**Narrator** (00:20): Our stories surround us in many forms. We find them in well-crafted books about long-kept family secrets. In stories of hidden heritage, hard times, good times, forgotten peoples, and life threatening situations. Our stories are written within the margins of small diaries and daily journals. They are found in photo collections and manuscripts, reflecting the routine and the special experiences of life in Appalachia. Composers tell our stories through the sounds of their music and the words of their lyrics. Our stories walk the stage in original plays by local playwrights. They live on painted walls and are embroidered into handmade quilts. The bits and pieces of our stories are discovered in yellow newspapers and among treasured letters, home. There are so many ways to learn our stories, but best of all, our stories are carried in the memories of our people linked to the past and intertwined with the present, with hints and lessons for our future stories. By looking at what was and what is, we can plan for our communities of tomorrow in the place we call home.

**Narrator** (01:43): So we listen, we learn, and we prepare ourselves to live the best stories we can. When we set out to learn about and compare educational systems of yesteryear to our own experiences today, we discovered that reading, writing, and arithmetic are only parts of schooling in an Appalachian rural community. They are important, but back in the day, an 80-year-old minister learned that you can talk to your tomatoes, a teacher learned that relatives are neighbors and neighbors are relatives, a judge learned that the electric pedal is fiction, and a mayor learned that a stubborn 600 pound farm animal can be a good teacher. Even borrowing a hen's egg to swap for a bag of candy and daydreaming are good tools for working out the challenges of growing up.

**Donnie Poston** (02:38): All children come with different personalities and one of the things I've learned so much, over the years, the training that I used to seek out would be like, as far as a graduate work and those types of, what do my kids need more from me? Not so much that I've got a degree at the end of my name with adding money. What can... What additional training do I need to help meet some of those personality issues, some of those character things that people would consider flaws? What can I be to them, to help them to absolutely have a good experience? You know, the least restricted environment that they have does not come easy. And so it takes a lot of preparation as an educator, as a parent, as just a friend.

**Jordan Heatherly** (03:32): With us also with learning disabilities, do you think it is easier without them to teach them or do you think it's just pretty much the same and you just kind of have to handle it a little bit different?

**Donnie Poston** (03:47): [inaudible 00:03:47].

**Steven Sampieri** (03:47): I think that as Mr. Poston says, you take every child for the needs that they have. I think that you adapt and yet you find what works for each student. He said a few minutes ago and I, and I have to say, I agree, you have to be the example. And then there's the quote "To be the change that you want to see, you have to be that change. You have to be that example." So whether it be a, a, a learning disability or, or not, you have to be what that child needs you to be. And you have to be able to adapt and be able to understand that there're needs that every child, no matter what walk of life they come from, they, they all have a need that you have to be able to approach and be able to be that example that they need.

**Donnie Poston** (04:24): Yeah. And two, it doesn't matter if, if child's IQ is 20 or 200, they are contributing citizens to our community. Therefore, they have value and you, you help them where they are to become the best they can be. I, I love, I love the schools where they put so much emphasis on the special needs of kids. I want to be part of that. We all should want to be part of that. And if we'll do everything that we can to make sure that they, that they're able to reach their highest potential, then I think everyone's will benefit from that. You cannot push anyone aside, regardless of their personality, their IQ, where they come from, the cultural differences, everyone has value.

**Jordan Heatherly** (05:19): And I have to touch on this, as being a kid and as being bullied. Do you think we have the power in Campbell County and beyond to change that? Or do you think bullying is just going to be around forever?

**Donnie Poston** (05:38): Well, bully... First of all, that's my pet peeve. I guess you would say, but some of the steps that you take as an educator is to have to limit bullying. I, I think it's more in the, in the front as far as news outlets and what have you today and cause, and we're seeing so much. Bullying has always been around.

**Jordan Heatherly** (06:00): Yeah.

**Donnie Poston** (06:02): I mean, ever since the Garden of Eden we've had bullies, but at the same time we can limit their access to our kids. If we'll, if we've got to use our highs and our wisdom to recognize these sayings. And children are beginning to [clears throat] step out and share those concerns [clears throat]. When they know that they can come to us and share their concerns without being put down or put aside, they'll do that. And then what happens? The level of that type of bullying and those things will be absolutely diminished. They'll never go away fully, but they can be diminished, they can be controlled. And like I say, it's always been a pet peeve of mine.

