

November 25, 2007

Interview with Ramona Brown Heslep

By Isabelle Chewning

[Text enclosed in brackets is not on the tape, and has been inserted for clarification.]

Isabelle Chewning: My name is Isabelle Chewning and today is November the 25th 2007. I'm in the home of Mrs. Ramona Heslep. She's agreed to tell us some of her memories of Brownsburg for us to put in the Museum. Could you tell me what your full name is?

Ramona Heslep: Ramona Brown Heslep.

Isabelle Chewning: How long have you lived in this area?

Ramona Heslep: Since I was twelve and I don't know how many years that is.

Isabelle Chewning: When were you born?

Ramona Heslep: 1929.

Isabelle Chewning: In July?

Ramona Heslep: July.

Isabelle Chewning: And where were you born, Mrs. Heslep?

Ramona Heslep: King's Daughters Hospital in Staunton.

Isabelle Chewning: Were your parents living in Staunton at the time?

Ramona Heslep: They were living in the Swope area. Staunton was the closest town to us.

Isabelle Chewning: So you were born in the hospital there?

Ramona Heslep: Right.

Isabelle Chewning: And when did your family first move to Brownsburg, when you were twelve?

Ramona Heslep: When I was twelve.

Isabelle Chewning: So that would have been 1939 or so?

Ramona Heslep: That sounds about right.

Isabelle Chewning: Where did your family live?

Ramona Heslep: We bought the old Dr. Strain place [3191 Brownsburg Turnpike]. It's just down the road about a mile and a half from here. It belonged to the Strains. The McCorkles lived there at the time we bought it.

Isabelle Chewning: Was it an auction? Did your family buy it at an auction?

Ramona Heslep: Now, I'm not sure because, I wasn't there and I don't know whether he bought it at an auction or how it was bought.

Isabelle Chewning: You moved here when you were about twelve --

Ramona Heslep: Yes.

Isabelle Chewning: -- so what grade were you in at school?

Ramona Heslep: At the fifth -- I was in the fifth grade. Mrs. [Frances] Buchanan, Mrs. Bill Buchanan was my teacher.

Isabelle Chewning: She was my fifth grade teacher too, that's funny. Fifth grade must have been her specialty, I guess!

Ramona Heslep: Well, you know, I think back then that teachers stuck to the classes they were teaching in. Because I remember Mrs. Williams in third grade. She was there forever. And Lib Ward in first grade was there forever. And it just seemed like, you know; they didn't- they didn't move. They didn't move -- didn't change classes. They just stayed where they were.

Isabelle Chewning: So did you move out here in the summer? Did you move to Brownsburg in the summertime, or did you come in the middle of the school year?

Ramona Heslep: We came during the school year, because I remember having to come to a new school when I first moved. It was in the fall, because I had a corduroy dress that I wore the first day, so it would have been the fall.

Isabelle Chewning: Was that hard for you to come to a new school?

Ramona Heslep: Yes it was. It was -- it was very hard for me to leave my home. We had lived with my grandmother and grandfather all those years. And it was hard for me to leave that home and leave them.

Isabelle Chewning: So they were still living in Swope?

Ramona Heslep: Yes.

Isabelle Chewning: That must have been hard.

Ramona Heslep: Very hard, I didn't want to come. I just didn't want to come at all.

Isabelle Chewning: Was your father a farmer?

Ramona Heslep: Yes, he was a farmer. He and Granddaddy both, they farmed together. Daddy had sheep. He raised sheep, and I can remember him feeding those sheep on the hill opposite the house in the feed troughs, and they'd line up to eat, and they were so pretty.

Isabelle Chewning: Now are you talking about when you lived here, or when you lived in the Swope?

Ramona Heslep: That was when I was in Swope. We couldn't see the barn from the house here. So I never saw the sheep very much.

Isabelle Chewning: Were the barns all behind the house like they are now?

Ramona Heslep: Yes, yes. The barns were all behind the house. We didn't have the silos then. It was just a barn and Dad built a tool shed.

Isabelle Chewning: Was it still mainly sheep when you moved here?

Ramona Heslep: No, Dad had cattle when he moved here. He had some sheep, but he also had cattle when he moved here.

Isabelle Chewning: About how big was the farm?

Ramona Heslep: I think three hundred and some odd acres.

Isabelle Chewning: That's a big farm. You had brothers and sisters?

Ramona Heslep: I had one sister and one brother, both younger than me.

Isabelle Chewning: What are their names?

Ramona Heslep: My sister's name was Hilda [Brown]. She died five or six years ago. My brother's name is Fred [Brown] and he lives in Crozet [VA. He married Lucille Mohler and has three boys.]

Isabelle Chewning: How about your parents? Can you tell me what their names were?

Ramona Heslep: My father's name was John Clemmer [Brown]. He was named after my [grand] mother's maiden name. She was a Clemmer before she married a Brown. And my mother's name was Pauline Hulvey.

Isabelle Chewning: How do you spell that?

Ramona Heslep: H-U-L-V-E-Y. It was a German name, I believe.

Isabelle Chewning: Your father went by Clemmer didn't he?

Ramona Heslep: Yes, yes.

Isabelle Chewning: He was always Mr. Clemmer Brown.

Ramona Heslep: He was always known as "Clemmer."

Isabelle Chewning: What else do you remember about when you started school in the fifth grade? Was your class very big?

Ramona Heslep: The class was about what I was used to. What I remember most about when I started to school up here was every afternoon, we had a Phys Ed period and we had to go out and play softball. I had never ever seen a ball and a bat. I had no idea how to play ball, so I didn't go over very well on the ball field!

Isabelle Chewning: [laughs]

Ramona Heslep: I couldn't hit them. [Laugh] I couldn't catch them, and it just wasn't very pleasant.

Isabelle Chewning: Was Miss [Ocie] Trimmer the principal?

Ramona Heslep: Miss Trimmer was the principal.

Isabelle Chewning: Was she the one who was behind this Phys Ed thing?

Ramona Heslep: Oh yes, she was the one that was behind the Phys Ed thing.

Isabelle Chewning: Were your brother and sister in school at that time, too?

Ramona Heslep: Yes, Fred was in the first grade, and Hilda was in the third. They were two years apart.

Isabelle Chewning: How did they feel about starting school?

Ramona Heslep: I don't remember whether they said anything about it or not. I don't remember. Fred hadn't been in school very long, so I don't guess he really minded, and I don't remember him saying anything about it. I don't remember what their feelings were.

Isabelle Chewning: But you remember your corduroy dress.

Ramona Heslep: I remember my corduroy dress.

Isabelle Chewning: What color was it?

Ramona Heslep: It was sort of a wine color.

Isabelle Chewning: I'll bet that was pretty. Did your mother sew for you.

Ramona Heslep: Yes, she did. Mother sewed, and I think she made a lot of my clothes. I don't remember, but she might have sewed for Hilda, too. But she didn't sew men's clothes. She just sewed for us.

Isabelle Chewning: And Hilda probably got your hand-me-downs?

Ramona Heslep: I don't know, she was quite a bit smaller than I was. I mean, she was always thinner, so I don't know whether she could wear my hand-me-downs or not. I don't remember much about her wearing my hand-me-downs.

Isabelle Chewning: Who were some of your other teachers?

Ramona Heslep: As I said, Mrs. Buchanan was my fifth grade teacher. I don't remember my sixth grade teacher. She was here just one year. And I don't remember my seventh grade teacher.

