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NARRATOR'S NAME
TAPE NUMBER
DATE OF INTERVIEW
PLACE OF INTERVIEW
INTERVIEWER'S NAME
SUBJECT
FOR

MARY BOW

5-29-79

MISS BOW'S HOME

FRANKIE HICKEY

FAMILY HISTORY

ORAL HISTORY

2-1

Frankie: Today I will be talking with Mary Bow. We are in her home on Otter Creek approximately 2 1/2 or 3 miles east of Burkesville. Ah, Miss Bow would you tell me what your full name is?

Mary: Mary C. Bow.

Frankie: And, ah, when was you born?

Mary: I was born 19 and...September 11, 1907.

Frankie: And what was your father and mother's name?

Mary: George Bow was my father and Orlenie Scott Bow was my mother.

Frankie: And how long have you lived here at this present location?

Mary: Sixty-nine year.

Frankie: Do you know who built this house?

Mary: It was told to me that Henry Bow built it where it was true or not.

Frankie: Is this your grandfather or some of your distant relatives?

Mary: Great-grandfather.

Frankie: Great-grandfather.

Mary: That took up the land.

Frankie: Uh, you're quite famous in this country for making baskets, uh, can you tell me how you make baskets?

Mary: I wish I could. (They both laugh) You take a white oak tree about six or eight inches in diameter, a length, you'd want your length to be five or six feet and you use a froe and a maul and a use a sledge and a wedge to split it into halves and then into quarters. And when you get it split into quarters or eights you take a froe and a maul and you, you split, finish splitting it up with a maul with a froe instead of a maul and you split it until the uh you each time you would half the little pieces that, I wouldn't know what you would call it but anyway it would be a eighth I guess and when you get it th...when... you get it that far along you split it by the growth because white

oak won't bend if you split it otherwise and when you go to match your hoop and your handle you want to split your timber by the growth and also whenever your going to make the ribs what we call ribs to shape your basket you'll want to split it in the same by the growth of the tree.

Frankie: Uh huh, how long does this usually take you from the time you start a basket until you've completed?

Mary: Well, it takes more time, honey, to take care of what your making your basket your of. You've, when, you've got to keep it moist so that it won't break and whenever you make a what we call a split that is to do the weaving with, you've uh, you've got to, the way we do it we, we roll it around our finger in a little loop and put a band on it, in order to keep it, so that it will be appliable why we put it...after we make 'em in the deep freeze and the same way with each piece you use you've gotta split it by the growth after you first get it into eighths.

Frankie: You don't have any idea about how many hours you put into one basket?

Mary: Well, what I started to tell you and I left it off, it's not as, it's not as time consuming to make the basket as it is to prepare you material.

Frankie: Uh huh.

Mary: It, it takes more time to take care of your ribs and your splits, the ribs is what shapes them and you've got to keep them wrapped in something like a plastic if, if you let them get dry they break.

Frankie: Uh huh.

Mary: And it takes more time to get your material ready and go to work than it does to weave it. I guess if you could just take a cloth or leather or something that you didn't have to you could make one in 12 or 15 hours. But it takes longer to do your...timber that you make it with.

Frankie: Is there a certain time of the year that you take the bark from the tree?

Mary: No, honey it's not made of bark it's made of wood. When uh when uh sap it up, you don't want to cut it, because it's dry. And that is from April 'til October.

Frankie: Uh huh, and that's the time that you don't between April and October.

Mary: Uh huh.

Frankie: Uh, can you tell me how to make brooms?

Mary: Yes. Grow you some broom corn's the first thing. (Laugh)

Frankie: Okay.

Mary: Well, uh, you know what broom corn is, I wouldn't have to explain would I?

Frankie: Yeh, would you tell me what it is?

Mary: I don't know how.

Frankie: (Laughs) Do you buy the seeding in the store or...

Mary: No, we've have seed in the family all our lives and you, its what's called broom corn and it grows just like cane and when it grows up oh I would say eight or ten foot tall and when it begins to put out its straws. You don't want to let it spread while its in that leaf, and about half, ah when the straws gets about halfway out of that I would say at least eight or ten inches above the leaf it grows in. You want to break it with a, so and hang, where it will hang them straws downward. If you don't it will (whisper) but you know'd that didn't you?

Frankie: No. (laughs). What do you use to tie your brooms with some special strings or...?

