

**March 2007**

**Interview with Anne Blair Buchanan McCorkle**

**By Isabelle Chewning**

[Items enclosed in brackets [ ] are editorial notes inserted for clarification]

Chewning: Today is March 21, 2007. My name is Isabelle Chewning. I'm here with the Brownsburg Museum to interview Mrs. Anne McCorkle who was born in the Brownsburg area, and is going to tell me some of her memories of Brownsburg. So, Mrs. McCorkle, would you tell me your full name?

McCorkle: Anne Blair Buchanan McCorkle.

Chewning: And you were born in Brownsburg, or the Brownsburg area?

McCorkle: Out in the suburbs of Brownsburg! [Laugh]

Chewning: I see.

McCorkle: If Brownsburg has suburbs! About a mile west, in the – I'm not sure, I think it was the old McClung house [763 Hays Creek Road]. There was a mill, and maybe they ran the mill there. But my grandmother lived further up on the ah, Mc –

Chewning: McElwee Road?

McCorkle: McElwee Road, uh huh [1397 McElwee Road]. That was where my father, I assume, was born and his sister and brother.

Chewning: And when were you born?

McCorkle: November 6, 1923 on Election Day.

Chewning: Ah.

McCorkle: My father was at the polls, and was hoping upon hope that maybe I would be a boy, but no such luck! One time he even said, "Even the dern cats are females!" [Laugh]

Chewning: [Laugh]

McCorkle: And of course, with us the family name ended, and then my Uncle Will [Buchanan] had one daughter, Eliza, and no boys, so that's the Buchanans.

Chewning: And that was, so that was Mrs. Fannie Buchanan?

McCorkle: Uh huh, a Sterrett.

Chewning: Ah, okay, okay.

McCorkle: Kin to you.

Chewning: Right, yeah.

McCorkle: [Laugh]

Chewning: And that's who's in that picture? [Referring to a picture of Mrs. McCorkle's grandmother with baby Eliza Buchanan]

McCorkle: Yes.

Chewning: That was Eliza?

McCorkle: Eliza. Uh huh.

Chewning: Well, you had mentioned to me that you were the fourth of four girls.

McCorkle: Uh hmm.

Chewning: What were your sisters' names?

McCorkle: Margaret Antoinette, which came from some of my mother's ancestry, French Hugenots. Five years later, Eugenia Johnstone – my grandmother was Eliza Johnstone Hutcheson. [Eugenia was named for Mrs. McCorkle's father, Eugene.] And then two years later, Mary Elizabeth. And then two years later Anne Blair.

Chewning: Uh huh. And you were born at home?

McCorkle: Yes. And Virginia Gilmore was the ah –

Chewning: Midwife?

McCorkle: Yes. [Laugh]

Chewning: What, what, what's her name? Gilmore --

McCorkle: Right.

Chewning: Or Gilliam?

McCorkle: No, Gilmore. Right.

Chewning: Uh huh.

McCorkle: Ginny, and I cannot remember her husband's name, but they lived on the – what road was that? [Mrs. McCorkle later recalled that Virginia Gilmore's husband was named Will.]

Chewning: That was Dry Hollow Road, I think they lived on.

McCorkle: Right, I didn't know the name of that. And, I was telling you that whenever Virginia helped to birth a baby, she would plant a rose bush in her yard, so she had many rose bushes.

Chewning: That, I think that's such a nice story.

McCorkle: Uh huh. And we just loved her. She was very soft spoken.

Chewning: Uh huh. And she was the midwife for Brownsburg?

McCorkle: Uh huh. Well for us, I'm only speaking for us. Yeah.

Chewning: And your father farmed?

McCorkle: Yes.

Chewning: That was his primary occupation?

McCorkle: Uh huh. He did go to W&L for one year, but I believe he pretty much majored in having a good time. But whatever.

Chewning: [Laugh]

McCorkle: And my uncle [Will Buchanan] was a livestock dealer. So the two of them worked very well together.

Chewning: Uh hmm. And ah, you mentioned, I believe, that your grandmother had gone to Mary Baldwin for a year?

McCorkle: Yes, uh hmm. I don't know what she knew about music. But anyway, when she went there, she had to take her own piano on a buckboard, they called it. Which was sort of an unusual thing. But she did [cough] excuse me – teach my sister Eugenia to play the piano, and Jean did a beautiful job. She would sit in the living room, and we just sort of assimilated all this music. You know, now you'd hear songs and you could sing them, just from listening to them. And Eugenia did well. She later on played an organ just for her own benefit.

Chewning: Tell me again about your – your grandmother – she stopped playing the piano?

McCorkle: Oh. My grandfather died when my father was twelve years old. And my sister said my grandmother never touched the piano after that. She was just in very deep mourning.

Chewning: Oh, very sad. And your – was this your grandmother who lived up on the hill on the farm [1397 McElwee Road]?

McCorkle: Uh hm.

Chewning: And you said she was austere and sort of severe?

McCorkle: Uh hmm. Straight-laced. I do remember I used to grind the coffee beans for her. And I remember she had a huge coffee pot on her big old wood stove, and she would put eggshells in it. And someone said that was to settle the grounds.

Chewning: Oh, I never heard that.

McCorkle: Or clear it. But she was a wonderful cook. And she often helped with the Chrysanthemum Show at New Providence. Out in the old academy is where she and some of

the black fellows there would help to freeze the ice cream in a big 10-gallon freezer. And she made the most delicious apricot ice cream.

Chewning: Apricot?

McCorkle: Uh hm. And of course then, it was all good because it was a lot of fat! But I'm sure she used raw eggs, and things we would never think about using now.

Chewning: Well, did apricots grow locally?

McCorkle: No. I would say they were probably dried and then she would cook them. I have this little cookbook from that Chrysanthemum Show. Now I don't think that recipe's in it – but it does have some other ice cream recipes.

Chewning: And what Mrs. McCorkle has just showed me is a little booklet. It says “Souvenir of the Chrysanthemum Festival, Brownsburg, Virginia, 1905.” Oh, and it has little recipes in it. [Mrs. McCorkle later donated the Chrysanthemum Show program she mentioned to the Brownsburg Museum. One of the ice cream recipes from the program was included in “Historic Brownsburg Recipes,” published in August 2007 as a fundraiser for the museum.]

McCorkle. Uh hmm.

