

KENTUCKY CRAFT HISTORY AND EDUCATION ASSOCIATION, INC.

Interview with Leona Waddell
Interviewer is Bob Gates
DATE February 5, 2015

() This symbol refers to an inaudible word or phrase

. . . This symbol refers to an interruption to the speaker

Gates: Hi Leona. We're ready to start.

Waddell: Oh okay.

Gates: So Leona, what's your full name?

Waddell: Now you have to talk. . .

Gates: What's your full name?

Waddell: Leona Waddell.

Gates: That's your . . . okay.

Waddell: Yea.

Cameraman: Watch your hands.

Gates: Oh, okay. So don't go like this or this?

Cameraman: Sometimes when I'm wide you can get away with it.

Gates: Okay. I can't use my hands.

Waddell: Huh?

Gates: Nothing. So you're Leona Waddell.

Waddell: See, I hear, then I don't understand, but I hear.

Gates: I'll try to speak up. Sorry, I have had this cold for a while. If I talk too loud, I'll start coughing. How have you been?

(phone rings)

Waddell: Uh oh.

Gates: Do you need to answer that?

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: Okay. Leona.

Waddell: Yes.

Gates: Leona Waddell.

Waddell: Yes.

Gates: What are you doing right now?

Waddell: Well, I'm trying to fix me a split and it keeps messing up. I'm doing a handle and you've got to have a certain width, you know.

Gates: So you're trying to cut that very thin so you can wind that around the handle.

Waddell: Yea, so I do this right here.

Gates: Can you hold it up so I can see it? So you're moving it around the handle like that?

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: Okay.

Waddell: And when I get that done, I'll go this way, like the bottom.

Gates: Wow.

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: That's a beautiful basket. Where's that going to go?

Waddell: Thank you. It goes to Oregon.

Gates: Somebody ordered it from there?

Waddell: Yea, some lady. She sounded like she was old.

Gates: Well, where did she hear about you?

Waddell: She said Billy Ray told her about me.

Gates: Who?

Waddell: Billy Ray. Sam's. He's from Alabama. He's worked with me quite a bit.

Gates: Oh, okay. So you're going to send it to her soon, I guess. You're going to send it to her soon?

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: You've got to get your money first. (Laughter, Gates)

Waddell: I always get my check first and then I mail the basket.

Gates: So how long have you been making baskets?

Waddell: How long?

Gates: Uh huh.

Waddell: Well, off and on since I was ten years old. But actually I've been making them since I retired in '96, I've been making them pretty steady and then I made them before then too because I worked at school part time. Well, I worked school until I retired and then I went on to baskets full time.

Gates: These baskets are a little different from the ones you made when you were ten years old?

Waddell: Well, they're pretty much the same, I made market baskets a long time. They were more of a square, oblong basket, you know, about that wide. A couple of them are upstairs. One of them, the one Sam made . . .

Gates: Like that one over there?

Waddell: No. They're made different than that.

Gates: Oh okay. Well, market baskets. Let's go back to as early as you can remember, making baskets. I want to, kind of, do your life a little bit. Talk about your life, your early life. So can we go back to when where you grew up?

Waddell: When I grew up, I helped my mom and she did all the particular about them then. Well, I could help her whittle the stuff out, the pattern out and then she would put together and do this burr. I call it a burr. And then she'd stick these ribs, well then I could weave it, you know, through that. And then we could scrape splits and stuff. When you you do this with a knife, you call that scraping, you know. And we could do that, but after I got started, quit making market baskets, I could remember enough how she did, you know, how to stick the ribs and stuff and make them myself.

Gates: What's a market basket?

Waddell: A market basket? It's just a . . . they're about this long and about this wide. Cut that deep and it's got a handle over it and it's got, when you put it together in the bottom, it's got little square holes and then you have to go back and fill them in () after you get everything else done.

Gates: Was it a market basket because you sold them at the market or because you used them to go to the market?

Waddell: Well, back then, down 31 they had basket stands they called them and they had bedspreads, they had, well, just rugs and everything you know, rocks even and all kinds of miscellaneous stuff.

Gates: Like souvenirs and things.

Waddell: See, that was before they built 65 and everybody traveled 31, you know. And so they had pretty good business. There were several guys and they bought my mom's baskets.

Gates: Who owned the shack?

Waddell: Huh?

Gates: Who owned that shack you're talking about, the basket shack?

Waddell: Well, Lonny Johnson owned one and Leonard Brook owned one. And actually, I don't know who else. I think maybe the Childers' down in Park City might have had one, I'm not sure, but they made baskets.

Gates: So they were going . . . people were going down to Mammoth Cave and they were driving down 31W and they were trying to buy things at these shacks.

Waddell: Yea.. And then they, see back then that Mammoth Cave it was a big thing then. They had a lot of business there and a lot of baskets. A lot of people bought them down there.

Gates: And your mom sold a lot to the man who had the stand right?

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: Did she have her own stand?

Waddell: No, she didn't have her own stand. We just made the baskets and her and dad would take them out and then finally they got to coming to the house and getting them. The guys that owned the stands.

Gates: They'd come to your house and buy them. What was your mom's name?

Waddell: We lived in the other side of Cub Run, off down in a holler.

Gates: Down in Hart County, around Cub Run.

Waddell: Yea, it was, I guess, about three miles going toward Mammoth Cave. And then we turned off to the right and off down in there. Then they finally built a house up on the hill and they lived up there, but I was married before they did that.

Gates: What was your mom's name?

Waddell: Excuse me?

Gates: What was your mom's name?

Waddell: Ella Trulock. She was Ella Puckett before she married. She married my dad. His name was Henry Louis Trulock, but they called him Babe.

Gates: Babe?

Waddell: Yea. Called him Babe.

Gates: Why'd they call him Babe?

Waddell: I don't know, just a nickname, I reckon.

Gates: And they grew up in Hart County too? In that area?

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: How'd they meet each other?

Waddell: I'm not sure.

Gates: They never told you?

Waddell: No, I'm not sure.

Gates: How many kids were in the family?

Waddell: That my mom had? My mom had 16 kids.

(phone rings)

Gates: She did.

Waddell: Excuse me a minute. This lady, she checks on me about every day.

Gates: Oh okay. Just checking on you.

Waddell: Yea. She makes sure I'm okay.

Gates: So your mom has 14 kids?

Waddell: She had 16. Raised 12. Her oldest one had some kind of heart problem and she . . . I never could remember if she said 18 months or 28 months old when she died and then she had my oldest sister, she was four years older than me and then she had a son and he was three years older than me and then this one passed away between that and then I don't know she lost three.

Gates: What was that like? Having that many people in the family?

Waddell: What?

Gates: What was it like having that many people in the family?

Waddell: Well, it wasn't very good. It was kind of rough.

Gates: In what way?

Waddell: Because, well, my dad wasn't, I don't know how to explain it. We had to work hard and everything, but we didn't have much. We didn't have much. We didn't have a lot of food a lot of times. We didn't have many clothes and somehow mama, well a friend, I think, told her about getting these packages of clothes like from Minnesota and North Carolina and all these states, you know? And they would send a huge box, like this big, full of clothes and for a basket. So that's how we got to having a lot of clothes. And then one was too big, she'd make them over for us, you know, and renew them.

Gates: So she would send a basket to this person or this organization and they would send you clothes? That's helped a lot huh?

Waddell: Yea. Oh yea. It did.

Gates: How did she learn how to make baskets in the first place?

Waddell: Well she's got a little basket upstairs that dad got her. They got married in 1921 and he gave her this little basket, just before they got married or right after. And I don't know where he got it or who made it or whatever, but it's up there in a China cabinet. It's 80 some, maybe 90 years old. And she started with an old broken butcher knife. She'd go out and chop her own tree stem, get them in. And she'd get them busted up and then she'd whittle with that old knife, broken knife. And she learned . . . () I never did ask her, but I know from experience she looked at that little basket and that's how she learned to make them. Because she could look at a dress in a book or something, you know, and she could make it. Cut the pattern and all, you know. But we had a hard time.

Gates: Hart County is known for basket makers, right?

Waddell: Right.

Gates: Lots of families up there make baskets.

Waddell: Oh yea. That's how people live back then. Their baskets, you know. Of course they'd raise some tobacco and stuff like that but not enough to get by on. Dad wasn't a manager, he just, more or less, worried about himself.

Gates: Worried about himself?

Waddell: You know, take care of himself. He had nice clothes and everything he needed, whether we had anything or not. I'm sorry to say, but that the way it was.

Gates: Oh sure, yea. I know how that is.