Isabelle Chewning: Then you went from seventh grade into high school?

Ramona Heslep: Into high school and I remember Miss [Mary] Lauderdale, she married a Sorrells. She was one of my high school teachers. She taught English [and was the best!]

Isabelle Chewning: Did you enjoy school?

Ramona Heslep: I enjoyed school. I enjoyed it very much. I've always liked school.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you have close friends in school?

Ramona Heslep: I had several, one of them moved away before -- she moved away, I think, when we were still in elementary school. The other good friend I had was Dorothy Little and she came to Brownsburg from Goshen when she came into high school.

Isabelle Chewning: She had gone to elementary school in Goshen?

Ramona Heslep: In Goshen. And then when they -- when they graduated seventh grade in Goshen, they brought them to Brownsburg.

Isabelle Chewning: That's a long bus ride for kids, I bet that was. Did you ever go out to her house to visit or did she --

Ramona Heslep: No, I never did, and I don't think she was ever at my house. I had another friend, Betty Palmer that came to my house a lot, and I went to her house a lot.

Isabelle Chewning: Is she Betty Firebaugh now?

Ramona Heslep: She's Betty Firebaugh now. She and Donald [Firebaugh] were both classmates of mine.

Isabelle Chewning: Don was too?

Ramona Heslep: Donald was too.

Isabelle Chewning: Who were some of the other people in your class that I might know?

Ramona Heslep: Anna Miller, and she married a Black. She married Tom Black, and I think he had a public office in Lexington, or she did. I don't remember what it was. And Harry Tolley was a classmate of mine. Marjorie Whitesell [Chittum].

Isabelle Chewning: I've interviewed Mrs. Whitesell -- or Mrs. Chittum now.

Ramona Heslep: Yes, you did.

Isabelle Chewning: I enjoyed talking to her. I had never met her before.

Ramona Heslep: Oh really. Well, I guess there's quite an age difference, so there would be no reason to have met her.

Isabelle Chewning: I enjoyed her a lot. Did you take Home Ec classes?

Ramona Heslep: I took Home Ec classes under Mrs. Watson. Miss Watson, I believe it was. She got married too but I don't remember her married name.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you enjoy Home Ec?

Ramona Heslep: Yes, I enjoyed Home Ec.

Isabelle Chewning: Mrs. [Marjorie] Chittum was telling me that she couldn't sew at all. She just had the worst time sewing in Home Ec.

Ramona Heslep: I couldn't sew either, and my mother could sew so she had taught me a little, and she helped me with my sewing a lot after I started Home Ec. But I couldn't sew, and I never did learn to make a button hole. [Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] That's exactly what Mrs. Chittum said! She said— I guess the story she had told me was—for your exam, I think. You had to draw something out of a hat and you had to do what it said. And she was so afraid she was going to get “make a buttonhole” but she got “make biscuits.” She was able to make biscuits, but she was worried about that buttonhole.

Ramona Heslep: I never did learn to make a buttonhole.

Isabelle Chewning: That's pretty hard to do. [Laugh]

Ramona Heslep: Mother could make beautiful buttonholes, but even she couldn't teach me to make a buttonhole.

Isabelle Chewning: Mr. Beckner, Mr. Wallace Becker told me that when he took Shop, they had an exchange for about a month where the boys took Home Ec.

Ramona Heslep: The boys would take Home Ec, and the girls would take Shop.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you do that?

Ramona Heslep: I can't remember taking Shop. Now I remember then doing that, and I don't know whether there was something else we could do in place of that, or whether I just blacked out during that time! [Laugh] Because, that's something else I couldn't do. I couldn't drive a nail, or work a saw, or anything like that, and I don't remember taking Shop. There may have been something else that we girls could do instead of Shop if we wanted to.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you take Music classes or anything like that?

Ramona Heslep: They had a Glee Club and I did sing in the Glee Club.

Isabelle Chewning: And was there a Future Homemakers of America [FHA]? Was there a Homemaker's Club then or was it just Future Farmers [of America, FFA]? It was just boys?

Ramona Heslep: I think it was just Future Farmers. I don't remember exactly about that, either.

Isabelle Chewning: How did you get to school?

Ramona Heslep: I rode a bus. I rode a school bus. Mr. [T. J.] Wiseman was the school bus [driver]. Well, we had several. Ed Patterson drove the school bus for a while, and Mr. Wiseman drove the school bus, Louise Wiseman's [Stuart] father.

Isabelle Chewning: You were lucky to be pretty close to school, I guess. You didn't have a long bus ride.

Ramona Heslep: I didn't have a long bus ride. I was the last one to get on in the morning and the first one to get off in the afternoon. I rode the bus while I taught there too.

Isabelle Chewning: You taught?

Ramona Heslep: I taught at Brownsburg after I finished college.

Isabelle Chewning: Oh, you did?

Ramona Heslep: I taught— I didn't teach but one year, and then I got married.

Isabelle Chewning: What did you teach?

Ramona Heslep: I taught the second grade.

Isabelle Chewning: So what year did you graduate from high school?

Ramona Heslep: Isabelle, you're asking me all these years! Would '40 seem right?

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] No, probably later.

Ramona Heslep: No, it wasn't then.

Isabelle Chewning: Probably some time during the war maybe?

Ramona Heslep: Yes, it was during the war. I do remember that.

Isabelle Chewning: Did the war make a big difference for your family?

Ramona Heslep: It made some because we had to draw the shades at night, and to close the shutters so there wouldn't any light shine from inside outside. So the countryside was just as dark as dark could be. We had a [Civil Defense] watch in Brownsburg, and I think they had their office over the bank. What was the bank at that time. And if they did see a plane or anything like unusual, they would blow a whistle, blow a horn. You could hear it out as far as I lived and you were supposed to go close up everything.

Isabelle Chewning: Did that happen very often?

Ramona Heslep: It didn't happen very often, but it happened. I guess I said a horn or a whistle, I guess it was a siren that went off.

Isabelle Chewning: Was that in the daytime, or at night?

Ramona Heslep: In the daytime, in the daytime. Now at night everything was supposed— well they blew it at nighttime too. But everything was always dark at night, because we had to close the shades and make sure we had -- make sure we had shades that the light wouldn't go through.

Isabelle Chewning: What was your graduation like? Did you have graduation in the auditorium?

Ramona Heslep: We had graduation in the auditorium. Girls wore white caps and gowns; the boys wore blue.

Isabelle Chewning: You never went to the old school building then? The two story brick building that's torn down now was the only school you went to here?

Ramona Heslep: No, the building that stands behind it -- it was the— let's see, what was there? That's where the Home Ec Department was over top of that, and they had -- the sixth grade was up there. There was another building there that had the Shop in it. It was a separate building all by itself. There were three classes and I can't remember; maybe fifth, sixth and seventh grade classes were in that old building, the brick [stucco] building, and then up overhead was the Home Ec Department.

Isabelle Chewning: But the new -- I say "new", but I guess [it was] the newest building that was there [1938] was there when you started? and it was probably brand new then, wasn't it?

Ramona Heslep: That I don't [know how new it was, but it was there.]

Isabelle Chewning: I think it was probably really pretty new then in 1939. I think they moved into that building maybe in '38.

Ramona Heslep: I never even thought about that. I never even thought about it being new, or where they went before they went there.