Chewning: Oh, this is so, so interesting! And your grandmother made ice cream for the Chrysanthemum Show?

McCorkle: Uh hmm. Well, and everybody pitched in. It was just a wonderful time in the community. It was beginning to slow down in 1941 when I left.

Chewning: Oh they were still having it? Up until the war?

McCorkle: Yes, the war was in '41, or late '41, December? And I remember one time we were helping to wait on tables. You know, they'd have the young people. And Governor Price of Virginia came to it. And I remember I had to serve him water, and I was, you know, flustered.

Chewning: Were you nervous?

McCorkle: Put the pitcher down and shook his hand. Then I poured the water, and I didn't spill it on him! My father and Dave's father [referring to her husband, David McCorkle] were great friends, but one was a staunch Democrat, and the other staunch Republican! But they used to cut ham together and slice turkey together [for the Chrysanthemum Show].

Chewning: For the Chrysanthemum Show?

McCorkle: At least they got along then. And people would make wonderful salads. Everything was homemade. And then on the third floor of the building [Note: Mrs. McCorkle is referring to the Sunday School Building of New Providence Presbyterian Church], of course they had Chrysanthemums. People raised Chrysanthemums and they were sold. People would come and buy them. And they'd be judged; they'd have ribbons on them.

Chewning: And was that a money maker for the church?

McCorkle: Oh yes. Yes.

Chewning: Or the community?

McCorkle: I would say the church, basically. Of course, I think – when I think of Rockbridge County, I think of Democrats and Presbyterians.

Chewning: Uh hmm. Uh hmm.

McCorkle: Because ah, that's pretty much what it was. I think there was one Catholic church in Lexington. And that goes back to your Scots-Irish background. And Augusta County, there are a lot of Presbyterian churches there.

Chewning: And your father was the Democrat and Mr. McCorkle's father was the Republican?

McCorkle: Uh hmm. But they did work together carving! [Laugh] So that was good.

Chewning: So people would buy tickets for the meals at the Chrysanthemum Show?

McCorkle: There would be lunch tickets, I think it was probably two days. Two lunches and two dinners. It was just – everybody was involved. I remember my sister, Margaret, at that time was teaching in a one-room school at Crawford, which had been a chapel – I didn't realize – of New Providence, out near Walkers Creek. I think it's now a home. And I was out from school – not going to school that day. And then I went down, and was in the classroom with her. It was interesting. But then we came and went to the Chrysanthemum Show. And a lot of young people helped. I was probably too young at the time. But a lot of them would come and serve the tables.

Chewning: So you were a member of New Providence?

McCorkle: Yes. Born and bred.

Chewning: And you said you lived in Brownsburg until 1941?

McCorkle: Uh huh. Went to Mary Washington College in the fall of '41. War was declared in December of 1941.

Chewning: Oh. While you were at college?



McCorkle: Uh hmm.

Chewning: Who were some of your neighbors, out on Hays Creek Road?

McCorkle: Mrs. James Brown and her daughter, Mary Stuart. She was a widow. Had a lovely home. And Harold and Venda Wade were at the mill, which was just on our side of the road [803 Hays Creek Road]. And Harold, I think, was a brother of Amelia Wade. As I said, that had been an old McClung mill at one time. And then across the creek – the Hays Creek ran behind our house and the mill race – was the Sensabuaghs. I don't remember their names. The McClungs lived not too far away. Miss Sally Reid, and Miss Madge, and Mr. Morton where Jen Wade – Jen Heffelfinger lived.

Chewning: Oh, at Level Loop [567 Hays Creek Road]?

McCorkle: Yeah, that's Level Loop. Uh huh.

Chewning: And who lived down at Bellevue [952 Hays Creek Road].

McCorkle: Moneymakers. Oh, and ironically, Dave's Aunt Eva [Strain] and my grandmother taught school there [at Bellevue].

Chewning: Oh they did?

McCorkle: The same grandmother. Dave's family had the school bell from Bellevue.

Chewning: Oh, how nice. And that was a girls' academy, at Bellevue?

McCorkle: Uh hmm.

Chewning: When did you – you started to school in Brownsburg?

McCorkle: Yeah, I was seven, cause then you – I had a November birthday, and you had to be seven then to start.

Chewning: And do you remember the first grade? Do you remember what it was like?

McCorkle: I remember them [laugh]! Ironically, I remember these little straight chairs. And I remember the Locker System in writing. We would do ovals, and then straight up and down – you'd count. But it, it really was a good system – cause some of these old letters that I read now, which are a couple of generations old – I can't read the writing. But at least with the Locker System you can read what you've written.

Chewning: So they're handwriting systems?

McCorkle: Yeah it's cursive now. Miss Isabel Leech was my first grade teacher. I don't remember much more about that.

Chewning: How – how big were the classes?

McCorkle: Umm, I'd say 20. I don't know. I'm sure much, much less than even our children, and, of course, our children's children.

Chewning: And how did you get to school?

McCorkle: Well, I don't know when this started, but my sister drove a buggy. That's my sister Margaret. And everything fell on her. She was the oldest, and then she had to look after the rest of us. But she would drive us, and I would sit between Eugenia and Mag, or Margaret. And poor Liz would be in the back. And I remember after Christmas, Liz was still singing Christmas carols, and we'd say, "Oh, Liz, please!" But that was okay! And then Mag said, you know, she'd have to leave the horse and buggy up there where the Dices lived.

That big gray house as you go past – right down below the school where you go around  
[Note: Mrs. McCorkle is referring to the Driver home at 22 Hays Creek Road].

Chewning: Oh, uh hmm.

McCorkle: The Dices lived there, but Mag would leave her horse there. And she said, “Then I got to school, and I smelled like a horse all day!” That’s Mag! [Laugh]

Chewning: [Laugh]

McCorkle: Mag would tell it like it was! But I don’t think we did that too long. Then the school bus came by. If you lived within a mile, you were expected to walk. But we lived far enough away. And I know one time, it snowed, and we said “Oh, goody, we have a day off!” But Miss Trimmer said, “You could have walked. You might have been late, but you could have gotten here.”

Chewning: [Laugh] So she wasn’t happy with you taking a day off!

