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Interview with David Eldred McCorkle

By Isabelle Chewning

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

Chewning: My name is Isabelle Chewning. Today is March 21, and I'm here with Mr. David McCorkle. Mr. McCorkle, could you tell me your full name?

McCorkle: David Eldred McCorkle. Man, I hadn't seen that for years. [Looks at Brownsburg High School ring]

Chewning: Oh, your ring?

McCorkle: Anne brought it in here. She wore it most of the time. I don't know whether I ever wore it much. [Laugh]

Chewning: [Laugh] Well, can you tell me a little bit about when you came to Brownsburg? Were you born in Brownsburg?

McCorkle: I was born in Lowe, West Virginia [on October 18, 1923]. Dad was General Superintendent of Weynoke Coal and Coke Company. With the unions, it was a pretty rough time for mine management and owners in West Virginia. And, unions – Dad ran what they called a “good mine” operation, in that miners had electricity and water in their homes. They weren't prone to joining the union. So I, we went from Weynoke to the West Virginian Hotel about 1930. And then we were there a couple of years. And then in 1932 we came to Brownsburg, for the good of both of us, a place to live. And we looked after a great-aunt and uncle, Eva Lee Strain and John Madison Strain. They were single. Aunt Eva had a leg off. She had lost it from an infection. So we stayed there until they both died. Uncle John died

first. And then Aunt Eva – I was the “baby sitter.” Let’s see. She read Latin. She loved Robert Lewis Stevenson – she read that. And Shakespeare.

Chewning: How old were you at that time?

McCorkle: When we came there, I was about nine. I had, in West Virginia was the change. Because I had Italian nurses. I spoke Italian before I spoke English. Well, they were guards because the union wanted the children of the owners and operators so they could make them unionize. So I’d come back to Lexington to visit Granddad’s home, Uncle Morton’s, and I’d always be looking around for Jim or Antonio, cause they weren’t there. Because when I came to Virginia, we didn’t have to worry. So we moved to Brownsburg, and it was quite different. In Bluefield, I had two cousins that were my main association. Other than that, I was pretty well by myself. But when we came to Brownsburg, why, there were kids my age everywhere. Then, we – oh, let’s see.

Chewning: Well, were –

McCorkle: We were there nine years.

Chewning: Were Jim and Antonio –

McCorkle: They were Italians.

Chewning: Was there a threat of kidnapping?

McCorkle: No, I didn’t get kidnapped because they were all there.

Chewning: But that’s why they were there?

McCorkle: Twenty-four hours a day, I was with one of them. They were guards. So, you know, my exposure with them. But I've lost all that. When we got to Brownsburg, didn't anyone speak Italian. [Laugh]

Chewing: No one spoke Italian! [Laugh]

McCorkle: So, I went back to English. But it was a great thing when we came to Brownsburg. We were there, I came from the West Virginia schools in 3A. So they said, "Well, 3A – put him in the fourth grade." Which was a jump ahead. Well, I had – I was dyslexic – they didn't know what that was in those days. I just wrote everything backwards! [Laugh] And so I took the fourth grade. I think it was Miss Coe. And I conditioned. Well, Mother says, when I started to school next year, she said, "You take the fourth grade again." So I was in line, and Miss Trimmer said, "What are you doing in that line?" [Laugh] And I says, meekly, "Miss Trimmer, Mother said I was to take the fourth grade again. I conditioned." She said, "Alright." [Laugh] So then, of course, the first time I was with a different group. They were actually older than I was. And then I ended up in the grade with Anne [his wife, Anne Buchanan McCorkle] and Mary [Sterrett Lipscomb], a different group. But the thing about it was, the teachers, of course, as I said, there wasn't any knowledge of dyslexia. But they kept me in at recess. They kept me in. They hammered, "No, that's not a 'd', that's a 'b'!" [Laugh] So that was a help all the way through. I thought they were mean, but I'm fortunate I ended up there because – well, as you know, in that period, Brownsburg was a closed society. I mean, you either belonged to New Providence Church, or you didn't belong! [Laugh] And there was a – well, it operated around the church or the school. And fortunately, this Miss Trimmer was a two-year graduate of Blackstone. She was the principal. But she could do anything. She taught Latin. She taught English. She put on plays. She made money. [Laugh] She was one of the most remarkable people that I ever met. And she worked for summers, finally got her degree. But, you didn't really want to ride with her, cause she wasn't the best driver in the world. [Laugh]

Chewing: [Laugh] That's one thing she didn't do well?

McCorkle: We had, we had baseball, and we had basketball, and you didn't dare lose a game. [Laugh] Let's see.

Chewning: Where did your family live?

McCorkle: We lived, let's see, in what we called then the Strain place [3191 Brownsburg Turnpike]. I don't know who – the Strains came there, must have been just before the war – the War Between the States. Ed [Patterson] knew who owned it before. But I can't remember the name. Of course, the McNutts were on a hill about the same height [3334 Brownsburg Turnpike]. I remember we could talk from one porch to the other across the valley. But if you went down in the valley, you couldn't hear. But it was, you know, one of those unique things.

Chewning: Was the house – did the Clemmer Browns own that house after your family did?

McCorkle: The Browns bought it when we left. They bought it, and then, I guess McClungs have it now. Ed had – well Aunt Eva talked about it. The house burned. There were two fires going on at the same time. That fire, and then there was a Mitchell that was the Reese place. And I believe their barn was burning at the same time. But I don't remember exactly when it was, but it was before we ever went there. But Aunt Eva talked about it a lot cause it was right traumatic. And then they rebuilt with the same walls. What I couldn't figure, in Mr. Jones' book [Henry Jones Diary], he talked about everybody. He talked about dealing with McCorkles that were up out of Lexington. And everybody else, but David Eldred Strain was his neighbor. He [Strain] was a doctor in the community. And he [Jones] never mentioned once the fellow I was named for. They must have had one of those rural feuds that happened in that community. And of course, he didn't mention the war, except he mentioned one time in that book that his son came home with his leg off. But Aunt Eva used to say that a Southerner could not write anything about the period before the war and during the war. But I want to tell you that – well, they talked about the French and Indian War, and some about the Revolutionary War. But they – if you mentioned Reconstruction, you had to back off cause fireworks are going to start. Cause they – the Reconstruction really set a – all

the older people they went wild. I know, well it was another thing. When you went into Mr. Jim Bosworth's store, you didn't mention Lincoln, or you were going out the door whether you were white or black or any other color! You were going out that door in a hurry! Cause I don't know, he had such a violent attitude towards Lincoln.

