

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW  
WITH  
ELIZABETH M. BARRETT

AUGUST 7, 2009  
MILTON, TENNESSEE

INTERVIEWED BY JIM WILLIAMS

PARQ  
PRESERVE THE AREA'S RURAL QUALITIES  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW #8

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Albert Gore". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

ALBERT GORE RESEARCH CENTER

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MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

MT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT INTERVIEW #410

## EDITORIAL NOTICE

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## **ABSTRACT**

Elizabeth Barrett, daughter of Rosser and Ollie (Elrod) McElroy, was born in Cannon County, Tennessee, on October 19, 1913. Her family lived near Halls Hill Road, but Elizabeth moved to Milton, Tennessee, to live with her grandparents at the age of six upon the death of her mother. She returned to live with her parents and older sisters about six years later. Her father was a farmer, growing mostly wheat and corn. He had most of his grain ground at the Readyville Mill, although Browns Mill nearby competed for his business and he went there on occasion. Barrett recalls riding a buggy to church, attending ice cream parties, raising homegrown food, preparing homemade soap, and doing chores on the farm as a child. She also recalls going to Murfreesboro to shop and names several stores, including Leatherman's clothing shop, Robinson's shoe shop, Goldstein's, and Woolworth's. Barrett discusses the effects of the Depression, World War II, and changing race relations on her community. At the time of the interview, she was ninety-five years old and living in Milton, Tennessee.

## **PHOTO**



Elizabeth Barrett

PARQ photo by Jane Rust

## **Sketch of Elizabeth M. Barrett**

“No!” was the emphatic answer when Elizabeth Barrett was asked if she had ever wanted to live in the big city. As a witness to nearly one hundred years of life in the Milton area, Barrett’s perspective mirrors the lives of many others of her generation who lived through two world wars and the Great Depression only to experience postwar prosperity and social change. In her youth, life was simpler, folks worked hard, and families were disrupted with deaths of parents and siblings.

Born near Halls Hill Road in 1913—in the first district of Cannon County—Barrett lived some time with her grandparents in Milton before returning to live on the farm with her father and older sisters. Her father grew mostly corn and wheat, as well as raised livestock. The grain he would take to Readyville Mill or Browns Mill, whichever offered the best deal. Usually Readyville Mill was the place where he drove his grain in his wagon.

Barrett remembers going to church and enjoying ice cream parties and sporting events while growing up in the area. School basketball and baseball games with other towns in the area were a great source of entertainment. Readyville’s team played in a field just across from the mill, taking on teams from such places as Woodbury and Lascassas. These events were where young folks met and got to know one another in those days, and it was at a ball game that Elizabeth met Stokely Barrett, her future husband. The Barretts raised their family in Readyville.

Like many others of her generation, Barrett recalled the days of primitive refrigeration—ice in sawdust, then ice boxes supplied from the Readyville Mill. Her family was proud of their kerosene-powered refrigerator and only enjoyed electricity in the late 1940s. She remembered the lights at the mill when it generated its own electricity. Hers was the age of party-line phones, news from radios with earphones, and water from a well brought into the house in buckets. And it was also the time in America where children were taught to address African Americans as “aunt” and “uncle” and lynchings were still a threat to her black neighbors.

Barrett reflected that while her childhood was good, the children of today—including her great grandchildren--have better lives in many ways, largely because of modern technology and other comforts. Things have come a long way from the days of electricity created by a waterwheel, or turkey drives all the way to the market in Nashville!

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH  
ELIZABETH M. BARRETT**

**PRESERVE THE AREA'S RURAL QUALITIES**

**ORAL HISTORY PROJECT INTERVIEW #8**

WILLIAMS: This is an oral history interview with Elizabeth Barrett. We are at her home in rural Cannon County, near—your mailing address is Milton, Tennessee, right?

BARRETT: Yes.

WILLIAMS: And this is Jim Williams from the Gore Center at MTSU and Tabitha Proctor is also here from MTSU, and it's August 7, 2009. This interview is being conducted for Preserve the Area's Rural Qualities, an organization that is interested in the history of the Readyville area and especially the mill. Readyville in general. So let's start with where and when you were born.

BARRETT: Born in first district of Cannon County.

WILLIAMS: And what was your birth date?

BARRETT: October the 19th, 1913.

WILLIAMS: And you called it the first district. What does that mean?

BARRETT: Well, they divided up in districts: the first and second and third and fourth and fifth and sixth . . . I don't know.

WILLIAMS: Where was your home at the time you were born?

BARRETT: Well that's . . . about two miles from, off of the Halls Hill Pike.

WILLIAMS: Two miles north?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Which, north?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: And what were your parents' names?

BARRETT: Rosser McElroy.

WILLIAMS: How do you spell that?

BARRETT: R-O-S-S-E-R.

WILLIAMS: McElroy.

BARRETT: McElroy.

WILLIAMS: M-C . . .

BARRETT: E-L-R-O-Y.

WILLIAMS: And your mother?

BARRETT: Ollie—O-L-L-I-E—Elrod.

WILLIAMS: How long had they lived in this area?

BARRETT: Well, all their life, I . . . They were born here in this part, too.

WILLIAMS: How old were they when you were born?

BARRETT: Oh, goodness, I don't know. I guess I'd say in their late forties and fifty.

WILLIAMS: So that means they were born back in the 1870s or '60s even . . . '70s?

BARRETT: Well, I had never really thought about counting that back.

WILLIAMS: Okay. That's alright. And the house that you were living in, was it on a road that had a name?

BARRETT: No, it wasn't named back then.

WILLIAMS: Is the house still there?

BARRETT: No. There's just a trailer there now I think. The house has been gone for some little bit.

WILLIAMS: Well, how many brothers and sisters did you have?

BARRETT: I had two sisters, no brothers.

WILLIAMS: What were your sisters' names?

BARRETT: One of them was named Rebecca.

WILLIAMS: Was she older or younger than you?

BARRETT: They were older. And Lois—L-O-I-S.

WILLIAMS: Are they both gone now?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: So three girls. That was it?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: How far apart in age were you?

BARRETT: Well, the one older than me, she was five years older than I was.

WILLIAMS: So that's Rebecca?

BARRETT: No, that was Lois.

WILLIAMS: And Rebecca was even older than that?

BARRETT: Yeah, uh-huh.

WILLIAMS: What did that house look like that you—did you grow up in that house?

BARRETT: Yeah, I was six years old when my grandparents moved over to Milton and I, they always petted me so I wanted to go live with them, so I moved with them to Milton.

WILLIAMS: Oh, okay.

BARRETT: And went to school in Milton 'til I was in the sixth grade and then they—my grandparents died, I mean my granddaddy and my grandmother went to live with some of her boys so I come home to live with my daddy. My mother died when I was six years old, and so I come home to live with my two older sisters and my daddy.

WILLIAMS: Okay, so were these your McElroy grandparents or your Elrod grandparents?

BARRETT: The Elrods.

WILLIAMS: So you got along well with them?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Why were you their pet?

BARRETT: Huh, I don't know.

WILLIAMS: What did they do for a living?

BARRETT: Well my daddy lived with my grandparents for about, oh, I think they said about fourteen years and he farmed it and my grandpa was then disabled to farm.

WILLIAMS: So your father was a farmer?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: And his father was a farmer?