McCorkle: No. But as a family of girls – we really did have a great childhood. And I think that’s what the bottom line is here, is the closeness of the family and all the things our mother did. And ah, Sunday afternoons there was the “Hurlburt’s Story of the Bible” and she would read us Bible stories. And I remember, I guess due to the polio scare, and I’m not sure when that was, but I know it was in August, and no youngsters under a certain age could attend anything. You were not allowed to go. And my mother would – on Sundays we would close the shutters, because it was very hot in the house. And we would, on Sundays, we would play like we were going to church. We were not allowed to play cards on Sundays, and we were not allowed to go swimming on Sundays.

Chewning: Did you swim in the creek behind your house a lot?

McCorkle: Well, there – the creek was there, but there was also a mill race closer. Ah, I don't know how in the world – cause when you got down near the mill, it just dropped straight down. And how in the world –

Chewning: Why you didn't go over the edge.

McCorkle: And mercy, it was bad water. It was raw sewage. I know Dave and I took a trip to Russia in '75, and everybody got sick but me. I guess because we'd been drinking all that water! [Laugh]

Chewning: [Laugh]

McCorkle: And we had a cow. My dad had taught the other three girls how to milk a cow. I guess I'm just the blessed one. Cause I guess everybody just said, "Oh, she's the baby of the family." At the same time, I felt like I couldn't do much because all these sisters were much better. But really, I've been blessed, because my dad was trying to teach me how to milk this cow. And I guess – I don't know what I was doing. But he said, "Oh, Annie, just pick the burrs out of her tail!" [Laugh]

Chewning: [Laugh]

McCorkle: So I never did learn to milk! [Laugh] But we had good times, and my mother would make such wonderful food. I remember we used to go to Churchville. Of course, my mother was a little more sophisticated. She had played tennis as a young girl. Churchville was a larger village, and more thriving than Brownsburg. So when she came to Brownsburg, it was pretty tough on her, and when I look back, I think it was pretty rough. And I just know why she read a lot, just to get away from us four kids! [Laugh] But, I can remember this wonderful place down there, Summerdeen, it was near a big spring in the shade. And my mother evidently got up in the wee small hours to cook fried chicken, and lemon tarts, and would pack this picnic lunch, and we'd stop there on the way to Churchville. And you know,

that's just the way she handled feeding us. But anyway, we'd go to Churchville. Ah, ironically, she was a good cook, but I never learned to cook. I just didn't.

Chewning: You didn't have to because she was a good cook!

McCorkle: [Laugh] Well, anyway, I just didn't.

Chewning: Did you have chores?

McCorkle: I can remember getting wood in, because then we – especially, particularly in the kitchen we had a wood stove. [Cough] Because my dad would chop the wood, but we had to bring it in and stack it up. And I remember, you know, if the person before you didn't stack it right, it was going to be trouble down the line! So one sister would slap it down and walk off. I'd yell, "Why don't you do it right?" Ah, since my uncle was in livestock, he would take us to open the gates. So when I got, finally to Harrisonburg when I married Dave, I had never really lived on a farm. It was just not – I just wasn't into it. Then I learned all about it. And I thought in all these years, I haven't made much progress. I'm still getting in wood and opening gates! [Laugh]

Chewning: [Laugh]

McCorkle: What else can I talk about? We had sleigh rides. We had a big hill right behind the house, and my mother would fix vegetable soup and hot cocoa. And I guess the four of us were just always doing things together. We'd get our Christmas tree. At Christmastime, as opposed to youngsters today, maybe some of them do it. We all made a list of everybody in the family. And then were given a certain amount of money, and then were to get all those people gifts, and wrap them. Nowadays, it pretty much goes to the child. Maybe. I don't know. But anyway, that was good. We would, we would write our list to Santa Claus. We had this wood stove in the living room. And our mother, of course, read the list first, then she'd put it in the stove, and it would go up to Santa Claus. [Laugh]

Chewning: Oh! Oh, that's how the letter got mailed Santa Claus, I see!

McCorkle: And of course I believed in the Easter Bunny until one Easter, my mother's fingers – one Easter morning when I got up, her fingers were about six different colors, and I thought, whoa! Disillusionment! [Laugh]

Chewning: [Laugh]

McCorkle: And we'd, you know, we'd make ice cream down in the basement. And everybody would want to lick the dasher. Have you ever done that?

Chewning: Oh uh hmm.

McCorkle: Yeah.

Chewning: What was the house like?

McCorkle: Ah, well, it was – well, this water system was pretty bad. We had what – we called it the tank room. And this was cistern water.

Chewning: What was on the main floor of the house?

McCorkle: Well, we had a living room, and later on – my mother was very – very artistic and very ingenious. She had the living room extended over the porch. She – I think she had one clock she painted about six different times. She just thought “Well, the clock ought to look this color.” But she really was very good. She could look at a pattern in the paper – of a dress. And just get it – and put a newspaper down and just cut out the pieces and make it. And every Christmas, Aunt Anna, we always knew – we'd each one, all four of us would get this lumpy package. We knew what it was going to be – dress material! We'd say, “Oh no, not again!” But it was her way of helping to clothe us. Since I was number four, you'd see a dress start on Mag, and I'd see it come all the way down to me!

Chewning: And you were tired of it by the time it got to you?

McCorkle: Certainly. I don't shop much anymore, but then I did – I would love to have something that wasn't homemade. But our parents were doing the best they could, and I think, as opposed to Dave's background, he had had a lot and lost it. But I'd never had it, so never missed it. And I can remember butchering the pigs – or the hogs – in the creek. Ah, of course they would shoot them, and then they would have these big pots of hot, very hot water, and I guess that would take the hair off of them. Cleaning up the pigs. But my grandmother got all the brunt of all that, cause all that meat would go to her house and be processed. We never had to do that part. I can remember my dad butchering beef, and seeing the whole process. We never had mutton, or lamb until I went to Mary Washington because I guess it was too valuable to eat.

Chewning: Oh, because people used them for the wool?

McCorkle: Well, that too, and I guess –

Chewning: Or it was just expensive meat?

McCorkle: Right. I don't ever – at this point, all my sisters are gone, so I can't say "I wonder why?" But now [at Sunnyside], I'm enjoying lamb because we never had it. Christmas trees, I remember, the second sister who was very particular. We would decorate the tree and I'd put on an ornament, and she'd say, "Oh, no, you can't put it there." I'd try again. "No, no!" And I'd go crying to Mother. And she said, "You know what? Go out and get your own tree and put it in your bedroom." So I did that.

