

PRESERVE THE AREA'S RURAL QUALITIES
(PARQ)

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

Mable Helton

May 22, 2012

Readyville, Tennessee

INTERVIEWER, TRANSCRIBER, AND EDITOR:

Jaryn Abdallah

SECONDARY EDITOR

Jane Rust

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF

Dr. Martha Norkunas

Mable Helton Biographical Sketch



Mable Helton was born in Braxton, Tennessee, on Locke Creek, on October 25, 1923. She has lived most of her life in and around Readyville, Tennessee, with the exception of time that she spent living in Texas and in Michigan. She attended Woodbury High School, where she played basketball. Ms. Helton worked as a switchboard operator during World War II, and then worked for many years making shirts at the Colonial Shirt Factory in Woodbury, Tennessee.

The Readyville Mill was a central point of Ms. Helton's youth in Cannon County. She would often accompany her father when he took grain to the mill. She also played there often with friends. Her family also got ice and electricity from the mill. Ms. Helton's parents were friends with Uncle Dave Macon, who often spent time at their house when she was younger.

Ms. Helton has a daughter, Jennifer, as well as several grandchildren and nieces and nephews with whom she is close. She currently lives in Readyville. She enjoys cooking and working crossword puzzles and jigsaw puzzles.

Mable Helton

Interview Abstract

Mable Helton grew up in Readyville, Tennessee. She recalls many experiences of growing up during the Depression and World War II. Local history is a central theme of this interview. She detailed many local tragedies including numerous fires, massive flooding of homes along the Stones River, instances of drowning, as well as suicides. She details numerous businesses that existed in Readyville through the Thirties and Forties. She recounted influential families in Readyville including the Readys, Talleys, Brevards, Tilfords, Holmes, Barkers and Yourees. Ms. Helton describes military maneuvers that the Army carried out around Readyville during World War II as part of its training exercises. Some of the men were left in the area for a few weeks, and Ms. Helton remembered community efforts to help feed them.

The Readyville Mill figures prominently in this interview. Ms. Helton's father took grain to be milled at both the Readyville Mill and Brown's Mill, and she often accompanied him on these trips. Her family got ice and electricity from the mill. Mable and her friends often played in the mill when they were children, and she often swam at the Readyville Mill Dam with other children from the community. She describes her interactions with previous mill owners Sam Hayes, Rat McFerrin, George Justice, Wayne Carignan, and the current owner, Tomm Brady.

Ms. Helton recalled that her parents always had a car, and that her family was never without food to eat, due to her father's business ventures and her mother's gardening and canning. Her father was quite a bit older than her mother. He ran a grain thrasher, traded in real estate, and also ran the Cannon County poor house. He was also a close friend of Uncle Dave Macon, who would often spend time at their home while Ms. Helton was growing up. She recounted numerous anecdotes about these visits.

Transportation is another theme throughout the interview. As a child, Ms. Helton recalls traveling by horseback, buggy, and wagon. When her parents began to buy cars, her mother would drive their family. Her father did not drive. She also recalled riding the bus to work.

Ms. Helton describes the local African American community and her interaction with these community members. Her half-brother had an African American mammy until her parents married, African Americans who worked for her father rented homes on their property. She played with the African American children that lived near her, and even recalled attending services at a local African American church. She described their services and baptisms that occurred behind the Readyville Mill. Ms. Helton also discussed educational opportunities for African Americans in the community.

Mable Helton Lightly Edited Transcript

Jaryn Abdallah: Alright, this is Jaryn Abdallah, and I'm here in Readyville, Tennessee, with Ms. Mable Helton. How are you today?

Mable Helton: Fine.

JA: Today is May 22nd, right?

MH: Right.

JA: And do I have your permission to record this?

MH: Yes you do.

JA: Alright. So how long have you lived in Readyville, or in this area?

MH: Eighty-eight years (laughs).

JA: Eighty-eight years? When is your birthday?

MH: October the 25th, I was born in 1923.

JA: Okay.

MH: Mother says I was born the 24th, but my birth certificate says the 25th.

JA: Oh, well, I guess we'll go with the birth certificate then. And where were you born?

MH: Braxton, Tennessee.

JA: Braxton.

MH: It was destroyed by a tornado. It's about three miles up the road.

JA: Okay. When did your family move to Readyville?

MH: Well, 1927.

JA: 1927?

MH: Readyville is the address up here where I was born.

JA: Okay.

MH: I always lived in Readyville, except that was Braxton up there but it's, about a mile up the road is Readyville, still Readyville.

JA: Okay. Can you remember any stories maybe that you heard from your parents about the area?

MH: Nothing no more than I know myself.

JA: Okay, well please tell me what you know about this area.

MH: Well, I know that everybody that's lived here in the years past is all about gone. My mother and daddy lived two miles from where I'm living now. And I moved there when I was three years old, and lived there till I was a sophomore in high school, and moved in down in Readyville right down here. And I finished high school down there. And I've lived in Michigan, I lived in Texas, but I've always come back to Readyville.

JA: What made you come back to Readyville?

MH: Well, my folks and all my family's back here.

JA: Do you know much about the history of this area, of Readyville?

MH: Well, I know the Readys had that, and I know all about that. My daddy went to the sale when they sold the Ready property.

JA: Oh, well please tell me about that.

MH: I don't know all about that, I was a baby.

JA: Okay, but he didn't ever talk about it?

MH: Well, yeah, I heard him talk about it because it was a sale, and there's a house right up here that's been here for years, right up on the hill here. The Barkers live there.

JA: And who are the Barkers?

MH: It was Oscar Barker owned it, and Ray Barker passed away a few days ago. He was living there. His sons live there now.

JA: And they were influential in the community?

MH: Readyville had a bank, barber shop, blacksmith shop, two stores on this side of town. On the other side, they had a store, a garage. They had two stores over there.

JA: And when is this? What time period are we talking about?

MH: I'm talking about the thirties.

JA: Okay.

MH: My mother worked in one of the stores down here.

JA: In what store?

MH: Will Jetton run the store. It had two Jetton stores down here, and they had the bank town here, Harry Carter run it. And Mamie Ready helped him in the bank. And old Uncle Bert Cothran run the blacksmith shop. Back during the Depression was when the bank went out. And Harry Carter went to Murfreesboro to the bank down there.

JA: Okay. Yeah, what can you, what else can you tell me about the community, about the people who lived here, especially about the mill at that time.

MH: Well, it's a mill. Old man Sam Hayes run it when I was little. And I'd go with my daddy over there to the mill. My daddy ran a thrasher, and he carried wheat and corn and all down there. And I'd go with him. Old man Hayes locked me in the icehouse, aggravating me. I was small. And I said, back then, that's where we went and got ice.

JA: Okay.

MH: At that time we didn't have electricity, but when I got up in the forties, we moved into Readyville. And Readyville had the first electricity anywhere. They had electricity before Murfreesboro. They had a Delco run from the mill over there.

JA: So you had electricity from the mill?

MH: Uh-huh.

JA: And what was that like?

MH: Well it's just like regular electricity (laughs).

JA: It wasn't twenty-four hours around the clock was it?

MH: Yes.

JA: It was? Oh, okay.

MH: We had lights all the time.

JA: Uh-huh, even at night?

MH: Yeah, all the time.

JA: Okay.

MH: They didn't have it out in the country, they just had it down here in town.

JA: Okay.

MH: In the town of Readyville.

JA: So what, what is the town? What are the boundaries of the town?

MH: Well this house had electricity, and that house up yonder had electricity. And not far out anywhere, not a mile or two out of town hardly.

JA: Okay, so around the post office.

MH: Around the post office. Well, the post office is not where it used to be.

JA: Oh, where did it used to be?

MH: On the other side of town.

JA: Okay. But when you say the other side of town, what do you mean?

MH: I mean across the river, over next to the mill.

JA: Okay.

MH: Where the post office used to be was a store.

JA: What store?

MH: Well, different ones run it. Ms. Burnett run it, and Mr. Raymond Beckton run it. Different ones run the store.

JA: So you said you used to go to the mill with your dad?

MH: Yes.

JA: What can you tell me about that? What was that like?

MH: Well, rode in the wagon, going with him to the mill. And I'll show you a picture of him and his thrasher. We'd go to mill there, and then we went to Brown's Mill, which is at Lascassas, which is quite a distance over to Lascassas. It seemed like going forever, you ride a wagon. And I'd ride on the spring seat with him on the wagon until we'd come back, and I'd be give out and I'd go get under the seat and go to sleep.

JA: About how long was that ride?

MH: Well it takes fifteen minutes to go get over there in a car, so you can imagine in a wagon how long it took, all day long.

JA: Uh-huh.

MH: It's about, I'd say, fifteen miles over there.

JA: Okay. And so what did you go to that mill for?

MH: Take grain.

JA: Okay.

MH: My daddy thrashed all summer. We had so much grain, they had to get – I don't – we never went hungry at my house. We always had plenty of meat. My daddy killed his own hogs, and cows, and what not. We always had plenty to eat.

JA: What did your mother do?

MH: Well, she was a housewife, and then she worked that store part-time.

JA: Okay, and what did she do at the store?

MH: Well she's just a clerk. It's just a little country store.

JA: Uh-huh. And which – I think you said which store that was, but I can't remember.

MH: It was Will Jetton run the store.

JA: Okay.

MH: And it's right, well right in sight of where I'm living now.

JA: Oh! It was right here?

MH: No, right down by –

JA: Oh.

MH: Which way did you come in?

JA: I came from John Bragg Highway.

MH: John Bragg Highway, if you come the other way, it's about a half mile, maybe a quarter of a mile down there.

JA: Okay.

MH: They had two stores, a bank. And at that time, all the people that lived down there is gone. And over on the other side, going around towards Murfreesboro where you make a circle here in Readyville, Ms. Annie Youree run a boarding house, had breakfast and bed. She had a big sign set out on the highway, and that house burned, oh, I guess

in the seventies, maybe before. She was a sister to Uncle Dave Macon, you know who, the name of Uncle Dave Macon is?