BARRETT: Oh, yeah. It was all farming folks around in this country.

WILLIAMS: When you moved with your grandparents to Milton, were they farming there?

BARRETT: No, uh-uh, no.

WILLIAMS: What did they do?

BARRETT: He didn't do anything. He was too old to do anything.

WILLIAMS: And lived just in town or out?

BARRETT: It was right in, well, I reckon you'd call the town.

WILLIAMS: Well how would you describe your father?

BARRETT: Well, he worked hard, I know that much. He got up early and worked late.

WILLIAMS: Was he a tall fellow? Happy? Sad?

BARRETT: He wasn't too tall. He was . . . oh, I guess you would say a medium size. He . . . always was pretty jolly and he wasn't, he wasn't, we didn't grow up being abused any.

WILLIAMS: Which of your parents was the discipline giver?

BARRETT: Well, I can't say much about that cause I don't remember ever being disciplined much.

WILLIAMS: Okay. Since your sisters were quite a bit older, did they sort of substitute as mothers?

BARRETT: Yeah. Yeah. The oldest one was the mother.

WILLIAMS: What did your mother die from in 1919?

BARRETT: I don't really know.

WILLIAMS: Had she been sickly or was it just a sudden thing?

BARRETT: Well, I didn't know it if she had been sick.

WILLIAMS: How would you describe your family's social status compared to other folks in the area, when you were growing up?



BARRETT: Well, we was just sort of an average.

WILLIAMS: Were there people in the area that were visibly wealthy compared to most everyone else?

BARRETT: Well, not really back then.

WILLIAMS: So the kids you went to school with were pretty much all in the same boat?

BARRETT: Average, yeah.

WILLIAMS: Were there any that were visibly poorer than you?

BARRETT: Not as I, not as I knew of.

WILLIAMS: And did you come from a religious family?

BARRETT: Yes.

WILLIAMS: What church did you go to?

BARRETT: We went to the Presbyterian church.

WILLIAMS: Where was that located?

BARRETT: On Halls Hill Pike.

WILLIAMS: Is it still there?

BARRETT: Yeah, but it don't have any service now. Got down to about three people and we, and I was one of them and two others and so we just closed out and went over to Cripple Creek church.

WILLIAMS: So what was the name of this Presbyterian church?

BARRETT: The Stones River.

WILLIAMS: Were there other churches in the area that you could have gone to?

BARRETT: Oh, yeah, we had the Baptist church down the way and the Church of Christ both. In fact a Mr. Wright gave the land for the two churches that sit down here on Halls Hill Pike to build the church. His wife was a Presbyterian, he was Church of Christ, so he gave both churches a place to build a church on. They are still there but the Antioch Church of Christ, they still have church in it.

WILLIAMS: What was going to church like when you were growing up? Did you enjoy it?

BARRETT: Well, we was just, we was just taught to go. That was it.

WILLIAMS: Were there activities for youth and that kind of thing—activities for young people?

BARRETT: Oh, yeah, we had ice cream parties and just different things, we'd meet and have.

WILLIAMS: Was there Sunday school?

BARRETT: Oh, yeah, in fact when the Presbyterian church used to have their Sunday school in the evenings and then when we wanted to we could go in the morning to the, go both places. We did a lot of that.

WILLIAMS: So you would go to the Church of Christ?

BARRETT: Sometimes, yeah.

WILLIAMS: Did your church have a full time minister?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: So you had preaching every Sunday?

BARRETT: Well, not every Sunday, but back then we just had it once a month or something, and then we got to have it every Sunday.

WILLIAMS: So when you were a teenager, for instance, how many people went to the Presbyterian church on an average Sunday?

BARRETT: Oh, I don't, they was, I don't have any, I don't think could give any number, but back then the churches was all pretty well full on Sundays.

WILLIAMS: How did you get to church?

BARRETT: Horse and buggy.

WILLIAMS: When was the first time your family had a car?

BARRETT: Oh, the family didn't ever have one 'til they was grown.

WILLIAMS: So you got around everywhere by horse and buggy?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: What kind of a buggy was it? You must had a wagon to do the farm work but . . .

BARRETT: Yeah, we had a wagon for that. We had a buggy with a top on it for going to church anywhere.

WILLIAMS: Oh, okay, and everyone could fit in that?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Did you like being around the animals?

BARRETT: Oh, yeah.

WILLIAMS: Did you ride horses?

BARRETT: Yes.

WILLIAMS: For fun or to get around?

BARRETT: Huh?

WILLIAMS: For fun or to just get around?

BARRETT: Just for the pleasure. Well, to get around too if I wanted to do something and didn't want to get the buggy for. Well, we would just ride the horseback.

WILLIAMS: What did your father farm?

BARRETT: What?

WILLIAMS: What did your father farm?

BARRETT: Why he had corn and wheat and hay.

WILLIAMS: Was there much cotton in this area?

BARRETT: No. No, it was all corn and wheat and stuff like that.

WILLIAMS: Did your mother and sisters have a garden?

BARRETT: Oh, yes, we had a good, we always had a garden and canned and put up for the winter.

WILLIAMS: What was your favorite thing to grow?

BARRETT: Tomatoes and some green beans and potatoes.

WILLIAMS: So did your house have a root cellar?

BARRETT: No, we didn't have a cellar.

WILLIAMS: Did you keep a, could you keep potatoes over the winter?

BARRETT: Yeah, we had a place—a shelter built over the pump house and they had it fixed for potatoes.

WILLIAMS: So they were down in the ground a little bit?

BARRETT: No, they was, they was up in a sort of loft thing.

WILLIAMS: Oh, okay.

BARRETT: We used to put turnips in a mound in the ground and keep them through the winter time. Yeah, I believe we put potatoes in that. Later years we just put them in the ground, but when I was little we had a place over the pump house they'd put potatoes in.

WILLIAMS: Can you describe that house that you grew up in? How big it was and how it was arranged?

BARRETT: Well, we had four rooms in the hall and an upstairs and a kitchen.

WILLIAMS: How many bedrooms?

BARRETT: Well, we had two upstairs and two downstairs.

WILLIAMS: So did each of you girls have your own room?

BARRETT: Yep, we wanted it. The two oldest ones, they shared their room, and part of the time I slept with them up in a bed up there, and upstairs, they was upstairs. So, part of the time I was downstairs.

WILLIAMS: Did that house have electricity?

BARRETT: No.

WILLIAMS: How did you heat?

BARRETT: Wood fireplace.

WILLIAMS: Fireplace, not a stove?

BARRETT: No, it was a fireplace.

WILLIAMS: Where did the wood come from?

BARRETT: Cut it out of the woods and hauled it in.

WILLIAMS: How did your mother and sisters do the cooking?

BARRETT: With a wood stove.

WILLIAMS: Was there an oven?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Do you recall your mother liking to cook?

BARRETT: Oh, yes.

WILLIAMS: Was she a good cook?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Were there certain things that you especially liked?

BARRETT: No, not anything that I don't like, I don't reckon. We was raised on vegetarians and meat, I mean vegetables and meat. There's not anything that I really don't like.

WILLIAMS: Did they do any baking?

BARRETT: Oh, yeah. We had biscuits and cornbread and cakes and pies. Had everything that they could think of to cook back when I was growing up in my house.