Chewning: So did you have your own bedroom?

McCorkle: Well, mostly we – Poor Liz, as she was always the one that was sort of put upon. We – there were four – the main floor had a living room and a dining room, and my parents'

bedroom, the kitchen, a bathroom and the back porch. And then the bedrooms were upstairs. So, I guess as we grew, we sort of moved in with the older sisters.

Chewning: Are there four bedrooms upstairs in that house?

McCorkle: Yes, uh hmm. One was near that tank room. I'm trying to think – I think that was where the cistern water – you know, cisterns weren't very clean either. I think we did try to clean off the roof before it rained. But that was the tank room that held this water. And then the water that came up from this ram that was the creek water that we used for bathing. We didn't ever drink out of that.

Chewning: And do you remember when electricity came?

McCorkle: My sister, Eugenia, had a bad scar over her lip. She had fallen on a Delco – I think that was the name of the plant – container that evidently the McClungs had put in there. [The McClungs had lived in the house before the Buchanans.] It had some registers that had to go with that system, but evidently my parents had done away with that, because we just had stoves, wood stoves.

Chewning: What was Delco?

McCorkle: It was like – something like canned heat, I think.

Chewning: Oh, hmm. And how about electricity – lights?

McCorkle: Electricity came in the late '30's, I guess. Oh, that was something else! When we first had the lamps, and the shades to clean, that was a pain. And then, then we had Aladdin lamps which gave a good light. Ah, and then when electricity came, it was great.

Chewning: You had lamps that plugged in – did they come through and wire all the houses? How did you make your house hook up to the electricity in the line outside?



McCorkle: [Shrugs]

Chewning: I don't know either. Because now the wires are all in the walls.

McCorkle: Yes. Well often, I know nowadays, even – well that house we lived in had that bare bulb hanging from the ceiling that you don't see anymore at all.

Chewning: Could you tell me a little more about going to Brownsburg School?

McCorkle: Well, of course, the grade schools were pretty much fixed. We went to the old academy. We had chapel. And we had the same songbook we're still using here [at Sunnyside]. Isn't that terrible? We had chapel. Miss Trimmer read the scripture, and we would have hymns, and the whole school would come, I guess for about 15 minutes.

Chewning: Oh, every day? At the beginning of the day?

McCorkle: Yes. Or sometime during the day. We had a lot of plays there. And of course my being ten years younger than my sisters, these things are different than what they did. I remember one time that the basketball court was out beside the old academy. And Brownsburg was to be the host team. And it had rained. So Miss Trimmer took her whole school out on this clay court. And we all tramped, tramped, tramped for how long – I don't know! And then I imagine she had one of the high school boys line it off.

Chewning: Oh, so she even was the person who lined off the basketball court? Did she teach you any classes?

McCorkle: Yes, English and Latin.

Chewning: In high school?

McCorkle: Yes. I loved school. I remember when my sisters had all gone to school, I would line up all of my dolls and teach them to write. Scribble, scribble. I always wanted to teach. I just couldn't wait to get to school, so you know, no problem there. Ah, but the teachers were all good. I had a picture, yeah this one [shows a newspaper clipping with a photograph of Brownsburg school teachers] of a lot of them. There's Mollie Sue [Whipple]. There's Miss Trimmer.

Chewning: Oh, these are teachers?

McCorkle: Um hmm.

Chewning: Ah.

McCorkle: There was Al Lunsford. This is probably near the time, I don't think it says the date on there does it? Yeah, '37. See that's when – about the time I would have entered high school. Because Mary Warwick Dunlap had been there – she was my sisters' role model as a Home Ec teacher. Now Rosenelle Patterson had been a former principal, but then Miss Trimmer, you know, came in. So she'd been around a while.

Chewning: And ah, was Mrs. Trimmer the principal when you started in school? Miss Trimmer.

McCorkle: As far as I remember.

Chewning: And do you remember any of your other teachers?

McCorkle: Yeah, I think I wrote those down here somewhere. [Looks through her notes.] Isabel Leech. Mrs. Herbert Brown, who's Margaret and John's mother. Miss Coe had bright red hair. Miss Amole. Ellen Montgomery. Polly Wade. Imogene Whittington. Al Lunsford.

Chewning: Were they – some of those were your high school teachers and –

McCorkle: And grade. Jen Heffelfinger taught us in seventh grade.

Chewning: Oh did she?

McCorkle: In the old stucco building.

Chewning: Did you take Home Ec?

McCorkle: Um hmm.

Chewning: Did all the girls take Home Ec?

McCorkle: Yes, I think it was pretty well required. I hated it.

Chewning: Did you?

McCorkle: There again, this picky Anne. Cause I remember Miss Whittington was there. And she said, “Well, Anne, now you can clean out the garbage cans today.” And I thought, “Oh, dear.” But anyway, I did that. And I remember a pair of pajamas. You know you’d make something, then you’d take it apart, and then da-da-da-da. Well, Eleanor Whipple and I were going to a get-together up in Goshen Pass, or up at Wilson Springs. We were riding – I was riding Mag’s horse. I wasn’t much of a horseman. But anyway, at that time, we got these hats that you could roll up and put in a little round container. And I had put my pajamas that I’d made in Home Ec in there. Well, we got lower on Hays Creek, down that back way to Walkers Creek, and we – King, the pony, tried to sit down in the water. But anyway, we went on. Well, we got on down there, and Eleanor and I talked and somehow the subject of nightwear came up. I patted the round container and said, “Oh, well, I’ve got my pajamas in here.” And I looked and the whole bottom had dropped out! Well, the next

day, these pajamas were hanging up in the front window of Anderson's Store in Rockbridge Baths! [Laugh]

Chewning: [Laugh]

McCorkle: Somebody had picked them up, and I thought, "Oh, no, those pajamas!" But anyway, Home Ec was good. You learned, but you just have to cook a while and then it's elementary.

Chewning: What about going to New Providence? Did you –

McCorkle: Oh, now that, I think Mary [Sterrett Lipscomb] and I spoke of that. Our social life was really – and that's why we were so sheltered. I said to Dave the other day, "My, we were so limited, and so out of it when we were young." It was just school, church, home. That was it. That was the social part, to go to your young people's group, and work in that, and then we would go to the different churches when they had rallies. And even school. Of course, now, Miss Trimmer had wonderful basketball. And then we would go – there's a woman over in Health Care now who – we were doing a sing-along a couple of years ago. She said something about Eagle Rock, and I said, "I think we played them in basketball." She said, "Yeah, we played you, and we won!" And I said, "Now you don't know that!" But that was about as far away as we got from home. I think the year Mr. [Charles Morton] Hanna [a New Providence minister] was there and had moved to Grundy from New Providence he had invited Mary Sterrett and Dave and me and Frances Bell Martin and Sid [Martin]. I think we rode bus to Grundy, and that was pretty far off base!