Isabelle Chewning: Was there a library, a school library?

Ramona Heslep: There was a school library. We had a lunchroom, and lunch was a quarter, just a quarter.

Isabelle Chewning: You graduated from high school and then went off to Madison [College in Harrisonburg]?

Ramona Heslep: Uh-hum.

Isabelle Chewning: Was it a four year program?

Ramona Heslep: Uh hmm. It was a four year program. It was an all girl school then. I think the year I started was the first year they had co-ed. So many guys were coming in from war, and it was -- they opened it up for them.

Isabelle Chewning: So you got a degree in Education?

Ramona Heslep: Education.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you move back with your parents afterwards?

Ramona Heslep: I moved back with them, but I taught school there at Brownsburg for one year, and I met Jack [Heslep] and we got married, and I moved to Fairfield.

Isabelle Chewning: How did you meet him?

Ramona Heslep: At a ballgame, a basketball game. We had mutual friends. A friend—a cousin of his, Jimmy Chittum, was dating a friend of mine and that's how I met him.

Isabelle Chewning: Was the basketball game here in Brownsburg?

Ramona Heslep: It was at Spottswood.

Isabelle Chewning: Was Brownsburg playing Spottswood?

Ramona Heslep: I don't know who was— I don't remember whether it was Fairfield playing Spottswood or Brownsburg playing Spottswood.

Isabelle Chewning: What was Mr. [Jack] Heslep doing at the time?

Ramona Heslep: He was driving a truck. He was a truck driver at that time.

Isabelle Chewning: So you married him and moved to Fairfield?

Ramona Heslep: We moved to Fairfield.

Isabelle Chewning: And you stopped teaching then?

Ramona Heslep: I stopped teaching.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you enjoy your second graders?

Ramona Heslep: Yes, very much. I did enjoy them very much. I did teach another year. I taught two years. After we got married and moved to Fairfield, I taught a year in Vesuvius while the school was still open down there. I hadn't planned to teach, and they called me just a few days before school started and asked me if I would take first, second and third grade in Vesuvius.

Isabelle Chewning: You had a three-grade class?

Ramona Heslep: I had three grades. That was all that was there: first, second and third.

Isabelle Chewning: Gosh! How many kids did you have?

Ramona Heslep: In the twenties, I had a regular class by it being so many in one. You know, first, second, and third grade all together. It was a normal amount of kids.

Isabelle Chewning: I can't even imagine three grades!

Ramona Heslep: I can't now. I can't now.

Isabelle Chewning: And no help?

Ramona Heslep: And no help, you did it by yourself.

Isabelle Chewning: Oh my goodness.

Ramona Heslep: We had an old coal stove that we got heat from. And there was a woman that lived in Vesuvius near the school that would come every morning and build a fire, and it was always nice and warm when we got there.

Isabelle Chewning: I can't even imagine – three grades. What's your first memory of being in Brownsburg?

[Phone rings. Temporary interruption in tape.]

Isabelle Chewning: I had just asked you what your earliest memory is of being in Brownsburg?

Ramona Heslep: Well, the house seemed awfully big, and awfully dark to me, because we didn't have electricity. Now we had water in the kitchen, but we didn't have a bathroom. We had an outdoor john, and I don't know, the house just didn't seem like home, you know. And Daddy had these sheep, and whenever one of them, the mother wouldn't take it, or it was sick, he would wrap it in a sack and bring it in the house and put it behind the kitchen stove. We had all fireplaces when we moved here. Great, huge, big, old fireplaces. Well Dad closed those fireplaces up, and put up stoves. Put up a wood stove in the kitchen and a fuel oil stove in the living room and the bedrooms. And I can remember him bringing those lambs wrapped up in a sack. He'd put them behind the stove and rub them, you know? And get them going.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you have to bottle feed any of the lambs?

Ramona Heslep: We had to bottle feed the lambs, and I remember he had made us each a little chair to sit in. And mine was a little blue rocking chair, and I would sit in the rocking chair and hold that lamb and feed it with a bottle.

Isabelle Chewning: Just like a baby?

Ramona Heslep: Just like a baby. We got so attached to them, we didn't want him to take them out.

Isabelle Chewning: Had you had electricity at Swope?

Ramona Heslep: No, we had not had any electricity at Swope but it wasn't long — my grandfather died and my grandmother came to live with us. And he [Clemmer Brown] put electricity in then, so we weren't without electricity very long.

Isabelle Chewning: Did your grandparents sell the farm out in Swope?

Ramona Heslep: No, they didn't sell it until after Granddaddy died. Grandmother was— of course she couldn't— had no way to work it or anything so they sold it and she moved in with us.

Isabelle Chewning: She lived the rest of her life with you all?

Ramona Heslep: Yes.

Isabelle Chewning: When did she die?

Ramona Heslep: Oh, it's been years ago. I think I was in college. I was in college, because I would stop by to see— she was in a [nursing home]. I don't know what happened to her. I think maybe she had cancer. But I'd come home weekends, you know, and see her.

Isabelle Chewning: How did you get to and from Madison?

Ramona Heslep: Jack usually. I usually rode home on a bus and Jack would take me back.

Isabelle Chewning: You were here almost every weekend?

Ramona Heslep: Almost every weekend.

Isabelle Chewning: Who were some of your neighbors?

Ramona Heslep: Well, the Burgers lived -- Dan Burger was principal at Brownsburg. Before Dan Burger, John Layton lived next to us. John-- was his name Layton? Mr. Layton?

Isabelle Chewning: I don't remember him.

Ramona Heslep: I think that was his name. He was— he was teacher for the boys FFA.

Isabelle Chewning: I may have heard someone mention him.

Ramona Heslep: And then when he left, Dan Burger moved in where Ann Beard lives now [3475 Brownsburg Turnpike]. He was principal at Brownsburg. And then Mr. Stockdale was principal at Brownsburg and I don't know where he lived. I think he was principal when I graduated. And the McNutts. The McNutts were all living where Pat Patterson lives now [3334 Brownsburg Turnpike].

Isabelle Chewning: How about on the other side?

Ramona Heslep: On the Brownsburg side there was a Mr. Shiflett, and Mr. and Mrs. Shiflett [2843 Brownsburg Turnpike]. That's where the – the Pattersons lived there first, and then Mr. Shiflett bought the place when they sold it. The Shifletts lived there. And those men would work together during harvest time. Like if Daddy were harvesting, and he was threshing the neighbors would all come help him. Then when they threshed, he'd go help them. And that's the way they worked their help in those days. They didn't have to hire help, the neighbors came.

Isabelle Chewning: Did your dad have any help on the farm?

Ramona Heslep: No, just Hilda and Fred, he didn't have any other help.

Isabelle Chewning: Did he raise a lot of crops?

Ramona Heslep: He raised corn and hay and I think that was all, mostly for feed. He didn't sell crops. He raised it for feed.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you have chores on the farm?

Ramona Heslep: Yes, let me see what? We had to fill up the wood box every night. Feed and water the chickens and gather the eggs. Hilda helped to milk and I guess Fred went to the field, went to the barn. We didn't have a lot to do, not a lot of chores but, you know, we always had the same ones every day.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you mother do three meals a day?

Ramona Heslep: She did three meals a day.

Isabelle Chewning: Was she a good cook?

Ramona Heslep: She was a good cook, a very good cook. I learned most everything I know about cooking from her. She was a good cook.