**Luciana Cole** (06:47): How would you all say education has changed since then?

**E.L. Morton** (06:55): I had great teachers and, and being a child of a school teacher and that day meant every school teacher in the county had open season on your behind if you misbehave. And so I learned that pretty quickly in early grades and tried to do my best to behave. But I think that we're in a whole different environment today, as far as how teachers control their classrooms and, and keep order. But that was [inaudible] message you got on day one of every year's new class, going back to school was, was who was in charge. And we had very assertive teachers, but they cared an immense amount about teaching us. I just had a conversation with somebody yesterday about talking about phonics and teaching reading with, with the phonics system and that was the baseline for us. There were a couple of sounds, you know, a vowel could make and, and hard sounds came from the consonants and, and that's the way I was taught.

**E.L. Morton** (08:00): And in years, since we, we view tools like sight words and, and other tools that have kind of changed the techniques for teaching reading. But I, I learned through phonics and, and some very disciplined teachers. I had a reading teacher who made learn Latin roots, prefixes, and suffixes. And after that time, I never studied for a vocabulary test again. In the English language that's what it's built on. And if you understand those roots, prefixes, and suffixes, you're going to know generally or two of the meanings of that word. And so... But those are, are tools that I'm not sure they're used so much anymore, but extremely useful. So different techniques and... And our teachers today are very talented in doing a great job. And I... I'm thrilled and so proud of them because just this year, we've had three schools recognized in Campbell County schools as reward schools and Elk Valley Elementary was designated a stem school for science, technology, engineering, math.

**E.L. Morton** (09:13): And so we're still getting it done today. Just the techniques that I grew up with were, were, were old school compared to today, but very effective. But I think educators today have... Maybe it's just my generation gap, but I think there's so many more stimuli in your world than there were in mine on an immediate basis, in every day, because of our cell phone technology, we have so much more stimuli and I think it makes it more difficult to focus. So back then the challenge was, don't be a daydreamer is what my teachers would tell me. If you're looking out the window and looking into the sky, your day dreaming. Well, I think now it's kind of taken over by more stimuli rather than less, that are the distractions to education now, as opposed to when I was growing up, but reading, writing, arithmetic produced a lot of high performance people in this area, in my generation and generations past. And so I, I think, I think we're still doing it today. Just a little bit different.

**Gregory Miller** (10:27): And teachers were of course smarter than we were as kids and they had a lot of techniques for enforcing discipline. Discipline was absolute, when I was growing up. But one of the things that we were most afraid of when I was in grade school was the electric paddle. Well, there really was no such thing as an electric paddle, but we thought there was, it turns out what it was; there was a thing called a MI graph machine, which is way before your time, but when you wanted to reproduce copies of things like something to color or whatever, they put the original in this thing, and it had ink in it and had a big drum that turned and it went [inaudible] out a page with whatever you were printing on. It smelled really good. I used to love to smell the things, although I'm not sure it's probably good for my hair, but all the kids would get it, hold it up to their face and smell it while the ink was fresh.

**Gregory Miller** (11:23): Well, anyway, every time that thing would go [inaudible] away, it was back the principal's office and we'd all get kind of pale and we'd huddle around in a little group. And we'd say, somebody's getting the electric paddle. I don't know where the electric paddle actually originated, but we just knew there was some poor kid in there. Well, one time I was, we were all huddled up, somebody was getting the electric paddling. There was this little kid, I guess he was probably sick or something, but they brought him out and he was all pale and staggering. And we just fled and tear because we thought, oh my gosh, you got the electric paddle. You know? So we were... They paddled you back in those days. When you were small, it was those little things that had the rubber ball and the rubber band. And they'd use those little things.

**Gregory Miller** (12:07): They got bigger as time went on, but, but we were always in dread and electric paddles. So we weren't going to do too much cause we didn't want to get, get that treatment. But, but I, I think that he's exactly right. There's more distractions now. I was a daydreamer. I'd stare out the windows and always get in trouble. The only thing that would save me is I'd usually read the textbook and the first couple of weeks as a subject, I would light. So sometimes they'd give me a chance. I could fumble around with the answer, but I was bad to stare out the windows. You had windows back then and you could open the windows back then. And so when the weather was pleasant, you had the windows up and they were these huge [inaudible] guess they were, the ceilings were high and those old school rooms.

**Gregory Miller** (12:53): So the, the window was probably 12, 15 feet high. They'd open them up and we had these old steam powered radiators for heat and had these enormous long window shades. And so in the wintertime, the radiators would heat the room and the, the window shade would sort of rock back and forth and make this little tick and say, and, and you'd watch the, the seasons change out the window, which was very distracting to somebody like me that had the tendency to stare off into space anyway, but you guys now see you have all these cell phones and all the distractions of things that, that we didn't have. You know, the worst thing we ever did really was talk when we weren't supposed, that was a temptation and you'd bring toys to school that you weren't supposed to. So they'd confiscate your water pistols or your, you know, whatever it might be.