Chewning: That was a long way!

McCorkle: At the end of nowhere. But anyway, that was a nice trip. And I think when Frances Bell Martin was in Montreat I did take the bus down there. But we were – our parents would take vacations, but we didn't go. They would have a woman come and stay with us.

Chewning: Oh. Where would they go? To visit friends, or –

McCorkle: Well it was often, they, I think they went with my mother's brother, Will Bear, in Churchville, and his wife. I know they went to Niagara Falls.

Chewning: And who stayed with you?

McCorkle: Well they had a, I think it was a Miss Moran in Brownsburg who would come and stay with us, poor lady!

Chewning: Who were the ministers at New Providence when you were growing up?

McCorkle: Ah, Dr. [Henry] McLaughlin, or Mr. McLaughlin, came, I think was there the year I was born, maybe, or else that's when that education building was built, in 1923. He was a wonderful entrepreneur, too. He got a doctor and bank, and he raised cattle. I think he had a herd of cattle. But he did well for that community. And that's when New Providence was the largest country church in the south, in the area, in that time. And then Mr. Hanna followed him. And then Dr. [David] Walthal was there when we were in high school, and then he went in the service. And then, of course, I left the community before Dr. [Richard] Hutcheson and Dr. Locke White were there.

Chewning: So you left before World War II started?

McCorkle: Well, that fall. The fall of '41.

Chewning: And where did you go?

McCorkle: To Mary Washington in Fredericksburg.

Chewning: And were you studying to be a teacher?

McCorkle: Yes, uh hmm.

Chewning: Education courses?

McCorkle: Bachelor of Science, I think they called it. Went in the summertime because it was just a good thing to do. And I really enjoyed it, as opposed to regular college. You kept up with your homework a lot better when you had to go every day. So I entered with the class of '41, [cough] graduated with the class in front of me.

Chewning: Oh, so you, you finished in –

McCorkle: '44.

Chewning: In three years?

McCorkle: Um hmm.

[Tape stops momentarily while McCorkle gets a drink of water.]

Chewning: We stopped the tape for a minute, but now we're recording again. Mrs. McCorkle was telling me about her father's death.

McCorkle: Um hmm.

Chewning: Can you tell me some of that again?

McCorkle: It seems that there was a lot of arthritis in our family. He had cousins who had severe arthritis. I don't know, the arthritis could have been triggered – because my uncle [William Buchanan] died in '39 of a heart attack. And my mother just remembered it was quite a blow. He was – seemed to be well up to that point.

Chewning: Was he the one who handled the livestock?

McCorkle: Yeah, Eliza's father [Will Buchanan]. And Eliza was just, I think she was about three years old. Uncle Will was a pallbearer for Lowrie Martin who had died the week before. And in those days they carried those caskets up to the graveyard from the church. And ironically, Uncle Will was dead a week later.

Chewning: And he was young, only 62?

McCorkle: 59. And my father had died on his 62<sup>nd</sup> birthday.

Chewning: How did your mother – how old were you then?

McCorkle: Ah, let's see.

Chewning: Were you still at home?

McCorkle: No. Our, our first daughter was born in '48, and my dad died in '50. So I would have been in my early twenties.

Chewning: Was your mother still living out on Hays Creek?

McCorkle: Yes, and it was rough for her. My dad had done all the grocery shopping, which in those days wouldn't be what it is now. My mother had never written a check. So this was quite a blow to her. But my sister lived nearby, and that was good, and then finally my mother moved to Fairfield and lived with my sister then down at the Martin place. But my mother lived to about my age, 83. And I thought, "Oh, my mother was so old!" And here I am her age! [Laugh]

Chewning: [Laugh] And you're so young! Do you – you said your father did the grocery shopping. Do you remember the stores in Brownsburg? Did you --

McCorkle: Yes.

Chewning: So is Brownsburg where you did most of the shopping?

McCorkle: Yes. Basically, we would go to Supinger's. I don't know whether Dave told you this or not – how Mr. Supinger would just use that brown paper – often you wrapped cheese in that. But if you wanted to charge things which – my dad told us, he said, “You may charge school supplies, but you can never charge candy!” But Dave would say Mr. Supinger, Bob, would just write your name and what you owed – maybe they had clothespins or something, and strung the pieces of paper on a string. But anyway, there was Woody's Store across from Supinger's. I remember, I guess depression glasses that came in the oatmeal?

Chewning: Um hmm.

McCorkle: We thought they were real tacky, and now depression glass makes an impression! And of course, there was Huffman's. Huffmans had one on the other side of Brownsburg. I don't think we went up there very much. And Mr. Bosworth's had the Post Office, but I don't think he had much. But I think it was basically Supinger's Store.

Chewning: Uh hmm. And if you needed shoes, or things like that?

McCorkle: In those days, we would go to Staunton or Lexington. And I remember one time I wanted a new pair of shoes so badly. We had a concrete walk outside our house, and I went out there, and I just rubbed them, you know, wore them down trying to wear my shoes out. Cause my mother had said, “No, your shoes are fine!” What a brat I was! [Laugh]

Chewning: [Laugh] When did your family first get a car? Do you remember your first car?



McCorkle: I think it was in the '30's. I remember the Isenglass curtains, like in "Oklahoma." You would just sort of pop them on, and in the summertime, you'd take them off. But they really didn't keep out much cold. But I don't remember. Of course, my sisters might have before that, I don't know. But I remember those – that Ford. I guess it was a Ford. I remember driving down to Staunton, and just the volume of snow that we had then would be just way up when you'd go through. I guess it snowed more then than it does now.

Chewning: Did your mother learn to drive?

McCorkle: No, never did.

Chewning: And did all four of you girls learn to drive?

McCorkle: No, Liz, Liz was a nurse, and she said she'd seen so many cases coming to the emergency room [after automobile accidents]. And it was too bad, because it really does open doors.