Chewning: When was your Aunt Eva born?

McCorkle: 1861.

Chewning: So did she have any memories at all of the –

McCorkle: Yeah, they had memories of it. And my grandmother did, she was older. I know they talked about peeling potatoes and keeping the skins and eating the potato to have food. But you see, we have very little record. I didn't know until that fellow that has Teddy Bob Supinger's store wrote a book [McCorkle is referring to a book written by Robert Driver]. And I didn't even know that David Eldred Strain was in the Southern Army till then.

Chewning: And he was your grandfather?

McCorkle: Great-grandfather.

Chewning: Great-grandfather.

McCorkle: My grandfather was Samuel White McCorkle from Lexington and farmed out at Brushy Hill, not too far from Kendal now. And we used to go up there every weekend. We had a Peerless automobile which was a big thing. Every Saturday we went up to Uncle Morton's. And along the way, there'd be people standing between there and Lexington, and they would flag us down and say, "Will you get so-and-so for us in Lexington?" And occasionally somebody wanted a ride. I remember Dad had an Irish Setter dog, and he would follow us or ride all the way up. And sometimes we'd leave, couldn't find him, and we'd get back to Brownsburg and he was already there.

Chewning: [Laugh]

McCorkle: But ah –

Chewning: So you had this car in Brownsburg?

McCorkle: Well, that was Dad's car.

Chewning: Uh huh. So you had brought it from West Virginia?

McCorkle: Oh, we'd brought it from West Virginia. He had – well, that was the top of the line of cars then, and Dad had about eleven over the years. Well, up until about 1928, everything was prosperous. I mean, I vaguely – well, I remember we'd go on a drive on Sundays, and as far as you could see, there were cars on the road. And of course, after 1929, we were up to the '60's before the United States manufactured as many cars as it did back then.

Chewning: Really.

McCorkle: Of course, the same old roads are in West Virginia that we rode on then. They've got interstate roads. But ah – oh, as Anne mentioned a while ago, I guess that Jeff whatever-his-name-is says "You may be a redneck if your – if your family tree looks like a pole!" [Laugh] So I guess he was talking about us!

Chewning: Well, I think, you know, here in the Valley of Virginia there are just a lot of Scots-Irish people – there weren't that many, and people married their cousins.

McCorkle: Well, and they were closed. The closed society. I remember when we came there people would say – my mother was from Washington, Pennsylvania, had lived up there and they lived all over West Virginia. But they'd say, "Well, Ginny seems to be alright for a

Yankee.” Because her dad was English and her mother was Welsh. So, she seemed to fit in alright.

Chewning: So your family came to Brownsburg because of the Depression?

McCorkle: Yeah, well, yes. West Virginia – when we left West Virginia in ’32, it was the richest state in the Union. And guess what it is today – the poorest. They’ve lost over two million people, so a lot of people, lot of mine management people came to the Valley. We’ve known a number of them around here our family knew in West Virginia. So that built up the – I guess, the population of the Valley. It’s hard to remember.

Chewning: That must have been a big change for you then, moving from Bluefield to a small country village and living on a farm.

McCorkle: Well, not really because you know, when you’re in that situation, you’re by yourself. We used to go to White Sulfur, and I’d be the only kid there. I remember the swimming pool – I was always in trouble. Because they had this big swimming pool, and it was absolutely clear. And I couldn’t remember which end was the shallow end. And I can remember that all the walls had war battles on it. They seem to be gone today; I don’t know why they got rid of them cause they were – they were interesting. But coming to Brownsburg, then there were, you know, around a lot of people my age. When I lived in Bluefield we lived in the West Virginia Hotel which wasn’t in a residential area. So every few months, the principal of the school would discover, “Well, he’s not in the area. We’re getting a lot of people moving. Send him down to South Bluefield.” And I’d be in South Bluefield for a while, then they’d send me to another school. I was always on the move because the population was a whole lot larger then in that area. Bluefield was larger then than it is today. By a good bit. And this West Virginia Hotel had just been built. So when we left Weynoke, why we lived on the tenth floor of this hotel until we came to Virginia.

Chewning: Was your father able to find a job when he moved to Brownsburg?

McCorkle: Well, he wasn't well. I guess he had one of the – well, to begin with, he was deaf as a post. I was his interpreter for years. Cause other people wouldn't yell as loud as I would. [Laugh] But he took care of the garden and other things around there. And by 1937, I guess it was, he had this ulcer, and Dr. Leech operated on him and patched him up some. So he wasn't well from there on. He did things.

Chewning: Was your uncle a farmer? The one that you were living with?

McCorkle: Yeah. The farm started at the Patterson's then next to Brownsburg. It was 400 acres. Until we had to divide and sell the place cause there were a lot of heirs. Some way, this David Eldred Strain had bought this farm. He just wanted it so he could drain some land and he didn't pay any attention to it. About 120 acres that was there, and they had to pay a lot of back-taxes on 120 acres that no one knew they owned. [Laugh] And it was land that – oh, I don't know, up next to the camp and all the way into Brownsburg.

Chewning: The camp?

McCorkle: Well, the ah –

Chewning: Briar Hills **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

McCorkle: Briar Hills. And they swam on the place. It was a swimming hole there that the kids all came over.

Chenwing: So you owned – your family owned land on both sides then of Brownsburg Turnpike?