Waddell: One time me and my sister made a basket a piece and Mr. Benny Sturgeon had a store up on the road. Like you went to Cub Run going towards Mammoth Cave. He had a store on that road and he didn't want to give me money for the basket, you know, and you could get groceries. But anyway we made a basket a piece and took them up there and we were going to try and buy a pair of shoes and he didn't have anything we could wear, our size. And he talked kind of funny and he said, "Well, I'm going to give you some money so you can go down to Ms. Cave's and get you some shoes." So he gave us some money and we went down there and she didn't have anything we could wear. So we took the money and went home. Dad found out we had it. He said, "Well, you all just give me the money and me and ma will go to town and we'll get you some shoes." Well we never did see the shoes or the money either. We just **had**jad to wear anything we could get.

Gates: You never got those shoes, huh?

Waddell: No.

Gates: Did you expect that?

Waddell: We didn't feel like did. (Laughter, Waddell and Gates)

Gates: He had done stuff like that before? Okay. So what kind of basket did you and your sister make?

Waddell: She made little picnic baskets, you know, that red () in there, we call that a picnic, or that brown striped () it's what they called picnic baskets.

Gates: Okay. They're not shaped like an egg basket. A little flatter.

Waddell: No and egg basket is like that one up there.

Gates: Rounded on the bottom.

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: A picnic basket is more of a square one on the bottom, right?

Waddell: Yea, and she made lids for them a lot of the time. They'd want a lid made.

Gates: Did you and your sister make more baskets?

Waddell: Yea, we made several. But, I mean, we didn't get to make many just for ourselves, you know. We had to have momma make them. And then we had to work in the field too.

Gates: You worked in the field?

Waddell: Oh, lord yes.

Gates: What did you do?

Waddell: Cut tobacco, cut corn, set tobacco and chop out corn and whatever there was to do we had . . . the last summer I was home before I got married, I worked three weeks helping them cut tobacco. My dad said well he was going to start cutting, he said, "Why don't you girls stay here and help get dinner and () can go help us in the field"? Well, of course, () she was my oldest sister and she went the first morning. And they come in from dinner and after dinner, dad said, "You can come on, help () and I am not going to be the one doing it all". That's what he said, okay. I went on to the field. Helped daddy. I helped three weeks straight. And she never went back to the field until the last half day. But he wasn't going to have one doing it all.

Gates: Sounds like he did. You must have been pretty good out there, huh? You worked hard?

Waddell: About every time. Yea, worked hard. Chopped corn, cut corn. And he'd tie a saddle like things, there'd be four places you could set corn in there. Chopped corn. And sometimes the old corn would be so big you'd have to make about three trips just to () before you could get from one shop to the other one.

Gates: And you were bringing that corn back to the house?

Waddell: No, it was like we just chopped it in the field and then when it got mature, you had to go pull it off of the stalk and pitch it in the wagon and haul it into the crib, you know. () We didn't get to go to school much. But those times were hard. Momma, she lived until she was 95 and almost two weeks before she passed away. He had cancer. I think he died in '74, I think. My husband died in '79.

Gates: So your mom and . . . did her neighbors make baskets too?

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: Did they kind of compete at all?

Waddell: Yea, my grandma on my dad's side, they made what they call a school basket. They had to make a round bottom. They had to cross them up like this. To give them enough ribs to make a round bottom, you know, and then they'd bring them up, about that big around and just about that tall I guess. Then they'd put a handle on them and a ().

Gates: Where those used by a school?

Waddell: I think that's about all the kind they made.

Gates: Oh, okay. Were those used for school kids?

Waddell: Well, I think some of the kids might have used them, but. . .

Gates: I mean what do you use them for?

Waddell: I think they probably sold them at the stores like everybody else. For Groceries.

Gates: Oh for groceries and stuff. Okay. You'll have to show me one of those later on. Do you have one here?

Waddell: No. Nobody knows how to make them anymore.

Gates: Really?

Waddell: I could make one, you know, but. . . I mean I know how they're made.

Gates: Well, before your mom started selling them to people who were tourist, or they sold them at the shack, did people use them in your community for different things?

Waddell: Back then, see on farms, that's all they had was the basket, they had bushel baskets, of course they are this big, you know. Momma made a lot of those when she first started making baskets. Then she'd taken them to the store, get groceries.

Gates: Just to fill up with groceries?

Waddell: Uh huh.

Gates: Did she always make them out of white oak or other materials?

Waddell: Always used white oak.

Gates: Why is white oak so good for making baskets?

Waddell: It's a better wood. It lasts longer. () they have, you can't whittle it. Your knife will just slip over it. Just like glassy looking, you know.

Gates: So it's stronger? Right now you've got it wet so it's easier to cut, right?

Waddell: Yea. Once it get seasoned, you can't bend it.

Gates: So you're going to make the basket before it seasons.

Waddell: Oh, yea. Well, when I first started making baskets, I learned, I would just make my hoops and handles and go ahead and finish it. But they'll spread out the wrong way, see like this, they'll spread this way, instead of this way. So later years, I learned to make my hoops and handle a head of time and let them season and then there's no movement in them. They stay like you shape them.

Gates: What do you mean ahead of time?

Waddell: Well, I make them long enough so they have time to season. Get, you know . . .

Gates: Before you put them on the basket?

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: That one's not on . . .

Waddell: It will turn dark, when they . . . after it gets so old. I can't tell how it's tied. See, this is what you call a handle and this is a hoop. And then you put them together like this and then you wrap this burr like that and that holds them together and then you got to make your ribs, make your ribs and stick them in there, take them all and make your hole in there and then you put your ribs in.

Gates: So you're saying you make those ahead of time.

Waddell: Uh huh. And that way they don't bend. Of course, these are little and are thinner, but big baskets, they won't bend.

Gates: And you said that's something you learned on your own?

Waddell: Uh huh?

Gates: But people, your mom didn't do that, huh?

Waddell: No, she didn't make them ahead of time. No. Because she didn't have time. She had to make them, you know, and get them done.

Gates: How many baskets would she make when she was really busy?

Waddell: Gosh, I don't know. I don't remember. She made several.

Gates: Would somebody come to the house and say, "I need more baskets"?

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: She'd take orders that way?

Waddell: Uh huh.

Gates: What was the most popular basket she was making for the tourist? For the basket shacks they were selling them for tourists, what was the most popular basket people wanted?

Waddell: The picnic basket was the most thing that went over then. Laundry baskets are a lot bigger than that. And she made a lot of them. And then she made some clothes hampers, kind of like that garbage can over there. She make a few of them and she made some flower baskets, different things.

Gates: Flower baskets. Yea. And you would help her.

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: And you would do certain parts of the job and she would do certain things.

Waddell: Yea. Yea.

Gates: What was the hardest part that she would do?

Waddell: Whittling out those handles, those hooks and handles. They were a big . . .

Gates: That's hard to do, huh?

Waddell: Yes, it was.

Gates: Well who went and got the wood?

Waddell: Well dad and my oldest brother would generally go find the trees.

Gates: And what kind of trees were they looking for? A skinny oak or a big oak?

Waddell: No, you want about a six or eight inches at the bottom tree.

Gates: 6 or 8 inch diameter?

Waddell: Uh huh. And they'd get it as long as they could get it without the limbs, you know, they could cut it up to the limbs, but you couldn't use that.

Gates: After the limbs, you couldn't use it?

Waddell: The what?

Gates: Why couldn't you use it after the limbs, the knots?

Waddell? Well, it just wouldn't work.

Gates: Well how long would that be then, from the bottom to the where the limbs started.

Waddell: Well, sometimes it would be 8 or 10 feet long.

Gates: Really?

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: So did you ever go out with them to cut the wood when you were little?

Waddell: Yea, me and the boys () went out and cut them. And I have chopped them down myself.

Gates: You have? What's that like?

Waddell: One time. It's hard. (Laughter, Waddell and Gates) It took me a long time to chop it down. But then after I got it down it wasn't any good.

Gates: Why?

Waddell: It was big. My goodness, it was that big around. But it just didn't work after I got it down. But I don't even know what she got for the baskets back then or we didn't know anything about . . . all we knew was the work.

Gates: All you knew was the work. So you went to school a little bit?

Waddell: Yea, we'd start school, when school started and then time would come to set tobacco or clean corn or put out crop we had to take out.

Gates: Did you tell the teacher you were going to be gone?

Waddell: No, we didn't tell her. Sometimes we'd go back and she wouldn't even recognize we were there, we'd be out so long.

Gates: She wouldn't know you?

Waddell: Well she knew us, but she wouldn't say anything to us. I mean, we couldn't help it, you know, we had to do whatever he told us.

Gates: So she was kind of being mean to you, because you hadn't been there. What did you learn in school?

Waddell: We learned how to read, write. My youngest sister, well, she was born after I left home, after I married, she's the only one of us that got a good education.

Gates: What did she do?

Waddell: But she got . . . she got married, I think about two weeks or so, before she got out of high school.

Gates: Was that good for her?

Waddell: I don't know. I didn't know much about what she did, because I live down long ways from them. She went, I can't think where it was. She went with my brother.