JA: I know the name, but I'm not really familiar.

MH: Well he played on the Grand Ole Opry.

JA: Okay.

MH: He's buried down here at Coleman Cemetery [Murfreesboro, Tennessee].

JA: Oh. Can you tell me a little bit about him? Was he from this area?

MH: Well, I think he was raised in McMinnville and he used to run a wagon carrying stuff to Nashville. That's the way he got on the Grand Ole Opry down there. You know what the Grand Ole Opry is?

JA: Yeah, uh-huh.

MH: That's where he played, on the Grand Ole Opry, and his son Doris.

JA: And what's his –

MH: And this Mrs. Youree that run this place was a sister to Uncle Dave.

JA: Oh, okay.

MH: And he used to be at our house all the time, because my mother and daddy raised my mother's sister's child. And back then they didn't adopt them, you know, they just took them as fosters. And he had lived with the family, and he passed away in October of 2008. He was a nephew of Uncle Dave.

JA: So you said Uncle Dave Macon would come to your house?

MH: All the time.

JA: And what, what was he like? Can you tell me about him?

MH: I won't tell you on this thing here about what he said. He aggravated me to death. (JA laughs) He used to say, "Oh, Mable, come here. Mable, come here." He stayed with

my daddy for two weeks at one time. And my daddy was sick, and he told him, said, "I'm going to pray for you." He got on his knees. My daddy told him, "Get up from there, you ain't fit to pray for nobody." He said, "I don't want you praying over me." But he all – when he'd go off on road trips when he was traveling with the musicians, he'd come by, see his sister, and always come to the house. Whenever he'd come in we always had him every time. And at the time, over where the mill is at, there was a store that set right on the race that run, the water runs down for the mill. And old man Rat McFerrin and George Hollinsworth run that. And Rat McFerrin lived in the house beside it. And that house, water gets in it every time it rains, and it big flood. And it gets in the mill too.

JA: Mmm-hmm.

MH: I said this guy's going to be shocked one day and it's going to run up there about over my head. He won't be going in that mill. I hate to tell him, but it will.

JA: Uh-huh.

MH: The river's right there in back of my house. Somebody said, "Aren't you afraid the river will get in your house?" I said, "When it gets in my house, there won't be nothing in Readyville." Because where I lived in Readyville, when we'd have big floods, the water would come up to the back door, get to the axel up on the car.

JA: Wow.

MH: If it got a big flood, it wouldn't ever get up here. It's got a mountain to climb.

JA: Yeah. So when the big floods of 2010, the May floods –

MH: That didn't bother me.

JA: Oh, okay. Did it flood in Readyville, in town?

MH: No, and it didn't do that like it did down there. But I live here right, and I can't get across. As far as your eye can see back that way the water was. And out over here it gets out in this field over here.

JA: So you were stuck here?

MH: I'm stuck here. I'm stuck here on a little peninsula just sticking out here. But it don't bother me, because, and I've got friends that say, "Oh when it gets up, why don't you come to my house?" I said, "What would I leave home for? I don't want to leave home."

JA: Mmm-hmm. So can you tell me more about growing up here?

MH: Well, I went to Readyville School, and they called it Culpepper. I went to school there five years, and then I went to Curlee school over in the Curlee community up off of highway 64, going towards Bradyville. And that's where I went to church, over there. And I finished school there and went to, graduated from Woodbury High School. And I played ball over there at school, basketball, played ball in high school too. After I finished high school, went to Michigan to live a while. Then come back home, stayed a while, went to Texas. I had a sister lived out there. Until I come back home, went to work down here. I was working Air Utilities they called it.

JA: What did they call it?

MH: Air Utilities, that's a place out of Murfreesboro on the Old Highway 70. And I was working there during the War [World War II] and the day of the War ended, they told us what they was making. They was making parts for the atomic bomb.

JA: Really? Wow.

MH: I worked there as a PBX operator.

JA: What does that mean?

MH: (laughs) That's a switchboard, telephone. I also greeted everybody that come in. Then I worked for the Colonial Corporation in Woodbury for almost thirty years.

JA: And what did you do there?

MH: Everything. (Laughs) I have sewed, and then the last few years I worked making (unclear) and piece goods, yards and yards of piece goods to make shirts. And I had to figure out how much it would take to make a shirt, and what color buttons to put on it, and what color this, that. And they made patterns then, and then whatever they took their patterns, they'd make the shirts. They made them for JCPenney, Sears, you name it, just anybody. And if anybody tells you that they are wearing a only one of a kind thing, that's not so. That is not so, because whatever button they want to put on the

shirt, they put it on it. If it's JCPenney, they won't take the label out. They'll take it out, put something else in it, set it for something else.

JA: Interesting.

MH: These logos don't mean a thing.

JA: Uh-huh.

MH: You may say, "I bought a pair of Chic," or whatever pants you get, it could have been anybody's pants. As far as that's concerned, the only thing that's on there is a different label.

JA: Uh-huh.

MH: And they make them for everybody.

JA: And that was in Woodbury?

MH: Yeah.

JA: Okay. You mentioned, before I turned the recorder on, that you had a friend that you used to run around with. Can you tell me about that?

MH: Well, she and I ran around together when I lived down here in Readyville. I've known her for years and years. That was, she's a niece of Uncle Dave Macon's.

JA: And what's her name?

MH: Martha Anne, she was Martha Anne Wood at the time, and then she married a Davis. She's in a rest home at Woodbury.

JA: And what would you two do?

MH: We went to the shows, and we went here and there. We always had somewhere to go. I could drive, and she didn't have a car, so I got. We always had a car. From the time I was born and on, we had a car. We had an old T Model back when I was little, and then we got an A Model. And just went on up to a good Ford, according to whatever they had. My daddy got the first car he got, well not the first one I don't guess, but he got them from a Puckett. And then his son went and had Puckett Motors in

McMinnville. And then Jennings Motors, got a car from Jennings Motors in Woodbury. We also used to go in a buggy after I rode buggy, buggy (laughs) everywhere.

JA: Did everyone in the community have a car?

MH: No!

JA: Oh, okay.

MH: They was still – a few people had cars. I guess in this community there was probably five or six cars at the time. This was all gravel roads. There wasn't nothing paved. And where the John Bragg Highway, there wasn't no road except going straight across. And after it got where I'm living now, after it got so far, it was a bluffy hillside you had to go up.

JA: So how could your family, how did your family afford the car? Because of your dad's business?

MH: Well my daddy traded in houses and everything. He'd buy land, and then he'd sell it and move. They did that, moved always before I was born. And then after I come along I reckon they decided to settle down. And then he'd run them thrashers.

JA: And what's a thrasher?

MH: A thrasher is a tractor with – you see them out here in the field where they're running tractors and things like hay bailers and all of it. It thrashes wheat out and puts the grain one way, and the straw the other direction.

JA: Okay, I know what you are talking about now.

MH: You know what I'm talking about?

JA: Yes.

MH: I'm going to show you the picture in a little bit.

JA: Yes!

MH: He had a big gang, and a bunch of people worked for him. I said, my mother always fixed dinner for him, most of the time, a lot of them. And she carried him, he couldn't drive, but she always had to carry him to work every day.

JA: So your dad didn't drive, your mom drove him to work?

MH: My mother drove everywhere.

JA: Okay. Did your family get a lot of cornmeal or anything from the mill for personal use?

MH: Oh, we had all kinds of bread. Mother was a good cook. We had cakes and pies and something all the time as far as that's concerned. And I said, always at Christmas time, Daddy always went out and bought two stalks of bananas, and everything, you know. And a hoop of cheese, and first one thing and another. We had a big Christmas, you know. That would only come once a year, but you'd buy some every once in a while. But at Christmas time we always invited a lot of people in. We always had family to visit. One day, some day one family would come, the other day another, and so. My mother was a wonderful cook.

JA: What were some of your favorite things that she cooked?

MH: I can cook like just like her. I can cook, I cook banana pudding. I've got a friend that said, "I could eat a whole one anytime you fix it." (laughs) My granddaughter's husband come the other day, and I had one, and he said, "Well I hate to say it, but I can't, I'm going to eat it, and then I'm going to take part of it home with me." I said, "Well take it all, because I don't, I'm by myself." And when yourself, you don't eat as much as you would if you're setting down at the table. A lot of times you run in and get you a cracker and cheese or something else.

JA: Well, if we can go back to maybe growing up in this area, where did you say you went to elementary school?

MH: Elementary school?

JA: Yeah.

MH: Culpepper they called it.

JA: Culpepper.

MH: But it's Readyville address. Then they changed it to Readyville School.

JA: So now it's the Readyville School?

MH: And now they call it, they got a school up there and they call it West Side.

JA: Okay.

MH: It's not far apart from where it's at.

JA: And what kinds of things did you do for fun when you were that age around here?

MH: Fun? You didn't think of fun; you had work to do.

JA: So what was your work that you had to do?

MH: Don't many people milk cows anymore, but I got up at 3:30 in the morning to go milk cows. My daddy sold milk, he had the milk machine that you'd turn the milk out. It separates the whole milk from the other. Now they say one percent. I said, "I wouldn't drink that for nothing." We called that blue John and give it to the hogs. We didn't drink that milk.

JA: Uh-huh.

MH: That's nothing more than water.

JA: Uh-huh.

MH: It's just a little, got a little milk in it, but it ain't got no milk in it.

JA: So you would get up at 3:30 in the morning and milk the cows, and then?

MH: You go to school, and you come home, you're tired, but you got to go to milk the cows.

JA: So you'd milk them again when you got home?

MH: Mmm-hmm.

JA: Okay.

MH: Well, well at milking time.

JA: Uh-huh.

MH: You have a certain time we'd milk every day. And he had a big bunch of cows we'd milk. He had sheep, and he had goats. We had mules. He had some of the best mules that were anywhere.