WILLIAMS: With the Elrods?

BARRETT: What?

WILLIAMS: With the Elrods? You said something about when you were growing up—well let, where did the flour come from to do the baking?

BARRETT: Oh, we raised our wheat and took it to the mill and had it ground.

WILLIAMS: Which mill was that?

BARRETT: We took it over at Readyville.

WILLIAMS: Was that, that was the closest mill?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Were there others around?

BARRETT: Yeah. There was one down at Browns Mill.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever go there?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: So why would you go to one or the other?

BARRETT: Well, sometimes one would give you a better—I don't know what they call it, something about the flour that when they tested it—one would give a better deal on the flour, and would, so they'd take some to both places and one got the, you know, got the best deal, that's the one where they carried it to.

WILLIAMS: Okay. So do you have any idea how much wheat and corn your family grew each year?

BARRETT: Oh, goodness no. I don't have any idea.

WILLIAMS: How would they carry it down to the mill to be ground?

BARRETT: A wagon.

WILLIAMS: In sacks?

BARRETT: Yeah, in sacks. Uh-huh. Yeah, the thrasher sacked it and they carried it to the mill in sacks.

WILLIAMS: Who was the thrasher?

BARRETT: Why, different ones. There was a Tenpenny. I can't think of his first name now, but he was a Tenpenny. They'd just make a round in the community. They'd do one, one field for somebody else just on a round.

WILLIAMS: And he had the machinery?

BARRETT: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: Did, when it was harvest time, did one family help another out?

BARRETT: Oh, yeah. We had to cook dinner for the thrasher and sometimes it would be twelve or fourteen . . . maybe more.

WILLIAMS: Where did all of those men come from?

BARRETT: Just around in the community.

WILLIAMS: And then would your father go help?

BARRETT: Yeah, he would go help the next one that was a thrashin'.

WILLIAMS: Since you didn't have any brothers, did your father hire help on the farm?

BARRETT: Well, not a whole lot.

WILLIAMS: Did you girls have to help?

BARRETT: Well, we helped some, yeah.

WILLIAMS: Outside with the farming?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: What other, besides horses, what other animals did you have?

BARRETT: Oh, we had hogs and sheep.

WILLIAMS: Sheep?

BARRETT: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: What were they for?

BARRETT: They sold the lambs and the wool both. They'd sheer them and sell the wool.

WILLIAMS: Is that something you helped with, sheering?

BARRETT: No, I didn't much about that, only helped get them up into a pen.

WILLIAMS: Did you have cattle?

BARRETT: Yeah, oh yeah, we had cows, too.

WILLIAMS: And were they dairy or beef?

BARRETT: No, they was just to . . . well, we sold them in the fall of the year and growed 'til then and sell them. They was just beef, or whatever, slaughtered.

WILLIAMS: So where did you get your milk?

BARRETT: One of the cows.

WILLIAMS: So you had at least one milk cow?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Did you have to milk the cows?

BARRETT: Oh, yes.

WILLIAMS: What was that like?

BARRETT: Well it, we thought it was hard, but it wasn't so bad.

WILLIAMS: It seems like it would take a lot of squeezing to fill up a bucket.

BARRETT: Oh, yeah, it was sort of bad when you, we'd get a cow that was sort of hard to milk. We used to try, my daddy tried to usually keep us a sort of an easy one.

WILLIAMS: And then did you make butter?

BARRETT: Yeah, we churned and made our own butter. We never did make any cheese or nothing like that, but we made our own butter.

WILLIAMS: So how much of your food did you buy in a store?

BARRETT: We didn't buy anything but sugar and a little coffee, the main thing.

WILLIAMS: And everything else you grew?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Did you have chickens?

BARRETT: Oh, yeah, and I was, I guess, a teenager, or not hardly a teenager either, I don't really guess, but they was, they formed what was called a beef club, and every who wanted to join in, I think they mostly tried to have twelve of them, that everybody that was in it had a calf that was in . . . once every week, why, the, they took one cow, the whoever was first, and it was divided and each feller got his, got a piece of beef.

WILLIAMS: So each one of the twelve members that week had meat from that first cow?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: And then that would go for twelve weeks?

BARRETT: Yep.

WILLIAMS: What time of year was that?



BARRETT: That was in the summertime, and they'd . . .

WILLIAMS: So did you only have fresh meat in the summer?

BARRETT: No. All year.

WILLIAMS: So the beef club would go all year?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Twelve weeks then repeat?

BARRETT: Well, it wouldn't go in the wintertime. They just had it in the summertime.

WILLIAMS: Was there a way to preserve the meat?

BARRETT: We had to go get it and cook it. If we had an ice place, well, we could keep it for, but otherwise when I was a kid, I would go with my parents down—they hung it up in a tree down here to just, in a shop that was down below me—built right down here. And I'd go and get our beef and we'd come home and my mother put it on and cook it. We'd have steak maybe for supper off of it and then boil the other. That was Sunday dinner.

WILLIAMS: Did anybody in the area smoke meat?

BARRETT: No. Oh, they might smoke a ham or something, just not many. We didn't smoke any.

WILLIAMS: You didn't have a smokehouse?

BARRETT: Yeah, we had a smokehouse, but they didn't smoke the meat. They just killed the hogs and put them in salt and took them up and hung them.

WILLIAMS: Did you participate in the slaughtering?

BARRETT: No [chuckling], I didn't do any part of that.

WILLIAMS: You didn't have to clean any of the meat?

BARRETT: No. I didn't do any of that.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever ring a chicken's neck?

BARRETT: Oh, yes!

WILLIAMS: So that you did have to do?

BARRETT: Yes, many of them.

WILLIAMS: What were your chores?

BARRETT: Well, to get in the wood [chuckling], stove wood.

WILLIAMS: Stove wood?

BARRETT: Yeah, fire wood and stove wood.

WILLIAMS: Anything else?

BARRETT: Well, I milked the cows and generally just whatever come around for us to do, we done.

WILLIAMS: Your house had wood floors?

BARRETT: Yep.

WILLIAMS: Who would do the cleaning?

BARRETT: Well, we would. The girls and my mother.

WILLIAMS: How did you do laundry?

BARRETT: Oh, on a scrub board, a washboard.

WILLIAMS: Inside or outside?

BARRETT: Inside. Outside when it was warm.

WILLIAMS: Did your mother and sisters make soap?

BARRETT: No.

WILLIAMS: So is that something you would have bought?

BARRETT: Well, yeah. I guess we bought—no! No! We made, I forgot, we made, we put our wood ashes in a pan and then we poured water on that and run the lye off and made what they call lye soap. It was just a soft stuff. It wasn't in no cake form, it was just . . . now, that's what we washed with. We didn't buy no soap.

WILLIAMS: Did you have a bathtub?

BARRETT: No.

WILLIAMS: How did you do your washing?

BARRETT: We did it in a pan.

WILLIAMS: My grandmother used to save fat. Did that go into the soap? Bacon drippings and that sort of thing? Did your mother do that?

BARRETT: Yeah, yeah. That's the way we made soap.

WILLIAMS: I've never understood how ashes and fat can make you clean. I'll have to have a lesson in that. Did you have an icebox?

BARRETT: Well, part of the time. Our first, we put it in just a, we'd have a pile of sawdust and put our ice in that.