Isabelle Chewning: Did she make a point of teaching you, or you just sort of learned it from watching her?

Ramona Heslep: I learned it from helping. I had to help, you know. I had to be right there when she cooked. And I helped, you know, with peeling potatoes and apples and stuff like that. And I would season stuff on the stove, you know. It was more of a— I learned mostly by just helping. Hands on. And I remember the first piecrust I ever made. I was in Home Ec and we had to make a pie. I made my piecrust by the recipe. It was the biggest mess. I threw away five or six before I ever got one that I ate. [Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] What went wrong?

Ramona Heslep: I guess I had too much liquid in it, and didn't have enough sense to add more flour because I was going by the recipe.

Isabelle Chewning: Trial and error!

Ramona Heslep: I finally got it right, and I've made lots of pies since!

Isabelle Chewning: Was it an apple pie?

Ramona Heslep: I think it was an apple pie.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you have a big garden?

Ramona Heslep: We had a big garden. Daddy did most of the garden work. Of course Mother helped some, too, but we didn't have to do much with the garden.

Isabelle Chewning: Did she can a lot of vegetables?

Ramona Heslep: She canned almost all of our vegetables that we'd eat during the winter. Green beans and corn. She'd make vegetable soup. When everything was in at one time, she would make vegetable soup and can it. I remember that being so good.

Isabelle Chewning: What kind of stove did she cook on?

Ramona Heslep: A wood stove.

Isabelle Chewning: She baked bread and everything in the stove?

Ramona Heslep: Make her bread and everything.

Isabelle Chewning: I still don't understand how you regulate the temperature on a wood stove.

Ramona Heslep: I don't either. I don't guess you did! [Laugh] I don't guess you did. You just had to - watch it very closely and just keep it-- not let it get too hot. You know, I don't guess there was— they had dampers, but that wouldn't do much to regulate the heat.

Isabelle Chewning: You then got electricity pretty soon after you moved there?

Ramona Heslep: Yes. Mother had an electric stove, but she still used her wood stove in the wintertime. That was the heat we had in the kitchen, the wood stove.

Isabelle Chewning: Did electricity make a big difference in your life?

Ramona Heslep: I don't think so. I don't think it really did.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you have lamps?

Ramona Heslep: Yes, we had lanterns, lots of lamps. We had Aladdin Lamps and I don't know why, but they'd give more light than just an oil lamp. I guess Aladdin Lamps run with oil, too. They have a different— have you ever seen one? They have a different sort of bulb than just the ordinary lamp wick. It's shaped more like the bulbs we have now, and the whole thing lit up. We had Aladdin Lamps.

Isabelle Chewning: When you got electricity, how did your house get wired? Did somebody come through?

Ramona Heslep: Somebody came and did it, but I don't remember- I don't remember who did it but somebody did it.

Isabelle Chewning: Most places usually had one light hanging down from the middle of the ceiling?

Ramona Heslep: Now, the kitchen had a fluorescent light. The rest of them just had lights hanging down from the ceiling.

Isabelle Chewning: And when did you get indoor plumbing?

Ramona Heslep: I think I had already left to go to school, away to school, when we got the indoor plumbing. We had water in the kitchen but no bathroom.

Isabelle Chewning: So if you wanted to take a bath, you heated water in the kitchen?

Ramona Heslep: We heated water in the kitchen.

Isabelle Chewning: We sure take that for granted today, don't we?

Ramona Heslep: Yes, we do, yes we do. I'd wash my hair in the kitchen, and then dry it. I'd sit beside the stove and let it hang down, and dry it by the stove.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you have long hair?

Ramona Heslep: I had long hair.

Isabelle Chewning: Did most of the girls have long hair?

Ramona Heslep: I think most of the girls did have long hair.

Isabelle Chewning: How about church? Can you tell me about what church you used to go to?

Ramona Heslep: We went to the New Providence Church. Dr. — I can't think of the man's name that was here when we came. But Dr. White -- Dr. Locke White was preaching most of the time that we were out there, that I was there. He was still preaching there when I left to go to Fairfield with Jack.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you go to Sunday School and church regularly, most of the time?

Ramona Heslep: Yes, all— every Sunday we'd go to Sunday School and church. And we— when we first came up here we had a car that you had to crank to get it started. So Daddy would crank up the car on Sunday morning, and he always dusted it off when we took it out. We went to Sunday School.

Isabelle Chewning: So you always remember having a car?

Ramona Heslep: Yes.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you have horses that worked?

Ramona Heslep: Yes, we had work horses. Yes, we did. We had work horses, but I never had to ride in a buggy or anything. We had a car. It was so different from now. We rode in the back seat and we stood up.

Isabelle Chewning: Oh, you stood?

Ramona Heslep: We stood up so we could see out, over, you know. See where we were going. Then they'd make us sit down. [Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: I guess they weren't going as fast as we go now.

Ramona Heslep: No, they weren't going as fast, no. And when we moved up here [to Brownsburg] there were so few cars that went by the house, that you could sit inside and listen, and Hilda could tell who it was by the noise — by the sound of the car. That's how few cars went by.

Isabelle Chewning: Was it a dirt road or was it paved?

Ramona Heslep: No, it was paved. It was a hard surfaced road.

Isabelle Chewning: But they had such distinctive noises that she could tell?

Ramona Heslep: Uh-hum. She could sit in the house and tell you who was going by.

Isabelle Chewning: What do you remember about church? Did you have a particular Sunday School teachers that you remember?

Ramona Heslep: Let's see, there was a Mrs. Williams that was my Sunday School teacher for most of the time that I was there. She's about the only one I could remember.

Isabelle Chewning: Then did you have a Youth Group?

Ramona Heslep: We had a Youth Group, Carrie Lucas, "Miss Carrie," we called her, and Dr. White were our youth advisors. And they would come every Sunday night to the Youth meetings and go on all our trips with us. We took right many trips. We climbed Jump Mountain and spent the night. We'd go different places and spend the night.

Isabelle Chewning: You spent the night on Jump Mountain?

Ramona Heslep: Yes, we did. We spent the night on Jump Mountain. And they'd always go with us, just the two of them.

Isabelle Chewning: Where else would you go?

Ramona Heslep: I can't remember where else we went to spend the night. We took a lot of hayrides. Went to the Sherando Lake and places like that, on hayrides.

Isabelle Chewning: That must have been fun.

Ramona Heslep: It was fun. It was a lot of fun.

Isabelle Chewning: And so was that your primary social activity, the Youth things?

Ramona Heslep: Yes.

Isabelle Chewning: When you first met Mr. Heslep, what did you do for entertainment, when you went on dates?

Ramona Heslep: We usually would go to a movie. We'd always go out to eat someplace and there were a lot of little restaurants up and down [Route] 11 then. And we'd go to a movie. That's about all there was to do. Or he'd come to house you know and stay, visit at my house.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you ever go to Massanetta with the Youth Group?

Ramona Heslep: [Yes, I went several years. It was always such fun. We had night services on a hillside with the moon coming up.]

Isabelle Chewning: Was the Chrysanthemum Show still going on at the church when you were there?

Ramona Heslep: Yes, yes, the Chrysanthemum Show was still going on. I had forgotten all about that! Yes, it was a big thing then. Yes, I remember one year I got in trouble because one of my friends and I traded coats, you know. She was going to wear my coat, at the show while we were there, and I was going to wear hers. And then we forgot to change back before we went home. So I got—I sort of got in trouble for letting somebody else wear my coat home.

