I want you to come help Granny. We're going to

start from one shelf. We're going to take things out and wash them. She said, "Okay." She likes to help me wash dishes. (Lauren laughs) When she gets older, she probably won't.

LB: Oh yeah. Yeah. (laughs)

BH: She can help me by bringing them to me, and we going to wash. It is something that they're losing out on. Like I told them, I said, "You all expect me to learn to text so I can communicate." I had to. They tease me at church. They say, "You can text?" I say, "Well, if I want to communicate with my grandkids, I had to because this is what they do." (laughs) So I told them, I said, "You know if you expect me to learn these things, well there's something you need to learn." I said, "So, Monika, you going to start going to the store with me. You going to learn how to buy groceries, not buying all this prepackaged stuff." She said, "Well Granny, you make work for yourself."

LB: Okay. (laughs)

BH: Anyway—I think we all want to leave something. We want to feel like, hey, if things get any rougher, you'll be able to survive. That's what this community has taught me. Passing on the knowledge that you have to somebody else like how to sell, how to market yourself, (laughs) how to feel good about yourself.

LB: Yes.

BH: You know, don't mind. Learn from other people. Then this is, you know, with the garden, and when everybody's garden would come in, we'd share. You'd go out on the porch, and it may be about twelve ears of corn or a basket of tomatoes, or somebody's come by and just left it for you when they harvest come in, they share. This is the type of community. This is the type of thing that by having something like the mills and then the people. Without the people, it wouldn't, you know. We had to feel good about ourself. We had to want to be good neighbors. We had to want to be in order for anything because if you just be mean to people, they going to be mean to you.

LB: Yes. (both laugh)

BH: I think when we all needed each other, like Ms. Pitts—she was sweet. She was very supportive. Like I said, my mom was a widow at twenty-five, but everybody knew how she loved her kids. She brought us up right. Then the school, I mean, she did everything she could to help us there because we would have to buy books. We couldn't afford all the books. In fact, I never did have my own book. I always had to share books with my brother. (both laugh) My two

older sisters, they had to share books because we had to buy books. Then they would be with no backs on them. We would get the old raggedy books [unclear]—all my mom could afford to get. So it's hard for you to realize that it—but you in history, so you probably have heard about this before.

LB: Yeah. Um-hmm.

BH: I remember we were going through the box trying to at least find a book where the pages weren't tore out because we couldn't afford a new one or not even a semi-new. We had to get the one with the backs off. It's kind of hard to think back to that things used to really be like that. So I'm thankful that when I see where we are now, that by the time my great-grandkids get a certain age, how much better it's going to be. I chose to believe that. That it's going to be that much better because look at how much better—and that's what Darryl said—that we spoiled their generation because by the time they got—my son, well he said things were so much better for you—for us—that you was in a place to make things better, and you spoiled us. I said, “Okay. You see where we made a mistake, so you straighten it out with your children.”

LB: Yeah. (both laugh) Exactly. Um-hmm.

BH: Things that I've said, “Well, yeah.” I said, “Because we were just thankful to be able to get a pair of shoes.” When somebody tell me, “I don't want no kids,” or “I want designer this.” I didn't know what a designer was, you know. That's what he told me, you know. We would just be talking. He'd say, “Y'all generation spoiled us.” We talked about that at church, and then we had to acknowledge we did. This is what we did. We was in a position where we had better jobs, and we could afford to do things. We tried to make up for what we didn't have, and we went overboard. Anyway—that's just something. They going to straighten it out. So you're—you mind me asking how old you are?

LB: I'm twenty-two.

BH: Twenty-two?

LB: Yeah.

BH: So you're my granddaughter—yeah. She'll be twenty-four in May, and so, yeah. She's a sweet girl. We talk, and then I was telling her about things. She said, “Aunt Granny, I just can't imagine.” She had no idea. They have no idea. They can't even fathom what it was like. I can't imagine for when my grandmom—because she used to talk about how they had to fight off advances of, you know, because of people that they work for that would try to take

advantage of them. That was one thing she had said you do not have to—I mean, even back then, she was very [holds hands out stiff in front of her] about that around us. Thank God that she was like that. That we was brought up saying this is something you don't have to do.

I'm just thankful for the community that we was growing up in. The Justices, the Burnetts, the Reeds, the Hollandsworths, I mean, these are the people around here—the Tilfords—and Ms. Pitts was the—and the Braggs. We grew up playing together. We didn't realize it that when we started getting older, they started kind of separating us, but we didn't know why. Because I know what it was there because they didn't want us mixing. (laughs) For all that time we had—we didn't know. We just know that they start being a little more strict on us not doing certain things and not playing what we was playing. Yeah. Anyway, I hope that's going to be a help to you.