WILLIAMS: And what would you use the ice for?

BARRETT: Iced tea and anything else that we . . . we put our milk or other things when we had the ice.

WILLIAMS: Where did you get your clothes?

BARRETT: Well, we went to Murfreesboro and bought most of them.

WILLIAMS: So your sisters didn't make clothes for you?

BARRETT: No, they, my sister didn't. My mother sewed for us 'til she was gone, and then I had a, I had an aunt that used to . . . sew for me.

WILLIAMS: Well how often would you go to Murfreesboro?

BARRETT: Well, just a, about, I'd say two or three times a year. Go in the fall and summertime, sort of as the seasons come in.

WILLIAMS: Did that seem like a special occasion?

BARRETT: Well, yeah.

WILLIAMS: What was Murfreesboro like back then?

BARRETT: Oh! It wasn't nothing like as big as it is now. Cause they was, stores was all up on the square. They wasn't out in malls and things, and you just go around the square from one to the other.

WILLIAMS: Was there anything else other than clothes that you would shop for in town?

BARRETT: Well, no, not really. We didn't.

WILLIAMS: Was there a particular store you liked?

BARRETT: Yeah, we liked Leatherman's clothing stop and Mr. Robertson's shoe shop, and Goldstein's . . . Woolworth's.

WILLIAMS: Woolworth's?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever shop through a catalog? Like the Sears catalog?

BARRETT: I don't remember doing much ordering.

WILLIAMS: And you had mail delivery?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: What did you do for entertainment when you were growing up?

BARRETT: Well, I had my dolls and out yard playhouse. [chuckling] We'd make our own playhouses—sometimes rocks, whatever we could find that we could use.

WILLIAMS: Were there many kids your age around, close by?

BARRETT: No, there wasn't too many.

WILLIAMS: Did that mean you had to play by yourself?

BARRETT: Yeah, unless I could persuade my older, the older sister than I was. She'd play sometimes with me. So . . .

WILLIAMS: Did you ever go to Murfreesboro to the movies?

BARRETT: Not back when I was I child, I didn't.

WILLIAMS: But later on maybe?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Did you have a radio?

BARRETT: Not when I was a child we didn't.

WILLIAMS: And did you take the newspaper?

BARRETT: I don't remember us taking the newspaper.

WILLIAMS: How educated were your parents?

BARRETT: I'd say the fifth or sixth grade.

WILLIAMS: So they could read and do math?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Did they have, were there books around the house when you were growing up, things for you to read?

BARRETT: Yes. Yes.

WILLIAMS: Was there money to buy things like that?

BARRETT: Not many.

WILLIAMS: Did you have a favorite book growing up? Or author?

BARRETT: No.

WILLIAMS: Were there any magazines that your family got?

BARRETT: No.

WILLIAMS: How did you keep up with the news if you didn't have a radio and didn't get the newspaper?

BARRETT: Well, the news was just circulated around from, I guess . . . visiting our neighbors and so . . .

WILLIAMS: So that kind of news spreading?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Now, I have talked to people who went to other people's house to listen to their radios. Was there somebody close by that you know?

BARRETT: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: No? How popular was hunting around—

BARRETT: See we didn't, we didn't have anything back when I was growing up but the telephone. We didn't have a radio.

WILLIAMS: So you did have a telephone?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Okay. Was it a party line?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Do you remember your rings? How you knew it was for you?

BARRETT: Well, our ring was three rings. Like 3-7-3.

WILLIAMS: And there was an operator somewhere?

BARRETT: Yeah, Milton.

WILLIAMS: Was hunting popular in this area?

BARRETT: Huh?

WILLIAMS: Was hunting popular in this area?

BARRETT: Well, not much, only just . . . like, if my daddy wanted a rabbit or something he just went out hunting. There wasn't no big thing of it. Just for food mostly.

WILLIAMS: Did you have dogs?

BARRETT: Oh, yeah.

WILLIAMS: Were they for hunting?

BARRETT: Not really. Just . . . mostly just to watch dogs.

WILLIAMS: Did they ever come in the house?

BARRETT: Well they didn't at our house.

WILLIAMS: And cats? Were there cats?

BARRETT: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

WILLIAMS: Were they for the barn?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: And so you had a house and you mentioned the pump house. What was in the pump house?

BARRETT: We had a pump in the well to, to a, pump water for the animals.

WILLIAMS: Was that powered? A powered pump or a . . . ?

BARRETT: Engine.

WILLIAMS: So the gasoline . . .

BARRETT: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: So that would pull water up for the animals?

BARRETT: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: Did you have running water inside your house?

BARRETT: No, uh-uh.

WILLIAMS: So how did it get in?

BARRETT: Brought it in a bucket.

WILLIAMS: Was there a pump outside . . .

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: . . . like with a handle?

BARRETT: No. There wasn't a handle to it. That was hooked up to the handle part.

WILLIAMS: Okay. The engine.

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: So you just had to go to a . . .

BARRETT: We just had to go out there and start the engine to get you a bucket of water.

WILLIAMS: Okay. So that was drawing up from a well?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: And then there was a barn?

BARRETT: Yeah. Had two barns.

WILLIAMS: Two barns. Why two?

BARRETT: I don't know. We had two but well . . . I guess they had the one for cows and the one for horses. I don't know why they had two.

WILLIAMS: Was there an outhouse?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Was it nice?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: What was the first house that you lived in that had indoor plumbing?

BARRETT: This one.

WILLIAMS: So your grandparents in town in Milton didn't?

BARRETT: Uh-uh.

WILLIAMS: Did their house have . . . ?

BARRETT: Uh-uh.

WILLIAMS: What did you do for light? Lights? If you didn't have electricity?

BARRETT: Kerosene lamps.

WILLIAMS: Where would you get the kerosene?

BARRETT: We'd have to go to, so we'd have to go buy it.

WILLIAMS: And the closest place to buy anything, where was that?



BARRETT: Well, I guess Milton would have been the closest place.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever shop in Readyville?

BARRETT: Well, yeah. I . . . did most of our store going and buying over there and if, we had, if he, if he left the, had the wheat over there, why I'd have gone to the mill and got flour.

WILLIAMS: Well let's talk some more about the mill. What are your earliest memories of the mill in Readyville?

BARRETT: Oh, all my life. All my ninety-six years.

WILLIAMS: Was it a treat to get to go there?

BARRETT: Well, sort of. We usually, when we went, we always got to get some ice and have ice cream on the weekend.

WILLIAMS: Did you go into the mill and watch what they were doing?

BARRETT: Well, sometimes, not many times.

WILLIAMS: Did you think that was interesting?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: What was interesting about it?

BARRETT: Well, seeing what they could take the wheat and make out, make out, and what we could make out of the wheat.

WILLIAMS: Did you also take corn to be ground?

BARRETT: Yeah. We'd take, we've taken corn.

WILLIAMS: Did your family sell the wheat and have it stored there?

BARRETT: Well, he'd . . . yeah, we'd sell what we didn't want to use for flour.

WILLIAMS: So how would that work? It was, you harvested the wheat in the fall and you put it in sacks. There was, the thrasher came and you got it in sacks, right?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Then would you take all of it down and get some of it ground and bring

that home, or would you leave some at home and take it later to be ground as you needed it?