McCorkle: Oh yeah. From the [New Providence Presbyterian] church, from right next to the cemetery to Brownsburg, basically. I used to ride a horse to church and leave it in the woods back of the cemetery and go to church. Sometimes I came up the road there. And there was

a surry there. I used to go places in the surry. I was just a kid. But on two occasions – the rule was that if you owned a pet, you had to be able to kill it.

Chewning: Oh.

McCorkle: And on two occasions, I brought these horses in after running them to get back before dark. Cause I just roamed all over the community from morning till evening. And ah, I'd put them away, they'd get distemper, and then Dad would call and say, "Come on down here –

Chewning: Uh oh.

McCorkle: and kill this horse." So I don't know, before I was 12, I'd killed two horses from – because I'd – they had distemper.

Chewning: Oh.

McCorkle: I'd shoot the horse, and they'd drag it out. But that was the rule – dogs, cats, or otherwise. Cause dogs and cats were animals.

Chewning: Right.

McCorkle: They weren't worshipped then. They had a job, they did it, and if they didn't, well they were goners. [Laugh]

Chewning: Uh hmm.

McCorkle: There wasn't that – we didn't – well, really, there was very few people that worked animals with dogs along at that period. I finally, working with Angus cows and sheep, found that dogs were a nuisance. Cause when I was working with them, I'd be a thousand feet away from the house. I'd tie the dog at the house, but those animals knew it

was there. And then after we got rid of the dogs, Anne and I could bring the animals from anywhere and work with them, no trouble. But that was – I think after we came here [to Rockingham County]. So – but the fortunate thing was that I ended up in Brownsburg. With the dyslexia, I still got the scholarship to W&L, and one to Bridgewater, which wasn't easy to get in those times. But I never used either one of them because of family; Mother and Dad were poorly. So, we came here [to Rockingham County] when I was about, just turned 17.

Chewning: When you say you came here, you mean –

McCorkle: To the farm – there. [Points to a photo of the house]

Chewning: In Rockingham County?

McCorkle: Yeah, we bought the farm there, and I operated it, and I bought Rockingham Memorial Hospital, I think! [Laugh]

Chewning: [Laugh]

McCorkle: Cause Dad – either Dad or Mother was in there [the hospital], but thank goodness it didn't cost as much as it does now. But of course, money was worth more then, too.

Chewning: So you basically lived in Brownsburg then from the time you were nine until you were about 17 years old?

McCorkle: Right. Uh hmm.

Chewning: So you graduated from high school in Brownsburg?

McCorkle: And the thing of it was, that was my education. But as a Soil Conservationist, I was the fellow they came to to find out about something. Cause I did have the farm, and I

was hired – this didn't have to do with Brownsburg, but it was a Brownsburg education. I put in soil conservation on the farm. The farm was – had huge gullies, and I put contour strips in. There were 26 strips. Well, Dr. Bennett and Dr. Loudermilk came down there. Dr. Loudermilk had one of the best insights on the effects of erosion on the world over the centuries. And there's still a pamphlet there, a reprint on him. But about three weeks later, here they came again. They wanted to see the farm again, and they did. So he went to town and told the District Conservationist, which had that area of the valley, to go out there and hire me. So, through all the years of working 40 years with the Soil Conservation Service, I was "Dr. Bennett's boy." So I said what I wanted to say, I did what I wanted to do. Earthshaking. I was at a meeting of the National Forest and Parks. And they were trying to figure out what to do with the Park, and what not. It was in one of those states where the budget had been cut, I guess. And he came around to me, and they didn't like my speech. I suggested they cut it up in 160-acre plots and sell it [laugh] and that didn't go over.

Chewning: You were a developer from Virginia!

McCorkle: That doesn't go over well with the bureaucrats. They wanted more land, more land.

Chewning: Right. Right.

McCorkle: After that, they did put limitations on what they could buy.

Chewning: And so you graduated from Brownsburg High School?

McCorkle: Brownsburg High School.

Chewning: Do you remember some of your teachers from –

McCorkle: Oh yeah. Sure I would. Of course, Ocie Ellen Trimmer was the Number One. I don't know – I sold Coca Colas through I don't know how many years there. They had a

Coca Cola box. Occasionally we'd have ice to put in it! [Laugh] But the drink man, every time he came, he gave me six bottles; well that helped some. I didn't know we were making anything. But anyway, it bought the football uniforms when they came. Miss Trimmer was a "Class A" manager, too. She'd put on plays. She had movies. She would get local string bands or whatever it was – the Whitesells and what not – to play and charge you ten cents. I've always wondered, she bought these backgrounds for plays she put on. They came from New York, and they were big. But they were all hand-painted, and I've always wondered what happened to those, cause they had the different scenes and everything, and they were very good.

Chewning: Were you in any of the plays?

McCorkle: Oh yeah. Well everybody had to be in the plays. There wasn't that many of us!

Chewning: Do you remember – what were some of the plays?

McCorkle: You could count on one hand.

Chewning: What were some of the plays? Do you remember any of them?

McCorkle: I don't remember plays. I knew she was very conscientious. When she put on a play, you know, you ordered the books. When the play was over – if she was going to have it again, she'd order the books again. Cause that was, you know, the law. And I couldn't figure how in the world, way back there in the boonies, she'd bother about –

Chewning: Copyright laws?

McCorkle: Copyright laws [laugh] so religiously, but she did. And then, one thing I remember, I worked there for – I don't know, for a year maybe more, or two. For the NYA.

Chewning: What does that stand for?

McCorkle: Well that's the National Youth Administration. Well, it seems the government says to Eugene Buchanan (he was the School Board Chairman and lived there) and Miss Trimmer, "You either take the NYA – get so many kids on NYA, you're in a depressed area." We didn't know it. [Laugh] "And you've got to get these kids on the NYA or we're going to cut funds somewhere else, or do something terrible." And so, she says, "You. You. You." [Laugh] "You're going to make that six dollars a month." And I remember one of my duties was sitting on the front steps, and kids would bring weeds up to me, and they'd count them, and I'd –

Chewning: You mean like dandelions?