JA: Did he ever take his mules to Columbia?

MH: Uh-uh.

JA: No?

MH: Back then it wasn't no such thing as that.

JA: Oh, okay.

MH: Back then, people didn't travel everywhere, you know.

JA: So what was school like? What do you remember about school?

MH: Well the first day I went to school I went on a wagon to school. And in winter time, it was cold, and Mr. Hiram Dennis drove the wagon, and he'd heat the little concrete blocks, and heat them up for us to keep our feet warm till we go to school. Of course I said, then you dressed not like you do now, because you had to get warm, keep warm. You wore underwear. And I said, "If I ever get grown, I won't ever own no more underwear (both laugh)."

JA: Yeah, so what was your school day like?

MH: Well it's not like it is now, because we didn't have all these meetings and everything. We went to school and we studied so long, we stayed there so long, and you come home.

JA: Okay.

MH: They have more teacher meetings now than they go to school.

JA: Did you have a lot of friends in the area? I know you said you worked a lot, didn't play a lot, but –

MH: Oh, we played. Oh we had balls. We're playing, I said we'd play annie over, and high blind fold, first one thing and the other, kicking a can. Kids had something to do. When I was little we played hopscotch and first one thing. But when you have nowhere to go, you couldn't go nowhere. Kids didn't have cars to drive to go nowhere.

JA: So after you went to Culpepper School you went to –

MH: Curlee.

JA: Curlee. And what grades was that?

MH: Sixth, seventh, and eighth.

JA: Okay. And so, did you still, was your day similar where you would get up and milk the cows when you were in middle school?

MH: Well I helped milk all of them until I was grown. Everybody has to have a job. Nowadays they don't do that. They don't teach kids to work no more. They don't know how to do nothing but sit and watch T.V.

JA: So what do you remember about growing up around here in your middle school years?

MH: Well, the only thing I remember about it is just going to school, and going to visit people.

JA: Who would you visit?

MH: Well, we always had friends and everything, just didn't have no certain place to go. I got a little girlfriend, woman, girl who lives down here, Berry Ann, do you know who Berry Ann is?

JA: Uh-Uh.

MH: That's the, oh, what's her name? Jane's [Jane Rust, PARQ Treasurer] friend.

JA: Oh, okay.

MH: Her first cousin used to live right across the field from me. Well she'd go to school, and she stopped, the bus stopped at my house. So she'd have to get home, and she laughs, because she said, "You walked a million miles with me." She couldn't go home unless somebody would walk her home. So we'd walk her home every day. When she was little, I'd go over and help, stay with her mama and let her mama wash out at the washhouse. She had an old log house she washed in. And she was a baby so she didn't leave her in the house. And I'd go take care of Betty Jane. And when I was in high school, my parents moved, left their house up there in Readyville and rented out part of it, and went to stay with my granddaddy down at Dilton, close to Murfreesboro, and I stayed with some friends of mine. That's when the maneuvers came in here.

JA: Who?

MH: Army, we was invaded by the army, they had maneuvers.

JA: Oh! Can you tell me about that?

MH: Well, they come in here in the middle of the night, and there's tanks and everything else, and you can imagine what, you're asleep and what it sounds like a bunch of tanks coming in.

JA: What were they doing that for?

MH: Well, they was practicing to go overseas. And then they had two or three tanks that broke down, and they stayed over there. So my cousin and I, we cooked and washed for them.

JA: For the army?

MH: Yeah, for the guys that got left. They stayed two week without nobody coming back to check on them. They got out, and climbed the trees, killed squirrels and rabbits, first thing then the other. Then this girl, my cousin, she would cook chickens, and she had fryer chickens, she took chickens, pies and things and give for them.

JA: And about what year was this?

MH: '42, about '42, right after the War started. And they was here, they was off and on all the time for a long time.

JA: I have never heard that before, that they were doing maneuvers around here.

MH: You haven't ever heard that?

JA: No, so if you have anything –

MH: Well they fought during the Civil War here.

JA: Can you tell me about that?

MH: I don't know about it, except I know I've got a bullet that come from the Civil War.

JA: Really?

MH: Fell down here in this field.

JA: Oh.

MH: In back of the house. And also, there have been numerous arrowheads found out here. So evidently the Indians lived here at one time.

JA: So you don't remember any older community members ever talking about the Civil War?

MH: My mother, her daddy's mother had a brother got killed during the Civil War, got killed at Fort Donelson. I've been looking up on my family history, and I go back to the fourteen, sixteen hundreds. They come from France, part of them. And my daddy was raised up on Cripple Creek up here, up top of the hill and turn off, go down that way. And that little house is still standing over there, I think. It was. And they come, I've got him, they come out of Virginia and they're Scotch-Irish. I go back about seventeen generations on my mother's, mother's side. And her mother's brother lived in Manchester. They go back to when Manchester was; Lecil Bobo was the first settler in Coffee County.

JA: Wow. So growing up, you don't remember any stories that people would tell about Readyville?

MH: There wasn't no stories about Readyville.

JA: About things that had happened in the history of Readyville?

MH: Nothing ever happened in Readyville (laughs).

JA: There must have been things that happened in Readyville. I mean, maybe not national level things, but just little things about people in the area.

MH: Well, I do know they had drownings in Readyville.

JA: Uh-huh.

MH: One guy drowned right out there. He went out there, jumped in, and drowned. There's two or three drowned in the swimming hole down here at the dam. The dam is right above the mill, you know, holds the water. Have you been to the dam?

JA: I haven't been to the dam, I've been to the mill.

MH: Well, I know two or three that drowned down there. And as far as anything else, there wasn't, well, nothing except people, two or three different ones committed suicide. But as far as that, the only thing I know is one. There isn't anything, no fights or anything ever, or nothing like that. People got along then. You didn't have no break-ins or nothing else like that. You slept on, and the doors open and everything. And you could go anywhere, and you didn't have to worry about nothing. I know some that slept on the porch at night, because it would be so hot. You were safe anywhere.

JA: Well, so what do you know about the mill, about the history of the mill?

MH: Going through the mill?

JA: Uh-huh.

MH: I just know I went over and played.

JA: You played there?

MH: Yeah, we played there.

JA: In the mill?

MH: Yeah, in the mill. I've been on the fourth floor, been everywhere. This girl that I told you about, she says, "Why we ain't got killed over there, running down those steps?" I used to be at the mill all the time. And my foster brother, he stayed over there with Mr. Justice a lot of the time when he wasn't working, and helped Mr. Justice out.

JA: What kind of things would he do for Mr. Justice?

MH: Well, unloading flour, you know. They made flour there. You know how they make the flour? He helped that. Then they'd load trucks to go out to deliver the flour to different communities everywhere around.

JA: Do you remember where they delivered to?

MH: Well they delivered to Curlee and Woodbury and everywhere around. Yeah, Mr. Justice had good meal. He lived down here in Readyville.

JA: And then who ran the mill after Mr. Justice?

MH: Oh lord, I don't know.

JA: Was it the Flipses? The Flipses, was that?

MH: They had a funny name. There's two different ones that moved over there. I never was over there when they done that.

JA: Oh, okay.

MH: Because I married and had a little girl, I said, most of the time I was at home with her. There was the Flipses, ain't that what you said?

JA: Yeah.

MH: The Flipses and somebody else.

JA: There was the Carignans.

MH: Yeah, Carignans. They are the one that had the books they put out on sale, wasn't it? The Carignans?

JA: That could be.

MH: And they had a little store of a thing in there. I know that, I've been there. But as far as going over, you know, like I said, I used to be over there all the time. I didn't go over there then because I was married.

JA: So when you would be over there playing, what kind of things, what would you be doing?

MH: Oh we were just romping around.

JA: And Mr. Justice didn't mind you running around?

MH: No, no, he didn't mind. I said, Henry Holmes run a service station out there, and his wife taught school in Kittrell. And they had one son. I worked, and I used to have to ride the bus to go to work. And when it was raining, why, he would wait to bring me to the house so I wouldn't have to walk up to the house.

JA: Mr. Justice would bring you to the house?

MH: No, Mr. Holmes.

JA: Mr. Holmes?

MH: Yeah, Henry Holmes.

JA: I'm not sure who that is.

MH: You're not familiar with that name? Well he run a service station out there where the post office is now, right across from the post office. And his wife was Jennifer's teacher. My daughter is Jennifer. And had a bird flew up there, he's after my cat food (A bird flew by the window).

JA: Oh. Did you go swimming or anything at the dam?

MH: Oh, swim! We went every day. Back where I lived, we had a raft built down there, and a boat too. And at one time we had the boat down here, belonged to Mr. Justice, and there was a bunch that come from Woodbury. And those kids jumped off, it was about fourteen foot deep in the, this girl and I jumped in and got them out. They would have drowned. Their parents were setting over there in the shade tree, weren't even watching them. Young kids, they didn't need to be in that water anyhow. We had a

diving board over there. There used to be a diving board up here. And my nephew and I, we used to swim from down here, you know where the Robinsons live down there in Readyville?

JA: No.

MH: They're up here, and then what, I floated back. He laughs about it. He says, "You're the only person I ever seen that could float and never move a muscle hardly." I could float all day long. I didn't weigh three pounds when I was born.

JA: Wow.

MH: I didn't gain no weight much until I married and had a baby. But we had good times down there at Readyville. One boy, he kept flipping off backers, and I kept telling him to stop it. He was a little, young boy. I said, "You're going to have a skinned head." Next thing he come up, the blood come up before he did. He skinned his head, split it open. But kids all got together and done things then, where now they don't. I think a lot of them started on where they can get some dope, or whatever they can get into. I said, I can't believe that kids going into the store, schools, I can't believe that. They never locked the door when I went to school. We went to school, and we started a fire, we had a big potbelly stove. We'd always start the fire a lot of time when I went to grammar school at Curlee.