Mary: Well you wanta something strong like a staging.

Frankie: And, ah, now how, what do you, would you have to tie these several times in order to get 'em to stay?

Mary: Well now the first thing you do, you take and split half of the stem off of that you'd you don't wanta get no straws you get pretty close to the straws and you split about half of the stalk up and it depends on how many you want for your broom. You'll prepare all of them. Then you have a needle and thread, a good sized thread, I would say a staging but it would, you'd want a good size...uh you string this broom corn on that until you get the broom the size you want it and them you have boiling water, no you first roll this broom corn that you've got ready to make your broom, you roll it around the handle you want in it and you also want to drive

a nail in that handle that your gonna put that broom on so it won't slip and when you get rolled up and tied why you uh have boiling water and pour on it until it gets good and soft and you want it, you pour some on it and wait a while and let it soak and then you'll pour some more and then you have a rope and you put a loop around that rope and you hang it upon a, well just anything that will carry your weight and you loop that around it with a, you loop the string that is hung up for the purpose to around it and that right tight. You have another I don't know its just any kind of a staff that would pull that rope down with your foot when you can tie it by yourself if you ain't too sorry (laughs).

Frankie: Who taught you how to make baskets and brooms?

Mary: Well now my mother, my mother's daddy made baskets and ah...

Frankie: What was his name?

Mary: Jim Scott, and she made some and we just got to making them just to play with and later on in life why we seen fit to make a little money out of it.

Frankie: Have you taught anyone else this trade?

Mary: Well I've tried to but there's too much work to it and its too big a job.

Frankie: Most people would rather go the modern way now huh (laughs). Something else I wanted to ask you about, could you tell me how you dry apples?

Mary: Well, way back years ago we put 'em out on a tin roof but the best place to dry the a...you know how to cut 'em and get 'em ready don't you?

Frankie: Would you explain it to me, some people hearing this might not know how.
(laughs)

Mary: Well at least you peel your apples and be sure you don't have no worms in 'em. And then when you get a pan full of peels why you lay 'em the best way this day and time is if you have a car or truck is to lay 'em on something and put 'em out in that car, it keeps all the insects away from 'em and ah they're whole lot nice...

Frankie: So that the sunlight comes to it?

Mary: You just have your old car or truck one sitting in the sun and its the best place I've not tried it that way but my folks do and they like it awful well and it keeps the flies from sucking on them. But now it didn't hurt 'em.

Frankie: How long did you usually leave them out to dry?

Mary: It depends on the weather. If its sunny and warm they'll in 24 or 48 hours but if its old soggy weather honey sometimes they'll even mold you can't use 'em.

Frankie: What about smoked apples, have you ever smoked apples?

Mary: Yes, I've smoked apples.

Frankie: Uh, could you tell me how to do that?

Mary: Yes you use one of these ole baskets we used to make and put your apples in it, course you know to peel 'em and core 'em and get all the specks off of 'em and you put 'em in a basket and have you something like a one of these here barrels, I don't reckon it'd matter, flour barrel or anykind of a barrel then you put, you hang that on, put that up on a stick and it over that barrel and have you some little coal of fire in a pan or something that'll protect it from burning and you put well I'd say a heaping teaspoon full of sulphur on that and of course now you've got to cover your barrel over honey so your smoke won't come out, you understand that?

Frankie: Yeh, and ah have you ever made hominy?

Mary: Yes I've made hominy.

Frankie: You want to tell me how you make hominy?

Mary: (Laughs) Well now I have made it with box lye but my mother made it with ashes. She cooked her ashes and she would skin that water from them ashes and them strain it real good and she would use that ash lye but when I used it I used used box lye and of course you have your corn shelled and you put your lye on and of course we used a ~~pick~~^{big} ole wash kettle and ah you cook until the ends will slip off and you've got to

wash it I'd say at least three or four times to get the lye out of it and you'll take it and use the water on it and wash it real good bring it back and put, clean up the kettle and get all the lye out of it bring it back to the Kettle and put it back on and cook it and it takes at least 12 or 14 hours to cook that soft.

Frankie: Do you make any now?

Mary: No, I hain't made none in years and years, I've not been able to.

Frankie: What about kraut do you make kraut each year?

Mary: I used to did, but not no more.

Frankie: Do you still tend a garden.

Mary: Yes, I still tend a garden.