**Gregory Miller** (13:45): And the teacher would have a big drawer full of toys. And at the end of the year, she'd give them all back to you, but they'd take them and keep them for a year to kind of remind you not to do that. But, but it was a, it was a different world in some ways, but in others, it was, it was the same. Education's the same, learning's the same. Inspiration's the same teachers probably use more technology now to do it and to interest things. One of the big innovations we had when I was going to school was, we had a television in the classroom and sometimes we'd watch educational television. And any time they launched a rocket that was going to the moon or something, astronauts, they would actually stop class and we'd watch the launch live on a, on a television set. And we, we just thought that was amazing and marvelous. And now I guess you have [inaudible] some sort of classrooms, but you could literally see the, the combined knowledge of mankind on it at, at any one time.

Lucianna Cole (14:44): So would you say as technology continues to evolve in the future, do you think that it will become more of a distraction or do you think the schools will learn to integrate them in?

**E.L. Morton** (14:56): I, I think we're integrating them in. It... It's either a compliment or a distraction and, and good teachers are going to figure out how to integrate, like the television came in...

**Gregory Miller** (15:05): Yeah.

**E.L. Morton** (15:06): ... Could have been a distraction, but it.. It's how we learn, it's how we're thinking now. So I, I'm not going to go very far from my cell phone and, and nobody is that's in our society, but it, it is a learning mechanism, you know, online education, internet access, all that it's going to continue to grow and I think it's going to be okay. But, you know, we've, we've made a recent commitment as a nation to put a woman on the moon and we're going to use a lot of computing power to put them on the moon. But when we went to the moon, first time, we did it with a slide rule and some very basic computations. The computers that put the first person on the moon have less computing capacity than your cell phone does. So we're going to keep growing it and integrating it. And, and I think it's, it's a good thing.

**Gregory Miller** (16:05): That's true. And, and if you want to be distracted, you don't need anything too distract you. I was distracted by trees outside the window of the classroom, you know, or a bird flying by or whatever. But, but technology also has the ability to interest far more than, than perhaps a book. You know, our television, we were fascinated by that. So as a result, I went out and bought plastic models of all the little, little lunar [clears throat] modules and all of those things and, and became interested in studying it because there it was on television and they interrupted normal programming when they launched those things and you sat there and you watched them as they explained all of the different things that were going to happen. Well, now it's kind of old fashioned, you know, now you, you watch on the internet. If they launched a satellite or a space shuttle, it's no big deal now to you guys, but it was to us then.

**Gregory Miller** (17:00): And when they landed on the moon for the first time, the whole country came to a standstill. Everybody was watching as, as they came down and took the first steps and put the first human footprint on the moon and the whole country was, was there, you know, anybody that had access to a television, watched it all over the world. But, but as far as a distraction, I, I guess it could be, but probably no more than anything else. If you're, if you're not paying attention, you're not paying attention. You don't really need a reason for it, but, but it has, has an unlimited ability to inspire, you know, and I, and to interest, you know, and there's just fascinating things everywhere. You can take tours of places you'll never go, you can listen to people talk that you'll never meet, but there are leaders in various fields, you can [inaudible] tours of cities you'll never go to, or perhaps, it'll inspire you to want go there.

**Gregory Miller** (17:58): So it was a little tougher with a book, you know, they had a book and pages of pictures, but that was as inspiring as God. See back in my day, a Viewmaster was big deal. Y'all don't even know what that is. I'm sure, but the little disc you'd put in there and you'd look through it and you'd click it and it would show different scenes, but it was three dimensional. And that was just fascinating. Oh, you know, there's the London bridge. There's the Taj Mahal, it's just like being there, you know? Well...

**E.L. Morton** (18:26): In color.

**Gregory Miller** (18:29): Hey color, that was the best. They used to be black and white. So in fact, I remember when they first came out with color television, you know what an innovation that was cause TV was black and white when I was growing up and we got our color television and not every show was in color and not every commercial was in color, at first.

**Gregory Miller** (18:45): And when color would happen, it'd be a color commercial. It didn't matter what they were advertising you'd to holler to whoever's in the house, "Come look, come look, it's colored." Everybody run in stare at it cause there was those beautiful blues and greens and so on. You see, you take all that for granted. Now that's just normal. You can't imagine a world of, of black and white and it's very difficult, but, but that's just how things have changed, but the sorts of problems and the sorts of innovative people that create those solutions that hasn't changed. Innovation's still innovation and, and good people applying themselves to problems. You do it differently, but it's the same thing. Just as you said, the computing power of those old computers, in near what you've got in your cellphone, but it was the same thing. When I was in high school, they sent you out to buy your materials and [inaudible] in high school, well, I went to the drug store and bought a slide room.