McCorkle: Dandelions and things. [Laugh] And I don't know what else. But they had to have so many people on NYA there. It was the start of the social system there, because they ah –

Chewning: And so you made money, being –

McCorkle: Six dollars a month!

Chewning: You had to make six dollars a month?

McCorkle: No, I made six dollars because of NYA.

Chewning: Because you were counting weeds?

McCorkle: Well, there were other things that, you know, things you'd do anyway, even if it wasn't there.

Chewning: Was –

McCorkle: But the government said they had to have so many people on NYA.

Chewing: Was selling the Coca Colas –

McCorkle: No, no, that was a money-making thing – that was a school project, and I liked it. That would be a terrible thing now, wouldn't it? I mean, you know recess was going, and something else. That's when I was in high school. I was living at the McNutts for a year there. With the – golly, I can't think of who the one teacher was. My mind – my Alzheimers is bothering me! [Laugh] Ah, Ellen Montgomery and Al Lunsford. Took their football and chemistry. I guess that's the main thing that he taught. And – but Anne and I went to see him eight or ten years ago down in Foley, Alabama.

Chewing: Mr. Lunsford?

McCorkle: Um hmm. He was from Foley. While he and I were living there [with the McNutts], his Dad raised potatoes. And he got this machine, and it was a great machine, digging potatoes and everything. The only trouble was, a year after he worked the machine the first year, he died of Silicosis, from the, you know, the dust coming up to him and got him. But anyway, we went down, and we thought we'd go to see him. We had a daughter in Pensacola, and we went down there and stayed a while. So we drove over there, and we went into a grocery store restaurant and whatnot there, and happened to ask a fellow there if he knew Al Lunsford. "Why sure," he said. "That was our – that's our Superintendent." And I asked him where – "Well," he says, "This is just the problem. He died three weeks ago." [Laugh] And they wanted us to go to the – over to the widow's, but she wouldn't have known who we were, or anything.

Chewing: How was it you happened to be living at the McNutts when he was there?

McCorkle: I was – the family had moved.

Chewing: Oh, your family had moved to Rockingham County?

McCorkle: Well, in the process they moved there, and they wanted me to finish there.

Chewning: Oh, I see.

McCorkle: So I boarded, I boarded at McNutts.

Chewning: What had happened to your aunt and uncle?

McCorkle: Oh, they'd died. Uncle John died in about '35, I guess. And Aunt Eva died in – must have been '38 or '39. And ah, then there was quite a few – well, the way the will was, there were quite a few heirs involved and everybody thought Dad was going to buy the farm, but he had already decided. So, consequently, a lot of people that wanted the farm wouldn't bid. [Laugh] And the Browns got it. Of course, they weren't from around there at the time. But Dad never put a bid in. But, I got a big part of my education, I've always considered, on the store porch at Supinger's.

Chewning: Which store was that?

McCorkle: Supinger's. Right across from Mollie Sue's [Whipple at 2728 Brownsburg Turnpike].

Chewning: Okay. It's now the antique shop?

McCorkle: The antique shop. That's the fellow that wrote the book – he must be a Yankee. [Laugh]

Chewning: [Laugh] And it was called – it was Supinger's store.

McCorkle: Yeah. Teddy Bob's.

Chewning: What is it? Teddy Bob's?

McCorkle: Teddy Bob was what –

Chewning: Teddy Bob Supinger?

McCorkle: And of course, his wife was the telephone operator. And her sister. And that was a great service, too, because they knew everything that was going on, and where everybody was.

Chewning: [Laugh] I've heard that.

McCorkle: Who was out of town. It was great.

Chewning: Where did the Supingers live?

McCorkle: Over the bank [2711 Brownsburg Turnpike].

Chewning: So the bank was there?

McCorkle: And they lived up over the bank. Apartments up there. And all – they – the Bosworths. Seven o'clock weekday evenings, the colored of the community would gather for "Amos and Andy". He had a radio. Now we had a radio, but it operated on a car battery and it would go down. So being from out in West Virginia and having relatives on the Ohio and Pittsburgh and what not, we mainly saved the battery for news of floods on the Ohio.

Chewning: Oh, I see.

McCorkle: [Laugh] So occasionally I'd get to hear Armstrong or some of those series that were on. But, let's see. There was, coming into town, there was, of course, the doctor's office [2744 Brownsburg Turnpike], and then Supinger. And I'm having trouble

remembering the fellow that operated the – the store next to it was a store and then it was a hardware store, and a [unintelligible] store – I think it belonged to the Whipples. And ah, there was a cobbler – I wish I could remember the name. I don't know whether his name was Potter or what it was. Somebody would know. Of course there was the Carwell Garage that was busy. And then the bank. And then the Bosworth's Post Office, store. Of course, across the street was the Huffman Filling Station and store. I used to work there just for – after school. There wasn't any pay involved. Occasionally I'd get some cheese and a Coca Cola. I remember we would – as I remember, I think, I think an egg, which you shook to make sure it was good. About 22 shorts in each change.

Chewning: What does that mean?

McCorkle: Pistol – ah, .22 shells. And these fellows would take those and go out and get their meat, you know. Squirrels, there were plenty of squirrels, rabbits, groundhogs. And I think it took three eggs to get a shotgun shell. But that was an exchange.

Chewning: Did a lot of the stores have that barter system?

McCorkle: No, I think mainly Huffman. Golly, my memory's shot.

Chewning: I think you're doing great!

McCorkle: But the only thing I didn't like about it was taking sprouts off of potatoes in the spring. I mean, there'd be a lot of potatoes down under that building, and I'd be down there knocking those blooming sprouts off.

Chewning: That was one of your jobs?

McCorkle: The only job I didn't particularly like. And of course, I had an advantage. I've always been a fellow that talked too much. And I'd end up having to copy the Latin book or History book. No pictures counted. The page had to be all – and I'd get on the counter there,

and pull the brown paper out, and do this copying. You know, 25 pages, or so many pages for penalty.