Chewning: Tell me about meeting Mr. McCorkle.

McCorkle: Oh, that's – that goes on forever! [Laugh]

Chewning: [Laugh] Okay!

McCorkle: That started way back in fourth grade! I had Dave's report card here a while ago, and I think it had on it the fifth grade. He had lived in West Virginia and came to Brownsburg. So we've been together a long time, 62 years this June.

Chewning: My goodness. And so did you date in high school?

McCorkle: Uh hmm. Not a lot of other boys, I guess.

Chewning: When you had a date with Mr. McCorkle, what would you do? Did he just come over and visit at your house?

McCorkle: Well, we often went to the movies in Lexington. I remember one time Al Lunsford took us there. Often we'd go to the church, we would go to the church meetings and have things to do there.

Chewning: And then, when did you get married?

McCorkle: In 1945. I had taught a year in Culpeper and we were married then.

Chewning: At New Providence?

McCorkle: Uh huh.

Chewning: And what was your wedding like?

McCorkle: Well, there again I just waited for things to happen. Because Mag, my poor Mag, it's a wonder she even spoke to me because she always seemed to end up doing things for me. When I was little, my mother would say, "Oh, where is Anne?" and she'd say "Oh, Anne, Anne, Anne." And then Mag would say, "You always say 'poor Anne' – what about poor me?"

Chewning: [Laugh]

McCorkle: And she [Mag] took care of all the arrangements. Ah, my sister, Eugenia, did a veil, and I borrowed a dress from Betty Bates, that was Buck Bates' aunt in Lexington. And Liz my sister, and Frances Bell Martin were my attendants, and Ed Patterson and Dave's cousin, Harry Moore. Anyway, it was at New Providence, and then we had the reception over at Miss Kate Brown's.

Chewning: Where was that?

McCorkle: That was just across from the mill [803 Hays Creek Road] , near our home.

Chewning: Okay. Uh hmm. Uh hmm.

McCorkle: Oh, a Dunlap – doesn't he live there now? Then of course, we moved to Harrisonburg.

Chewning: So right after you were married you moved to Harrisonburg. Do you remember people in Brownsburg? Were there particular characters or people who stand out in your memory?

McCorkle: Well, I guess all of us, whenever we get together here [at Sunnyside], and there are several of us here at Sunnyside, we always go back to Miss Trimmer.

Chewning: She sounds remarkable.

McCorkle: Well really, she was. Of course that's one of the early memories, we had to march to a drummer.

Chewning: I've heard that. Mr. Dunaway was a drummer?

McCorkle: Um hmm. [Mrs. McCorkle later had the following recollection: When I was a Junior in high school and deciding what subjects to take my senior year, I said to Miss Trimmer, "I don't think I'll take Solid Geometry." Miss Trimmer replied vehemently, "If you plan to go to college, you will take Solid Geometry."]

Chewning: Uh hmm. Do you remember when the Carwell's house burned?

McCorkle: Yes. I remember. That was one of the first Sears Roebuck houses. Of course we knew them. In a school that small, news traveled fast.

Chewning: You knew everyone. Uh hmm. How about Christmas? Did you have particular customs or Christmas traditions in you family?

McCorkle: Well, yes. We did – of course we opened our gifts on Christmas morning and had our Santa Claus. But my grandmother, who was a good cook, too, always had us up there for Christmas dinner. And I'm not sure we wanted to go, but we did. And I remember coming back, it would be – you know December's dark anyway, and I thought, "Gosh, Christmas is gone, and I would rather have been at home." Isn't that ugly! And I think all the trouble she went to! She always had scalloped oysters, and of course they had to come from Staunton or somewhere. And probably her homemade ice cream. And we would have pageants at the church, you know that was a big thing. We'd go Christmas caroling, we loved to do that.

Chewning: Oh did you? Uh hmm.

McCorkle: If people put a candle in the window, then you knew they wanted you to sing carols to them. Then we were invited in and served cookies and cocoa.

Chewning: Did you do that with a group from church?

McCorkle: Uh hmm, right.

Chewning: And your sister was the musical one – was she –

McCorkle: Well, I don't know – I don't think she ever played publicly. Of course we were all – you know Miss Trimmer was great on Glee Clubs. Eugenia would – I guess sang alto, and Mag. My dad sang in the choir, a great bass voice.

Chewning: Like Buck [Mrs. McCorkle's nephew, Buchanan Bates].

McCorkle: Yeah. And my mother said she really missed that after he died, because I know Miss Mary Monroe Penick had come from Lexington to sort of shape us up. She said, "Gene, I don't mind you patting your foot, but please don't rock the choir. Just try not to do that, because the whole choir is sort of shaking." [Laugh] But my mother said she really missed his voice, when she went back after he died. And Diane [Bates] probably has the same problem now after Buck's death.

Chewning: Oh I'm sure, uh hmm. Yeah, we miss Buck. What was I going to ask you? See I lose my train of thought, too.

McCorkle: Oh, good for you! [Laugh]

Chewning: [Laugh] We talked about the – is there any particular event in Brownsburg that really stands out in your memory as something –

McCorkle: Well, of course there were bad things that went on, too. You know, knifings with the blacks and –

Chewning: Oh my.

McCorkle: Uh hmm. But you know, as a kid, you hear bits and pieces, and you really don't know what happened.

Chewning: What about the lawn parties?

McCorkle: I can't remember much about that. Maybe dinner on the grounds at New Providence?

Chewning: Uh hmm.

McCorkle: But I don't remember much about lawn parties.

Chewning: Someone had mentioned that in one of these interviews and I thought that was a question that needed follow-up, and I never remembered to follow-up with that person. What about school segregation and the black schools? I think Mr. McCorkle told me that the black school was right down below where Miss Lib Ward lived [get address]?

McCorkle: Uh hmm.

Chewning: And so were there a lot of black families in Brownsburg whose kids went to that school?

McCorkle: Well, see, our family, I don't know why, for whatever reason never had blacks working for us. I know there was a Mr. Bob Shoultz that I remember. My grandmother had such a poor water supply and would have her laundry done. And it was sent over there on the hill where Maxwelton is. [Mrs. McCorkle is probably referring to 2508 Sterrett Road where Camp Briar Hills used to be located.], or –

Chewning: Oh, Briar Hills.