BARRETT: Well, we done it both ways. We sold him what we didn't think we'd, well, I don't know how you'd say they done it, but anyway, we sold part of it and part of it we got the flour for it.

WILLIAMS: So you knew about how much you would need each year, and you'd keep that?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Were there different kinds of flour?

BARRETT: Yeah, mhm. He had the, I can't remember the names of them, but there was . . . sometimes we'd bring part of it home and then leave part of it over there, and the, well, we just got what we said was our part, you know? So we didn't have to bring all of it home and store it. He kept it, but, but, kept...

WILLIAMS: It was yours?

BARRETT: Yeah, uh-huh, yeah.

WILLIAMS: Up to the right of the mill, there was that long building. Is that where the, they would store the . . .?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: What else was going on there other than the mill?

BARRETT: Ice, they had, was making ice.

WILLIAMS: Okay. So that's where you'd, was that the only place to get ice?

BARRETT: It was for a long time, but finally it got the, an ice plant, you could get it in Woodbury and of course Murfreesboro. But, that was the closest place we could get it was Readyville.

WILLIAMS: When you took your wheat and corn to be ground, could you ask them to do different kinds of grinding?

BARRETT: No. I don't reckon.

WILLIAMS: So if you wanted it finer or course . . .

BARRETT: I don't reckon. There wasn't but one place.

WILLIAMS: And the cornmeal, you would use for what?

BARRETT: Making cornbread.

WILLIAMS: Who ran the mill when you were growing up?

BARRETT: A Mr. Hayes and . . . oh . . . well . . . shoot, I can't think of his name.

WILLIAMS: There was a man that I've heard of, people called "Rat."

BARRETT: That was Mr. Hayes.

WILLIAMS: Was it?

BARRETT: That was Mr. Hayes. Well . . .

WILLIAMS: There was also a McFerrin.

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Was he around when you...

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Do you remember anything particular about those two?

BARRETT: No. Not particular. I can't think of his, who was the last man, there was another man at the mill. Hmm.

PROCTOR: Was the cost for grinding your wheat and your flour, was it all through trading products? Did you have to trade what you grew for them to grind it for you?

BARRETT: I don't know. Repeat that again. I can't hear out of this right ear.

PROCTOR: When they would grind your flour and your wheat for you, was there any sort of payment other than excess crop that you had?

WILLIAMS: How did you pay for the grinding of the wheat?

BARRETT: Well, by part of the wheat.

WILLIAMS: So they would keep part as payment for grinding.

BARRETT: Yeah. Mhm.

WILLIAMS: [To Proctor] Is that what you wanted?

PROCTOR: Yeah.

BARRETT: I'm trying to think of that other man's name there.

WILLIAMS: What else about Readyville do you remember? There were other things—

BARRETT: Oh, there was stores that we bought other things from. The grocery store. Mr. Stroush had a store there, and Mr. Melton he had two grocery stores.

WILLIAMS: I guess you didn't need gasoline if you didn't have a car.

BARRETT: No. No. The horse and buggy didn't have to have no power then.

WILLIAMS: You mentioned ice cream. Did you ever have candy or pop or anything like that growing up?

BARRETT: Oh, yeah. We made our ice cream when we got ice.

WILLIAMS: Would they ever deliver the ice or did you have to always go get it?

BARRETT: Finally, they got Dr. Adams, J. F. Adams, and then got to delivering ice. They'd come once a week around delivering ice.

WILLIAMS: Did you have an icebox by then?

BARRETT: Yeah. We had that, our, sometimes they wouldn't get around 'til it was after dark and they'd, they'd, we'd just put our money out there and they'd put it in the box.

PROCTOR: When you sold a bunch of your livestock and products and stuff, where was the local market? Was there a market that you sold these things at?

BARRETT: Yeah, back then they had to carry it to Nashville, the livestock, uh-huh.

WILLIAMS: So there was a, not a slaughterhouse but a, well, stockyard?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: And an auction?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: So your father would have to take livestock to Nashville?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: How would he get it there?

BARRETT: A lot of times they drove it back then.

WILLIAMS: Really?

BARRETT: Yeah. Even drove, we never did, I don't think, but they did, even drove turkeys.

WILLIAMS I've never heard of that.

BARRETT: [chuckling] Yeah. They'd drive a bunch of turkeys to Nashville.

WILLIAMS: Where was the closest train to here?

BARRETT: Nashville.

WILLIAMS: So did you ride the train much while you were growing up?

BARRETT: No, I didn't. We didn't go anywhere but around, as far as Murfreesboro.

WILLIAMS: Do you remember the first time you went to Nashville?

BARRETT: Oh, yes. I was about six years old.

WILLIAMS: How did you get there?

BARRETT: Well, the car about that time, but we didn't have one. It was a cousin of ours or something that had one, but we didn't have a car then.

WILLIAMS: What did Nashville, how did it impress you?

BARRETT: It was a big thing to see all those buildings and things.

WILLIAMS: Do you remember anything about World War I?

BARRETT: Not really. I just heard talk.

WILLIAMS: Did you have any relatives in the war?

BARRETT: Not in that one, no.

WILLIAMS: Do you recall anything about the flu epidemic right after the war?

BARRETT: Oh, yeah. I remember them talking about that killing so many people, but that's about all I remember.

WILLIAMS: Do you know if anyone in this area died from the flu?

BARRETT: Well, I guess they did, but I don't remember just really knowing anybody.

WILLIAMS: When you went to live in Milton, you said that was through the first through sixth grade, is that right?

BARRETT: What?

WILLIAMS: When you went to live in Milton with the Elrods. That was first through sixth grade? Is that right?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: What was the school that you went to there?

BARRETT: It was just called Milton School.

WILLIAMS: What was it like? How big was it?

BARRETT: Well, it was pretty good sized school. It went through the, I think the tenth grade.

WILLIAMS: So it wasn't really a one-room school house.

BARRETT: Oh, no, no.

WILLIAMS: It was much bigger than that. Was there a teacher for each grade?

BARRETT: Oh, no. We had like first and second; third and fourth; fifth and sixth, like that.

WILLIAMS: What did you learn at that school? What kind of things?

BARRETT: Well, we had math and English and history and spelling.

WILLIAMS: Were you a good student?

BARRETT: I tried to be.

WILLIAMS: Did they give grades?

BARRETT: Yeah. Mhm.

WILLIAMS: Were there extra activities after school?

BARRETT: Yeah, we played ball and . . . kickball. First one and then the other.

WILLIAMS: Were there plays or pageants? Anything like that?

BARRETT: Well they had a play about once a year. They'd have . . .

WILLIAMS: Did you participate in those?

BARRETT: No, that was mostly high school that did the plays.

WILLIAMS: Was there music and art?

BARRETT: We had music, yeah.

WILLIAMS: Did you learn to play an instrument?

BARRETT: No, uh-uh. No, I didn't learn any, to play instruments. I never did play none.

WILLIAMS: Do you remember any of your teachers?

BARRETT: Oh . . .

WILLIAMS: Fond memories or not so fond memories?

BARRETT: Well, I had, didn't change much. I had the same one, third and fourth, and I don't remember whether we had, I don't remember a teacher.

WILLIAMS: Did you have homework?

BARRETT: Oh, yes.