Chewning: Because you talked in school?

McCorkle: I talked everywhere!

Chewning: [Laugh]

McCorkle: I talked in line, you know. We'd march from class to class, and you didn't talk. By the drum. I think there was a – oh what was it? He was good on the drum, the fellow that lived right next to Mollie Sue [at 2716 Brownsburg Turnpike]. Dunaway. But we always marched by drum. And Miss Trimmer, some days, she'd have to whip probably 10 or 12.

Chewning: Oh, my goodness.

McCorkle: Well, we'd all be in the penitentiary today, with the present system.

Chewning: I'm going to have to flip this tape over.

[End Tape 1, Side A]

Chewning: Okay, it's running again.

McCorkle: You see, Brownsburg was one of two schools in the state of Virginia that were accredited.

Chewning: Really!

McCorkle: And, in other words, when you went to college, why, you went to college. You didn't have to go through the entrance and everything.

Chewning: Really?

McCorkle: And no one ever failed in college when they graduated from Brownsburg. But it was “by the book.” [Laugh] We – I guess people have told you they – the basketball court was in this red clay. And when someone was coming to play, Miss Trimmer would have all of us out there just walking our feet up and down to mash that water out of the clay.

Chewning: [Laugh]

McCorkle: So we could play basketball. As I say, she was a genius. Now other people raised Cain, but she was tough on me! But that was alright. She just hated it when she’d be chewing me out and I’d be laughing. [Laugh] She didn’t like my laughing when she was – and – but, the Latin. Of course, all the people I worked with were probably Tech graduates – VPI. But I had an advantage on them that they couldn’t touch. Because I had Latin. I had been hammered in Latin all those years. And here these people were working in agriculture, and they didn’t know the terminology of trees, or shrubs, or anything else, because it’s all Latin.

Chewning: Oh, right. Um hmm.

McCorkle: And so that puts you way ahead if you have that. I think it – well, it’s still true today. May be a dead language, but it’s – we’ve traveled, and stayed for – we had a daughter that was – her husband was head of AFIS. And we spent a period in Mexico, Chile, Argentina. And I could – I never could pick up any Spanish, but I could always read – read the menus and everything else, to take care of that. As long as it was printed. But –

Chewning: How many years of Latin did you take?

McCorkle: We had two years there. Of course, I had Aunt Eva.

Chewning: That's right.

McCorkle: I don't know. [Laugh]

Chewning: Shakespeare and Latin with Aunt Eva.

McCorkle: And Miss Trimmer. She used to say when she started teaching Latin, she was about two or three days ahead of the pupils. Of course, she went out to Aunt Eva, and they talked Latin, I guess. That was – Aunt Eva may have had her leg off, but she never stopped teaching.

Chewning: She had been a teacher?

McCorkle: Yeah, she'd taught – oh, what's that seminary down – oh, the Moneymakers?

Chewning: Oh, Bellevue?

McCorkle: Bellevue, um hmm.

Chewning: And that was a girls' school?

McCorkle: A girls' school, um hmm. She'd taught there. The – David Eldred Strain was a doctor at Western State for about 15 years, and she used to talk about going to the dances. But she always would say that the people there were very smart, brilliant.

Chewning: Where?

McCorkle: At Western State.

Chewning: Oh, um hmm.

McCorkle: Very intelligent, but I guess they were crazy. [Laugh]

Chewning: And she was – Aunt Eva was Dr. Strain's daughter?

McCorkle: Daughter. Um hmm.

Chewning: And she was your great-aunt?

McCorkle: And my grandmother was her sister. That brought the Dunlaps in, the Strains.

Chewning: And had your grandparents lived there on the farm, too?

McCorkle: No. The other side – my grandparents lived at Brushy Hill. They had a farm –

Chewning: in Lexington?

McCorkle: Lexington. Belongs to a cousin now. Bill McCorkle. That was the McCorkle side of the family. And, of course, there was the Strain. And there were Dunlaps. I don't know, they were all mixed up.

Chewning: Were the Dunlaps from Lexington?

McCorkle: Um hmm. They lived out – their farm was on Whistle Creek. They came – but they moved from Slatey Fork. My sister-in-law was one of the Dunlaps, and they own – well, the base of the mountains. Her father had – he was the Postmaster, and had a store, and they – oh, what am I trying to think. They had – he had about 400 acres there. And went to school in Marlinton. But then they moved to Whistle Creek. They always wanted to keep the place just like it was. And I said, "Forget it! Sell the thing!" So, finally after all of them died they sold the place, and it's a sub-development now. [Laugh] Can't keep it like you dream.

Chewning: Your grandmother, who was Dr. Strain's daughter, did she get married and leave the farm, then?

McCorkle: Well yes. She married McCorkle and he had the farm that Bill McCorkle has today.

Chewning: Brushy Hill? On Brushy Hill?

McCorkle: Um hmm.

Chewning: Okay. Now I'm straight on who's who!

McCorkle: Bill is an unusual fellow. Most of the McCorkles don't like music.

Chewning: He is fabulous!

McCorkle: I don't know where – I wonder about him!

Chewning: He played at my wedding.

McCorkle: Is that right? Well Mollie Sue [Whipple] played at ours.

Chewning: She directed my wedding. Mrs. Whipple directed and he played.

McCorkle: Is that right?

Chewning: She had stopped playing for weddings then, so we had Bill.

McCorkle: Is that right? Well, he – my dad – Dad got so he wouldn't go to church cause he'd come home with a headache from the music. Brother was the same way. And I'm the

same. I wear earplugs. I can hear. I'm about the only fellow here that can hear real well. But I never leave home without these earplugs.

Chewning: Is that right?