JA: What else can you tell me about, I guess, just your recreational time at the dam or at the mill? Any other stories about that?

MH: There are no stories about that.

JA: Just things that happened when you were there?

MH: Wasn't nothing happened; nothing at all except, it wasn't nobody there but Mr. Justice, and Elmer, or somebody coming in and out. Because it was the busiest place, you know. They had a garage right where the store is now, and that's where everybody went to get their car fixed. And then Mr. Orville Tilford opened up a store over there and a lumber yard. And Tom still, his son, still lives right there at the mill, and his grandson runs it now. Randy Tilford runs it now.

JA: The store?

MH: The mill, sawmill.

JA: Oh, okay.

MH: It caught a fire, burned part of it one night, and my foster brother took the lift and moved a lot of logs. He saved a lot of logs out of there that night. Someone was saying, "He's going to get burned up!" But he was just sitting there blowing it out. He worked there for several years, and he went to Cummings Sign, worked there about thirty years. And there used to be a sawmill up above, on the side where the mill is up there, there was old highway that had a sawmill up there. He worked up there. They've had sawmills, there used to be a sawmill out here at one time.

JA: Right here near your house?

MH: Yeah, right on the other side of where you come in, right there at the gate. You go out right there at that lower part. There was an old sawmill there at one time.

JA: Why so many sawmills?

MH: There's money in lumber. (both laugh) That's it. Elmer, that's my foster brother, he worked in the mill sawing down trees and everything for a long time, until he broke his leg. And then he started working at the sawmill, driving the lift to lift the lumber logs. Worked there about, I think, eleven years, then he went to Cummings Sign and he wired signs down there.

JA: So when you were growing up, your family got electricity from the mill, or from the dam, got electricity from the Readyville Mill. And you got ice, you said.

MH: I got a million piece of ice out of that mill. Got locked in there many times, too (laughs).

JA: You got locked in there?

MH: Yeah, Mr. Hayes would put me in there and shut the door, and then he was just piddling, teasing me. He'd open up the door. He was aggravating me. I was little and he just, I guess I was mischievous, so he liked to aggravate me.

JA: I'm not really familiar with who this is, Mr. Hayes?

MH: Yeah, he owned, he was the one that owned the saw—the mill.

JA: Okay, I haven't heard that name very often in my interviews, so can you tell me a little about him? When did he own the mill?

MH: Oh, he owned the mill when I was born. I don't know when he started it. But his wife lived right there in the house where you go down to the mill, on the left side there, right on the race. That was where she was living when she died. And she also lived right up above where Tom Tilford lived at one time. And there was a Talley that used to live up on that hill, and they call it Talley's Bluff. Have you heard that?

JA: Mmm-hmm.

MH: And Robert A. Harris lived in that little house there when I was going, first started school. Me and him started school together, and he lived in that little house, that's the first I can remember anybody living in that little house, they moved.

JA: Up on Talley's Bluff?

MH: Yeah, right up there on Talley's Bluff.

JA: Oh, okay.

MH: And as today, now I don't know. Ms. Carter lived there, and Mr. Bowman lived there. There have been several different ones that lived in that little house. And I don't know, but I think it was Shrum that lived there. Been different ones that lived in that little house. And some of them are still living that lived in that little house. Well Robert A. is living. He lived right, he lives up here on Porterfield Road. Me and him the same age, going to school, we started school together.

JA: But we were talking about Mr. Hayes.

MH: Mr. – No, Mr. Hayes –

JA: Can you tell me about him?

MH: Well, the only thing I can tell you, he was just an old man when I was a little girl. See, that was before I can remember too much except going down to the mill with my daddy.

JA: And he's the one who you would get the ice from?

MH: Yeah. And his son killed himself out on Tasseys Road.

JA: What about Rat McFerrin?

MH: Well Rat McFerrin lived there, and he had, I reckon it's two boys and two girls, and his two girls was teachers, and I went to school to both of them, went to school with the youngest one. And he run that store over there.

JA: The store?

MH: Right, it stood on right there on the race, on the upper side of the race.

JA: Okay. Now, he –

MH: Right where that house sits over there now.

JA: Okay, now he ran the mill as well.

MH: Yeah.

JA: At one point. So do you remember when he?

MH: That was when I was probably four or five years old, I can't remember except just going most of the time down there with my daddy, maybe to the store. And I said, then you could get candy for anything, or anything you wanted for nothing. Now you can't buy candy for nothing. I went to school to Rat McFerrin's two daughters, Ruby and Bertha. And they both lived to the last few years. They died over at Auburntown [Tennessee], I'd say, in the last ten years. And their son, too, the youngest son. And I had a sister that died when she was twenty three, and she went to school with Thomas. They were, I think, in the same class. And there was a Mr. and Mrs. Leyman that taught school at Culpepper. And they were German descent, and I had them in grammar school, and then I went to school at Woodbury and I had Ms. Leyman as my music teacher. And I also had Maynetto Pascal as my music teacher. Mrs. Leyman was a little old white-headed woman, and she was as straight as an arrow. But she was just as white-headed as she could be.

JA: What can you tell me about the Ready family?

MH: I don't know nothing about the Ready family.

JA: You don't remember ever hearing anything about them?

MH: The only thing I know about them, that was when my daddy was a young man. Only one that ever been I knew out there was Lawrence Barker, and I don't know who lives out there now.

JA: Did your dad ever tell you stories about growing up in this area?

MH: Well my daddy didn't live in this area at first. He lived at Curlee. He was raised, as I said, up on Cripple Creek. And then they went, they moved over there. My granddaddy lived over there, and his grandson still lives over there where my grandparents lived. They lived over close to Curlee. You go up by the flashing light and go out there, turn off and go back across there. They all lived up in that Curlee community. My daddy had three brothers and three sisters. I had one aunt that lived, she would have been 106 when she died. And her son, one of them was a chief of police over there, or something, in Nashville. He worked at the police station, I think he was an intelligence guy. There's two of them that done furniture, refinished furniture there in Murfreesboro.

JA: So how did your dad get to Readyville? When did he move here?



MH: Well, when we moved to Readyville, we moved right up here, the '27 I said, October of '27. I know when we moved up there. I was three years old, but I know when we moved because I've been told that.

JA: Uh-huh.

MH: You don't remember everything.

JA: Right.

MH: I know about a lot of stuff back then. That's when I was going to the mill with him, when I was small. So I can't remember everything going, except when I'd go to Brown's Mill with him, there would always be the convicts over there cooking dinner for the road gang to work on the roads. And I was scared to death of them when I was little. I'm scared to death, my daddy said, "They ain't going to bother you." They had ball and chains on, they wasn't going to go nowhere much. Old man Brown, he'd tease me when I'd go over there. I was all over that mill over there, but it fell in out there.

JA: The Brown's Mill? What were the differences between the Brown's Mill and the Readyville Mill?

MH: Well you had so much wheat and all – way he took, done it, if people, back then, you know, a lot of them couldn't afford to pay for it hardly. And they'd take the grain, he'd take the grain in, and he'd take and put it in the mill. And then when we'd want meal, he'd always go to the mill and get a hundred pound of flour at a time. That's what we'd get, a hundred pound at a time. And I said, we didn't ever go shopping every day. You didn't have to, he bought his, he'd go buy pinto beans or white beans, a hundred pound at a time. You raised your garden. We only put out about twenty-five rows of sweet potatoes, and about three or four rows of cabbage, and everything. You had a garden. And Mother put it up.

JA: What else did you plant in your garden?

MH: Everything, cucumbers, turnip greens, turnips, and squash, just everything. Just one thing from another. Mother always made her kraut, made her, canned this, everything.

JA: Where did you store, I mean, when you'd buy a hundred pounds of flour and beans, where did you store that stuff?

MH: We had a place up the stairs that we'd put stuff like that. We had an upstairs up there. And we had sheds out there to put stuff in. You had a smokehouse outside you put your meat in, your lard and stuff, set it out there. You had places, everything. And when I was little, where we lived up there, our barn burned. My mother almost got burned up in it. They was hauling hay and it caught fire. And they built a barn when I was, I guess I was in the fifth grade when it burned. I was small then. But I can remember, she was carrying out saddles, and trying to let stock out of the barn. And the fire knocked her down twice. She said she finally made it out and she decided she better not go back in.

JA: Did your family lose a lot of stuff in that fire?

MH: Well, a lot, lost everything you had, bridles and things that wasn't there. He was hauling hay but he had bridles and saddles and things. Of course we rode, I rode a horse everywhere I went. And I said, people go wild on riding horses now, that was the only way I had to go when I was little. I'd get on and ride and go to Curlee to see somebody or something like that. And we had buggies, and we'd go. We always went in a buggy. Mama and them went in the car, but we'd go in the buggy and ride a horse back. The kids did, you know, to go. That's what made it go.

But I said, I don't know how many years Mr. Justice owned this mill, but he run it for a long time. And then it went down after he went out. The Flipses, they sold all the stones, I think it was them that sold all the stones out of there.

JA: I, I don't know. I, I wouldn't think so, because people had the mill after the Flipses.

MH: I went over there, I don't know which one Elmer says they sold some of them stones out of there. He was mad about it, he didn't like it. He said that was the mill, they didn't need to sell out nothing out of there. You ever go down there? They've done it over though. They had marks out there on the porch how what deep the water got. Over my head, that's what I said. Tomm may be looking out over his head one day down there.

JA: Yeah, I've heard about the marks.

MH: Mary said, "Tomm worries every time it comes a big rain." I said, "Well, he may be waiting, it may come one, one of these days." I've seen it go around. It come through the yard down here, between these two houses, but it don't, it's still got a long ways to come up here. And it went around the post office and through that garage over there, and run over top of the bridge out there. And they pulled some through with a tractor.

There's one like that went over the bank down there. I said, he tried to go through it, I said, "You don't go through water where you can't see, because there's no banisters there." And that house there, they've raised that house up. It used to get in it every time it rained.

JA: The one by the mill?