WILLIAMS: What was your favorite subject?

BARRETT: Well, I guess math would be the favorite one.

WILLIAMS: Well, you moved back to your father and, father's house and then you went to another school?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: What was that school?

BARRETT: I had, we went to Halls Hill. Then we went there 'til we finished the tenth grade, and then I went to Kittrell School the two last years.

WILLIAMS: Did Halls Hill seem much different than Milton School?

BARRETT: No. Uh-uh.

WILLIAMS: Did the quality seem any different?

BARRETT: No.

WILLIAMS: As you got older, did you get more involved in activities?

BARRETT: Yeah, we did, I did, I played basketball in my, I guess, seventh and eighth grade.

WILLIAMS: Would you play from, teams from other schools?

BARRETT: Yeah. We had tournaments back then.

WILLIAMS: So now we're talking about the early to mid-twenties, is that right? As you were finishing up high school that was . . .

BARRETT: I finished in thirty-one.

WILLIAMS: Did your sisters both finish high school?

BARRETT: No. Uh-uh.

WILLIAMS: You were the first?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Were there dances?

BARRETT: No. Not around in this country.

WILLIAMS: Did the Presbyterians frown on dancing like the, some of the other churches did?

BARRETT: Do what now?

WILLIAMS: Did the Presbyterians frown on dancing like some of the other churches? You hear the Baptists don't dance, Church of Christ, maybe. Were you allowed to dance if you wanted to?



BARRETT: Oh, yeah. We was allowed to if we wanted to.

WILLIAMS: So, you were, you were in high school when the Depression really started.

BARRETT: That's exactly right, yes.

WILLIAMS: What was that like? What was your first awareness of bad times coming?

BARRETT: We didn't have money to spend that we'd been spending.

WILLIAMS: Well, what did that mean on a daily basis? Were you hungry?

BARRETT: Oh, no, we didn't go hungry, but we just didn't have the . . . extra things that we could get, wanted to maybe have.

WILLIAMS: Was your family very political?

BARRETT: No.

WILLIAMS: What did, were there, New Deal programs that you started to see in the area, maybe people working for, building roads or things like that?

BARRETT: No, they had to work on them and, you know, build them. They had to put so much time on working the roads when I was growing up. So many days every year had to work the roads.

WILLIAMS: Everybody in the community.

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Were they, were there good roads in this area?

BARRETT: Well, fair.

WILLIAMS: How many of them were paved?

BARRETT: Oh, none.

WILLIAMS: So, Halls Hill Road wasn't paved back then?

BARRETT: Uh-uh.

WILLIAMS: Do you remember when it got paved for the first time?

BARRETT: It was in the forties.

WILLIAMS: Did that seem like a big improvement?

BARRETT: Oh, yes. We didn't have any dust after that.

WILLIAMS: I was about to ask you about the dust. Did you go to college?

BARRETT: No.

WILLIAMS: Did you want to?

BARRETT: Well, I didn't have much thought about it because my two older sisters had passed away. The oldest one died when I was in high, in the, was graduating from school, so my turn was to take over and be the housewife. So, I would have liked to have, but I just didn't ever have any thought about it. That was what . . . I was, had to do was take over and stay at home and so that's what I did. I got married.

WILLIAMS: So at that point was it just you and your father? Living in the house?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Where had Lois gone?

BARRETT: She passed away.

WILLIAMS: So she's the—well, what about Rebecca?

BARRETT: She died the year I was in high school.

WILLIAMS: Okay. So they were both—they died fairly young then.

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: You seem to have broken the streak there. Your mother died pretty young and your sisters, and here you are ninety-six almost.

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Good for you!

BARRETT: [Chuckles].

WILLIAMS: Well, when you would go to Murfreesboro or just be from the area, how aware were you of the Tennessee College for Women or the state teachers college? Did you know people from either of those schools?

BARRETT: No, not really.

WILLIAMS: After you graduated from high school, would you ever go to Murfreesboro for football games or parties or anything?

BARRETT: No, uh-uh.

WILLIAMS: So it sounds like you had to stay home pretty much.

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Well, how did you end up being able to court someone?

BARRETT: [Laughs] Well, we, that's when the partying and dancing come along. We got in a group and got . . . but we . . . just partied around and just met one another.

WILLIAMS: Were you doing that in high school? Were you able to have friends and go to parties?

BARRETT: Oh, yeah, basketball games back when I was in school, yeah, we . . .

WILLIAMS: Is that mostly how you would have a chance to meet boys?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Through school?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: How did you meet people after you graduated from school?

BARRETT: Well, just, well we went to Woodbury shopping back then and just got acquainted with this one and that one.

WILLIAMS: Well, how did you meet your eventual husband?

BARRETT: Well, I guess going to baseball games mostly.

WILLIAMS: Where were the baseball games?

BARRETT: They was played at Readyville and different, different places around. Milton had a, a baseball diamond that they used to play over at Readyville down there just below where the last post office was. It's grown up in bushes now. You can't ever tell that there was anything ever there.

WILLIAMS: That was near the river?

BARRETT: Yeah. It was right down there on the river. Right across from the mill.

WILLIAMS: So those ball games were popular. Who was playing in the teams?

BARRETT: Hmm?

WILLIAMS: Who played in the ball teams?

BARRETT: Well, just different ones.

WILLIAMS: Was it like now where they had businesses sponsor a team or...?

BARRETT: No, uh-uh.

WILLIAMS: Did they have names for the teams?

BARRETT: Oh, yeah, they had Readyville and Woodbury.

WILLIAMS: So each town would have a team.

BARRETT: Lascassas and all around.

WILLIAMS: What was your husband's name?

BARRETT: Stokely Barrett.

WILLIAMS: S-T-O-K-E-L-Y?

BARRETT: Yeah. Howard Stokely was his full name.

WILLIAMS: And you met him at ball games.

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Did he pursue you or did you pursue him?

BARRETT: Well, I don't know which one now did the pursuing.

WILLIAMS: Well, how long did you court?

BARRETT: Well, I guess a year or more.

WILLIAMS: Did he have a car?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Where did he grow up?

BARRETT: Woodbury.

WILLIAMS: And was he older than you?

BARRETT: Yeah. He was a barber in Woodbury for years.

WILLIAMS: So he'd gone to school in Woodbury?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: When did you get married?

BARRETT: 1936.

WILLIAMS: Was it tough to get married in the Depression?

BARRETT: Hmm?

WILLIAMS: Was it tough to get married and start a family?

BARRETT: Yes. Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Where did you live after you got married?

BARRETT: Well, down, it's off, off of the Goochie Ford Road.

WILLIAMS: In a farmhouse?

BARRETT: Yeah. Yeah, he farmed.

WILLIAMS: Did he farm and barber, too?

BARRETT: Yeah, mhm.

WILLIAMS: Where did Stokely learn to be a barber?

BARRETT: I think . . . I don't think he ever went to school. It was just sort of a . . . I don't know what you'd call it, a . . .

WILLIAMS: Did he have a shop in Woodbury?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Where was it?

BARRETT: It was on the square.

WILLIAMS: Did it have a name?

BARRETT: Palace Barbershop.

WILLIAMS: And how long did he keep that shop running?