Gates: Let me ask you this, when you were making baskets when you were little was it work for it or did you get some kind of enjoyment out of it?

Waddell: Did I what?

Gates: Was it just work or did you kind of enjoy it?

Waddell: Well, I guess we didn't think anything about it. We just knew to do it, you know? Whether we liked it or whether we didn't.

Gates: Were you proud of what it looked like when it was done?

Waddell: Yea. I always took, pretty much, pains with what I did, you know. But my sister, bless her heart, she didn't much care. And momma had, she made big, wide splits. These things are called splits and she had a scrapper. She got tired of scraping them and she rolled up a bunch and took them out in the woods and hid them in a brush pile. (Laughter, Waddell) Somehow momma found them and made her go get them. I don't know how long they'd been there.

Gates: Sounds like she got frustrated.

Waddell: Yea. She got tired. It was hard work, you know.

Gates: Tired of making them?

Waddell: But they'd be this wide, the splits would and pretty thick and it was hard.

Gates: How much time a day did you spend making baskets?

Waddell: Huh?

Gates: How much time a day did you spend making baskets baskback then?

Waddell: Well, we'd work at them in the morning until time to get dinner then we'd take out in time to get dinner and then after dinner we'd go back at it.

Gates: Where'd you work on it?

Waddell: Huh?

Gates: In the house or in the barn?

Waddell: Well, yea. We had a porch we worked on part time. Sometimes we'd sit in the shade.

Gates: Did you think those baskets back then were pretty?

Waddell: They what?

Gates: Were they pretty? I mean these are very pretty.

Waddell: They were nice. Momma made good () baskets. Back then the colors were brown and orange. Striped them with brown and orange and that went on for years. Then they finally got to get some different colors.

Gates: Where did they get the orange from and the brown?

Waddell: RIT dye. She had to dye them. She'd get RIT dye. And she has colored the brown with walnut hulls.

Gates: Walnut hulls, okay. So it was pretty much the same colors? Those are stripes in it, the brown and the red and the rest was just. . ,

Waddell: Well, she generally used the brown for the outer edge and the orange in the middle.

Gates: Was everybody doing that?

Waddell: Most everybody I reckon.

Gates: That was kind of what people liked, huh?

Waddell: But the laundry baskets and stuff like that, you didn't put any color in them. Just made them white.

Gates: So you've got to make that a little thinner, huh?

Waddell: Uh huh.

Gates: That's really pretty.

Waddell: You wouldn't believe it, the trimming it has on it. My lap will be full of little shavings.

Gates: Yea. (Laughter, Gates)

Waddell: When I'm weaving. When I get done, I've got a clear spray I spray these with and it makes them shine.

Gates: I saw you had a little crazy glue or something right?

Waddell: Yea, I used glue on them too.

Gates: When you have to go from one strip to another?

Waddell: Well, when I lap my splits I use it. They aren't going to come undone.

Gates: So did the money you made from baskets, your mom made, did that help the house a lot?

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: You got the clothes from the people in Michigan or Wisconsin or where ever that was, but you also, when she sold them at the shacks she got money from them.

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: How much did she get?

Waddell: I don't know.

Gates: Oh you don't know. Okay.

Waddell: I have no idea how much they got.

Gates: Did your mom ever get tired on making baskets?

Waddell: I don't know if she did or not. I don't know how long it was. I don't know when she quit making them. And then after dad died and she lived by herself, I don't know how . . . she got started back () I think she was 83, maybe, when she quit making them.

Gates: So your grandfather on your dad's side or your mom's side used to make baskets too?

Waddell: I don't know if grandma . . . I don't know if momma's . . . I don't know if her parents made them or not.

Gates: But it was your dad's side.

Waddell: Yea. His mom, sister.

Gates: And what was his name? His last name?

Waddell: Trulock.

Gates: Okay.

Waddell: He was in World War One.

Gates: He was? Did he go over and fight?

Waddell: Huh?

Gates: Did he go over to Europe and fight?

Waddell: He was in Germany and France. And Germany.

Gates: My grandfather did too. He came back and they said commanding officer said they wouldn't live very long when they got back because they had been gassed a couple times.

Waddell: Yea, my dad got, I don't know, something. His legs would break out in little blisters, you know. Some kind of gas.

Gates: Do you think that made him more like you said he was?

Waddell: Huh?

Gates: Do you think that made him more want to get his own stuff when he got back or was he always like that?

Waddell: Well, all I know was he's the boss.

Gates: He was the boss, huh?

Waddell: You didn't sass him, you didn't say even a word and you didn't talk back, no matter right or wrong. He'd said his (). I tell you one time I was sick and he accused me of eating green apples. Well, I did not eat any green apples. Christine did, but I didn't and he whooped me. Made me on^{own} up that I ate them. And then he whooped me for lying. When I didn't eat them to start with and I don't know why I was sick, but I was sick.

Gates: So on top of being sick, he beat you. Well, that wasn't nice.

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: Was your mom nice? Nicer to be with?

Waddell: Yea. Momma was okay. I don't know how she took what she did. I don't know how she let him treat us kids like he did.

Gates: Yea.

Waddell: He beat my brother one time, oldest brother, over a nickel pack of cigarette papers. He whooped him, beat him and stomped him, kicked him and he laid on the bench at school for a week. He couldn't sit up. He'd go to school, but the teacher just let him lay on the bench. There was a couple of them who were going to indict or do something to him and his mom went up there and talked him out of it.

Gate: They were going to what?

Waddell: Huh?

Gates: They were going to what?

Waddell: They were going to indict him.

Gates: Oh your dad?

Waddell: These teachers were.

Gates: Were going to indict your dad.

Waddell: They were going to and his mom went up there and talked them out of it.

Gates: Wouldn't get away with that today, would they?

Waddell: Huh?

Gates: Wouldn't get away with that today would he?

Waddell: Oh, lord. There was one guy that had two boys and he was mean to them and then their uncle and them together, they shot him one night.

Gates: When you were young?

Waddell: Huh?

Gates: When you were young?

Waddell: When they were young, yea.

Gates: Okay. So your memories about making baskets were that they were hard to make, you'd spend a lot of time. Did you get any pleasure out of making them?

Waddell: Do what?

Gates: Did you have any fun making them?

Waddell: I guess we didn't think anything about it, you know.

Gates: It was something you did because you needed to.

Waddell: It was something we had to do, you know and we just worked at it like any other job. Yyou know.

Gates: Well what made a good basket back then, to you? When were you happy with your results when you worked with your mom?

Waddell: About all we knew was just have her make them and . . .

Gates: Well, you said it had to be sturdy.

Waddell: Oh yea.

Gates: The colors had to be a certain way, right? Did they have to be real small like that or were they bigger?

Waddell: Yea, hers. She didn't do as fine a work as I did.

Gates: Yea. What you're doing right now is very fine work isn't it.

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: Nobody made them like that back then did they?

Waddell: No.

Gates: Why is that?

Waddell: I don't know.

Gates: Because it was hard to make. It took a lot more time to make doesn't it? Like what you're doing?

Waddell: Oh yea.

Gates: And they were making . . . get done fast, weren't they? And sell them to the . . .

Waddell: They were a lot wider.

Gates: Anybody ever come to your house and buy them right from your mom like tourist? Or did they always buy them from the shacks?

Waddell: Well, nobody but these people that had these shops, you know. They were the only ones that came to the house.

Gates: Did they give her a pretty good price or was she happy with the price?

Waddell: I couldn't tell you.

Gates: So you got married, huh?

Waddell: I got married when I was 17 and I was 18 . . . I got married in October and I was married in January. So I wasn't around home much anymore.

Gates: What did you do then? Did you make baskets anymore?

Waddell: I didn't make baskets for a long time.

Gates: Well, how come?

Waddell: I don't think I made baskets until my oldest daughter was a baby. She was three months old and I started making baskets and buying her little outfits. I'd get her a little outfit every week. I think I got 65 cents for a basket. Market basket. Of course, I thought that was big money, you know, back then.

Gates: This is after you got married and you had your . . .

Waddell: Huh?

Gates: What did you do in between that time? When you got married, where did you live?

Waddell: We lived down, way down in the country . . .

Gates: In Hart County?

Waddell: The post office was called Dog Creek. And that was down like, if you go through Cub Run on towards Wax. I don't know if you know that road or not. Well, hit 88 out of Munfordville and you'd stay on that road until you got to Wax, they called it, but then, before you got there, you'd turn off to the left a little ways and that's where the post office was.

Gates: Dog what?

Waddell: Huh?

Gates: What was it called?

Waddell: Dog Creek.

Gates: Dog Creek. So you lived in Dog Creek.

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: Why'd they call it Dog Creek? (Laughter, Gates)

Waddell: I don't know why they did. That was just the name of the post office.

Gates: So why did you marry this guy?

Waddell: Huh?