McCorkle: If there's going to be a lot of noise around, I put them in. I know deafness is a terrible thing. Dad was like I was; he loved to talk, but you know, when you're totally deaf – when we moved here, I had a whole drawer of hearing aids. These fellows would come and sell them. And he'd be just as happy for about a half an hour, and then he'd pull that thing off and that was it. He had nerve damage. And finally one of the fellows came by, and he says, "Mr. McCorkle, we can't help you. There's no use you buying this." One honest man! [Laugh] But around here, it would be great to have the concession on hearing aids.

Chewning: Right.

McCorkle: In this place [Sunnyside].

Chewning: Can you tell me a little bit about the aspects of the farm when you were growing up? What – was it a subsistence farm? Did you sell cattle?

McCorkle: No, we raised corn, silos. We mainly bought three-year-old Shorthorns and raised them until four. Then they were shipped here in Rockingham County, and fed out and sold. They were big animals. And then, of course, we had sheep.

Chewning: Were Shorthorns a common breed?

McCorkle: Yes, it was then. But if someone had one of those Shorthorns today, they'd have a gold mine, because it went completely out of existence. There were two Shorthorns. One was a beef animal, and the other was a milk animal. Now the milk animal, there's remnants. But the beef animal, with other breeds coming in, just disappeared. But the frame and everything of that animal would make a good basis for any – for any beef animal today. But

they couldn't find any when – over there at the McCormick Farm, they looked everywhere for it, and they never – couldn't chase it down. But of course, we even raised buckwheat. The Pleasants were share-croppers. Uncle Letcher and his son we called Pitt. What was – I'm having trouble remembering his real name. But Uncle Letcher, he owned three houses there in Brownsburg.

Chewning: And where were they?

McCorkle: Well, you know where they had that Tea Room [2640 Brownsburg Turnpike]?

Chewning: Um hmm.

McCorkle: Well, that was one of his houses, a log house. And he lived in the house right next to it [2650 Brownsburg Turnpike] between the Whitesells.

Chewning: Oh, on the alley, the one that's –

McCorkle: No, he lived right on Main Street. And then Pitt – oh, golly, I wish I could remember his name – lived down over the hill in a house that Uncle Letcher owned. And of course, Uncle Letcher built – I guess they went to the [New Providence] Presbyterian Church at one time. But he, basically, built the Methodist Church there [Asbury United Methodist Church in Brownsburg]. I haven't been in it in a long, but I'm sure the windows are still there with his name in it. He was – for that period, he was right prosperous. Mainly that farm, and then the Wade farm [Castle Carberry at 34 Beard Lane] had a tenant farmer. I can't, but Anne would remember his name [Zack Franklin].

Chewning: Is that the farm closest to the church? [New Providence]

McCorkle: Um hmm.

Chewning: Was he – was Mr. Pleasants paid a salary, or did he –

McCorkle: No, he, he was the fellow with the money. I worked for him for a while.

Chewning: I see.

McCorkle: [Laugh]

Chewning: So did he pay rent?

McCorkle: No, he got a share.

Chewning: Of the profits?

McCorkle: Yeah.

Chewning: From selling the beef?

McCorkle: Well, of the grain. There was wheat. This valley raised an awful lot of wheat, and it just destroyed the soil. Where we're sitting, there used to be from three to five feet more soil. This is a Frederick soil. It's the same thing down in Brownsburg. There were four layers – horizons. The top horizon, you would -- it would, you know – if you dropped seed in it, you'd have to get out of the way, cause it's coming back. And the second horizon was right fertile. But the fourth one – which we're working on now – is clay, and has to be fertilized to raise good crops. There is more soil in Rockbridge County than there is here, although it's the same soil. Because that was steep and they didn't farm it as much. Steeper than this. But here in this county they just raise wheat, wheat, wheat. Which they didn't do – they raised wheat, but they rotated, and didn't lose as much soil. But it's steep.

Chewning: What is it about wheat that pulls the nutrients out of the soil?

McCorkle: Wasn't the wheat. It was the erosion.

Chewning: Oh.

McCorkle: When I first started working, I mean – well, that’s another thing from Brownsburg – I was in the sixth grade, and I was looking out the window, and these fellows were out there, they were laying contour lines between the school and the Methodist church. And I thought, “That’d be a good thing to do.” And then Mr. Hanna preached a sermon on soil erosion and soil conservation. He preached a couple of them. I mean, I thought they were going to have a hanging. I mean, “We don’t have any erosion!” Aunt Eva just – she’d be there, of course, she wasn’t at church, but she heard about it. She thought that was terrible. But in the process, I don’t know, somewhere I decided I’d like to do that. And I didn’t have anything to do with it, but the process of – some way, I ended up as a Soil Conservationist. And I’ve been in a whole lot of states. I was President of the Soil Conservation Society of America. Secretary, things like that. I don’t know why, when you’re dyslexic, you always get appointed, or processed to be Secretary. [Laugh]

Chewning: Secretary! [Laugh]

McCorkle: And so, there’s a lot of misspelled words in this! But, that’s the reason I think Brownsburg was the “Promised Land” as far as I’m concerned. All our family was sent there, to this perfect valley. I don’t know whether, when they had the 175th anniversary of the Presbyterian Church around in Virginia – I wish I could remember the fellow that spoke. But he said that they were looking for a “war-like Christian people” to settle areas west of the mountains to cope with the Indians. And they found these people, and they allowed them to come to the Valley to pay rent and fight Indians. But they enjoyed fighting Indians more than they enjoyed paying rent! [Laugh]

Chewning: [Laugh]

McCorkle: When they came in through Philadelphia, of course that whole area was involved. I don’t know whether you ever noticed it, but in Rockbridge County, it’s easily

possible to walk from one Presbyterian church to another. And of course, you had a shortage of ministers, and of course, that involved the area. But, the same fellow that was President of Liberty College [Liberty Hall Academy] preached at New Monmouth and Timber Ridge. That's a pretty good walk or ride!

Chewning: Hmm. Um hmm.

McCorkle: Of course, New Providence has always been big enough that they were one unit.