Frankie: Do you raise and can a lot of vegetables?

Mary: Well I used to did but I don't have the ability to use a pressure cooker now and I ~~can't~~ lift on account of my spine and for that reason I cook my foods just like I'm gonna eat it and put it in my freezer since we've had one.

Frankie: Your not able to do any farmwork or anything like that?

Mary: No, uh that's when it'll pass is when I would pick a stick of wood that was any size and put it into the stove. I would have to sit in the recliner all night my spine would bother me so bad.

Frankie: You don't, do you hunt anymore?

Mary: Well if they come around in my yard I'll shoot at 'em. (Laughs) No honey I lost my balance when I had a stroke back in '55 and ah I can't climb the hills, I can't hold my balance.

Frankie: You mostly just squirrel hunted?

Mary: Yes.

Frankie: Did you ever rabbit hunt?

Mary: No, I never did hunt rabbit but if I think one's gonna get in my garden I'd shoot him. (Laughs)

Frankie: Have him for dinner. (laughs)

Mary: Oh I never eat a bite of rabbit in my life, I don't even love wild meat but I used to love to hunt squirrel. (tape messes up) We'd hunt in the fall an of, of course I could go in the woods with them and assist them and they didn't know the way much and I's afraid they'd get lost.

Mary: Lord honey I don't have the slightest idea.

Frankie: You don't know how many baskets you've made in your lifetime?

Mary: Lord no.

Frankie: Do you know how old you were when you made your first one?

Mary: Well, I'm ashamed to tell. Me and my sister Ora made one when we was oh ah I guess we was seven or eight years old with our mother, she give us the pieces and we called it a basket honey and we would show it, we thought it was something and people laughed at us you know. (Laughs)

Frankie: Do you have any of your baskets now on hand?

Mary: No, I do not, Lord I couldn't keep 'em I never did finish the last one's I had, the last one's I had and they...

Frankie: I guess most people use them now for decorating, back years ago why they used them for...

Mary: They wasn't no decoration back then, honey.

Frankie: They used them to gather their eggs and uh...

Mary: Yeah and feed.

Frankie: Well back years ago didn't they take the eggs into town and sell them wasn't that kinda your living money?

Mary: Uh huh, yes, you couldn't live without your old hens and your old cow. (laugh)

Frankie: Can you ever remember when they used to pick geese and sell the feather?

Mary: Yeh, I been by 'em a many a time while holding their head.

Frankie: How often did they pick them?

Mary: Every six weeks, they'd pick duck, every four weeks, but I had to hold the old geeses head or ganders' and the old ganders was the worst to bite and I've had them a running geese after me, youngun like get dilatary and I'd get my jaws slapped. (Laughs)

- Frankie: Can you remember uh during the depression years, ~~can~~ you remember about how people lived uh did they eat just what they growed?
- Mary: Practically yes. They uh of course the people wasn't able...didn't have the means to buy the food in the store but back then honey they wouldn't much in the stores you, you lived at home you made your molasses in the fall and of course you always kept an ole cow or two an ah that's about all the sweets you had once in a while you might get you a little bag of sugar maybe for Christmas and bake a cake they call it a cake but I'd rather bake a molasses sweet bread.
- Frankie: Do you remember how she made that?
- Mary: No honey I don't, she just stirred it up and it was sweet and we all eat it.
- Frankie: Did she make your clothes uh?
- Mary: Yes she made our clothes.
- Frankie: What about shoes, you didn't wear shoes in the summertime did you?
- Mary: No, we just got one pair a year and we wore 'em through the winter or we get 'em in the spring and wear 'em throught the summer course back then there wasn't no such thing as slippers as far as we's concerned I guess there was up in New York but we didn't know what was.
- Frankie: You've lived in Cumberland County all your life?
- Mary: Well I never was out of Kentucky.
- Frankie: You never was out of Kentucky.
- Mary: I've been over in Tennessee.
- Frankie: Uh huh, when you went to school how many months of the year did you go to school?
- Mary: Eight months.
- Frankie: You went eight months. And ah how did you go?
- Mary: We walked and sometime the teacher carried me. I was so little and tiny the scholars carried me til I was ten or twelve years old.
- Frankie: Where did you go to school at Mary?
- Mary: Stony Point.

Frankie: That's not been a school for several years now has it?

Mary: No.

Frankie: Can you remember some of your teachers names?

