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Listening For A Life

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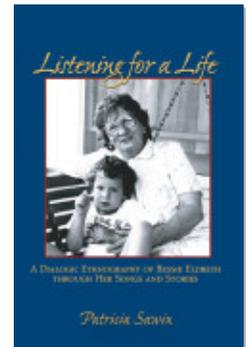
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TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

In transcribing Eldreth's stories and her conversations with me and other partners I have employed the following conventions to render oral communication into print.

- . A period indicates falling intonation and brief pause (as at the end of a declarative sentence).
- ? A question mark indicates rising intonation (as at the end of an interrogative sentence), whether or not the phrase is a grammatical interrogative.
- [that] Brackets indicate words that the speaker did not actually say but that I have inserted to complete the sense or descriptions of accompanying nonverbal activity, such as laughter or hand motions.
- [plate?] Brackets with a question mark indicate a word or words that I cannot hear clearly on the tape. This is my best guess at making sense of what was said.
- . . . Ellipsis indicates a pause, especially within a sentence or phrase when the sense carries across the temporal disjuncture (for example, a pause as if searching for a name or particular word).
- [. . .] Bracketed ellipsis indicates an omission in my subsequent quotation of excerpts from a text.
- | A vertical line indicates an abrupt break in sense or syntactical flow, which may be, but usually is not, marked by a short pause, as when Eldreth repeats a word, corrects or amplifies a phrase before she has completed it, or changes the topic or her approach to it in midsentence.
- //oh// Double slash marks indicate simultaneous or overlapping speech of two participants.
- but— A dash at the end of turn at talk indicates speaker breaking off because interrupted. (If the speaker takes up the same phrase after the interruption, the beginning of that turn at talk is marked with another dash.)
- bu— A dash following an incomplete word indicates a midword interruption.
- italics* Italics indicate emphatic vocal stress.

In representing pronunciation I strive to enable readers to hear the sound and rhythm of Eldreth's voice, while being mindful to avoid stereotypical or negative representations of "Appalachian dialect." In instances where Eldreth's practice is consistent with broad patterns in informal American English—for example, the so-called dropped *g* at the end of progressive tenses or "till" rather than "until"—I simply employ standard spelling for all speakers. In instances where shortened forms have an impact on the flow of Eldreth's speech, however, I have chosen to represent contractions such as "em" (them), "bout" (about), and "cause" (because). I retain distinctive regional grammatical constructions, such as "a-walking" and "hit" for "it" in emphatic positions when Eldreth employs them, and have represented occasional distinctive pronunciations, like "young'uns" and "Papaw," that would seem stilted or distorted if "corrected" toward some supposed standard. I similarly represent repetitions and false starts in Eldreth's storytelling, both because I want to capture the effect of an informal oral narration and because disfluencies are occasionally significant. I have silently excised listeners' frequent minimal responses in order to speed and facilitate reading but have included listeners' more explicit comments and questions where these are important to the sense of the passage or germane to the analysis offered. Since my analyses focus on the discourses and themes in the stories or on reported speech that is clearly demarcated and attributed to other speakers by Eldreth, I have presented the stories in paragraph form, using multiple paragraphs to indicate episodes or new phases (for example, the transition from exposition to evaluation) in longer accounts.