Gates: Why did you marry him?

Waddell: I don't know.

(Laughter, Gates)

Gates: How many kids did you have?

Waddell: Huh?

Gates: How many children did you have?

Waddell: I had five. I had twins. I got twin boys. They'll be 61 in March. March 9th. But we almost lost them when they were babies. We had them in the hospital and everything and they didn't get any better. Finally I got them out and took them over to my mom's and my husband he had been down to our house and come in and a friend of ours had told him about their son when he was a baby. () Baby's died with diarrhea and he told my husband what cured his was burnt whiskey. You poured it out in a saucer and then you set it on fire. Strike a match and set it on fire and burn the alcohol out and then you put a little water and sugar and then put it to the baby's. If it hadn't been for that one of them would have been gone by the next morning. He was that bad.

Gates: You tried it? You burnt the whiskey and tried it?

Waddell: Yea. So dad. He fixed it. He poured it out in a saucer and burned it. And then momma, she fixed it and fed it him and I'd say 30 minutes, you could tell a difference in him. Larry and Gary is their names. Larry was 22 minutes older than Gary.

Gates: Larry and Gary. That's a neat name (Laughter, Gates)

Waddell: Larry weighed seven pounds one ounce and Gary weighed seven pounds. I couldn't sit down or lay down or whatever. (Laughter, Waddell and Gates) And my oldest son, he died in year '65 I think.

Gates: What happened?

Waddell: And he worked this restaurant. There's a restaurant in () in Pine Ridge Hill. You know where that is? No? Well it's on 31 going to . . . before you get to Munfordville. And it's between Bonneyville **Bonnieville** and Munfordville. And I worked at that restaurant and that time and on this Tuesday night, I was off and he didn't have a way home. So he laid down in this old . . . the guy that ran the filling station wasn't there and then the other guy that worked there, he wasn't supposed to come in that night. And Gary . . . Earl was supposed to work all night, but then this other guy came in about 12 o'clock and relieved Earl. So he went and laid down in this old truck and it didn't have no muffler on it and all that smoke and fumes came up in there and that's what happened.

Gates: And he died from that, huh?

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: Oh, that's sad.

Waddell: Coldest time () he died on my oldest brother's birthday. Cold, nice **Cold n' ice** . . . road's were covered nice **in ice**. Snow. And we were remodeling our house. We had it all torn up at that time.

Gates: Was he living at home?

Waddell: Huh?

Gates: Was he living at home, Earl?

Waddell: Yea, he was living at home. But he was working and making money to buy him a car.

Gates: Yea.

Waddell: He said his dad told him he wanted him to work and get him a car.

Gates: I see those scissors has 2013 on it, what does that mean?

Waddell: Yea and that's when I bought it.

Gates: Oh you keep track of when you buy it your scissors?

Waddell: I got two more. I got one 14, one 12 and then those pink handled ones, those thing's are twenty some dollars.

Gates: Really?

Waddell: Yea, these were 8 or 9 something.

Gates: Are those special scissors?

Waddell: Yea ().

Gates: Where did you buy them?

Waddell: From Bethlehem **Beth** in the shop.

Gates: Ok okay.

Waddell: Have you ever been down to their shop?

Gates: You know, I went in for a little bit, but I didn't get to see the whole thing. Do they got a lot of supplies for basket makers?

Waddell: Uh huh. A lot of that reed stuff and they've got handles. All kinds of handles and hoops. About anything you would want, you know.

Gates: You didn't have all that when you were making them when you were little, did you?

Waddell: No, you had to do it yourself.

Gates: So there's been some new advancements over the years, huh? And things to use?

Waddell: Oh yea.

Gates: Did you like changing? Trying new things?

Waddell: I made several different kinds of baskets.

Gates: Well tell me why you started making baskets . . . when you married, you had children, did you say you taught in school at one time, or not?

Waddell: I worked at school. Twenty years.

Gates: What did you do?

Waddell: I don't know . . . I think my youngest daughter was in high school when I started working at school. Well I did work at the sewing factory.

Gates: Oh, you did?

Waddell: Yea. I worked in Horsecave. . .**Horse Cave**

Gates: A sewing factory, where is that?

Waddell: . . .for a long time and then I worked in Louisville Bedding.

Gates: What did you do there?

Waddell: Louisville Bedding? I surged mattress pads, like thye they put skirts on them and then when they brought the ends together, I had to surge the ends. Closing it.

Gates: Oh. So you've worked with your hands a lot, haven't you?

Waddell: Yea, I did.

Gates: Was that a selling point when you tried to get a job? That you knew how to make baskets and that you could work with your hands?

Waddell: Yea, well, when I was working at the sewing factory I was on five machines.

Gates: Five machines?

Waddell: They were on conveyors. And this lady sat like where you are and there were conveyors on each side of her. And she would get this line and another lady would get this one and you had to surge, go backwards and forwards and surge them.

Gates: What does that mean to surge?

Waddell: Well, they had surging machines and it closed the ends of the material like that. That had closed the ends and cut it smooth.

Gates: Oh, okay.

Waddell: You had to keep the bag fastened on the machine somehow with scraps to go in.

Gates: Were you pretty good at that?

Waddell: Yea, I made production.

Gates: Made production?

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: What does that mean?

Waddell: When they hired me, the boss said that I wouldn't be on a machine. At that time they were trimming the pads. They cut the pads, you know, the size of the bed. The mattress pads is what they were. And they made quilts too, but I don't know about the quilts, we didn't work on them. We just worked on the pads. And they had these big old scissors and you had to trim the () and you had to trim those corners round with the scissors. And I mean, your hands would really get sore. But anyway. He hired two more women with a high school education. Put them on those machines and they fooled with them for about two weeks and they let them go. I heard Shepherd, he was the high boss, day boss and Philip was the night boss. But they come out on

the floor one night and I was trimming and I heard Shepherd ask Philip said, "Where are those girls at that you hired?" And I just raised up, I was trimming, but you know, where they could see me. And he told Philip to take me over there and put me on the machine. We went over there and he got a bunch of little scraps, you know, training me and he sit there and sewed a while and showed me how to do it. Then he left and he said, "Well, you sit here and practice and I'll be back". So I did. I got started. When he got back I was surging pads. (Laughter, Waddell and Gates) He didn't know what to say.

Gates: So you went way ahead of him, huh?

Waddell: Yea. And then I don't know how long I worked. About three years, I think it was. And I had to have surgery. And I was off like four months before I could go back. I was in the hospital for about 23 days. Finally got able to go back. And then they put me . . . another girl had took my place. They promised I could have my same job back, but I didn't get it. So anyway.

Gates: Are you warm down here?

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: Do you mind talking about these old days?

Waddell: Huh?

Gates: Do you mind talking about these old days?

Waddell: (Laughter, Waddell) I don't mind. () down here doing laundry or something. And then on Sundays he comes down here and on Thursday we watch it upstairs and he watches down here. He likes it there on that old couch.

Gates: Yea, I watch too much T.V. Did you watch the super bowl?

Waddell: No. We don't watch much ball. Kentucky plays, we watch that.

Gates: Do you watch Kentucky?

Waddell: But that's about all we ever watch. My granddaughter, she's for the Reds. We tease her all the time.

Gates: Yeah. Well, you know that's where I'm from. Cincinnati, yes?

Waddell: (Laughter, Waddell) Yea.

Gates: When I was little, I used to go to Crosley Field with my dad and watch all the Reds.

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: You shouldn't tease her. (Laughter, Gates and Waddell)

Waddell: I don't reckon Kentucky's lost a game yet, so far.

Gates: Yep. Everybody's Kentucky crazy.

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: Back.

Waddell: Are you all getting hungry, do you want to eat something?

Gates: Well, I thought we'd go a little bit longer . . . are you hungry?

Waddell: No.

Gates: Okay, I thought we could go a little longer and then we could eat when we finish.

Waddell: Yea, okay, when you get done.

Gates: So Leona, you didn't make baskets for a while, but you did a lot of handiwork, right? You worked in factories where you used your hands.

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: What made you start doing baskets again?

Waddell: Well, I got tired of working at the sewing factory and I got a chance to get on at school. Cooking at school. So I worked five years at Hart County High and then I moved up here and I got . . . first year . . . well, I had to move pretty fast to get up here in time, get settled before school started. I moved in September and school started.

Gates: What school up here?

Waddell: I worked at Parkway the first year and then they were building New Highland. And I was about 5 minutes from the school. Just across the road. So I worked here at Parkway and I helped, I don't know (). Whoever needed me to help them.

Gates: Was your husband still around?

Waddell: Huh?

Gates: Was your husband still alive?

Waddell: No.

Gates: Okay.