Mary: Oh I remember all ~~of~~ them ole Aunt Larry Firmer was my first teacher and Cloyd was my second and Cecil Rainey was the next one, Orestus Sharp was the next one and did I say Cecil Rainey? Cecil Rainey and Jewell Logan that was my teachers. The Farmers teached four years straight.

Frankie: What did they teach one thru eight grade? About how many children went to school?

Mary: There's so many there wasn't no where to sit down. I had to sit on a rostrum and I wasn't big enough to count it.

Frankie: Did you all cook at school then or did you take your lunch?

Mary: We took our lunch. They're wasn't no such thing as cooking in the school.

Frankie: Uh, what did you do like now we have a calamity days when the weather is bad, did you go ahead and go to school?

Mary: No you just went when the weather is fair and fit to go, and of course I was so little I couldn't, the two or three first schools I was so small that when it got cold I couldn't, go.

Frankie: Uh huh, Many people say that the olden times was the good ole days, do you agree with that?

Mary: It wasn't with me it might've been little bit then but I shore don't wanta go back to it.

Frankie: In the winter months, your meat did you butcher your own hogs?

Mary: We butchered our own hogs, yes.

Frankie: Can you remember how they done that, did they have a scalding pan or did they use sacks?

Mary: No they just used water from a kettle and they would put some kind of a cloth like a sack on the meat hog and pour that water and take the hair like that.

Frankie: And how did they ^{preserve} ~~pressure~~ their meat uh, did they ^{preserve} ~~pressure~~ it in ashes or salt.

Mary: Salt. Salt is all I ever knowed, I've heard of the ashes but I never did see it.

Frankie: Do you remember back several years before Wolf Creek Dam was put in did you have a lot of problems with flooding in this area?

Mary: Yes we had water until we couldn't get out of here for months.

Frankie: For months?

Mary: Months, well would you have to put your stuff up or move them to higher ground?

Mary: No we didn't have no trouble with the water but we couldn't get out I mean it didn't bother us it come about halfway up this road that you'd come up.

Frankie: Uh huh, up Otter Creek road.

Mary: Umm, we was in the creek at the time old road.

Frankie: This flooded out from what uh Bear Creek?

Mary: Yeh, the river backed up. The backwater come over a mile from the creek bank.

Frankie: Can you remember traveling in skiffs?

Mary: Yes. Oh it was fun to go out and in a skiff.

Frankie: Did all the girls know how to handle skiffs too?

Mary: No, we never did, never did we never was around the water that much but there'd always be somebody the neighbors would help you out.

Frankie: Uh huh. Come and check on you when the water got high.

Mary: Well uh if you needed to go out you'd just go down there and they would help you over, they had boats.

Frankie: If you needed a doctor then would they make house calls?

Mary: Yes, you didn't no doctor back then they wasn't no sick folks then.

Frankie: Yeah, did they have their own remedies, their own medicines?

Mary: Uh huh.

Frankie: Can you remember any that was used quite a bit?

Mary: Any medicine?

Frankie: Uh huh.

Mary: No, I never did know about medicines, cause, but they'd always bring a we called them saddle bags and they had their medicine in 'em and they would take a knife and cut up some paper and take the point of that knife and pick up some powders and put two or three different kinds of powders on a little piece of newspaper and that was your medicine I don't know whether it was soda or salt or quinine or what it could've been all three it was awful bitter they said.

Frankie: Calomone or?

Mary: Calimine.

Frankie: Uh huh, I've heard that that was used quit a bit for medicine back in those days.

Mary: Well, uh hit was used by some people but hit wasn't used muck in our family they used something like a black draught.

Frankie: Uh huh, Can you remember some of the doctors that was in the area?

Mary: Dr. Jim Bow and Dr....

Frankie: Is he a relation of yours?

Mary: Well at a distance but they was three Bow's come to this county and he was from one of the Henry and Jacob and he was from we're from the Jacob and from another one of the Bows.

Frankie: Uh huh, do you know where they came from when they came here?

Mary: From Virginia.

Frankie: From Virginia. Do you know what part of it?

Mary: I've got it in writings but first one then another of our people takes my names and things away and hits at uh Albany now at with Noxie Brown. She wanted the both trees.

Frankie: Your running your tree back? Uh the doctors then what was their fee do you about remember what they charge for a house call?