Isabelle Chewning: Was the chrysanthemum show pretty exciting?

Ramona Heslep: It was exciting, it was pretty. The most chrysanthemums, and they were all so pretty.

Isabelle Chewning: Did your family grow chrysanthemums?

Ramona Heslep: A few. We never showed any. We never took any to the show.

Isabelle Chewning: Who were the people, then, who mainly showed the chrysanthemums? Was it the local people, or was it...

Ramona Heslep: I think-- I don't know whether it was the local people or whether they brought in chrysanthemums from other places. They may have done that, too, because there was a lot of them. I don't think the community could have had that many chrysanthemums, so they must have come from other places.

Isabelle Chewning: And was there a meal?

Ramona Heslep: There wasn't a meal. I think you could buy -- I don't know whether you could buy hot dogs and hamburgers or not, but we could buy drinks. I remember that. And some sort of snack, you know. There wasn't a meal. We didn't have a meal.

Isabelle Chewning: Where were all the chrysanthemums? Were they in the sanctuary part of the church?

Ramona Heslep: No, they were in the Fellowship Hall. If I'm remembering all this right, now, it's like I said, I had even forgotten about the chrysanthemum shows that we had. I know we were outside a lot so they may have had some outside, because I remember being outside like when I wore this coat. But I think they were mostly in the Fellowship Hall.

Isabelle Chewning: What kind of -- you mentioned the car that your dad cranked up to go to church on Sundays. Was it a Model T or...?

Ramona Heslep: No, it wasn't a Model T. It must have been a Ford. It wasn't one of the Model Ts. My uncle had a car that had a rumble seat on it, and that's what I thought was just it, being able to ride in that rumble seat! And now when you talk about rumble seats, my grandchildren don't know what I'm talking about! [Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: Right. Did your mother ever drive?

Ramona Heslep: She drove a little. She wouldn't drive very much, and she wouldn't back up. When she was going someplace, she'd have to go where she could [turn around].

[Phone rings; temporary interruption in tape.]

Isabelle Chewning: We were talking about your mother driving, and you said she wouldn't back up.

Ramona Heslep: No. She wouldn't back up. If she-- when she always went-- wherever she went, she went to see her sister sometimes, she lived in this area then. She could turn around there. Sometimes she would come over to Fairfield to meet me when I came home from school [Madison College] on the bus. But I'd always meet her someplace where she could turn around, she didn't have to back up.

Isabelle Chewning: So she liked to drive forward but not backwards?

Ramona Heslep: Right. Right.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you have different cars?

Ramona Heslep: I can't remember having but the one car.

Isabelle Chewning: And did you learn to...

Ramona Heslep: No, we had another car, because Dad got rid of the one that he had to crank and got another one that, you know, a more modern car. And I never learned to drive until I married Jack. Jack made me just get in and do it, you know? I'd say, "Well, I can't do this" and he'd slide way over on his side of the seat and say, "Do it." [Laugh] And it was do it or just sit there. [Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: So you learned.

Ramona Heslep: So I learned to drive.

Isabelle Chewning: How about your sister, did she learn to drive?

Ramona Heslep: Yes. She learned to drive. I guess she taught herself, because she learned to drive early, when she was young, and so did Fred. They both drove, and Hilda drove when she was young so I suppose she, just like everything else, she just did it, you know.

Isabelle Chewning: What did your sister do after high school?

Ramona Heslep: She went to college at Farmville. I think it was called Farmville then, and she was an x-ray technician at the hospital.

Isabelle Chewning: And how about your brother?

Ramona Heslep: He stayed on the farm until he graduated then he took a trip, by himself, and when he came home, he joined the Air Force.

Isabelle Chewning: Was he a career Air Force person?

Ramona Heslep: Yes. Yes, he was sent to Korea. He never flew. He was a technician, and that's what he did after he got out of the Air Force. He went to work in Charlottesville at a place called Sperry, and so he kept up with the same work that he'd done in the Air Force.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you do most of your shopping in Lexington?

Ramona Heslep: No, we did most of our shopping in Staunton. We never went to Lexington because -- the reason for that was, we'd go to Staunton on market day.

Isabelle Chewning: What day was market day, Saturday?

Ramona Heslep: Market days were Tuesdays and Fridays, and Daddy always wanted to go to market at least once a week. So he would take his little can of sardines and crackers, and we'd go-- Mother and I would go to downtown in Staunton, and he would go to the market.

Isabelle Chewning: And was it a livestock market, that kind of market?

Ramona Heslep: Yeah.

Isabelle Chewning: Oh, buying and selling cattle and sheep...

Ramona Heslep: Yes, cattle and sheep. They still have those markets.

Isabelle Chewning: So she would drop him off there?

Ramona Heslep: No, he would drop her off.

Isabelle Chewning: He would drop her off, oh okay.

Ramona Heslep: Right. He would drop her off and then go to the market.

Isabelle Chewning: And would you have lunch in Staunton?

Ramona Heslep: We'd have lunch. They had, in the -- we had three dime stores or five and ten cent stores, whatever you want to call them. Down what is Beverly Street, and they all had a bar with stools and you could go there and get your lunch.

Isabelle Chewning: So that was...

Ramona Heslep: They had all kinds of soups and sandwiches and hot food and ice cream and most whatever you'd want.

Isabelle Chewning: So that was a big family outing, then? Everybody would go?

Ramona Heslep: It kind of was. I think we sort of -- us kids, I think we sort of got tired of it. [Laugh] But, yeah, I guess you would say it was, because when he'd go to market, most of the time, we'd go with him [to town].

Isabelle Chewning: Did you do most of your grocery shopping in Brownsburg?

Ramona Heslep: In Brownsburg.

Isabelle Chewning: Which store did you go to?

Ramona Heslep: Whitesell's had their store open then, and I think that's the one [2664 Brownsburg Turnpike]. We went to Swope's sometimes, too, and that was down on the corner where Dick Barnes [the location of Old South Antiques] is now.

Isabelle Chewning: So Whitesell's and Swope's were both open.

Ramona Heslep: Both open, and then they had store where Dick Barnes lives [8 Hays Creek Road]. It was the Farm Bureau at that time. You could go there go buy feed and things like that.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you all use the mills?

Ramona Heslep: Yes.

Isabelle Chewning: For your flour?

Ramona Heslep: Yes, we used the mills. Daddy would grow the wheat, take it to the mill and then, when we needed flour, we'd go to the mill and get the flour.

Isabelle Chewning: So you sort of banked your wheat at the mill and...

Ramona Heslep: Mm hm.

Isabelle Chewning: And then, as you needed flour, you'd go there and get it?

Ramona Heslep: Right. I had forgotten about that, too, but we did. I went with him a lot of times to the mill to get flour. Mother always did her own baking but we'd get the flour from the mill.

Isabelle Chewning: How did you keep up with the news, what was going on? Did you get a newspaper?

Ramona Heslep: We had a newspaper. We took the Staunton paper and we had radio and, later on, we had television so we could keep -- and all you had to do was go to Brownsburg to find out all the news! [Laugh] I know Mollie Sue Whipple said one time that if she forgot what she was supposed to do today, all she had to do was step out on the front porch and she would hear what she was supposed to do today. [Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: And I guess news sort of spread through those party lines on the telephone, too.