McCorkle: Briar Hills, uh hmm. There was a black woman who did her laundry. My grandmother said it always bothered her. She might have a hole in her handkerchief, but the woman would always fold it, and it always looked perfect! Now Dave's situation was different, altogether different.

Chewning: How about Mrs. [Mollie Sue] Whipple? Was she a teacher when you were in high school?

McCorkle: Yes, she and Fred [Whipple] were married, I think, in the late '30's. She was teaching at Brownsburg then. See, that was '37. [McCorkle shows a news clipping with a photo of Brownsburg teachers in 1937.] She was teaching then – Mollie Sue.

Chewning: And you graduated in '41. Did she – was she your teacher? Did she teach you any?

McCorkle: No.

Chewning: She taught lower grades and you were in high school then?

McCorkle: Yes. Uh hmm. Right. But she said she was always called on to play piano for Miss Trimmer. She's such a dear, and she can play by ear, she can play by note.

Chewning: A fantastic piano player.

McCorkle: Mollie Sue's a person who sort of fits in most anywhere, and yet she really will take a stand if something's not going right. She is one of the few who stood up to Miss Trimmer. I'm so glad in these later years that I've learned to know her.

Chewning: Were you in any of Miss Trimmer's plays? Or the Glee Club?

McCorkle: Yes, well, you know you do what you gotta do.

Chewning: You do? [Laugh]

McCorkle: [Laugh] I remember John Layton Whitesell and I were in a play together, and of course, it was a romantic scene. And I remember Dave walking back and forth across the gym, just checking! [Laugh]

Chewning: [Laugh] Oh, you were, you were dating Mr. McCorkle and –

McCorkle: Um hmm.

Chewning: And you had to play a romantic scene with Mr. Whitesell?

McCorkle: Uh hmm. So Dave was just walking – of course you know –

Chewning: Uh oh.

McCorkle: Well, you understood Miss Trimmer just did all the casting, and you just did it.

Chewning: No questions asked.

McCorkle: Um hmm. That's right.

[End of Side A]

Chewning: Did you have to work in the garden?

McCorkle: The main thing I remember – and I'm sure my dad did the hard part of it – was gardening. It was labor intensive. He would fill these little cans with kerosene in the bottom. And we had to go along the potato row and pick off potato bugs. And put them in the kerosene. So we still – we had potato bugs then, and we still have potato bugs. But we didn't have the sprays, so the potatoes were probably a lot healthier for us than now.

Chewning: Did your mother can a lot of vegetables?

McCorkle: Uh hmm. And the meats were canned and preserved. I remember the apple butter. That was probably penicillin on top, I don't know. It was stored in a crock, and we'd just scrape off the mold and eat it!



Chewning: Was your family pretty healthy, other than your father's arthritis?

McCorkle: Uh hmm. Yes we were. Mother and my sisters died in their eighties. So we've done okay.

Chewning: Um hmm. Um hmm. Did you play games? How did you all entertain yourselves when you were growing up?

McCorkle: Well, there was a game called "Andy Over." We'd get a small ball we could knock over the garage and back. One would holler "Andy" and the person on the other side would answer "Over." And Mag, I remember talking about "Cracking the Whip," now I don't know what that was all about. Everybody would grab a hand and you'd go down a hill or something?

Chewning: Oh, I don't know.

McCorkle: But anyway we loved to go to the Indian Hole to swim.

Chewning: In Goshen Pass?

McCorkle: Um hmm. I remember they'd say to me "Now Annie, you ask Dad – Daddy, he won't say 'no' to you." [Laugh]

Chewning: How would you get there?

McCorkle: Well, we'd go by car. Mag was driving then. But it was, of course, a lot different from Hays Creek. We all learned to dog-paddle in Hays Creek. We had a swimming hole down below where we lived. We walked a lot, and sang, sang a lot. We played a lot of card games. My grandkids play this game called "Animal." They love to play. And solitaire, double solitaire, triple solitaire and Fish and Piggy, Piggy. And I guess it kept us entertained.

Chewning: Did you read a lot?

McCorkle: I wasn't the best reader. I remember telling Miss Trimmer, "I only want the books that the conversation is in." And she said, "Well now you can't always do that." But then in later years, I'm an avid reader. I just love to read.

Chewning: And was there a library at school? Where – where would you even get books?

McCorkle: Well, Mother was a great reader. I don't remember a library at school, but certainly we had one.

Chewning: What was your mother's life like? Did she – was she busy all the time with four girls, doing laundry –

McCorkle: After being a mother with three children, I don't know how she did it. Um, and I think it was, it was just so different from what she was used to. I don't know. But of course she never complained. Of course, she sewed for us. They did have the Home Demonstration Clubs then that the women went to, and church circles, and bridge parties. Again, it was all around the community pretty much.

Chewning: Well, let me look and see if there are other things I need to ask you. Or, you look at your notes and see if there other things you need to tell me.

McCorkle: Well this, this telephone system was something in Brownsburg.

Chewning: Oh, tell me that!

McCorkle: Miss Osie [Supinger] and Miss Mattie Wade. Well, I know when you dialed you had to, you know on the old phones, ring three longs and a short on the side of the telephone. That was somebody's number. But anyway, Miss Osie and Miss Mattie, they were the town

criers! [Laugh] Someone called central and asked them to call Mollie Sue's number. Miss Osie or Miss Mattie said, "No, I just saw her go down to the store and she's not at home now." [Laugh]

Chewning: [Laugh]

McCorkle: But really, it was a good system, too, because when things happened, it was just, it spread in hurry and it got things done. The telephone company was above the stucco bank. Bank of Rockbridge.

Chewning: When did you get a telephone?

McCorkle: It must have been a long before I was born because I don't remember anything about that.

Chewning: Oh, you don't ever remember not having a telephone?

McCorkle: Right.

Chewning: And as I understand, there were little exchanges, and each exchange had a name, or –

McCorkle: No. I don't know about that. I don't remember that. I think our ring was three longs and a short. I remember this Mr. – I think it was Mr. Huffman. He was a lineman for the telephone company, and his wife was pregnant. And my mother was pregnant. So when he came to work on the phone, she hid, didn't want him to see her in that condition! [Laugh] Then his child was born the same time, my mother said, "Oh, my goodness!" But you know, in those days, you just didn't do that. You didn't go out in society.

Chewning: Did she go to church? When she was pregnant?

McCorkle: Can't remember that. See I'm the youngest here, so – I doubt if she did.