Waddell: So I worked a year up there and the manager she said, "Now Parkway school's going to be open next year and whenever you want to transfer you can". And I said, "Well, I do". Because I just live across the road from it and I had to drive () up there. Anyways. I transferred down there and finished up twenty years. I was going to work one more year. I retired in '96, but I had two weeks before school was out, I had to have gallbladder surgery and then I couldn't go back because I couldn't lift all that stuff.

Gates: Yea, I had that too.

Waddell: I didn't have to lift fifty pounds of sugar or fifty pounds of flour or whatever. Of course, I had a partner, but every time I needed her she was way off on the other end or somewhere and I'd have to just . . . I'd just get it on my knee and pitch it up on the table, empty it up and pour it.

Gates: What year did you move up here?

Waddell: Year 80.

Gates: 1980? And your husband died in '79?

Waddell: Yea. Well, yea. I lived a year down there. Munfordville. I lived in Munfordville. Right across the railroad track, we built a new house up there.

Gates: Why did you decide to move up here from Munfordville?

Waddell: I just wanted to move.

Gates: And you had worked in the school system down there and so you wanted to keep doing it up here.

Waddell: I worked 5 years down there. Hart County High.

Gates: You were a cook, huh?

Waddell: Huh?

Gates: You were a cook in the school?

Waddell: Uh huh.

Gates: Did you like that?

Waddell: Yea, I didn't mind it. I didn't like the manager. We got rid of her. (Laughter, Gates and Waddell) She was a big, old, fat, colored lady. She carried off stuff. This other lady that worked there, she did her dirty work for her, she'd get stuff ready for her to carry home. See, we had to take turns taking dish towels home and doing them.

Gates: Oh, washing them at home?

Waddell: Yea. So whenever, Gertrude was her name, would come her turn to go home, why you're liable to see a whole turkey laying in her basket or these big cans of tuna fish, stuff like that. Gallons of corn, beans, whatever.

Gates: So when did you decide to go making baskets again? After you retired?

Waddell: No, I made them while I was working at school. I don't know.

Gates: You did. You made them while you were working at school.

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: Okay. That's back in the 80s then, right? Were you selling them to people?

Waddell: I don't think I . . . I didn't make any until I moved to E-town. And I don't know how I could . . . well, I think () started. Well, momma was still making them.

Gates: She was?

Waddell: And I went down there and spent a week with her. We were off school a week of something. And I went and stayed a week with her and I got to making . . . I made three magazines that week. Got \$25 a piece for them. I got one up there I can show you.

Gates: Magazine basket?

Waddell: Uh huh.

Gates: Made it to hold magazines, huh?

Waddell: Yea, well it's full of flowers, but it's a magazine basket. It's like, you've seen these flower baskets at funeral homes and places. You make a big round piece and then you fold it up and put a handle in it. And then it's kind of oblong and this end ended up like that.

Gates: So you went home and you made three of those with your mom.

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: Was she making money doing that?

Waddell: I think I made \$25 a piece, got \$25 a piece for them. My husband's brother in lowlaw bought them. He was making baskets at that time. () And so, I don't know, seemed like he bought a few of momma's baskets, but Leroy AlveeAlvey, most of the time, bought momma's baskets.

Gates: Leroy AlveeAlvey, I've heard of him.

Waddell: Yea, he lives over in Cave City. He's got a shop over there on that road. And he bought my sister's baskets when she lived down in Horse Ccave. I think that's where she lived, don't think it was either when she made them.

Gates: So she made baskets too.

Waddell: She made small baskets.

Gates: So after you made those three magazine baskets, you decided to start making them again?

Waddell: Yea, I reckon I just took the fever. (Laughter, Waddell) I started making them and then, I don't know how come it started at the fair. But I made one and took it to the fair. I don't even know how I got started that.

Gates: What fair? The Hart County fair?

Waddell: Uh huh. So I went and took it. And Beth. That's how I met Beth.

Gates: Okay. Tell me about that.

Waddell: So they had this tent up down there. Just the top, you know, and it's all open. And that's where they started with the basket contest until they built a building up there and had it up there. Well, I had that one basket and I took it and of course won first place. (Laughter, Waddell) I reckon it just gave me the fever, you know. I thought, "Well, next time I'll make it a little better you know". Keep trying to get them a little better, you know. And then I won first place every year then. I've won best in show a lot of the times. But they have to divide it up amongst all the makers. But I got it most times.

Gates: Why did you win?

Waddell: Because it was the best work.

Gates: Even the first time it was the best work? How did you get your work to be that good?

Waddell: Well, I was always the type, if I did something, I did it the best I could, you know. I took pains with it and I just like for it to be good, you know, whatever I did. My sister, she would say, "Well, you take too much pains with them", you know, well, that's where it put me at today, you know? Everybody said, well they've never seen baskets with as fine of work, you know. Little fine work.

Gates: When you won the first year were you doing fine work then?

Waddell: Yea, it was pretty good., but I've still got it a little finer, you know.

Gates: Now, a lot of people up there in Hart County make baskets. A lot families make them, but they're not too many people who make it like yours, do they?

Waddell: No. Everybody that's bought my baskets said they've never seen no one that had ever come up with them.

Gates: Did you move toward that or did you start making them fine?

Waddell: Well, it's like I said, it's just each year, I try to make them a little nicer, you know?

Gates: Does Doctor Middleton have one of your first baskets?

Waddell: I've taught several people. I've taught several people and if they didn't do it, like I told them, they'd take it out and do it over. If they didn't take it out, I did.

(Laughter, Gates)

Gates: Who did you teach?

Waddell: Huh?

Gates: Who did you teach?

Waddell: Oh, I taught a lot of people. Taught Beth.

Gates: Beth Hester, you taught her?

Waddell: And I taught Brent and I taught two ladies from Missouri and I taught a guy over in Litchfield. Well, I probably could have made him two baskets. He promised everyday he'd say, well he worked at some factory over there, he gets off about two weeks in June every year. Well, he's kind of in a hard place, had a family. His wife, she was expecting again and was having a hard time, she's having a hard time () to the hospital. And I just, you know, well, he belongs to our church too. And I just felt sorry for him and helped him for nothing, you know. I didn't charge him anything. And he'd tell me everyday, he'd say now if you never need any timber you just let him know. And that went on and finally we got him two baskets made. He said he wasn't going to sell umhim, but he did sell one, because he needed the money. \$375 he got for it.

Gates: Pretty good. Isn't it?

Waddell: Well, I'll get \$550 for this.

Gates: \$550 for that?

Waddell: Uh huh. And, anyway. He went back to work and it got close to Christmas time and I had to get some baskets made for Christmas, somebody anyway. I called him two or three times and then I saw him at a friend's house at a birthday dinner and I asked him, I said, "Aaron". He was going down the steps to the basement. A bunch of them were going down there to look at something. And I hollered at him and I said, "Have you been to the woods yet?" "No, I haven't had time" And that was the end of it, I never bothered him anymore. He never did get me any timber. I taught one lady, her and Beth came one time when I lived up in the apartment, I forgot what her name . . . she had a funny name. And she lived () and she had two adopted colored children. But she ended up, I think, getting divorced and movedloved to Lexington last I knew. But anyway, I taught her.

Gates: Well, have you been pretty proud of the people you taught?

Waddell: Yea, most of them.

Gates: The ones that . . . did they go on and do pretty good.

Waddell: I taught Sam and Jerry.

Gates: Sam and Jerry, your son in law and your daughter.

Waddell: He said that was his first basket and then that was her first one.

Gates: Those ones on the floor there, okay.

Waddell; Uh huh.

Gates: The bigger one's his?

Waddell: Then they made another one a piece, but they sold . . . Dr. Middleton bought them. They gave each other those.

Gates: Oh did they? Presents to each other, that's nice. Well, we gave you a grant one time to do an apprenticeship, didn't we?

Waddell: Uh huh.

Gates: Who did you teach for that one?

Waddell: I think so.

Gates: What's her name? I can't remember her name right now.

Waddell: Huh?

Gates: You taught somebody who had made willow baskets before.

Waddell: Charlene Long.

Gates: Charlene Long.

Waddell: Yea. She lives between Uptown and Bonneyville **Bonnieville**, but she lives back on the back roads somewhere. And then I called her and helped her make two and then the last year, well, her and Charlie together, that's her husband, they made a white oak basket, did a pretty good job on it. She won first place on it.

Gates: How important is that contest to you?

Waddell: Huh?

Gates: How important is that contest that doctor **Dr.** Middleton does?

Waddell: Well, pretty good.

Gates: You already said it made you want to keep going, right?

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: So you want to win that don't you?

Waddell: He wants my baskets every year. But then, see I didn't know how they did. I didn't know that he always got the first prize baskets. I guess his second year, I had them in there. Well, there's a guy from Lexington, he worked at a horse farm and he was down there and he was asking me about my baskets and he wanted to buy them and everything. Well, he left and was gone quite a while. Finally, he came back and came over **and** sat down by me and my granddaughter and we were waiting for the show to start, you know, contest. And he said, "Well, I'm going to buy your baskets" and I think I got \$125 a piece for them then. And said, "Well". So he started pulling the money out of his shirt pocket and gave me the money for them. I think I

had two or three. Well, I talked to Middleton's wife and she got kind of ill about it because I let him have mine. I didn't know the program, anyway.