Chewning: But then, didn't they have Pisgah Chapel and –

McCorkle: Yes, they had that and a couple of outposts there. And the preachers all covered that. But, that was just in the areas where you couldn't walk to the big churches. Actually, you see the division that Old Providence and New Providence – actually they aren't that far away if you put it. Dad had a farm that he got from Aunt Eva. Joined the McManaways – in fact, he sold to McManaway when they left there and came here. But it was the original Strain place. Aunt Eva used to talk about the soldiers – Confederate soldiers – would be coming up the road with injuries and sick, and what not. They would take care of them for weeks, and get them back in shape and off down the road they'd go. There'd be more coming. Apparently for a good while, they were, you know, when the war was over, they would have said, "Go home." And a lot of them didn't have homes to go to. But she used to talk about David Eldred taking care of them. Their – that was the road that went in by the Wade's, you know [Beard Road].

Chewning: Oh, okay, okay. Out near the church [New Providence]?

McCorkle: I assume at some time, it ended up at Bethel [Presbyterian Church in Augusta County at 563 Bethel Green Road], that's where a lot of the family were buried. But there must have been a road through there because they also owned – there was a Strain place, several of them on down that road. They were buried at Bethel and New Providence. The name's kind of faded from history as far as this area is concerned. But there were a lot of

them. There were several of them killed in the War Between the States. Usebiah Strain was a brother. His name, he was one of the first graduates of the medical school at the University of Virginia. And when you go to The Rotunda, walk up the steps, you look up there, and there's this "Usebiah Strain." Where they got a name like that, I don't know.

Chewning: I never heard that one before!

McCorkle: "Usebiah Strain" is up on the – around The Rotunda there. But that was a brother that was killed. And there was another brother that was a doctor that was killed.

Chewning: So there were three brothers who were all doctors?

McCorkle: Yeah, um hmm.

Chewning: Your grandfather and two of his brothers?

McCorkle: Now, David Eldred went to the Jefferson Medical College at Philadelphia. But the others went to University of Virginia. Apparently the program just started over there.

Chewning: In Virginia?

McCorkle: In Virginia. Because I've been over there several times [to the hospital], unfortunately. But, in looking at the pictures there, that was about the period that the medical school started. I don't know who has it now – we called it the Slusser Place [4216 Brownsburg Turnpike]. That was one of the Strain places.

Chewning: Cloverdale?

McCorkle: Is that it? I guess so.

Chewning: Just past, just past the church [New Providence] on Brownsburg Turnpike?

McCorkle: Just past the church, um hmm. I used to – Aunt Eva always called it Aunt Annie’s place. Aunt Annie apparently was about that tall. [Holds hands about three feet off of the floor.] [Laugh] I never saw her, but Aunt Eva always referred to her like she was right there.

Chewning: Well, your Aunt Eva certainly sounds interesting to me.

McCorkle: Well, she was. She was. Of course, that was the task I had. [Laugh] It – you know, it wasn’t necessarily enjoyable then! [Laugh]

Chewning: [Laugh]

McCorkle: But, but you know, that was a pretty good system. The Moores had been there before we – that’s another aunt and uncle – had been there for a period before we came. And they went back just out of Lexington, had a dairy there. Which was the old Morrison place. Which is some more kinfolks! [Laugh]

Chewning: Well, did you have time to play games and have fun when you were growing up, or was it mostly taking care of Aunt Eva and doing chores?

McCorkle: Oh, no. I was – a lot of days, I was, as I say, I’d just leave. Just roam around visiting people.

Chewning: Who were your friends?

McCorkle: Well, there was – on one side there was Sid and Bud Martin. On the other side, there was Ed and Bill Patterson and Sam Patterson.

Chewning: And they were your contemporaries in age?

McCorkle: Well, Ed and Bill were a little older than I was, but Bill and I were pretty good buddies. I used to help him measure wheat for the AAA program. He worked for that.

Chewning: What was AAA?

McCorkle: Well, that was a wheat program. If you'd been raising, say, 30 acres, well they would measure it and figure out – it was a stupid program. But then they'd say, "Well, you can raise 11 acres." Well, if you put fertilizer on there, you could raise more off of 11 acres than you could with 30. And so [laugh] it didn't do a whole lot.

Chewning: Because there were wheat surpluses?

McCorkle: Oh, yeah. Terrible. There was a surplus in everything, for some reason. They were – I don't know whether they actually did it, but they were taking pigs on the old World War I ships and sinking them. [Laugh] And there was just – I don't know why all of a sudden there was such a surplus, but, you know 19 – as I say, 1928, everything was prosperous, and farms were prosperous. People borrowing money. There were farms around there that couldn't pay the interest. But the banks didn't want them, because they didn't know what to do with them either. So they just wouldn't toss people off the farm. I guess some of them did, but most of them kept riding through with no interest coming. It was pretty hard on banks. I remember Miss Trimmer saying, "You don't say anything bad about the bank." [Laugh] You had to be very careful. Cause people – you know, they had a terrible time with running on – runs on the banks. Not too many went out of business. West Virginia banks, there were a good many. But out through the mid-west, they just closed bank after bank. I worked with a fellow, he was county agent in Stafford County. His brother was something with accounts with the Federal Government. And his first work was closing banks in the west. He said they opened up all the bank boxes and everything, and pile them there and have an auction and be gone in two days to the next bank. That involved also the – going off the gold standard. But on the whole, now, Uncle John had this big box. And he would put the jowls and the shoulders and I don't know what all in there. And some of them had been there apparently for years. But anyway, people would come by and say they were

out of meat, and he'd go in the – it was all packed in ashes, and they were really dried and hard, but I guess they were edible. And he'd dig out a jowl or shoulder, and it went on regularly. That was the – that was basically the reason it wasn't as hard around there as other places. Because people got food if they needed it. We used to – they would raise sorghum. Of course, half of it went to the Pleasants. I remember going with them to pick up the pans and everything every year. And the squeezer, or whatever it was. The horse would go round and around. The fellow that owned the pan, I mean he stayed with it around the clock until it was finished.