Ramona Heslep: Right, right.

Isabelle Chewning: Were you on a party line?

Ramona Heslep: We were on a party line. I think our ring was two longs.

Isabelle Chewning: And did you always have a telephone?

Ramona Heslep: We always had a telephone. We had a telephone before we had electricity.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you have a telephone out in Swope, too?

Ramona Heslep: No, we didn't have a telephone in Swope. I guess that's one reason we got one so quickly after we moved because my grandfather got sick during the night and grandmother couldn't get any help. She didn't have a telephone, no close neighbors, and it was a big deep snow on the ground so she couldn't get anywhere. So we put a telephone in for her and one in for us when we first moved.

Isabelle Chewning: What kind of sickness did he have?

Ramona Heslep: He had a hernia that ruptured.

Isabelle Chewning: And was that how he died?

Ramona Heslep: That's how he died.

Isabelle Chewning: Oh, my goodness. And so then she was out there by herself for a little while?

Ramona Heslep: She was there by herself for a little while. I don't know whether it was a year -- she was by herself for a while.

Isabelle Chewning: Did she have to sell off all the livestock, the sheep right away or...?

Ramona Heslep: I guess -- well, the sheep were Daddy's and he brought the sheep with him, and maybe that's how he got his cattle started. I don't remember. Maybe he brought the cattle, too. They had the work horses and they sold those. I was so young, I didn't pay much attention to what was going on.

Isabelle Chewning: Right. Yeah.

Ramona Heslep: I know I remember thinking a lot now that I wish I had of gone to the sale when they had their -- they sold the place, they auctioned it off, and her furniture. And I wish that I had of been old enough to have known, you know, that I could have gone and bought some of her furniture.

Isabelle Chewning: Oh, that's a shame.

Ramona Heslep: I think of things that she had now. She didn't sell it all. Mother got some of it, Mother and Daddy got some of what they wanted of it, and it's scattered around now. I have some of it, and Fred has some of it.

Isabelle Chewning: Was your house pretty empty when you moved into it here or did you have a lot of things, when you all moved to Brownsburg?

Ramona Heslep: Of course, we had some things that we brought with us, a few. Most of it was Grandmother's. And they filled up the house, though. I don't remember much about that, either, but I just know they filled it up.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you and Hilda share a room or...?

Ramona Heslep: We shared a room. When we were both there, we shared a room.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you have a wood stove in your room to keep warm or...?

Ramona Heslep: We had a fuel stove.

Isabelle Chewning: And did you stay pretty warm in the winter or was it...

Ramona Heslep: Yeah, it stayed pretty warm. I would stay pretty warm. The rooms we used were always -- of course, you'd go to the hall, you'd freeze, but the rooms we used were always pretty warm.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you use most of the house or...?

Ramona Heslep: Well, let's see. There were one, two, three, four bedrooms upstairs. We used three of them. And there were four, one, two, we used all the rooms downstairs except the formal living room. Now, we didn't -- it was across the hall by itself, and the only time we ever had heat in there was at Christmas. We'd put the Christmas tree in there and we had Christmas in there and we'd have a fire.

Isabelle Chewning: What was Christmas like at your house?

Ramona Heslep: Well, I guess it was -- we always put up a tree and exchanged presents, just like everybody else. I mean, it was just a normal Christmas.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you have other relatives come in for Christmas dinner?

Ramona Heslep: Mother had some of her relatives that'd come in; her sisters would come in on Christmas for lunch -- for dinner. Daddy didn't have any brothers and sisters, so he was the only one and his parents were -- I think his -- I don't know whether his mother was there for Christmas. It doesn't seem like she lived very long after she moved up with us.

Isabelle Chewning: And where were your mother's relatives from?

Ramona Heslep: They were from down the Swope area, too. Mother and Daddy didn't live very far apart, about a mile. And when he'd go see her during the week and they weren't going anywhere, he'd just walk. He'd walk to her house.

Isabelle Chewning: So did you have Santa Claus?

Ramona Heslep: Yeah, we had Santa Claus. They trimmed the tree on Christmas Eve. We didn't see it 'til Christmas morning. Santa Claus had brought the tree and left it.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you usually have a cedar tree?

Ramona Heslep: Mm hm. Yeah, it was usually a cedar tree. Daddy would just cut, you know, there on the place.

Isabelle Chewning: What kind of decorations did it have?

Ramona Heslep: There weren't lights, no. There weren't lights. There were just Christmas, glass Christmas balls and things like that.

Isabelle Chewning: And did you give presents to Fred and Hilda? Did you all exchange...

Ramona Heslep: We all exchanged presents. Yeah. We exchanged presents with everybody. We stopped, Fred and Lucille [Brown] and Hilda, we all stopped exchanging presents later on after the children got a little bigger. We'd just get [presents for] the children.

Isabelle Chewing: You mentioned a little about World War II, the blackout.

Ramona Heslep: Blackouts. Well, we were...

Isabelle Chewing: War bonds and things.

Ramona Heslep: We were rationed with sugar, gasoline. Was there anything else? I don't remember anything else. And we'd eat -- places like cereal and things like that that you wanted sugar on, we'd use molasses or syrup. To sweeten things up because we were rationed with sugar. There was a sugar ration.

Isabelle Chewing: Did everyone feel really patriotic about doing things for the war effort?

Ramona Heslep: I think we did. I think they did, really more so than what they do now.

Isabelle Chewing: Savings bonds and those...

Ramona Heslep: Mm hm.

Isabelle Chewing: ...kinds of things.

Ramona Heslep: Mm hm.

Isabelle Chewing: Did you know people who were in the war?

Ramona Heslep: I had a cousin that was taken prisoner, and I had another cousin on my mother's side that was in the war. He lives in California now. He's the oldest one of the cousins. I had some other cousins that were my mother's-- my grandmother's people. I didn't know them very well, but they were in the war. There were two boys in the family, and they were both in the war. [And Fred, of course.]

Isabelle Chewning: How about people that had gone to school?

Ramona Heslep: Well, Harry Tolley was one of them, and he got killed in action. Don Firebaugh was in the service. And I don't remember because being in the country like we are, we're so scattered out, you just kind of lose contact with everybody. I don't know who else went, but I know those two did.

Isabelle Chewning: Any other war recollections? What it was like?

Ramona Heslep: I just remember there would be very, very few planes going over, and when you heard a plane, you were always scared, as a child, you know. I don't guess the adults paid that much attention to it but, as a child, you were scared when you heard a plane go over.

Isabelle Chewning: Anybody come to mind when you think about individuals in Brownsburg, people who stood out in your memory, from growing up here? A lot of people have mentioned Miss Trimmer. I guess she made a big impression on...

Ramona Heslep: Well, I do remember Miss Trimmer. I remember Miss Williams, and Lib Ward. I think Lib Ward made the biggest impression on me because she had Fred. Fred was, she was Fred's teacher and she was still teaching there when [Mrs. Heslep's son] Scott went to school, and she was Scott's teacher. [Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] I understand from some people, she [Miss Trimmer] was pretty much a disciplinarian all the time.

Ramona Heslep: Oh, yes, yes. All the time. That's the reason she stands out in my mind, is because of that. She was there a long time but she was a disciplinarian.

Isabelle Chewning: I remember. How about the Post Office, and the bank, and the telephone company? Do you remember anything about those?