MH: Yeah, right down there in that hole. Now that's a place I wouldn't have. And I wouldn't live there for nothing. I'd rather live in a tent beside the road than to live in that house.

JA: Who lives there right now?

MH: I don't know. I don't know people who lives in Readyville now.

JA: Oh.

MH: So don't ask it.

JA: (both laugh) No, that's fine.

MH: All the people that lived in Readyville nearly are gone. I said, Paul Vaughn, I don't know whether you know who Paul Vaughn is; he's a photographer in Murfreesboro. I think he makes them in his house now. He lives in the house where Mr. Justice lived. And at one time old Uncle Will Jetton lived there, run the store. And then Ms. Youree's house burned and Roy Lamb, I reckon he still lived there, he was living there and he passed away a year or two ago. And the Craigs lived down here in this house. They called it Lady MacKnight house, that's what used to be who owned it. And the Braggs lived in that house. Virgin Conley lived there with them. Him and his wife was Craig's daughter. And they was different ones after Craigs died out that has lived there. And now there's the Arnett boy, man, I think they call them Arnetts, Ben Arnett lives there. And I don't know, but I think Jane Rust lives in a Brevard house, don't she?

JA: I don't know, I'm not sure.

MH: At the house up there on that hill on that side, across from Berry Ann's is, well, where Berry Ann lives, that was a Brevard house too. Dunns owned that.

JA: Who are they?

MH: I don't know, except they was the Brevards. Margaret Brevard was a teacher at, I think out at MTSU [Middle Tennessee State University], and Mary Hall. They got a building out there named after Mary Hall ain't they?

JA: I don't know. It's such a big campus, I'm not familiar with all of the buildings.

MH: Oh, you're not? I used to know what everything was, but they've changed that campus all together different.

JA: Okay.

MH: What am I supposed to tell you now? I've told you about everything I know. Telling you about all them. Joe Barker lived out on the hill out there. And at one time it was a Perry man lived out there, going out Bivens Hill Road, when I was little. And Betty Jane Perry was Berry Ann's first cousin. Her daddy was a brother to him, they lived out there. They used to be here, and they went to Arkansas. A lot of people that lived here moved off, and a lot of them died away. What did you lose?

JA: My pen – I – okay. So you don't, you weren't really aware of the restoration or anything of the mill?

MH: I knew they were doing it over, I knew they were doing that. But as far as, from the time I married on, I never was at the mill too much except go down there once in a while after Mr. Justice, maybe go down there and get flour or something. But I was too big to get out there and go up in the mill. I was over there when Carignans run it. He also run a store down in, Grants in Nashville. He sold books down there. He had a little market down there.

JA: Mr. Carignan?

MH: Uh-huh. He had cookbooks he sold.

JA: At the mill?

MH: Uh-huh, at the mill. I think it's Carignan that did that.

JA: What else did they sell?

MH: They had a little stand there, they sold different things. Tried to sell little jellies and things like that, you know. I don't know what Tomm sells. I never have been down there except before he got it made, done.

JA: I was there once, and I know they, they sell the stuff that they make in the mill, like grits and cornmeal.

MH: Well I don't go eat breakfast there because I don't like breakfast (laughs). No need of me going over there to eat breakfast! I don't eat eggs myself, no time. And I don't care none about grits. Did they'd have to be full of syrup if I ate them.

JA: So you haven't been down there since the renovations?

MH: Mary carried me down there one time when he was down there, when he was working on it. You know who I'm talking about?

JA: No.

MH: Girl that runs the store over there, beside him.

JA: Oh, okay.

MH: And I went down there, and he was down there. I seen, used to see him all the time, but don't ever see him no more.

JA :Tomm Brady?

MH: Mmm-hmm.

JA: I've not met him.

MH: I used to see him at, up at Mary's all the time. He's up there eating dinner or something all the time. But I don't see him no more. But I don't go over there no more either. (laughs) I pretty much stay put at home. I don't go nowhere much. I'm like – I got a friend up here, she says, "Ain't nobody place like home." I said, "No." I – during the winter I did jigsaw puzzles, and now I do crossword puzzles. I do every one that come out in the paper.

JA: Uh-huh. Yeah, I'd love to hear more about this area, and about the mill in particular.

MH: Only thing I know about the mill is back years ago, going down there with my daddy and all. And when Elmer worked over there was over there. And I know who lived around there. And I know who lived in every house in Readyville then, and now I don't know who lives in none of them.

JA: Uh-huh. Did you ever go to parties or anything at the mill, or hoedowns?

MH: No, they didn't have nothing like that.

JA: Oh, okay.

MH: That I ever knowed of. They didn't have no parties much back when I was growing up.

JA: Uh-huh.

MH: Most of them was at school. They had a school dances, you know, and all.

JA: What were the school dances like?

MH: Just regular old square dances.

JA: Oh, okay. I went to a really small school, growing up, and we didn't have any dances.

MH: You didn't have no dances?

JA: No.

MH: Where'd you go to school?

JA: I went to a really small school in New York.

MH: Well my daddy didn't like for me to dance.

JA: Oh really? Why is that?

MH: Well he didn't think it was nice for girls to get out and dance. (laughs) He was one of them older men, you know. My daddy was fifty-one when I was born.

JA: Oh, wow.

MH: He's twenty years older than my mother. So all of his people is gone, and I said, I had a cousin, she and I worked on everything on her line. Her grandmother and my daddy, they was brothers and sisters. So I helped her get her line of family up, and bless her heart, she passed away at sixty-nine years old, about four years ago. Her brother died in February, and she died in December, the last two in that family. But I never did go to the mill after I married much. Just get down there and maybe get a sack of flour, pick Elmer up or something like that. But I used to be down there all the time when I was growing up. And was over there at the garage all the time. My daddy's first cousin run that garage. And, of course, I knew George Hollinsworth and Ms. Margaret. I used to meet Ms. Margaret, I helped clean that house over there and the one across the road, in front of the store now. There was no telling how many times I've helped clean that out. Mud would be up, well it'd be three or four foot deep up in the house. We had to move, up in the upstairs, move a woman. She couldn't be moved nowhere, and they moved her upstairs down there. And she went, she was just renting there. They got her out of there, and she never did go back. But it gets around. Up the road, I have seen it go across the road up above Readyville store there, Tilford's store. And it also goes around by the post office out Bivens Hill Road. I've seen it do that. That's one of the last big ones we had.

JA: When was that?

MH: Oh lord, that's been, in the '60s I guess, because my daughter was still in school. And she finished in '69. Berry Ann Moore, her mama lived down there in Readyville too, at one time. And the ones that lived there one time when I was living there, their son drowned in the race over there. Christmas Eve night went to see his girlfriend at Woodbury, and his mama told him not to stay out late. He stayed out late, and he was, I guess rushing. Black woman found him the next morning. She'd seen the skid marks, found his body thrown out over there. And they lived in that house where Jane's grandmother lived. Well what's it going to do, what I'm telling you? I want to know.

JA: It's really just trying to get the history of the mill, and it's kind of the history of the area as well.

MH: Well do you know they used to have baptizing down in back of the mill?

JA: Really? I hadn't heard that yet, so please tell me about that.

MH: Oh, he ain't telling that. They used to, the black people there, right there where the garage is there, go down the banks of the river, where the bluff runs around down there, there used to be black people baptized down there.

JA: Oh.

MH: Down below Talley's Bluff.

JA: What was that?

MH: I said, "Down below Talley's Bluff."

JA: Oh. Were there a lot of African Americans in the community?

MH: Well at that time there were several.

JA: Oh.

MH: There used to be a black family lived here, and he was the first one I ever knowed that lived here. Now he had a car. And he did painting, and he did papering. His wife took in washing. His daughters cooked, and she cooked. There was a big family of them.

JA: Do you remember their name?

MH: Pardon?

JA: The name of the family.

MH: Yeah, Bud Brandon.

JA: Bud Brandon?

MH: Yeah. Day-Day they called her, I don't know what her name was. They called her Day-Day. And when my daughter was born, she come, waited till it snowed to come down there and see that baby. And she said, "What did you name it?" And I told her. She said, "Well I won't ever remember that." I named her Jennifer Leigh. She said, "I'll just call her my baby." So that's what she called her all the time, "My baby."

JA: Did she watch Jennifer?

MH: No, she just come down there to see her.

JA: Okay.

MH: New baby. She was born on the 29th of March, and we had a big snow the first day of April. So she come down there to see her. But they used to have that church, there was this black church over there. I don't know whether anybody's ever told you, they used to have a black church over in Readyville, and a black schoolhouse over there in Readyville.

JA: Oh, I've not heard that. Please, I would love to hear more about this.

MH: Well they had a schoolhouse, right where this house up here, Ray Barker's daddy had two or three rent houses, and they had black people worked, lived in them. And then they had, over here they had a church over here on the, I was always hearing church bell. Back where blacks was, over there. There are still several blacks over there. And there was Bob Taylor's bunch, and Eunie Robinson's, Son MacBroom, and where they lived, I can't think of his name right now. And there was a black one they called Squirrel, and I don't know what his name was except Squirrel. (laughs) There was a whole bunch of them that lived over there. Then there was, well, there was a Swafford that lived over there. Sam Dunn lived over there. There was just a big bunch lived over there. And they have a nigger church right up here, used to, used to call it Seatick right on top of the hill over here. Did you see it when you come up the hill? You notice it when you go back down, on the other side, just right after you drop off the top of the hill, it's on the left where the road turns to the left. There's a black church there.

JA: Oh, okay. And where's the schoolhouse?

MH: The schoolhouse is gone. They used to have it, though, when I was little. The black girls used to live next door to us went to school down there. And, I'm thinking that the nigger woman that taught up here at West Side, I'm thinking she taught over here at the last one, taught over there at the nigger school. They started going to Woodbury to the black school. And then they started going to Murfreesboro to the black school. They cut out all the black schools up here.