LB: Yeah. Oh yeah. I was just wanting to ask you—you were talking about Marie Carignan. Did you know much about her husband Bill?

BH: I don't. Bill and Marie was kind of on and off. I think that one time when I came in, he had been in some trouble or something. So she was wanting—and I think that's why we were so—because she had to be the mainstay and doing what—for the family. Because I think he had gotten in some trouble sometime. Yeah. So Marie, she was the go-getter in the family anyway. I told her, I said, "You must have come from old money," (Lauren laughs) because you could kind of tell, you know.

LB: So do you know why they wanted or had to sell the mill?

BH: I think this was just something that they would get into different stuff, and then I don't know if it's when he had gotten into trouble and it kind of made things harder for her. She was just trying to get into something that she can maintain more. Well, it was her and her boys because Tony, he went into service, and he was a Blackhawk. Then Kenny—he's in Woodbury now in construction.

LB: Oh okay.

BH: Yeah. So, well she had to get into something that she could manage for her and her boys.

LB: So did you ever know the Epperlys who bought it after the Carignans?

BH: No.

LB: No?

BH: No. I never did know them. That was one of the times that I had moved back to Michigan. (laughs)

LB: Oh okay.

BH: Because see, I had some spaces when I would go up there. Uh-huh.

LB: Yeah. I think that's when the mill started really going downhill then.

BH: I just kind of heard it was somebody that had bought it that just kind of sold off stuff. Just kind of was in it to get grants—what they could, and then just not have the mill interested—you know, not preserving it or doing anything with it. Just what he could get from it, you know. That's what I heard because I asked when I came back why was the dam like it was because I had a little knowledge of knowing that it was money out there—some kind of way that you could get to fix it. Someone said that he had gotten the money and didn't do it.

LB: Mmm. Oh.

BH: The grant money to fix the dam but not fixing the dam, see. Then it just started really deteriorating. Because we used to go there and fish, but we couldn't go across and fish anymore because the water was running around behind it. It was unsafe. Yeah, so.

LB: Yeah. So—well, do you know Tomm Brady who—yeah?

BH: Oh yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yes. I have talked with him. In fact, he's been on radio talk. In fact, they come up and have breakfast and everything, yeah.

LB: Do you eat at mill on Saturdays?

BH: Oh, I'm going to, but I haven't been. My son and I, we said we're all going down there with some people that live around here, and they going to come on Saturday. We're going. I work with my church, so it's been kind of hectic here lately because we were without a pastor for so long. I'm Associate Minister there, and so then my responsibility there kind of increased. Right now we have a new pastor, so I have more time. Yeah. Because on Saturday I usually have something on calling on people or doing something, you know. Working with the youth, but now I'm getting a little freer. We going to meet up. Bart he called me—that's the owner of WGNS, and they was wanting me to meet them down there. I told them, "I have women's ministry today." I couldn't go, and I really wanted to go.

He said, “Well, if you trying to eat healthy, I don’t advise it because of all this butter and—” (laughs)

LB: (laughs) Yeah. Um-hmm.

BH: So he said that it was good. He said that all these big—what is it? Pancakes, yeah.

LB: Yeah, yeah.

BH: Oh, you’ve come down?

LB: I haven’t. I haven’t eaten there yet. I want to, but I’ve seen the menu.

BH: My doctor—I go to Dr. Stewart Smith, my orthopedic in Nashville [Tennessee]. So he said, “How far are you from the Readyville Mill?” I said, “A hop, skip, and a jump.” He looked at me like—because that’s what old people say. (both laugh) I said, “That’s like a block.” He said, “The next time I come through there, I’m going to stop there.” I said, “Okay.” I told him, I said, “In fact,” I said, “my dad and my brother and all them used to work there and do different things.” Yeah, so—

LB: So are you glad to see the mill getting restored and everything?

BH: Oh yes. Yes. It’s the picture in the telephone book. I think it was in the telephone book. They showed the picture of behind the mill, and I can actually see my mom sitting there fishing in my mind. Because this is a place where they would fish right behind the mill that when that thing would be churning, and the water would be real swift. It would pull the fish out of the river come down the race, so they could sit there and catch those red-eyes they called them. She and Ms. Lallie Taylor—they could. That was my mom’s relaxation. My granddaddy used to always say, “I thought you were tired.” She said, “I am tired. That’s why I’m going fishing.” Because fishing would really relax her, my mom. She worked in a restaurant, and she loved her kids. She was a good mother. She was well respected around here too. Yeah.