Chewning: Huh. So you just didn't go out in public?

McCorkle: When you're pregnant.

Chewning: When you're pregnant?

McCorkle: Well, maybe up to a point you could.

Chewning: Um hmm. Um hmm.

McCorkle: Um hmm.

Chewning: Huh. Can you think of anything else? Other stories? Anything about your ancestors? Stories about your ancestors you'd like to share with us?

McCorkle: Well, just knowing that one grandmother, and then we weren't very compatible.

Chewning: Aah.

McCorkle: Because she was pretty austere.

Chewning: Anything else you – I'll stop and let you look through your notes.

[Tape stops momentarily while McCorkle reviews her notes.]

Chewning: Mrs. McCorkle, if you – I know you have a little clipping from the newspaper about Miss Trimmer. I wonder if you'd mind reading that for me. It's so interesting.

McCorkle: [Reads] “Miss Ossie Trimmer is principal of Brownsburg School in Rockbridge County, which was listed as an honor school in scholarship as a result of a recent survey by Charles C. Rodifer. Only two rural high schools, Brownsburg and Prospect, attained this rating. Miss Trimmer believes stressing of the fundamentals is responsible for her school’s record.”

Chewning: I just, I just think it’s so remarkable that a little tiny country school like that had such a reputation.

McCorkle: Um hmm. Well, and see then, if we did something wrong at school, like Dave said, it was such a closed society, your parents would know before you even got home.

Chewning: Before you got home?

McCorkle: And then they would also reprimand you. Nowadays, they’d sue the principal; they’d sue anybody. It’s just so sad – you know.

Chewning: Well, it’s different times.

McCorkle: I remember one time my mother had a luncheon, I guess, on her front porch for the school faculty at the end of the school year. She was a perfect hostess. My dad was on the school board, and I guess she – that she would have all these exotic things. And so I guess that’s the way she expressed herself. But then, I wonder about her too, how she did that. [Laugh]

[End of Side B]

## Anne Buchanan McCorkle Index

---

### A

Amole, Miss · 18  
Automobile · 24

---

### B

Bates, Betty · 26  
Bates, Buchanan (Buck) · 26, 29  
Bear, Will · 21  
Bellevue · 9  
Bosworth's Store · 24  
Briar Hills, Camp · 30  
Brown, Mary Stuart · 9  
Brown, Mrs. Herbert · 18  
Brown, Mrs. James (Kate) · 9, 26  
Brownsburg  
    Bank · 21, 35  
    Doctor · 21  
    Midwife · 3  
    Post Office · 24  
    Sears Roebuck House · 28  
    Stores · 24  
    Telephone System · 34  
Brownsburg School · 17  
    Basketball · 20  
    Glee Club · 28  
    Home Economics · 19  
    Honor School · 37  
Buchanan, Eliza · 2  
Buchanan, Eugene (father) · 2, 7, 12, 20, 22, 23, 24, 28, 32, 33  
    School Board · 37  
Buchanan, Eugenia Johnstone (Jean) · 3, 10, 16, 28  
Buchanan, Frances Sterrett (Fannie) · 2  
Buchanan, Margaret Antoinette (Mag) · 3, 8, 10, 26  
Buchanan, Mary Elizabeth (Liz) · 3, 10, 26  
Buchanan, Mrs. Eugene (mother) · 11, 13, 23, 32, 34, 35  
Buchanan, William · 2, 4, 22

---

### C

Carwell, House Fire · 27  
Christmas · 13, 15, 28  
Cistern Water · 14  
Coe, Miss · 18  
Crawford School · 8

---

### D

Dunlap, Mary Warwick · 18

---

### E

Easter · 14  
Electricity · 16

---

### G

Gilmore, Virginia · 3  
Gilmore, Will · 4

---

### H

Hanna, Charles Morton · 20  
Hays Creek Road, 22 · 11  
Hays Creek Road, 567 (Level Loop) · 9  
Hays Creek Road, 763 · 1  
Hays Creek Road, 803 · 9  
Hays Creek Road, 952 (Bellevue) · 9  
Heffelfinger, Jen · 9, 19  
Home Demonstration Clubs · 34  
Huffman's Store · 24  
Hutcheson, Eliza Johnstone · 3  
Hutcheson, Richard G. · 21

---

### L

Leech, Isabel · 10, 18  
Level Loop · 9  
Lunsford, Al · 18, 26

---

### M

Martin, Frances Bell · 20, 26  
Martin, Lowrie · 23  
Martin, Sid · 20  
McClung, Madge · 9  
McClung, Morton · 9  
McClung, Sally Reid · 9  
McCorkle, Anne Buchanan  
    Birth · 2  
    Farm Chores · 12  
    Gardening Chores · 32  
    Grandmother Buchanan · 5, 9, 36  
    Marriage · 26  
    Mary Washington College · 8, 21  
    School · 9  
    Sisters · 3  
    Swimming · 33  
McCorkle, David · 7, 9, 12, 13, 15, 20, 25, 30, 31  
McElwee Road, 1397 · 5

McLaughlin, Dr. Henry · 21  
Montgomery, Ellen · 18  
Moore, Harry · 26  
Moran, Miss · 21

---

## *N*

New Providence Presbyterian Church  
Christmas Caroling · 28  
Chrysanthemum Show · 5  
Circles · 34  
Crawford Chapel · 8  
Education Building · 21  
Young People's Group · 20

---

## *P*

Patterson, Ed · 26  
Patterson, Rosenelle · 18  
Penick, Mary Monroe · 29  
Polio Scare · 11  
Price, Governor of Virginia · 7

---

## *S*

Segregation · 30

Sensabuagh Family · 9  
Shoultz, Bob · 30  
Sterrett, Mary · 20  
Strain, Eva · 9  
Supinger, Osie · 34  
Supinger's Store · 24

---

## *T*

Trimmer, Ocie · 17, 27, 31, 37

---

## *W*

Wade, Amelia · 9  
Wade, Harold · 9  
Wade, Mattie · 34  
Wade, Polly · 18  
Wade, Venda · 9  
Walthal, David · 21  
Whipple, Eleanor · 19  
Whipple, Fred · 31  
Whipple, Mollie Sue · 18, 30  
White, Locke · 21  
Whitesell, John Layton · 31  
Whittington, Imogene · 18  
Woody's Store · 24