JA: Do you know why they did that?

MH: I reckon just not enough blacks that they wanted to fool with them I guess, I don't know.

JA: So when you went to school, the entire time you were in school, were schools segregated?

MH: Uh-uh.

JA: No?

MH: That's after I was married when they did all that.

JA: When they desegregated schools?

MH: Yeah, no, when I went to school, the blacks went to school over here, and I went to school up here.

JA: Okay.

MH: About two miles up the road. And they went to school over there.

JA: Did you have any black friends?

MH: Well, I played with the blacks, because they lived next door to us. This little black girl, my daddy dipped snuff, and she'd come up there, and she'd say, "Mr. Reed, give me a dip of snuff." He'd say, roll your lip out, here, I'll give you some. (laughs) That's about the first thing she'd say when she'd come, because they didn't have money to buy snuff, but he got snuff. He dipped and smoked, smoked a pipe and smoked cigars. And now don't tell me that smoking kills a person. He lived to be about eighty years old. And I said, it's that ham meat will kill you, and my uncle lived to be ninety-eight, and he'd eat ham all the time. I don't know what it is, must be something in this, and what you eat nowadays they're putting in it that kills you.

JA: That could be.

MH: Because in the old days, when you eat meat, you eat meat. It wasn't something stuck in it to keep it. My aunt used to can sausage. I love sausage, and you know I'd go over and stay the night with her. And we'd always go upstairs. She had a place up there she'd fixed, and they put sawdust, and they would can her stuff and put it under that sawdust and keep it from freezing. Then when she wanted something she'd go over there and get it. So when I'd go she'd say, "Let's go get us a can of sausage."

But the mill has changed so much since everything.

JA: How so?

MH: The mill in itself has not changed, except they've redone it. But as far as being what it used to be, well it's not. Because used to, when I was little, somebody was there, going in and out all the time, you know. It's not that way now. They got it blocked off where you can't go in.

JA: It's open on Saturdays, right?

MH: Yeah, uh-huh. But back then it didn't have no fence around it. You went when you wanted to. And it also had a building across there where they parked their buggies and things in that shed. You know that, didn't you?

JA: No, uh-uh.

MH: Right, right across from where the, you know where the icehouse was?

JA: Uh-huh.

MH: Okay, right across from the icehouse, right across that race, they had a building set there, built right over the race. You drove in from that side over there, right straight across from the icehouse. It was a buggy shed that drove his, kept his buggy in there.

JA: Oh.

MH: And Margaret Hollinsworth, and old man Hayes's great-great granddaughter who lives, I think, out on Short Mountain, where you're talking about going to the distillery. I don't know whether she's still living or not, but she was. They die and I don't ever know they died. But that house over there, the water would get up and up, it would turn the furniture upside down there would be so much water through there. And one old lady, she lived there, and she left her pocket book and her suitcase under the bed. And then she wanted to go in when the water was over her head to get it. They said, "Forget it!" And it had washed from the upper side, down to the kitchen. It had lodged. And if the kitchen door was open it would, she was just lucky it didn't wash away.

JA: Yeah.

MH: But I said, one time it come through, and the house across, in front of where the store is now, the family that lived there, they had chickens and first one thing and another. It washed everything in the yard away. And it'll wash everything away again if, somebody, they told me over there that they guy had two little old donkeys over there. I said, "Well, they better put them somewhere else, because them donkeys will be washed away if it ever comes a big flood again."

Now Robert A., he'd know about the mill, but he wouldn't tell you nothing I guess. He's being voted into the Hall of Fame for coach, he used to be coach up here at the high school.

JA: Oh.

MH: That's the one I'm talking about that lived up there in that Talley House. Me and him went to school together. We were cousins. And he's being voted in to the Hall of Fame, I thought they made the Hall of Fame sometime in May. But he was a basketball coach for years at Woodbury.

One of the boys I finished school with got killed the first thing in the Army when he got out of school, two of them. And there was two brothers from school got killed at the same, about the same time. But you didn't know nothing about the tanks and all. There was soldiers that marched up and down this road. You'd see them marching in troops like, you know, in training, like that on the T.V. and everything. Well they would march up and down this road, and all the way around through, over to Beech Grove and all over on the other side of Bradyville.

JA: When you say this road, you mean Lassiter-Barker Road?

MH: Uh-huh. Just go up the road. They would march for days on end, come from, through Lascassas, you know where Lascassas is.

JA: Mmm-hmm.

MH: Come from Lascassas, and just march, march, and march, and march. There'd be just gangs and gangs of them.

JA: Wow. This is during World War II?

MH: Uh-huh, during World War II. They, they stayed here for a long time. And they were, where my granddaddy lived, my daddy lived down, mother lived down there,

and I stayed up here and went to school with my cousin up here. And down there they would camp right in the door. And they did down here in Readyville. I lived – my home place in Readyville is right down here. It's after you go out, it's the third house. Where the house used to be, it burned after we moved away. And my daddy died, mother remarried, and the house burned. Some guy lived there, I don't know, he may have set it on fire. He's an old drunk. I don't know how it burned.

You could hear the singing down there when they'd have that baptizing. You could hear them singing, singing down there. Have you ever been to a black service?

JA: No, I haven't.

MH: We used to go to the black services up there on the hill.

JA: Oh, what were they like?

MH: Well, they just, they're happy when they sing everything. You see them on the T.V. how they sing, don't you?

JA: Uh-huh.

MH: But, I used to go to their services all the time. I never was at the service over here. But I could hear the church bell on Sunday mornings. Always ringing the church bell for them to come to service. But all the blacks, older blacks are gone. There's a few left of the younger grandsons and all. There's one that has been over there for years. She cut her leg off mowing her yard, and she's at a rest home in Woodbury.

But I haven't been down to the mill since they redone it. I don't go to the store very often. When I go, I usually go to the Murfreesboro or Woodbury one. They don't carry everything I want, so there's no need in running one place and the other.

JA: I have a question. I know that you said your family would get flour and stuff from the mill, like hundred pound bags. After you got married, would you still get flour and stuff from the mill?

MH: No, my daddy wasn't running the thrasher. You see that yellow paper there?

JA: The envelope? Uh-huh.

MH: That manila (Ms. Helton searches through the papers in the envelope). I thought there was going to be – see, this is not it. I was going to show you, but I guess it ain't it.

JA: Is it in the little one in there?

MH: No.

JA: Where would you get your flour and stuff from after that?

MH: After that? The store.

JA: The stores in town?

MH: Uh-huh. I don't see it. It might be in a bigger envelope, maybe in a white one. Maybe it's in this one. I don't think it's in them.

JA: Let me pause this.

MH: No, the mill didn't even concern me, because I didn't care about it because I always, It's always been the mill to me.

JA: Uh-huh, you didn't think about it because it was just a part of your life.

MH: It was just a place to go, a place to get your meal. That's the only thing I, just like going to the store. You don't think about going to the store. But my daddy always carried meal down there, went down there and got ice. We had an icebox we kept ice in back then, go down there and get ice to keep. But we also had a spring that was like ice water running out from under the hillside where we kept our milk and all. We'd keep our milk in that.

JA: Really? Oh.

MH: But we had water, we didn't have lights where I was raised, until I was seventeen, but we also had running water in the house and everything, you know.

JA: So you kept your milk outside in the –

MH: We kept it down in the springhouse; we had a springhouse. Water run out from under the hillside and it was cold water, it was good, cold. That's where we got our water. To drink, we had it running out from up, it'd be in pipes running in the house,

and running on the back porch. But we didn't drink that because it would get so hot, you know. We'd drink, have to go to the spring to get good, cold water.

JA: How far was that from your house?

MH: Oh, just a few steps down the hillside. Wasn't far. Wasn't as far as it is from here to where I come up from the road. Just like walking down the hill. We all had a job to do back when I was growing up and, but every one of us hated to go get water. (laughs) I don't know why, but I guess because the sun was hot, you know. In winter time you could drink the cold water coming out of the faucets. But in summer time it would be boiling hot.

But my daddy, he always, he worked. The day that he died he'd cut out a fence roll. He walked with a crutch, and he made a garden with a spade and a hoe. Sat in a chair and dug that dirt up in the garden, made a garden. But we always had plenty of stuff in the garden. I always had stuff here till this last, since Elmer passed away I haven't had no garden. But I've got some tomato plants out there now. I'm hoping to have tomatoes because, Elmer says I loved them tomatoes better than anybody who'd ever seen dinner, breakfast, and supper, whatever, in between meals. I love tomatoes. Tomato sandwich is good enough for me, just eat tomato and bread.

JA: Did you have a lot of tomatoes in your garden growing up?

MH: Well, yes. Mother canned tomatoes, made juice, and made soups and everything.

JA: What else did she can? You said, you mentioned sauerkraut.

MH: We had sweet potatoes. My daddy always dug a place for the turnips. He'd always dig a hole in the garden, and he'd put the turnips in, and then he'd put the dirt over it. And then he'd put the straw over that, and then he'd put a metal roof over that to keep water from going in it. And when we wanted any turnips or anything, you'd go out there and pull them out of the bank. That way you did sweet potatoes like that too. And we always put the Irish potatoes in the house. And then Mother made kraut, and then the canned tomatoes, and canned corn, whatever you normally can, just to have food all the time. And there was never a day that we didn't have something sweet setting on the table. She cooked tea cakes, she'd cook them, take part of them, she'd put chocolate icing on some. And put vanilla on some. And then she'd let us pick icing on some. And she made molasses bread, they call it. Make some of the best biscuits you ever eat. And what I like was biscuits and sausage. (laughs) Are you hot?

JA: No, I'm fine actually. I'm good, thank you.

MH: I've got one air conditioner on. I've got another one but, I said, I'm not ever hot.

JA: No, I think it feels nice in here.

MH: I don't know. I hadn't been to the mill in a long time. The only time I went down there is when Tomm first started putting the flooring down.

JA: And did you talk to him?