BARRETT: I guess—well he didn't keep it too—he and another, a Davenport. They had the shop together. So, after we got married, why, he decided he'd get out, so he got out of the barbershop business and he farmed, oh, let's see, our oldest child was born in '38 and, when this, she got old enough to go to school, why, we had to walk over, almost two miles, I guess, to meet the school bus to go to school. So, we decided we'd move. Well, he had gotten a job at VA hospital barbering down there. So, when she had got big enough to go to school, we moved up here to this place where they'd have a way to get on the school bus and wouldn't have to walk.

WILLIAMS: So that was about 1943 or so?

BARRETT: '47.

WILLIAMS: '47. After the war. And the VA hospital, is that the one in Murfreesboro?

BARRETT: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: So he would commute, as we would say?

BARRETT: Yeah, mhm.

WILLIAMS: But he had a car.

BARRETT: Yeah, yeah, we had a car.

WILLIAMS: But you would also farm?

BARRETT: Well, not much farming. We had got down to just having cows that would just run on the pasture. He did take up the hay, but he didn't row crop any.

WILLIAMS: How much land did you have down on Goochie Road?

BARRETT: We was still renting. We just rented that.

WILLIAMS: And when you moved up here, how much land is this?

BARRETT: I think about 120 acres.

WILLIAMS: And did you continue with the cattle?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: How long did he work at the VA hospital?

BARRETT: Well, he went to work down there in . . . I guess about sixteen years.

WILLIAMS: And then what did he do?

BARRETT: He retired for his health.

WILLIAMS: And how many children do you have?

BARRETT: Just two.

WILLIAMS: So the first one was 1938?

BARRETT: And the other one '40.

WILLIAMS: What are their names?

BARRETT: Mary Ann . . .

WILLIAMS: Mary Ann?

BARRETT: Richardson now. And Mina Parker.

WILLIAMS: Both girls.

BARRETT: Both girls.

WILLIAMS: I forgot to ask you earlier, did you have a lot of cousins around growing up?

BARRETT: Oh, yes. I had an uncle that had twelve. I had a bunch of them.

WILLIAMS: Did you see them very much?

BARRETT: Oh, yeah. They didn't live too far away.

WILLIAMS: And you knew both sets of your grandparents. Is that right?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: What do . . .

BARRETT: Oh, you said my grandfathers didn't you?

WILLIAMS: Grandparents.

BARRETT: Grandparents. No, I didn't know my daddy's.

WILLIAMS: Mr. McElroy you didn't know?

BARRETT: Uh-uh. I just knew the Elrods. My grandparents on my daddy's side I never did see.

WILLIAMS: Okay. Now during the New Deal and the Depression, did any of those programs help you personally? TVA, the electricity coming in, anything like that? When did you first, was this house the first you had electricity?

BARRETT: Yeah, mhm.

WILLIAMS: But that was after the war.

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: So up until that point you didn't have electricity.

BARRETT: Well, we had, before we moved up here, we had electricity. We had a kerosene refrigerator. We was proud of that one. [Chuckles]

WILLIAMS: But down at the mill, at some point, they ran, they were generating electricity. Do you remember anything about that?

BARRETT: Yeah, I don't—yeah, I remember about them getting lights in Readyville when they got them.

WILLIAMS: Well, what did you think when you saw those electric lights?

BARRETT: Well, of course it was something to see back when I was a teenager like. I thought it was something.

WILLIAMS: So when you finally got lights here, that was quite a bit later.



BARRETT: Oh, yeah.

WILLIAMS: Anything else about Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal that you remember? Were there hobos in this area or people that really seemed to need help more than your family?

BARRETT: No, I don't remember any. We were just all about in the same boat.

WILLIAMS: How did you learn about Pearl Harbor?

BARRETT: I guess the radio.

WILLIAMS: So by then you had a radio?

BARRETT: Mm?

WILLIAMS: By then you had a radio?

BARRETT: Yeah. When we moved [?].

WILLIAMS: You were, what is that?

BARRETT: It was a little ear thing.

WILLIAMS: Oh, you listened with the ear piece?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Did you listen to other things on the radio?

BARRETT: Oh, yeah. We listened to music and different things.

WILLIAMS: Did you enjoy the radio theatre?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: The stories of that kind. Was there anything every week that you just had to stop and listen to?

BARRETT: Well, no, I don't remember anything that I did.

WILLIAMS: Nothing like the opry? Would you listen to the Grand Ole Opry?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Well, you learned about Pearl Harbor. How did the war change this community—World War II?

BARRETT: Well, I don't remember any radical change in the community. We was always glad it was over.

WILLIAMS: Was your, did your husband ever think he might have to go?

BARRETT: He went and they turned him down.

WILLIAMS: He tried to volunteer or was drafted?

BARRETT: Yeah, I think he volunteered. I think.

WILLIAMS: You were okay with that? Having two children at home.

BARRETT: Well, you didn't have your choice then.

WILLIAMS: Was it for health reasons?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Did you do anything to help in the war effort? Volunteering, anything like that?

BARRETT: No, uh-uh.

WILLIAMS: Were there scrap metal drives and those things out here in the country?

BARRETT: Any what?

WILLIAMS: Scrap metal drives. Did you save your tin foil? That kind of thing? To be collected?

BARRETT: No, I don't remember any.

WILLIAM: Did you know any people who worked in the factories or places like Camp Forrest during the war? Any women friends of yours that went to work?

BARRETT: I don't remember any that I knew of.

WILLIAMS: Did you know any people personally who were killed in the war, from this community?

BARRETT: Yeah, oh yeah.

WILLIAMS: Any of your kinfolk?

BARRETT: No, uh-uh. I had a bunch to go. In fact four out of that twelve, but they all come back safe.

WILLIAMS: What was that family's name?

BARRETT: McElroy's.

WILLIAMS: Okay, they were the McElroy cousins?

BARRETT: Mhm.

WILLIAMS: Did the maneuvers—

BARRETT: Oh, yeah, we had them, yeah.

WILLIAMS: What were they like?

BARRETT: Well, they was—all we had was nice. They . . . we didn't have any problems with them.

WILLIAMS: What were they doing in this area?

BARRETT: Well, I don't know. I don't know anything about them. Just camping out and being here.

WILLIAMS: Would they camp on your land?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: Would they practice? Would you hear gunfire?

BARRETT: Oh, yeah. Yeah, mhm.

WILLIAMS: What did you think about all that going on around you?

BARRETT: Well, just didn't think a whole lot about it. Only it was here and wasn't really bothering anything, only just being here and . . .

WILLIAMS: Did you have a chance to get to know any of those guys personally?

BARRETT: Well, not really.

WILLIAMS: Did they ever give you anything?

BARRETT: Yeah [chuckling].

WILLIAMS: Why did you laugh?

BARRETT: Most everybody that was, you know, that was close by, they'd get something. Sugar or something like that that they didn't want to bury or something. They'd give it to, you know, if they was on the place, they'd leave it.

WILLIAMS: Was that helpful?

BARRETT: Oh, yes. We was having to have the stamps to get sugar and stuff then.

WILLIAMS: Well, what happened after the war? For you and your husband?

BARRETT: Well, we just . . . tried to provide for the family.

WILLIAMS: And you said he retired in the '50s sometime. Is that right?

BARRETT: No, it was somewhere—no I guess it was in the 60s when he really retired.