Mary: Well when my brother passed away in 1918 he went to Fort Knox and got sick and come home about the time World War I broke, why it was two and a half.

Frankie: Two and a half dollars and that was the house call?

Mary: And they rode the horses.

Frankie: They rode horseback?

Mary: Uh huh.

Frankie: Is that how most people traveled, horses and buggies?

Mary: They was more people went on their feet than they was their horses where they was a big family they couldn't have enough horses to ride and if they had a family they part of the time they had an old farm wagon they could travel in we didn't happen to have one.

Frankie: Uh huh.

Mary: Now what?

Frankie: Uh how often...

Mary: About, I didn't go more than once a year.

Frankie: You went into town once a year?

Mary: In the spring.

Frankie: And what would you all go in for?

Mary: Well mostly to buy something new in the spring if we happen to have that much money.

Frankie: Miss Bow uh years ago when there was sickness in the family did the neighbors come in and help take care of them and sit up with them?

Mary: Yes.

Frankie: And if these people passed away uh was there an undertaker then?

Mary: We didn't know there was an undertaker.

Frankie: Well was there someone in the community that...

Mary: There was always somebody in the community that could make their casket, there wouldn't no such thing as bought caskets as far as we was concerned back then they was always somebody that was able to do that and they was people that ^{had} lumber sawed for the purpose it had to be real broad they didn't piece the plant. Yes I can.

Frankie: Plan~~k~~ is one piece you know broad enough.

Mary: Uh huh. But we had trees then, we didn't have bushes like they saw lumber out of today.

Frankie: And ah in the dressing of the corpse who done this?

Mary: Just anybody in the neighborhood would take a hold an do it, and every body was too tim...they couldn't but they was some people too timid to but they was always somebody willing to do the job.

Frankie: And how did they transport the body to the grave?

Mary: They carried 'em in a farm wagon.

Frankie: A farm wagon. Uh did they turn school out and things of this matter when there was a funeral in the community?

Mary: No.

Frankie: They went on with their regular affairs, and ah at the cemetery what did they, did the mules lower the coffin?

Mary: No, they, the men lowered them by hand there'd be somebody get down in the grave and somebody hand them down.

Frankie: Uh huh.

Mary: And they was...homemade caskets, first ones I ever remember they didn't have handles to put on 'em but later in life when they got to where they had 'em or they got able to buy 'em or somehow they had 'em.

Frankie: And ah did they usually bury them very soon after they died?

Mary: Yes, they had to, because there wasn't no way to preserve 'em.

Frankie: Usually what the following day?

Mary: Yes if they could at all they did yes.

Frankie: Was it a custom to sit up all night with them?

Mary: Yes, it was custom that they didn't leave the ^{dead} ~~bed~~ alone. I don't know why.

Frankie: Were they quiet what type of affair was this of a night when they were sitting there did they or?

Mary: Well yes in some places they did not always I don't think but they was some sacred songs.

Frankie: Can you remember back years ago when they used to have revival when they would have them of the day time?

Mary: Oh yes.

Frankie: Now did they include the schools on these too. Did schools turn out?

Mary: They come to the church for service but they didn't turn out, they brought the children to school to teacher would from school to the church house and then they would march them back to the school house.

Frankie: Well then did they have a night service also then?

Mary: No they didn't have no night services.

Frankie: Well what did the farmers do just not farm of a morning when they'd be having the services.

Mary: Well some of 'em just worked away and then what wanted to could go they wasn't that busy because they wasn't that much work a going on.

Frankie: Uh huh.

Mary: They would try to have their revival when it was a wasn't as much heavy work a going on.

Frankie: In what late fall, early spring.

Mary: Well they would have it long after the crops was all made between that.

Frankie: What was the primary crops then?

Mary: Well mostly corn and some dark tobacco.

Frankie: Uh huh. Can you remember the first crop of tobacco your family ever raised?

Mary: No, they had tobacco before ever I could...I could remember the first burley but I can't the tobacco.

Frankie: The first burley crop. Now the dark tobacco it didn't sell for quite as much did it?

Mary: No, I don't remember how much a pound but there was very little money in it.

Frankie: Can you remember what the first burley would bring?

Mary: I can recollect when it sold for ten cents I don't know whether that's the first 'un I was at.

Frankie: Quite different from what now a dollar was the current market last year.

Mary: Well, some brought a dollar thirty-nine didn't they?