MH: I talked to him several different times.

JA: Can you tell me about your conversations with him?

MH: I just talk, I just go setting, and see him. That's about it. I never talked to him about nothing much. He's always over at the store when I'd see him. Over at Mary's and Russell's. My nephew come in one day and he wanted to go see it and the gate was closed. He lives in Texas, both of them wanted to see it. I said, "Well, Tomm's got the gate locked." And then I got a friend, he was going to see it. I think he's coming to, maybe tomorrow. We're going to the distillery. He wants me to go see it, show him where to go to the distillery. And I know a guy that owns, run the distillery.

JA: Oh, Billy Kaufmann?

MH: No, Ricky Estes.

JA: Oh.

MH: You don't know Ricky Estes?

JA: Nope.

MH: Well his wife and I worked together for years.

JA: Oh. Where at?

MH: Colonial Shirt Factory. I've been knowing Ricky for years, and his whole family. I'm going out there to see him. I don't know what he wants to go for. He just wants to go look. He's one of those ones wanted me to go with him to Short Mountain. We went

to Short Mountain, and he got chicken. He got to the top, he was ready to turn around and come back. We turned around, come back. His wife said, "Don't you ever carry me no place like this no more." (laughs) She said, "I didn't know it was going to be like this. I wouldn't have been coming up here." Just look down at them hills there.

JA: Did your dad ever make moonshine?

MH: No.

JA: No.

MH: He didn't. He kept moonshine, or kept liquor. I'm asthmatic, and I said, I coughed all night long if something. I do now, get out and everything. I try to stay in as much as I can. That's the reason I don't get out and go nowhere. It's bad out there now. And I got a granddaughter, she's awful. She's going to the doctor constantly. She can't get over that cough. She gets out, mows the yard, and that brings it on. But she can't stand to put them things on to stop the dirt and all. It smothers her. I don't know how many times she's been to the doctor. And they said she was one of the worst ones they've seen.

JA: So your dad didn't make moonshine, but he, he had it?

MH: We kept it as a toddy when we got sick, drinking, he'd make a hot toddy. You know what a hot toddy is?

JA: No, why don't you tell me, please.

MH: Well you take, put you some hot water and sugar and your liquor and lemon in there, make a drink. It'll cut the phlegm out of your throat and all.

JA: Oh. Where did he get the moonshine from?

MH: Somebody always had it. As I said, Squirrel, black guy, he'd come up there and bring him a pint or something like that once in a while.

JA: Uh-huh.

MH: My daddy knew all the blacks around. We had black people lived with us, too, on our place.

JA: Just renting? Or did they work for your father?

MH: Worked for my daddy. He always had hands to work.

JA: Uh-huh.

MH: My daddy had been married before he married my mama, and his wife died when my half-brother was four years old. And she stayed with him for ten years, a black, eighty, woman. She was his nigger mammy (laughs) until him and my mama married. And my mama was nineteen when they married, and he was thirty-one years older than her. But he took care of the old black lady when she died, though. He also ran the poor house, they called it back then. You know what a poor house is, where the people in the county, well they had one in Rutherford County too. That's the Rutherford County farm out there on Rucker Lane. I think they got a rest home out there now. It's to the left. Poor people that just didn't have a home or something, they stayed there. And there have been a lot of people worked over there.

JA: Where was that?

MH: It's off, on 64, right up about three miles over here. But he lived in three or four different houses up there. And in where I was born up here on Locke's Creek is not like then. We moved across over on high, Old Highway 70, and lived there a year or two. Then we moved up here, and that's where I lived seventeen years. But they've been different people owns the stores here. They've been so many different ones. I don't know whether I could even think of all of them. They've been so many that comes through. We had the same postmistress for years, and years, and years, Margaret Root. And then when Margaret Hollinsworth took over and run it for a long time. And now we have different ones all the time out there. I don't know. I'm trying to think who else around here, that lived around here. We had schoolteachers that lived here in Readyville. And we've had preachers who lived here, and doctors. Used to be, where, the house where I lived in was a doctor's house at one time. And then out the road was another doctor. And then where Uncle Dave Macon's sister, her husband was a doctor. He was Doctor Youree. Had three doctors in town. And of course everybody don't know that either.

JA: No one that I've interviewed so far has talked about the doctors, so.

MH: The house I lived in had fourteen-foot ceilings and nine, windows was nine foot tall. Had a hallway all the way through, and then three big rooms on each side, and the little room where his office was at, and then a kitchen, and a back porch. It was screened

in back porch. You could walk on the back side of the house. I thought maybe you knew who lived down there, or had heard her talk about some of them down there.

JA: No.

MH: I met her, Jane, at the post office. Didn't I tell you?

JA: No.

MH: The other day.

JA: No.

MH: I went to the post office, and while I was in there, just walked in, she was standing there. She turned around and said, "I'm Jane Rust." I said, "Well, I'm Mable Helton." She said, "Well I've been wanting to meet you!" I said, what's your name?

JA: My name? Jaryn Abdallah.

MH: I knew it was Abdallah or something, but I couldn't. How do you spell your first name?

JA: J-A-R-Y-N.

MH: Like it's J-E-R-R-Y, nearly like that isn't it.

JA: Uh-huh.

MH: Spell it like it's J-E-R-R-Y?

JA: No, J-A-R-Y-N.

MH: I said it's just like your spelling it, the way it sounds is like it's Jerry.

JA: Oh, yeah, mmm-hmm.

MH: Yeah, I saw her out there. I go to the post office nearly every day. I didn't go today. I went yesterday. I hardly ever miss a day, but I didn't want to go today. I didn't want to do much of nothing today. Sat out here and read the paper, worked my puzzles.

JA: Well I'm glad that you agreed to sit down and talk with me.

MH: I like to work them puzzles in the paper.

JA: Uh-huh.

MH: I like to work the jigsaw puzzles. I really love them, but it gets so hot, and setting there. My granddaughter says, "I wouldn't work one of them for nothing." Says, "You can run me crazy." I said, "Makes you think! Keeps you young, keeps your mind working, don't it?"

JA: Yeah.

MH: I had open-heart surgery in 2000. I said, I went to the doctor, it was last Thursday, and I said, he said, "Well you're doing good." Said, "Your EKG is grand." I said, "Well, that's good." And he said, "I'm going to let you live to be 100."

JA: (both laugh) Well I sure hope so.

MH: I said, "No, I don't think so." I'm alright except my back. I was up and down – I had a wreck, my daughter and I had a wreck in '68, and they give us each one fifty-fifty chance to live. And well, it happened October, and I couldn't go back to work until February.

JA: Wow.

MH: And I couldn't remember what I was doing. It's a good thing you are talking to me now, because I, my sister said if everything I said was in my pocketbook, a semi couldn't hold it. I was always talking, this rattling and everything, just talking. My pocketbook, got my pocketbook.

JA: Yeah, any more stories about growing up, or about Uncle Dave Macon, who I know we talked a little bit about?

MH: Well I don't know nothing about Uncle Dave except he, I told you, I'll tell you a joke. He'd tell, he was full of them jokes, you know. And he'd tell my daddy one, and he'd tell, then he'd say. My daddy raised my three sister's kids, grandkids for him. He'd send one of them to get me, and I'd say, "I don't want to go." I'd hide out a lot of times to get out of the house where he wouldn't be aggravating. He was the worst at that. Anyway, he said, "I'll tell you one. But you can't hear the one." He called my daddy

"Bear." Said, "I can't tell you what Bear, don't want to tell Bear, it's a dirty one." I said, but he loved his moonshine. You was talking about moonshine, (JA laughs) he loved his moonshine. But my daddy said, "You can't come here drinking, Dave." Daddy didn't drink. Uncle Dave loved his moonshine. While I went to work one time, and he got on the bus, and he said, "I thought I seen Mable. That's Bear Reed's daughter." Another girl told him. I'll tell you what he said later, I ain't going to tell you that. (laughs) But he had that bus a roaring. I was so embarrassed I could have got up and killed him. (JA laughs) The next morning I went out and got on the bus to go, and the bus driver, I rode with him every day, and he said, "Mable, we're going to pick Uncle Dave up this morning." I said, "You can pick Uncle Dave up, and I'm getting off right there. (JA laughs) I'm not going to work." (laughs) But Uncle Dave lived just right down the road here, you know.

JA: No.

MH: He lived about four miles down here. Where you see Kittrell, when you go back through, you can see a big, long white house right there, where you turn. It says B & W, but you go right on down here and look out there, that's his house out there.

JA: Oh.

MH: And he married my foster-brother's daddy's sister. And then he's got kids and grandkids that plays music now. And his son that lived with him killed himself up here at Woodbury, Dorris, that played with him. He lived in a big brick house right there, where you go in, the red light at Woodbury. You go through Woodbury; you look, you going out to Short Mountain? You going by yourself?

JA: No, no. I'm not sure when I'll get there, but not today.

MH: Well I wasn't meaning today.

JA: Oh.

MH: It's no trouble finding Short Mountain. You go out Woodbury, go straight on through Woodbury. After you get to the top of the hill, you'll see out there, about four or five miles out there, you'll see East Side School. You turn to the left of the road there, go out to the end there, to that road, and turn to your left again, and that'll carry you right in to Short Mountain.

Uncle Dave, he had seven boys. One of them was a preacher, and one of them was a sot. (laughs) And one of them disappeared.

JA: When did he disappear?

MH: He went into service in World War II, and he come back here, had a wife and a little girl. And he disappeared. Nobody knows where he went to.

JA: He disappeared after he came back, or while he was?

MH: Uh-huh.

JA: Oh, wow.

MH: One of them was a preacher, who was also a school teacher. He taught down here at Kittrell School. But Uncle Dave was a character.

JA: Sounds like it.