Gates: So the program is that if you win first prize, he buys them from you, right?

Waddell: Yea, he gets all the first prize.

Gates: But he buys it right, he doesn't just give it, you don't give it to him.

Waddell: No! He buys them.

Gates: He buys them, yea. So he would have given you the same amount of money, right?

Waddell: Oh yea.

Gates: But you didn't realize that, so she was a little angry about that, huh?

Waddell: I didn't realize that, you know, they didn't tell me how the program was or whatever.

Gates: Oh, that's okay, you learned, right?

Waddell: Well, anyway, she told my granddaughter, she said "Well, we'd have paid her more than that for them". I'd have been happy to get it if I would have known, (Laughter, Waddell) you know?

Gates: Oh, that's fine. Dr. Middleton has most of your baskets thought doesn't he? If you went over . . .

Waddell: He's bought them every year

Gates: He's bought them every year, so they're all over . . .

Waddell: Sometimes three or four.

Gates: Really? (Laughter, Gates)

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: Do you think that's important that he does that? That he has that . . .

Waddell: I think the year before last I brought home about \$2,100. What he buys and then I sell the rest of them. And other people buy them.

Gates: Wow. That's pretty good.

Waddell: I always do good.

Gates: Did you have a hard time making your price more?

Waddell: Well, Beth and Scott, they got me going with a better price.

Gates: They did, what did they say?

Waddell: See, Curtis Alvee Alvey, he was buying them for a little to nothing. He's go to New York to these shows and they said, now these women that live in E-town told me about it and asked me if I knew about it and I said no. And she said they'll say here comes the best basket maker in Hart County or in Kentucky and he'd come out there with my baskets on his arm and in his hands and take the prize for my baskets. So I found out about it and I quit letting him have them.

Gates: Did you say anything to him?

Waddell: No, I didn't say anything to him about it. See, he'd take orders and no telling what he made on them. He had bought one about this size, I might of got \$25 for it, I don't know if I got that much, but anyway, he sold it for \$100. There was some people coming from Indiana, down through there and he wouldn't tell anybody where I lived or my address or phone number and this lady she tried to find out where I lived and he told her that I lived in another county and I just lived across the road from him.

Gates: Yea, I heard about that.

Waddell: I soon cut off letting him have them. And then it got started ().

Gates: So how did Beth help you out then?

Waddell: Well, she told me, they told me the prices . . . that I wasn't getting enough for them.

Gates: But to get those prices, you had to sell them yourself, right?

Waddell: Yea, and then she got to making me brochures and putting the prices on them.

Gates: So she helped make the brochures and then people started buying them directly from you.

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: And you were getting the price that you felt good about.

Waddell: I'd get orders from . . . They call me from everywhere. But this basket . . . I've got ten baskets to make now.

Gates: You've got ten baskets to make?

Waddell: Yea. They order two at a time These three women, and I still don't know, I forgot where they were from.

Gates: How do you make up the price?

Waddell: How do I make up the prices?

Gates: Yea,. How do you know what they're worth?

Waddell: I don't make them up. I just go with what Beth and them . . .

Gates: Oh, okay. What they recommend?

Waddell: Yea, it's on the brochures. I don't know if I have one. . .

Gates: What I mean is, I mean you started out \$25 a basket, now they're \$500 and you probably raised the price over the years, a couple times right? Is it because you know how much work you're putting into it?

Waddell: Yea. I had a certain price until last year or the year before and then I started raising the price more. Everybody was telling me that I was giving them away. And Dr. Middleton's sister told me, she said, "You don't get enough for your baskets" . Herself.

Gates: Well, good. It's good to have people do that for you, right?

Waddell: Oh, yea.

Gates: Let you know what's going on.

Waddell: Then the last brochures Beth made, they're really expensive.

Gates: Really?

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: And you're still getting lots of orders, right?

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: Do you have one in the Smithsonian? A Basket?

Waddell: Huh?

Gates: Do you have a basket up in Washington?

Waddell: Yea. What is it? What do they call that place?

Gates: Oh, the Smithsonian?

Waddell: Yea. I got a basket in there. And then Billy Ray Sams, I helped him make two or three, but the first one that we made, what's his name . . . Cole is his last name. I can't think of his first name. So he saw Billy Ray somewhere with the basket and Billy Ray lived in Alabama. So I don't know how come him down there, but anyway. He sold that basket and he bought it. Gave Billy Ray \$700 for it. He put it in there. See, that's closed 'til . . . it might be open next year. They were going to close it for two years. They were going to remodel.

Gates: What?

Waddell: Up there at that place in Washington.

Gates: Oh, Smithsonian?

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: Oh, okay. Who is Billy Ray?

Waddell: He's a guy from Alabama. He's a single guy. I think he was married when he was young, but he does a lot of filming and a lot of stuff like that and he also makes baskets. I taught him how to . . . when he'd get one started and he couldn't get it fixed, he'd bring it up here and have me to help him work it out.

Gates: Did he ever do a film about you?

Waddell: Huh?

Gates: Did he ever do a video about you?

Waddell: Yea, he took a lot of pictures and stuff. Yea.

Gates: So it sounds like you have had a lot of people who have helped you out. Set your prices and talk about you and stuff out there.

Waddell: Oh, yea. A lot of local people that I've even forgot about, that I've made baskets for. And then sometimes they'll say, "Well, I've got one of your baskets" and I had forgot about, you know.

Gates: And the Folk Life program, when I was working there . . .

Waddell: A lot of people want to buy them too and they don't want to pay anything for them. There's this one lady at church, she asked me about them, we didn't talk much about it at church and then she called me one day and she said she wanted to know how much they were, you know. I told the prices. Well, what she wanted was from like \$200 and something. And she said, "Well, that's kind of high, I thought I could get something for about \$100". And I said, "Well, I'm sorry, I don't make anything for \$100". So I never did hear anymore from her. (Laughter, Gates) Three women had come, I made them all one that was about that big. I don't know, it was a while before Christmas and they came and got them and then they ordered the next size up. So I got to make theirs. And I guy came down () she called and ordered two. This guy in E-town, he ordered two and his sister order one. And this guy from Pennsylvania, this lady in Pennsylvania, I've got to make her one. It's a medium size, it'd be about that big.

Gates: So that's why you got plastic on the floor, so you can drop all that on the floor, huh? Make a mess.

Waddell: Well, I kept it in that box most of the time. (Laughter, Gates)

Gates: Who cleans up after you?

Waddell: But, I keep it swept up, I don't let it. . . That's the reason I put this down, so I could keep it all, without going off of the thing.

Gates: Well, let me talk about the little ones you got there. Can you bring one of those up for a minute?

Waddell: Huh?

Gates: One of those little ones next to you?

Waddell: Oh, these? This is a size they ordered. But then the ones I made them were smaller than that.

Gates: Like those little ones up at the top there. That's okay, you can hold them up there.

Waddell: Oh, you just wanted me to hold them.

Gates: Just wanted them for the camera, yea.

Waddell: Oh, okay.

Gates: Are those considered miniature baskets?

Waddell: I'd say so, yea.

Gates: And then the little ones, what are those called?

Waddell: Well, that would probably be called more like a miniature basket.

Gates: Oh okay. Is it harder to make little ones than it is big ones?

Waddell: Oh, yea. Takes a lot more time to make them.

Gates: So, the little ones cost more, shouldn't they? Or do they?

Waddell: Well, they run from about \$250 up. I charged \$150, \$250 for the last little ones that I made, and then they ordered this size and I said, "Well, now they'll be higher". They wanted to know how much higher and I said, "I don't know yet, until I make them. They'll either be \$250 or \$275".

Gates: What would your mom think about those baskets?

Waddell: Oh, she loved them.

Gates: Did she like little ones? Did she make little ones?

Waddell: She liked the fancy ones. But she passed away before I really got . . . () But I made a little one, but my son, he wanted it, he thought she made it and he wanted it, so I gave it to him and he thought momma made it, but she didn't. I said, "No, I made it". She just bought it. I was working on it and one of my brother's come over there and I was down there at momma's, she was sick at that time. And I was down there with her and I was working on it and he wanted to know how much I wanted for it and I said, "\$25 dollars" then, you know, I thought that . . . "\$25 dollars!", he said, "Well, I'm not going to pay \$25 dollars for that". And momma she spoke up and she said, "Well, I will" she said, "I want it". So she was willing to pay me \$25 dollars for it. And then she kept it until she got ready to break up housekeeping and then I brought it home.

Gates: Well, that was pretty good for her to say that, wasn't it?