**Gregory Miller** (19:42): You can't find a slide room now, but you'd sit there and work the thing back and forth and do all this stuff. Well, your little phone or a handheld pocket calculator has more power than, than those big room full of computers that they used to use. So it's, it's a different world in many ways, but it's, it's still the same. Cause I think basically people are, are the same people, problems are problems, and solutions are solutions and you got good people and people that haven't begun to apply themselves the way they should yet. But, but things, things change. But fortunately there's some smart people out there that can help us adapt to that change.

**Luciana Cole** (20:28): Well, we appreciate you all coming out here to talk to us. It, it means a lot to us that you all took the time out of your day to do this.

**Gregory Miller** (20:38): I'm very glad to do it. And speaking from somebody from my generation, it means a lot to me that there's young people out there that are interested. It's hard to know what the future will be if you don't know the past. If you don't know where you've come from, it's hard to tell where you're going. And it's also very difficult to know where you are when you have no frame of reference and history, I think, gives us a frame of reference. You have something to compare where you are to now because you can see where we came from and how they used to do things and so I'm, I'm very gratified to see young, bright, smart kids that are interested in something other than a video game or stare at their cell phone, but actually reach out and talk to people cause there's nothing in the world more interesting.

**Luciana Cole** (21:25): Absolutely.

**Gregory Miller** (21:28): Your, your electronics are fun, but they're not interesting the way people are. The more of them you meet, the more of them you deal with, the broader your horizon. So I thank you very much for having us. And I'm very, very impressed with what I'm seeing here.

**Luciana Cole** (21:44): Thank you.

**E.L. Morton** (21:45): I'm proud of what you're doing too. And just appreciate you're including me. I've enjoyed our discussion as well.

**Keola Morton** (21:50): So what are some ways that we could expose our kids to more of that?

**Tony Branam** (21:56): That's a good question. And that's one thing I hate for people that are being interviewed to say is, "That's a good question." I think it, you know, part of it, it has to do with the school system. You know, they have to have resources to do that and programs and time available to do that. We spend, or we seem to spend so much time focusing on the achievement test toward the end of the year that we leave a lot of things, including art, including music, including, you know, career visits and field trips to places. We kind of leave a lot of stuff out that we had when we were growing up, just because we're so focused on preparing, you know, to pass this test, whether that test really means anything or not. As far as to the children, it means something to the school system but I don't know that it means that much to the kids, you know, they're missing out on a lot of things they could be involved in just because of the limited amount of time and resources the school system has to put toward that.

**Anaia Roberts** (22:58): And what type of education did you both receive?

**Tony Branam** (23:03): Go first.

**Freda Branam** (23:06): I went to Jacksborough Elementary, which at the time there was no kindergarten, so you went from first to eight and then I went my freshman and sophomore year to Jacksborough High School. And then my junior year, they consolidated Jacksborough and [inaudible] and finished those two years up at Campbell County High School. So I was the second in the second graduating class of Campbell county, which...

**Tony Branam** (23:39): I went to win a school, which at that time was a first grade through 12th grade school. So I stayed there all 12 years. I graduated with a class of 40, which is very small compared to what the number is that graduates from Campbell County High School. Being in a school that much time, essentially with the same group of people and teachers, you really had a close-knit experience, kind of like a community or family experience at the school. You know, everyone knew everybody and everyone knew what went on. Ever so often you to have a new teacher come in, but not that often. I think I had this same principal the whole time too.

**Tony Branam** (24:32): So, you know, you ate, you ate in the cafeteria with everybody. It's just like a big family experience. And that was five miles from where I grew up. So I rode a bus every day. So you, again, you knew everybody on the bus and most of them were, you know, from that general neighborhood. So you really got to know people. And the teachers really looked after the kids because it was almost like their family had been around them for 10 or 12 years, you know, by the time they graduated. There were a couple of feeders schools. So new kids would show up from Stinking Creek, from White Oak around middle school, or certainly by high school, they would kind of suddenly appear in school, these new kids so you kind of had, you know, a little bit of an exposure to new people every year too.

**Keola Morton** (25:23): Are there any questions you'd like to ask us or anything?

**Tony Branam** (25:27): Hmm. Who should I ask? What have you learned through these interviews?

**Keola Morton** (25:33): These interviews? That I have a lot to learn.

**Tony Branam** (25:35): One thing.

**Keola Morton** (25:36): That I have a lot to learn.