LB: What was her name?

BH: Lillie. Lillie Frances. Everybody called her Lillie Frances. It’s really weird because my grandmom—that’s who we lived with— we called her Mama Ordie. We called my mom Mama Frances. We called both of them Mama, but called them by they name. That’s what people in the neighborhood called them—Mama Ordie, Mama Frances, and Mammy Zan. Aunt Lizzie—we wouldn’t be related to

the people, but that's the closest when you give somebody a family name like that—or aunt—and called them—when they not. That's showing you how close we are. More than just a “miss.” (laughs) Yeah, so.

It was so many Black families around here at one time. I was thinking about all the houses that used to be all around the road. They were sharecroppers' houses, but people would live in them, and I was thinking about the Simmons, and the Weatherlys, and the Greers, and all these people, they used to live here. I told you, it used to be a little city. A little place, you know. Right now, the houses are gone. All the sharecropper cabins are gone now. There's big fields where they had people that helped them on the farm, you know, lived on the farm. My granddaddy, he never did do farming. He worked in the mine, or he worked cutting logs, or he worked at the mill. That's what he did for the—yeah.

Oh yeah, we had our telephone office here too. (both laugh) So we, yeah. So Readyville was kind of three stores, you know.

James Swarford: I'm going to cook me some chicken tenders. Do you want some?

BH: Uh-huh. You go.

JS: You care for some water or something young lady?

LB: No. I'm good.

BH: I'm sorry. I didn't ask you, did I?

LB: Oh no, it's okay. I'm good.

BH: I'm so sorry. I had brought me some in case I start coughing, but praise the Lord, thank you. People been calling me. My minister friends, they standing in faith with me about, you know, because I had a negative report. I said, “Well, I'm going to believe the report of the Lord.” It seemed like every time you'd call, something was happening, or the doctor had called and wanting me to go see this person or wanting to go see that. I was getting a little weary, but so, no—nuh-uh. I'm going to follow through.

LB: Yes. (laughs)

BH: You know, because the first thing you want to do is say, “Ehh.” No. I made a commitment.

LB: Well, thank you so much for doing this. Is there anything else that you want to add before we stop today?

BH: I can't think of anything, sweetie. I just want this to come out about the relationship that we had with all the people in the community and connecting the mill. I know it's with the mill, but all of it hooked together.

JS: [unclear question]

BH: You can use them all [chicken tenders].

JS: It's a lot.

BH: You can go ahead and use them all. [To Lauren] I'm sorry.

LB: It's okay.

BH: It kind of worked together. With the lumber mill and the grist mill we called it and the mine. All the people that here would just—everybody worked together. Try to instill morality in your family. No matter who you are, you know. Don't want to just mistreat anybody, yeah. So I don't think we ever had any problems like that in this—if we did, I didn't know anything about it. hen it would come in.

[Bobbie, to herself] What? Oh, Ms. Hollandsworth that lived in the house right—it used to be a little bridge that you could cross to go into her house. She was a gifted seamstress. Her family had once run the mill. So she was another lady that always was there to encourage us. Wanting to do something. If you wanted to learn to sew, if you wanted to learn—one of my sisters, she was more interested in crafts and things, but I never was. It was something for us here if we was interested. It was always somebody willing to take that time to share with you. That's the type of place.

I think that's what made Readyville Mill last as long as it did. It keeps coming back because that's the way the people are. That's the people. This generation of people—may not be as many of us, but it's a remnant. You'll find them. Then there come people like you that want to help keep it alive with what you're doing. So that's a gift. That's something God is using you for.

LB: Well, thank you. (laughs)

BH: I believe that. I do. Because He know the heart of people, and this is so many memories for some people just to see it. One of the mills just fell apart and

floated down the river. Then he put it in the heart of somebody that hey, we're going to preserve something. We're going to keep—and it's working. So that generations to come—somebody's going to read about you, Lauren.

LB: Yeah. (laughs) Well, I guess we'll see. Yeah.

BH: Stand on faith.

LB: Yes. (laughs)

BH: This will happen.

LB: Yep. All right. Well, thank you so much. Just one last thing to ask before I stop. Do you consent to donate this interview to the public domain so we can share it with others?

BH: Yes.

LB: Okay.

BH: That's why I was doing it.

LB: All right.

BH: Yeah.

LB: All right. Thank you.