Ramona Heslep: I remember them being there. I remember we had the telephone company and we had a bank. We had, like I said, two stores, the Swope's store and the Whitesell's store and then there was, like, the Farm Bureau. That's where it was at that time. It wasn't there very long, I don't think, until it closed. And Dr. Taylor, the doctor in Brownsburg, had his office there [at 8 Hays Creek Road]. I remember him. And Dr. Williams.

Isabelle Chewning: Was your family pretty healthy?

Ramona Heslep: Yes.

Isabelle Chewing: Did you have to...

Ramona Heslep: We were a healthy family. We didn't have to go to the doctor very much.

Isabelle Chewing: Did you have all the normal childhood diseases like measles and mumps?

Ramona Heslep: We had all the normal childhood diseases, but we had them before we moved up here. We had them-- we had our tonsils taken out, we had chicken pox, we had measles. None of us had the mumps. Chicken pox and measles. And whooping cough, I think we had that.

Isabelle Chewing: Oh, you did?

Ramona Heslep: Yeah.

Isabelle Chewing: How about politics? Did your parents vote?

Ramona Heslep: Yes. Daddy did

[End of Tape 1, Side A]

Isabelle Chewing: We had been talking a little bit about your dad voting and I think we said...

Ramona Heslep: He did vote. He did vote, and I think the voting place at that time was at the bank. I'm not sure about that. At that time, when I was at home, I wasn't old enough to vote, and I just never paid much attention. I remember the Presidents.

Isabelle Chewing: Do you remember the first time you voted?

Ramona Heslep: The first time I voted was when I lived in Fairfield and we came over to the high school to vote. It was Rockbridge High School at the time.

Isabelle Chewning: How about significant events in Brownsburg? Do you remember anything important happening there?

Ramona Heslep: I don't think so.

Isabelle Chewning: How about funny stories? Do you remember any funny things happening? I know there used to be a big crowd of practical jokers there, the men, who would play tricks on each other at those stores, I think.

Ramona Heslep: I don't remember anything funny. Talking about the stores, that was our weekly outing. Daddy would always go -- the men would always go to Brownsburg to one of the stores on Saturday night. And most of the wives and families would go with them and we'd just stay in the car and watch people walk up and down the street. Men would go inside and tell their tales and that was a big thing. And another big thing I remember, and probably you remember it, too, was making apple butter. Our families would all get together and make -- peel apples and make apple butter. Do you remember that?

Isabelle Chewning: Oh, absolutely. Yeah.

Ramona Heslep: That was one of the big things I remember, because that was always fun.

Isabelle Chewning: Um hmm. How about the black community in Brownsburg? Did your family interact with the black community at all?

Ramona Heslep: Daddy had -- I think we called him Uncle-- I don't know who he was. He lived down in the little house where John Swisher lives [3569 Brownsburg Turnpike] and Daddy had him, hired him as extra help when he was doing, like, cutting corn or something like that.

Isabelle Chewning: Was it Zack Franklin?

Ramona Heslep: Zack Franklin. That was his name. We called him Uncle Zack.

Isabelle Chewning: I think he must have been pretty important person in the black community because just about everyone remembers him. And he had a lot of kids, I guess, big family.

Ramona Heslep: I think he did. I think he did have a lot of children.

Isabelle Chewning: How about, were there any home remedies? Did your mother have any special home remedies that she used?

Ramona Heslep: About all she had, she had arthritis, and I guess she went to the doctor and took medicine for that, and I don't believe we did have any home remedies.

Isabelle Chewning: I'm going to -- that's just about all my questions. I'm going to stop the tape now and let you look at your notes and see...

[Temporary break in the tape]

Isabelle Chewning: I've given Mrs. Heslep a couple minutes to look over her notes. She did a little homework in advance of today, and I think she has a couple stories to talk about that she has written down in her notes.

Ramona Heslep: One thing I remember about the church [New Providence Presbyterian Church] was the lawn parties. They would have ice cream, all kinds of home made ice cream and cakes. and you'd go. Well, I think they served dinner, too. They served dinner inside, and then you went outside and got your ice cream and cake and they were called lawn parties. And I remember one year we went after Scott was born. He wanted to go get chocolate ice cream. We made him eat supper first and then, after we got out to the ice cream in the yard, the chocolate ice cream was all gone. I do remember that.

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] And then you were in trouble.

Ramona Heslep: And we used to make home made ice cream at home on Sunday after church. Daddy would go, they had an ice plant in Staunton, and you could go buy ice. And Grandmother had an ice box, and you'd put that cube of ice in the ice box and some -- it lasted a pretty long time. Then you'd cut it up on Sundays and put it in the -- one of the old wooden freezers that you turn, and make home made ice cream.

Isabelle Chewning: What kind did you make?

Ramona Heslep: We made a lot of chocolate and we made, like, when peaches were in season, we'd make peach or strawberry or something like that when they were in season.

Isabelle Chewning: What else is in your notes there that we haven't talked about yet?

Ramona Heslep: Well, I think we're covered it. We always sold milk and eggs. We didn't have a refrigerator to keep our milk in, so we'd put it in a big cream can and set it in the spring house. The spring house was right below the house and we'd keep our milk and our cream in the spring house.

Isabelle Chewning: Where's the spring house?

Ramona Heslep: It's right in front of the house, down -- I don't know whether you can -- I don't know whether it's still there or not. It was -- you know where that road goes up one end and comes out the other?

Isabelle Chewning: Mm hm.

Ramona Heslep: It was across the road, down a little incline, was just a little wooden building there.

Isabelle Chewning: So it's across the road from the house?

Ramona Heslep: It's across the road from the house, yeah.

Isabelle Chewning: And Hilda was the milker?

Ramona Heslep: And Hilda was the milker, and she would -- there was a truck came through, I don't know how often, whether it was two or three times a week or how often it came through, to buy the-- to pick up the milk and take it to the creamery. We kept the cream. We churned our own butter and we would -- we had a separator that separated the milk from the cream, and we'd keep the cream and make our butter and then sell the milk.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you drink a lot of milk?

Ramona Heslep: We drank a lot of milk. We drank a lot of milk. We didn't have Cokes and things then. We drank milk.

Isabelle Chewning: What was your mother's day like?

Ramona Heslep: Mother's day?

Isabelle Chewning: How did she spend her day?

Ramona Heslep: I can't remember. I guess she spent it just like any other day. We didn't make anything special out of it, except we gave her a gift. I can't-- other than that, I can't remember whether it was any different.

Isabelle Chewning: On a day to day basis, what did she do?

Ramona Heslep: Oh, I see what you mean. Of course, she'd cook. She'd cook breakfast, she'd get us off to school, and she stayed busy.

Isabelle Chewning: Did she have...

Ramona Heslep: She always had a lot of laundry to do, and a lot of ironing to do. Of course, I helped with the ironing from the time I could -- had to stand on a box to reach the ironing board.

Isabelle Chewning: You like to iron?

Ramona Heslep: I used to. I used to like to iron. I could -- I had a whole tub, one of those old wash tubs, and when I'd bring my clothes in and dampen them, and roll them up and put them in that tub, I'd have a tub full. And I used to put my ironing board here in the corner in front of the television, and that's where I'd iron and watch television at the same time, so I didn't mind ironing. I don't like to now, but I didn't mind it then.