WILLIAMS: So all through the war he continued to work at the hospital?

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: And you were home raising your children?

BARRETT: Yeah. And looking after my daddy. He was still living.

WILLIAMS: Oh. That's right.

BARRETT: He was in a wheelchair for about thirteen years, so that was . . .

WILLIAMS: That was a lot of work. Where did your children go to school?

BARRETT: They went to Halls Hill and Kittrell.

WILLIAMS: Did they go on to college?

BARRETT: Uh-uh. No, neither one of them went. The oldest one got a job at State Farm just right after she got out, so that was where she left. And the other one went to school for the next two years, and then she got out. She went to work in Nashville at the Commerce Union Bank.

WILLIAMS: When there were big events like General MacArthur coming to Murfreesboro, were you all able to go to things like that in the area?

BARRETT: Yeah. *I* didn't, but . . .

WILLIAMS: Were you able to travel much through your married life?

BARRETT: No, uh-uh.

WILLIAMS: Well, looking back to 1913, what are the biggest changes in this area that you have experienced or witnessed?

BARRETT: Well . . . I don't know how to tell, to express what I feel about it.

WILLIAMS: Are they good feelings or bad feelings?

BARRETT: Oh, it is good. Everything sort of prospered a little bit and things got better. We had more things to go . . . if we really had the chance to go.

WILLIAMS: When you look at Readyville now, for instance, compared to when you were growing up, what do you think?

BARRETT: Now and then?

WILLIAMS: Mhm.

BARRETT: Well, there's been a big change. All the stores is gone.

WILLIAMS: Do you wish that those stores were still there? You could drive down the road and not have to go to Woodbury or Murfreesboro to buy something?

BARRETT: Well, it would be nice.

WILLIAMS: What about the people? Have the people in this area changed?

BARRETT: Oh, they have changed a lot.

WILLIAMS: In what ways?

BARRETT: Well, back when . . . in the . . . we used to know everybody. Now we don't know hardly the next door neighbor.

WILLIAMS: If you were a child now, do you think it would be as nice of a childhood as you had, growing up here?

BARRETT: No, it would be a lot better than what I grew up in.

WILLIAMS: What would be better about it? Sounds like you had a nice childhood.

BARRETT: Huh?

WILLIAMS: It sounds like you had fun and a nice family. What would be better today for children?

BARRETT: Well, they just have the TVs and radios and things that I didn't have.

WILLIAMS: More entertainment.

BARRETT: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: What about the values. Have those changed?

BARRETT: Well, I'd say so. I reckon.

WILLIAMS: Do you have grandchildren?

BARRETT: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Great grandchildren?

BARRETT: Great grandchildren.

WILLIAMS: Do they have the same values that you had growing up?

BARRETT: Oh, they got more.

WILLIAMS: More?

BARRETT: Yeah, because there is more to have now than there was then.

WILLIAMS: So you think they have more moral values than you had growing up?

BARRETT: Well, no, not really that, no.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever wish you lived in a big city?

BARRETT: No! [chuckling] I don't want no big city. [phone rings; recorder off]

WILLIAMS: Back on. Oh, well. Missed those last few minutes. I forgot to turn the tape on, so I'll just say that your husband passed away in 1981, and you said you haven't been tempted to move, and I think I asked you if you ever wanted to live in a big city.

BARRETT: I don't, no.

WILLIAMS: And you said "no" pretty emphatically. Tabitha?

PROCTOR: Yes, well, you say you don't want to move to a big city and it seems that the town itself has been growing a lot. What do you think attracts people to this area to live or to work or to Milton/Readyville area in general?

BARRETT: I guess to work.

WILLIAMS: Have there been a lot of people move in from other places.

BARRETT: Oh, yeah.

WILLIAMS: Do they work locally or farther away?

BARRETT: No, they commute somewhere else.

WILLIAMS: Well, I'm trying to . . . Oh, how many blacks were there in this area when you were growing up?

BARRETT: Well, not many.

WILLIAMS: Did you have much contact with those that were here?

BARRETT: Oh, yeah. They, they'd, the women, the black women, would hire out to wash and do things for, like they house cleaned.

WILLIAMS: Did your family ever hire black women?

BARRETT: Yeah, we had a black woman that washed for us.

WILLIAMS: What time was that? Before you were married?

BARRETT: Yeah. That was when I was a teenager.

WILLIAMS: Okay. Did you have any friends who were black growing up that, you know . . .

BARRETT: No, not really. The ones we had didn't have any children. They was done up in the years. We just, I'll always, we just thought they was old and we was always taught to "aunt" them and "uncle" them. Uncle This and Uncle That.

WILLIAMS: What else were you taught about blacks and whites?

BARRETT: Well, back when I was, back then, we didn't eat at the table with them, and things like that.

WILLIAMS: Were they in school with you?

BARRETT: No.

WILLIAMS: Where did they go to school?

BARRETT: They had their own school.

WILLIAMS: Where was it?

BARRETT: They had one in . . . they had one in Woodbury, and where was the black school back in closer than that? There wasn't anywhere this close around. I guess Shiloh down here was the closest one from here, and . . . I can't think of any one over about Milton anywhere. As I say, all blacks that we had around was, they wasn't no school aged kids.

WILLIAMS: Did any of those families own their farms?

BARRETT: Yeah. The rentage, you know.

WILLIAMS: Were they growing about the same—

BARRETT: They rented and did farm work and things.

WILLIAMS: So what, what was it like back here when things started to change for black?

BARRETT: Well, everybody just accepted it. There wasn't no . . .

WILLIAMS: Violence. Much reaction.

BARRETT: Uh-uh.

WILLIAMS: Did you ever hear stories about the old days when there were lynchings or anything like here?

BARRETT: Oh, yeah, yeah.

WILLIAMS: Was that still going on when you were small?

BARRETT: No, it was before.

WILLIAMS: So what were the stories you would hear?

BARRETT: Well, I just, you know, just heard the stories about it. So and so did something. He's just, it was just lynching going on.



WILLIAMS: But nothing like that that you saw personally?

BARRETT: No.

WILLIAMS: Well, that's been a big change in America. We have a black president now. Do you think that's been for the better—race relations?

BARRETT: Well, it could be. Could not be I think.

WILLIAMS: Still not decided on that?

BARRETT: No.

WILLIAMS: Are you optimistic about the future of the country?

BARRETT: Well, not really.

WILLIAMS: What worries you then?

BARRETT: The economy. I wish it could get better and folks could go back to work.

WILLIAMS: Do you think it will ever be as bad as the Depression was?

BARRETT: Well, I hope not. I sure hope not.

WILLIAMS: Of course now we have things like Social Security. Would your grandparents—

BARRETT: No, uh-uh.

WILLIAMS: Your father?

BARRETT: Uh-uh.

WILLIAMS: So what would your life be like if you didn't have Medicare and Social Security?

BARRETT: Well, I just couldn't get by is all. [chuckles]

WILLIAMS: Yeah. So that's made a big difference.

BARRETT: Yeah, been a big difference.

WILLIAMS: Well, thank you for letting us come out. I hope we haven't worn on your patience with all these questions.

BARRETT: No, not bothering me.

WILLIAMS: Really enjoyed listening and learning about the area. Thank you.

**END OF INTERVIEW**