MH: He was something else. He liked to have fun. My nephew said that he was a dirty old man. (laughs) Because he was one he'd send after me a lot of times, you know. He said, "He's a dirty old man." Well he preaches at the church sometimes, and I said, "Bobby don't carry all that stuff like that, you know." I went to the doctor Thursday. He called me Thursday morning, he called me Friday morning, he called me Saturday morning, and he called me again Sunday morning. He lives in Texas. He said, "Are you alright?" I said, "I'm alright." I got two nephews that live out there. Their sister is in Boulevard Terrace, she's got Alzheimer's. But she knows everything. She can tell, she can talk to you about what's happened like this, like she went to the mill and everything too. But she can't remember what she does in ten minutes from now. Short-time memory loss.

JA: Yeah. Well, we've got a couple more minutes, if you can think of anything else.

MH: Well I've told you several things.

JA: I know.

MH: That somebody else hasn't told you.

JA: I know, this has been really, really good. This is a lot of new information, so that's great.

MH: Well, everybody don't know they had all them, nobody knows all of that stuff.

JA: Yeah.

MH: I don't know, I said, there's a lot of stuff. The mill over here, Tilford's Mill, I reckon it's still in business. He run a, also run a grocery store there for a long time. His wife and his daughter, son-in-law, daughter-in-law would run it. They still sell logs over there, buy logs. And Randy's went to school, his grandson went to school with my daughter. And I never went to school with none of them, because, well, the ones my age went somewhere else, to Kittrell School, and I went to Woodbury. I finished school in Woodbury. And I said, used to you went where you wanted to, and now they don't, they have to assign you a place to go, and you ride fifty miles to go to school. It looks to me like it would take them all in one block, so far, and then another block so far. And then if you have to go something else, and not run them. This friend of mine I'm talking about wants me to go with him, his son first went to Mitchell Nielson [Elementary School], and then his daughter, then his oldest girl went to, finished school at Oakland [High School]. The youngest girl, I think, finished at Siegel [High School], and the boy finished at Blackman [High school]. The boy and girl are not that much difference in them, and yet they were never in the same school. And they lived in the same house. You tell me how that, I don't know how they do that stuff.

JA: I don't know.

MH: But I hope Tomm does good over there, but I hope he don't get washed away. But there's a possibility. I don't guess the mill will wash away, because it's been through a lot of it.

JA: Yeah, the building is probably around 200 years old, or 150 years old.

MH: Well, let's see. It was there when my daddy was a boy, and my daddy would have been 80, about 78 or 79, on his birthday. He, he would be 140 years old if he was living.

JA: Really? Wow.

MH: So it was there then. This house would be, would be that old too, I guess. It's been here for years. We added on.

JA: So what was the original part of the house? Right here?

MH: Well this house caught fire and burned part of it.

JA: Oh, okay.

MH: And I'm scared to death of fire.

JA: Uh-huh.

MH: We was setting in there, and I said, we was having a thunder storm, I said, "Pow!" And I heard it just, "Ping!" I said, "Elmer, the house is on fire." He said, "It ain't." I said, "I smell smoke!" My mother always fussed at me because I smelled everything (laughs) that didn't smell right. I said, "I smell smoke!" He said, "I don't see none." I said, "I smell it." And I got up. And it was coming out of the bedroom. It had burned a wire in two that went under the house, burned it. I said, "Under that bed!" I looked back by the bed. I had two big suitcases packed full of clothes. And that held it down, but it burned my mattress and box springs off the bed. But it never did burn out, you know, all through the house. But the water done more damage than anything. But it kept it from burning up the house. I said, "That's one time the old suitcases was in hand." This little boy, or man I'm talking about coming up here, his kids stayed up here and stayed all night with me time after time. One day he's up here and he said, "Mable, what do you got under your bed?" (laughs) I said, "Everybody has something under their bed, don't they?" (laughs) He was about five years old, and he said, "Mable, what do you got under your bed?" I said, "You won't believe it." (both laugh) But that's where I had a suitcase full of towels, and, and I had some night, I always keep extra gowns. I don't know whether anybody's as stupid as I am, but I always kept a suitcase full of gowns and pajamas in case I got sick.

JA: Uh-huh.

MH: Jennifer said, "Mother got all them gowns, and then she'll sleep in one till it falls off of her." I said, "That's when they get to feeling good, (laughs) when they get ready to fall off of you." They don't wear good when they're new. I don't like nothing new. Usually them old tags hurt your neck on the dresses and everything else.

JA: Well, can you think of any more stories of things that happened in Readyville while you were growing up? Or times when you were at the mill?

MH: No, I just went to the mill, and the only thing I know I was down there and old man Sam Hayes aggravated me. And we was all over the mill, climbing here and there. Out on that bluff, we went out on that bluff out behind there. Have you ever been out behind there?

JA: No, I don't think so. Behind the mill?

MH: I think they had somebody jump off that bluff out there, doesn't it seem like. I guess she was drunk. Yeah, there used to be a lot going on down there, but I reckon they don't have nothing going on down there except on Saturday mornings, do they?

JA: All I know of right now is the Saturday morning breakfast, but, well they have a lot of weddings and stuff, I think.

MH: Do they have weddings out there on that bluff behind the mill? Is that where I'm telling you, talking about?

JA: I'm not sure. It is, it's out behind the mill, they have a little gazebo set up, and a nice little area.

MH: Well there's a cliff that hangs over there.

JA: Oh, okay.

MH: You walk out through there.

JA: Oh, uh-huh.

MH: I don't know, have no idea how they got it, how they fix it, but I thought that's where it was at, behind the mill.

JA: Maybe, yeah.

MH: I don't even know where they put the house up there, the Talley House. I don't know how close it is to the mill now.

JA: I'm not sure.

MH: I know they moved it.

JA: Oh, okay.

MH: From where it used to be. The Talley House used to be up. I know it's Talley Bluff and Talley House, and down on there. I've been down there on that, where they had the baptizing. And they used to have muscle shells, looked like oyster shells down there. I just wondered if they have them now.

JA: I don't know.

MH: We went down there and got oyster shells many a time.

JA: Uh-huh.

MH: But I don't guess I'll ever know. (laughs) Because I ain't going to walk down there to see. But we used to be often up and down the rivers all the time. And then on down below there, they all call it, they call it Gucci Ford now, but I always called it Goochie Ford. That's what it was when I was growing up. And that's a swimming hole over there, too. It had a, a swing over there. And you know the, you know they have this here, comes down, Stones River. They come down through here when they come down here in the canoes and all. I don't know, I'm thinking there are places that might not be deep enough for them to take a boat now, since that water is leaking out of the dam. Used to water got higher than it does now on account of the dam leaking. But I heard that they was going to fix it, but I don't know whether they are or not.

JA: I don't know. I think a lot of people would like to see it fixed.

MH: I don't care whether it does or not. The water don't get as high.

JA: (both laugh) Yeah, they'd like to fix it. I'm not sure.

MH: Well, what's he running on? Electricity?

JA: Yeah, electricity.

MH: He's not running on water from the race, is he?

JA: No.

MH: I didn't think he was.

JA: No, but if they could fix the stream bank, where the water has washed around the dam, then he probably could run on water.

MH: I guess the one that lives in that house down there would hope they don't fix it either.

JA: I hadn't thought about that, I'm not sure.

MH: But that, that is deep above that dam, used to be fourteen, fifteen, sixteen foot deep.

JA: Uh-huh.

MH: We used to stay in that river all the time. Summertime we laid out there in the river. That's where we done.

JA: Uh-huh.

MH: There's a big rock over there at the dam that you go over there and sit down, lay down out there. Me and another boy used to go down there, fishing. There's holes right below the dam. And we'd fish in them holes. I'd stop up one hole, and he'd, he'd grab, what you call grabbling, grab a hole to get the fish out of the hole. Catch some big ones.

JA: Oh!

MH: Elmer used to fish here, and he'd get fish that long. They was so good when you'd fillet them and everything. I don't do much cooking no more though. I cook a little, sometimes. Well I make a lot of bread. I like zucchini bread, or banana bread, first one thing, then another. I had strawberry shortcake for dinner today. I have just something, a little something, a lot of times a sandwich, and sometimes I'll fix a little something. But I don't know whether you know what poke greens are or not.

JA: No.

MH: Well my daughter got out there and picked some the other day, but she brought me some from up yonder. It's almost, tastes almost like spinach. It's wild greens. But a lot of people eat them with eggs, but I don't eat eggs. That's the reason I said I don't need to go nowhere to eat breakfast, because I don't like their breakfast food.

JA: Uh-huh. Well, yeah, thank you so much for sitting down to talk with me. This has been really great. Did you have any other stories about the mill? Anything else?

MH: No, I don't go to the mill no more. I said what I know, just when I was growing up and we'd go over there to get ice, and my daddy would go, he'd go every few days because there was several of us in the family. Ten pound, a hundred pound of flour didn't do long when you'd make baking and cooking.

JA: Oh.

MH: Because like it is when you buy a little bag now, you don't cook many meals until it's gone.

JA: Uh-huh.

MH: You make biscuits?

JA: Sometimes.

MH: I said, I take some time, make it. You ever make them with mayonnaise?

JA: No. (MH laughs) Is that the best way?

MH: Well, it makes them soft. You put a little mayonnaise in with the next cooking; just put you a tablespoon full of mayonnaise in it.

JA: Oh, I'll have to try that. Before we turn the recorder off, I just want to get your permission on the recorder to donate this interview to the public domain, which is the paper that you signed earlier.

MH: Uh-huh.

JA: Which just means it's available for researchers, if someone wanted to research the history of the area, or of the mill.

MH: Well, I got my permission to do anything you want to with it.

JA: Alright, well thank you so much.

PHOTOGRAPH IN TRANSCRIPT

Page 29—Thrashing Day

Standing second from the right is Mrs. Helton's father, James P. Reed. He was named for his Grandfather, Peter Reed, who first came to Tennessee and settled on Cripple Creek. Holding his father's hand is Elam Reed. Just to the left of Elam is James' brother, Olie, holding a pole.