Isabelle Chewning: I wanted to ask you also about the Cunningham ladies. I think they're an important part of Brownsburg's history. They did a lot of good things for the community, and I just wanted to talk a little bit about them: what your memories of them are, and how they got here and...

Ramona Heslep: Well, they lived in -- outside Charlottesville. They were originally from New York but they moved to Keswick [VA], and they wanted to leave Keswick and move some place else and they looked all over for a farm to buy.

Isabelle Chewning: Tell us what their names were.

Ramona Heslep: Helen was the oldest, then there was-- I can't remember the middle one's name. Alice and Helen. Margaret. Margaret was an invalid. She got thrown off a horse when she was young

and she never -- it injured her head, and she never was healthy after that. And Alice was the youngest one. They were pretty much -- they were in their late '80s, or early '90s when they died. They found this farm here. No houses on it. But they liked the location, and they bought it, and Jack built this house and their house [371 Clear Fork Drive]. And the brick house where [Mrs. Heslep's daughter] Gail [Heslep Clark] lives was here, but they renovated it [52 West Airlie Lane]. Did it all over so it's nothing like it was when we bought the farm.

Isabelle Chewning: And weren't they a big part of the water system in Brownsburg?

Ramona Heslep: Yes, they gave land up on the hill for the water, Brownsburg didn't have. I guess they had the water. I don't know where it came from, whether they all had wells, or where it came from. But they gave land for water, and that's where Brownsburg has gotten its water ever since.

Isabelle Chewning: And when did they move here?

Ramona Heslep: I can't tell you right off. Let's see. Jack and I got married, we went over there, we were over there 12 years. I don't have any idea. Jack and I would have been married 57 years. We lived there 12 so how would -- [Laugh] If I had a pencil, maybe I could figure it out from...

Isabelle Chewning: When did you get married?

Ramona Heslep: '51, '50.

Isabelle Chewning: So it was probably in the early '60s, early to mid-'60s.

Ramona Heslep: Yeah. Yeah, I can tell you. Gail is 43 years old. We moved into this house when she was a year old. Of course, we were here before that because we lived in the trailer down at the bottom of the hill while they built the house. So we've been here about 44 years.

Isabelle Chewning: I think my grandmother [Edna Morton Sterrett] enjoyed visiting the Cunninghams. She enjoyed them a lot.

Ramona Heslep: They thought a lot of her, and there was somebody else that visited besides her.

Isabelle Chewning: I think Mrs. Heffelfinger, maybe?

Ramona Heslep: Maybe it was. I don't remember. Maybe it was.

Isabelle Chewning: I just think they did a lot for the community. I think Mr. Heslep did a lot for the community. I think when we had the 200th reunion of Brownsburg back in 1993, I think the Cunningham ladies had a big part in helping pay for the food and...

Ramona Heslep: I remember being there. I remember being there.

Isabelle Chewning: But none of them ever married?

Ramona Heslep: None of them ever married.

Isabelle Chewning: Which one died first?

Ramona Heslep: Margaret died first, the middle one died first. And then the older one, Miss Helen, died next, and then Alice.

Isabelle Chewning: And did she [Miss Alice Cunningham] stay there until she died?

Ramona Heslep: No. She was in assisted living, and she had gotten sick and they had moved her from assisted living [to a nursing home]. But that's where she died. She'd gotten ill while she was living in the assisted living.

Isabelle Chewning: And did they have a lot of help?

Ramona Heslep: Well, they had more help when they lived in Keswick than they had here. They had a cook, and somebody to do their laundry. There was somebody there all of the time. There was somebody there around the clock. They had somebody to sit with Miss Margaret, take care of her.

Isabelle Chewning: Do you think they were happy here?

Ramona Heslep: I think so. I think they liked it here. They had a lot of friends in Lexington, that's where most of their friends were. And they'd go to Lexington for lunches and things like that.

Isabelle Chewning: Well, I think I've gotten through my questions. Anything else on your list that...

Ramona Heslep: I don't have anything else on my list. I've got one here about the spring house, the blackouts. You've asked me about all that. Ice box, the home made ice cream. We've covered it all.

Isabelle Chewning: Okay. Well, thank you, thank you so much.

[End of Tape 1, Side B]

Ramona Brown Heslep Index

A

Automobile · 20, 23

B

Black, Anna Miller · See Miller, Anna

Brown, Fred (brother) · 4, 25

Brown, Hilda (sister) · 4, 24, 36

Brown, John Clemmer (father) · 4

Brown, Pauline Hulvey (mother) · 4

Brownsburg

Bank · 32

Polling Place · 33

Saturday Nights · 34

Stores · 26

Telephone Company · 32

Telephone System · 27

Water System · 38

Brownsburg School

Buildings · 11

Bus Drivers · 9

Glee Club · 9

Graduation · 11

Home Economics · 8

Phys Ed · 5

Shop Classes · 9

Teachers · 2

Brownsburg Turnpike, 2664 · 26

Brownsburg Turnpike, 2843 · 16

Brownsburg Turnpike, 3191 · 2

Brownsburg Turnpike, 3334 · 16

Brownsburg Turnpike, 3475 · 16

Brownsburg Turnpike, 3569 · 34

Buchanan

Mrs. William · 2

Buchanan, Frances · 2

Burger, Dan · 15

C

Chittum, Jimmy · 12

Chittum, Marjorie Whitesell · See Whitesell, Marjorie

Christmas · 29

Clark, Gail Heslep (daughter) · 38

Cunningham, Alice · 37, 39

Cunningham, Helen · 37, 39

Cunningham, Margaret · 37, 39

E

Electricity · 15, 18

F

Farm Bureau · 26

Farming

Cattle · 4

Creamery · 36

Harvest · 16

Horses · 20

Sheep · 3, 14

Staunton Livestock Market · 25

Firebaugh, Betty · See Palmer, Betty

Firebaugh, Donald · 7, 32

Franklin, Zack · 34

H

Hays Creek Road, 8 · 32

Heslep, Jack · 12

Heslep, Ramona Brown

Birth · 1

Childhood diseases · 33

Farm Chores · 16

Household Chores · 37

Madison College · 12

Marriage · 12, 38

Parents · 4

School · 2

Teacher · 10, 13

I

Indoor Plumbing · 19

L

Lauderdale, Mary · 6

Little, Dorothy · 7

Lucas, Carrie · 21

M

McNutt Family · 16

Miller, Anna · 7

Mills · 27

Mohler, Lucille · 4

N

New Providence Presbyterian Church · 20

Chrysanthemum Show · 22

Lawn Parties · 35
Massanetta · 22
Sunday School · 21
Youth Fellowship · 21

P

Palmer, Betty · 7
Patterson, Ed · 9

S

Shiflett Family · 16
Stockdale, Mr. (School Principal) · 16
Strain Farm · 2
Swope's Store · 26, 32

T

Taylor, Dr. · 32

Tolley, Harry · 7, 32
Trimmer, Ocie · 5, 32

W

Ward, Lib (1st grade teacher) · 3, 32
Watson, Miss (Home Ec Teacher) · 8
West Airlie Lane, 52 · 38
White, Locke · 20
Whitesell, Marjorie · 7
Whitesell's Store · 26, 32
Williams, Dr. · 32
Williams, Mrs. (3rd grade teacher) · 3
Wiseman, T. J. · 9
World War II
 Civil Defense Watch · 10
 Rationing · 31
 Tolley, Harry (KIA) · 32