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: She liked your stuff, didn't she?

Waddell: Oh, she did, yes.

Gates: Was she proud of you?

Waddell: She thought it was perfect.

Gates: She thought it was perfect.

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: Well, I guess I was asking was, when your mom was making it to sell to tourists, they probably wanted bigger baskets than little ones, didn't they?

Waddell: Yea, yea, they did. They didn't know about all these little ones, back then.

Gates: They didn't. That's why I was wondering. When did people start liking little ones?

Waddell: Well, just later years really.

Gates: When you started making them?

Waddell: Well, I guess when they started the fair, I'd say, about when the little ones started. There's an old lady over in Litchfield, she makes them. Last year, she brought four big, black garbage bags full of baskets. Made of maple and stuff like that, it wouldn't last no time, more awful shapes you ever saw, lopsided and everything.

Gates: She brought them to the fair?

Waddell: Yea. Dr. Middleton, he finally bought one. And then she makes a whole bunch of little bitsy ones and she'll put them on a string.

Gates: Oh, yea. I think my wife looked at one of those. They're not very good though, is that what you're saying? Because she doesn't put a lot of time in them?

Waddell: Yea, she has to make that many.

Gates: But each individual one, does she do a good job on or no?

Waddell: No.

Gates: When there's a folk art form like this, folklorists like myself, like Brent and I, we talk about the aesthetics of it. What makes it good. What are you aiming for when you make it? What are the aesthetics for you, what makes a good basket to you?

Waddell: Well, it depends on your wood and your workmanship. And the time and the patience that you take with it. It takes time and patience if you make it good.

Gates: And what makes it good? I mean, you're looking at it to look a certain way? Show me that basket there . . .

Waddell: Like that for instance. Look at how fine the splits are in that one.

Gates: This one here?

Waddell: Look how fine the splits are.

Gates: And so if you see somebody else who tries to copy you and doesn't have good splits, you can see that right away, can't you?

Waddell: And nobody hides the ends of their splits much. Know when to lap them.

Gates: When you lap one before and you put the glue on it?

Waddell: When I lap my splits, I pull them through to the edge, just before it gets to the edge of that rib, and I glue them. There isn't a way for them to come out. There isn't a way of seeing them.

Gates: And you can't see them anymore, because they are continuous. But you're saying some people just let it . . .

Waddell: Some people, you see every lap and everything.

Gates: And that's important to you?

Waddell: Oh yea.

Gates: Are those the kind that you would through~~throw~~ away?

Waddell: I've had them to look for the ends. I've had them look for the ends and they couldn't find them. (Laughter, Gates) How do you get all that work in there and you don't ever see where you slice it?

Gates: You'd have to have a tree that was like a hundred feet long, wouldn't you? (Laughter, Gates and Waddell)

Waddell: No, you couldn't work with it that long. But, I mean, you know, if I've got good timber I like to work on them. I like to make them.

Gates: Do you see in your mind, what the basket is going to look like before you start on it? You know what it's going to look like right?

Waddell: Well, I'm hoping what it will look like. (Laughter, Waddell and Gates) Yea. Because it depends a lot on your timber, you know. If you can work with it.

Gates: Do they always come out the way you think they're going to come out when you first start?

Waddell: Well, pretty much.

Gates: What would make you throw a basket away that you're working on?

Waddell: Huh?

Gates: If you were working on a basket and it didn't work, look good, would you throw it away, take it apart?

Waddell: I just take it apart and redo it if it's . . . yea.

Gates: How much work would you lose doing that?

Waddell: Like, if I'm weaving and the splits break or whatever or if they don't look right, I just rip them out and do more.

Gates: I know one of your apprentices said that you made her do that and it was hard on her to do that.

(Laughter, Waddell)

Gates: I think Beth said that. (Laughter, Gates)

Waddell: Beth said I was a mean teacher.

Gates: She thought you were a mean teacher?

Waddell: She thought I was a mean teacher?

Gates: How is Beth? Does she do a pretty good job with hers?

Waddell: Yea. Pretty Good. She can do good, if she takes her pains with it. She's got one little basket she started, she never has got it finished and we were up . . . well, Brent had us up in Louisville back in the summer demonstrating one day.

Gates: Demonstrating in Louisville?

Waddell: And she had that little old basket and she said "Well, I take it everywhere I go and I never do get it done". So she had tried to put some ribs in and she put them all in the wrong place. And she got busy talking to somebody and I took her basket and looked at it and I ripped out some of the ribs and redone them and stuck them in where they belong, you know. She said, "I saw you redoing those ribs". (Laughter, Gates)

Gates: Was she mad?

Waddell: No. She's glad I do it, you know. I explain it out if she doesn't understand it.

Gates: So, the craftsmanship is important. Are the colors important to you, that you use?

Waddell: Yea, well anymore, I don't use . . . I just use the heart part of the tree.

Gates: That's the heart part of the tree?

Waddell: That's the heart part of the tree. That's what everybody wants now.

Gates: So you didn't color it or anything.

Waddell: Uh uh.

Gates: That's a very natural look.

Waddell: Yea, it's all natural.

Gates: So it's the heart part and you save those pieces when you're weaving that, so you can get those pieces in there?

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: If somebody came to you and said, "I want the basket to look like this. I want this color in it and this color and this color" and you didn't like that, would you do it, or would you try to talk them out of that?

Waddell: Well, yea, I would do it if they wanted different colors. Now Curtis one time, he ordered one, he ordered it for somebody and he had four or five different colors. I know four colors. He wanted a peach color and there isn't no way of getting that . . . I mean there's a color peach color but not for wood, you know. Material and stuff, you can get in peach.

Gates: Let me ask you, when we did the Folk Festival and you came up to Frankfort a couple times. Did you like that?

Waddell: Yea. Well, we were up there a couple times in Lexington a time or two.

Gates: I remember having a big tent out there at the festival and having a bunch of basket makers there. You guys were all there. That was fun wasn't it?

Waddell: A bunch of the Childers'. They've all about quit. Well, they all have quit, except, I think one of the young boys is trying to get started. He made one and had it at the fair last year. And then he had one since then. I think Beth and Scott bought it.

Gates: So what are you doing now with that piece? You're going to put that all the way through?

Waddell: Yea. I've got to fill this out across here.

Gates: Oh my gosh, you do?

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: You've got to run it all the way underneath, up and down all those?

Waddell: Just over the top, you don't have to do it under there. See, it looks like this when you get done. The stop will look like that.

Gates: How do you get those little curves in there?

Waddell: You'll just have to see it done. (Laughter, Waddell)

Gates: So you're pulling that up and bringing in every other one?

Waddell: Yea, you drop back one every time.

Gates: Drop back one.

Waddell: A lot of people they want to come watch me work on them.

Gates: They will?

Waddell: They want to come watch me work.

Gates: Oh yea, so they can learn?

Waddell: No, they just want to see how it's done.

Gates: Well, I guess that's what we're doing.

Waddell: Well, the thing of it is thought, Bob, they could come here and sit everyday for a week and they wouldn't know no more the day they left than they did when they came. Just seeing it done, you know. They would say, "Well, I just don't see how you do it".

Gates: Because they didn't do it themselves. You've got in there and actually use your fingers and do it and see it. Yea, I've been working with you guys for years. . .

Waddell: And then some people, I don't think they could ever learn.

Gates: I don't think I could. Brent's pretty good at that isn't he?

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: For a folklorist.

Waddell: He doesn't make any anymore, I don't reckon. He's got a thing over . . .

Gates: A museum?

Waddell: Museum over in Bowling Green.

Gates: Mark told me to say hi. Remember Mark don't you?

Waddell: Oh yea.

Gates: I talked to him yesterday.

Waddell: Did you?

Gates: Now, who is going to carry this on for you?

Waddell: I have no idea. My youngest daughter, she lives by () Indiana, and she had got Gary's son and they were going to come down in August and she talked Gary into trying to make one, but he's got a crippled hand that he got, he was helping my brother saw mill () and my brother had him up at the end by the saw and my brother was on the other end. Well, my brother dropped his end and this end flew up and Gary's hand came down, that saw hit him. Took it out across there. Lost those knuckles, this was hanging on by air. It was awful. So he's got a cripple hand. I don't know, I asked him if he thought he could whittle and he said, well he thought he could, he does everything. He retired last summer.

Gates: That's one of your twins?

Waddell: Yea. He retired last summer. The company he worked for in Louisville, they sold to another company and they offered him a good retirement. He said it's almost as much as he's making. And of course, he's got that 401K or whatever, different things. And he's got a nice garage and he works in there for people and cars now, since he retired. He stays busy.

Gates: So he might learn.

Waddell: I'm trying to show you how . . . I mean I wanted to show you.

Gates: So you're working on two right now. And one is a little bit back farther than the other one, is that what you're saying?

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: That's why it's going to give that motion look to it?

Waddell: Uh huh.

Gates: Oh okay. How'd you learn that? From your mom?

Waddell: I just learned it on my own.

Gates: Did you? Now, you know what I mean when I say Hart County basket making tradition, right?

Waddell: Uh huh.

Gates: It's a tradition that grew in families and everything. Do you feel like yours is part of that or it's changed so much, it's not really a tradition of its own.

Waddell: Well, I guess mine's a different version, you know, then what was made back then.

Gates: Because it's got a lot of you in it, right? Do you always work on three at a time like that?

Waddell: No.

Gates: You're just going to show us, I was wondering.

Waddell: I'm just trying to get enough to show you how it looks like that.

Gates: Oh okay, so it's making different lengths in between there. That's beautiful.

Waddell: When I get done that will be all the way over here.

Gates: Now, some of those basket makers in the old days before your mom they would say, well those baskets don't hold very much, do they?

Waddell: No. (Laughter, Gates)

Gates: What would you say to that?

Waddell: Well, I don't know. I've heard some of them say that my baskets would hold water, you know.

Gates: That's a good sign, isn't it?

Waddell: Yea. One of those three women, I call them, she ordered a market basket, but I don't think I'm going to try to make it. They're really hard to make. It takes a lot of grip. The way my hands are . . .

Gates: What kind of basket is this?

Waddell: That's what I call a market basket.

Gates: No, the basket that you're making right now.

Waddell: I'll show you when we go upstairs.

Gates: This is an egg basket, right?

Waddell: Yea.

Gates: A miniature basket or?

Waddell: That's an egg basket pattern, this is.

Gates: You could put robin eggs in there, couldn't you?

Waddell: Uh huh. (Laughter, Gates) I got a little basket made that will be in my casket.

Gates: Do you?

Waddell: Yea. I got my funeral already paid, everything's done. Kids won't have to do anything. There's a piece, you know how the lid stands up and there's a piece about that big of a square and it's got a verse on there. But I can't remember all the verse but at the bottom it says, "And

this is my work". And that little basket will be sitting there at the end of that. Of course, some of them will take it out, but they won't bury it with me.

Gates: Oh, they won't?

Waddell: No.

Gates: I thought you might want to take it with you.

Waddell: No.

Gates: You say you had that basket set aside?

Waddell: I've got one set up there in that China cabinet, that I've had a long time. I told my granddaughter, she could have those. Jerry said, "Well, they keep asking who is going to get that little basket". I said the only thing I know is we'll have to draw numbers to see who gets it. (Laughter, Waddell and Gates)

Gates: How small was it? Like this?

Waddell: Yea. It's between those two up there, I'd say. The size between those two.

Gates: Those look very hard to make.

Waddell: I'll show you when we go up there.

Gates: That's really hard to make those small ones right?

Waddell: Yea, they are.

Gates: It seems like they should cost more, since they're harder to make. Do they?

Waddell: They should be the same price as the big ones, really. This is going on the third week I'm in on this thing.

Gates: How many hours do you work at it a day?

Waddell: Of course, I don't work eight hours a day, you know. I have other stuff I have to do. I have to do a lot of laundry and odds and ends.

Gates: What is your working day like?

Waddell: But then I make up time at night, I work until 8:30 or quarter to nine, you know? But I'm going to have to quit that. My eyes are getting . . . messing up on me.

Gates: Do you need the money now or are you doing okay with your social security and everything?

Waddell: Oh yea. I don't have to make these baskets. I'd live without it.

Gates: So why do you make them?

Waddell: Just because I like to make them. (Laughter, Waddell) I like to bring in those checks, you know. I'm just saving up the money and let the kids fuss over it. (Laughter, Waddell and Gates) No, they won't fuss.

Gates: Is it kind of making up for what you didn't have when you were little?

Waddell: Yea. Well, it's a pastime. I can't just sit around and do nothing. I've got to be busy. I raise a big garden every year. Do my canning, all that stuff. Year before last, I canned 113 or 114 kinds of green beans. Last year I canned 70 something, but I had several left from the year before. I make pickles. I make relish. Make kKraut.

Gates: So you have to fit in time for all that, too.

Waddell: I freeze my corn.

Gates: So you have to fit in some time in your day for all that too? What's more important, the baskets or the . . . ?

Waddell: But I don't know how well I'm going to do this time. I've got a bad hip. Couple years ago I was picked cucumbers and I raised up, my left popped and it's given me problems ever since then. I don't know if something is broke about it or if it's out of place or what.

Gates: You didn't show it to a doctor?

Waddell: I haven't yet.

Gates: When was this? Two years ago?

Waddell: Uh huh.

Gates: Oh. But you've have knee replacements right?

Waddell: Yea. Both of them. Both hands. Cut the top of my stomach to the bottom.

Gates: For what?

Waddell: My first surgery.

Gates: What was that?

Waddell: Well, I had a hysterectomy and then I had a hernia that ran up in here. And I have problems under both ribs. My short rib, now. I can't twist certain ways. If I do, it hurts so bad.

Gates: What do you think you got all those from?

Waddell: And I had breast cancer.

Gates: You had breast cancer too?

Waddell: And then I had a cancer this big on my back, right by my spine and the cut me all across . . . clean across my back to get that back together. He had to cut out (). I've have 11 surgeries.

Gates: Whoa. You don't think that basket making caused any of them did they?

Waddell: No.

Gates: Well, is there anything else you'd like to say?

Waddell: No, I think I've said enough. (Laughter, Waddell) That's all I know to say.

Gates: If somebody came in and said, "You can't make baskets anymore", what would you do?

Waddell: Huh?

Gates: If somebody came in, like a doctor and said, "You can't make baskets anymore", what would you do?

Waddell: I didn't quite understand you.

Gates: I said if a doctor came and said, "Leona, I don't want you to make any more baskets", would you do that?

Waddell: I don't know. Depends on how I felt. If I felt like making them, I'd probably make them.

Gates: Because it makes you feel good, right?

Waddell: I mean, you know, if I didn't. . . The time will come when I won't feel like making them, you know. And I feel like my hands probably will give out on me.

Gates: Does it make you feel good to know that other people learn from you? That are making baskets?

Waddell: Oh yea. I'd be glad to teach anybody if they'd try to learn. But the thing of it is, when you try to tell them and I make a pattern. I whittle out the pattern and everything and I say, "Now this is the way you have to do it". For instance, here's a little old rib. It's called a flat rib. It's these right here and I put six of them in and I put six small, I call them round ribs or short ribs, whatever. But this is what you call a flat rib and that's what you stick in first. What you put in there. Like when you make this burr, you stick that rib right there first. Right beside your handle and you just judge them out. You get six in there on each side. And then you weave it this much, like where this dark is, you weave it that much and you put two of these short ribs in at the time. And then you weave that until it gets up so far and then you put in two more and you do that until you get six of them in. And then you're ready to weave that on in. And you have to make this little rib put on top there. And then of course, on the handle.

Gates: How long does it take somebody to really learn what you do?

Waddell: Huh?

Gates: How long would it take somebody to learn all the stuff that you're doing in that one basket. Couple years, you think?

Waddell: Well, they should learn . . . Well, it depends on how much interest they put in, you know, and how bad they want to learn.

Gates: So they've kind of got to have heart to do it.

Waddell: The main thing if they can whittle. So many people can't whittle.

Gates: How do you learn how to whittle?

Waddell: Well, you just take a knife and you start whittling.

Gates: And that's a real task right there. To get your whittle right, yea? It's not just the weaving part. It's the cutting it and weaving it.

Waddell: Jerry (Laughter, Waddell) she'll get mad, you know and she thought she () just like I did, you know. And she'd say, "Well, you make it look so easy" and I said, "Well, it's not hard" you know, of course it was for her.

Gates: Because you've got it working the way you need to work it for you over the years, right?

Waddell: And she'd help take it out sometimes, but she did a good job on them. She said after she retired she might get back into making some.

Gates: Did that make you happy?

Waddell: She'll be . . . yea. She'll be 64 in June. I think she's going to try to work until she's 65, I think.

Gates: Well, Leona. Thank you.

Waddell: What did you say?

Gates: I said thank you.

Waddell: Well you're welcome.

Gates: There's a lot more questions I could probably ask you, but we've gone two hours now.

Waddell: I've enjoyed talking to you, whether it amounted to anything or not. (Laughter, Waddell and Gates)

Gates: Never know if it's going to amount to anything. Is it okay with you if we put this in the archives and other people can look at this and use it for educational purposes?

Waddell: Fine by me.

Gates: Okay. We might do an exhibit. We're supposed to do an exhibit in Lexington. Not about baskets, just about a lot of people who work with their hands and I want you to be in there with that.

Waddell: I wish you could go . . . I guess you've been to Gatlinburg (tape cuts out)

END OF INTERVIEW