Chewning: So somebody would bring the pan in?

McCorkle: I don't know who the fellow was. It was – we would go over towards – now my mind's shutting down. It couldn't have been too far from Goshen – I mean Rockbridge Baths, fellow lived there. And we'd take a wagon and go haul all the stuff and bring him over. And he'd stay there 'til they'd squeezed the sap out and he'd boiled it down. And there'd be a lot of sorghum. And we'd -- maybe we'd use a half a gallon. But by the time winter was over, our share had gone, people had – the rest of the people there had – apparently they ate a lot of sorghum. I never was a big fan of the stuff.

Chewning: [Laugh]

McCorkle: And I guess the rest of the family wasn't either. But we raised it every year, and I guess that was the sweetener.

Chewning: How many acres of that did you raise?

McCorkle: Oh, I think there was probably four or five acres. It was a lot. You had to strip the leaves and all that. I was basically a spectator to that other than I'd work the skimming some.

Chewning: How did you cut it?

McCorkle: Oh, it was a liquid, syrup.

Chewning: No, I mean how did you cut the sorghum?

McCorkle: Oh, with a knife, or pull it off. No, the sorghum wasn't cut, the stems were just run through the squeeze thing – the machine that squeezed the sap out of it.

Chewning: So it went down the rows? The machine went down the rows?

McCorkle: And then it would get in the bucket, and they'd pour it in this pan that went – I guess they're still doing it around, I don't know. But the pan was probably oh, eight or ten – eight feet long or so. And it had dividers in it. And they'd run it all the way through and skim all the foam off of it. It was a fairly complicated process to make good molasses. I guess they're still basically doing it today. Probably have a different thing squeezing it. But then, well, just about everything that we used there – there was a lot of hunting and a lot of – I don't know why there was a lot of wildlife there, and that supplied a lot of food to people, I would assume. I never ate a squirrel in my life that I know of. But I killed a lot of them. I'd throw them in the back of this surrey and go into Brownsburg and I mean, it wouldn't be long until they were all gone.

Chewning: Did you give them away?

McCorkle: Oh yeah, sure. It wasn't a – it was just my sport, spoiled kid. [Laugh] Rabbits and squirrels. But we never ate them. And then the – what was it? Tourlarena or something came around with the rabbits. You had to be very careful about – you know, there wasn't rubber gloves then.

Chewning: Oh, it was a disease?

McCorkle: Yeah. From the rabbits. And that hurt, there were a number of people got that.

Chewning: Were you still living in Brownsburg when electricity came through?

McCorkle: We didn't have electricity. They – VEPCO, I guess that's what it was called. There were a lot of poles on the Strain place that came not far from the house. But Aunt Eva and Uncle John didn't want that.

Chewning: Oh, they didn't want it?

McCorkle: But just before Aunt Eva died, she had to have electricity. Well, it wasn't in there when we left. We used oil lamps. And Aunt Eva assigned herself as a duty to get in her wheelchair, and trim the lamps. And of course, that house was pretty good sized, and we had a number of lamps. I know I had a little lamp about that big [demonstrates] and it's a wonder I didn't burn the place down because I read. I've always – I read three or four hours a night here. But I'd get under the covers with that thing and read. It's a wonder it didn't suffocate me. [Laugh]

Chewning: [Laugh] That does sound dangerous!

McCorkle: Of course, my room was a little separated on the back side of the house, so they never got onto that.

Chewning: Did you have brothers and sisters?

McCorkle: I had a brother 13 years older. The day I started to school at Weynoke which was – Lowe is another name. It was Weynoke Coal and Coke Company. He started to VPI, it was then. And so he was gone most of the time. With that, we were always very good friends. He was my big brother – he came up to my shoulder! [Laugh] And he was – he graduated in electrical engineering. He ended up as engineer on a Nike missile program. He was in radar during World War II. He went to – let's see. He went to Harvard first, and then MIT with a crew of fellows that brought radar from England. And they perfected radar so

that they could spot the submarines. Which stopped the submarine problem, which was great. I don't know how many – he was in the Army for about five years. But he was Assistant Chief Engineer of the American Coal Company. And when he came back, he was going to be Chief Engineer of the American Coal Company. He told Dad, and Dad says “No more McCorkles in West Virginia. Find something else.” So he worked for the Highway Department as an inspector or something for a while. And then I took him down to Burlington in North Carolina to Western Electric. And his wife and I were sitting in the car. He went in for the interview. And we'd just, just gotten settled when in a little bit here, the door opened. And it was Bob. I said, “What happened?” He said, “I'm supposed to be here in two weeks.” [Laugh]

Chewning: Must have been good.

McCorkle: Well then the Highway Department said, “Oh, we wanted you to do – we wanted you in another thing.” But anyway, he went down there. He worked with Bell, Bell Labs and Western Electric. So he was there the rest of his – so he came home a whole lot and –

[Mrs. McCorkle enters.]

Mrs. McCorkle: Are you doing all right?

Chewning: Yes, I just want to make sure that I don't run out of tape. I've done that before.

Mrs. McCorkle: So how you all doing, okay?

Chewning: Great.

Mrs. McCorkle: It's almost twelve o'clock.

[End of Tape 1, Side B]

Chewning: We're back on the tape again, and Mr. McCorkle is talking about the Peters family in Brownsburg, a black family.

McCorkle: Well, Aunt Henrietta, Aunt Henrietta was the cook and maid there at the Strain place. One thing I remember was, I would get warts, and she would say, "Let me see it." And she'd rub it a little bit and then she'd ask me to give her a penny. And the wart would go away. At the same time, they had a black minister in there, they did the – people came in there for the same thing. I never did figure out how it worked, but it worked. But Aunt Henrietta had a daughter that taught the school, Carrie Peters. I never knew the other part, but there was a – one of her sons was a doctor, and another was a missionary in Africa, and another was a butler to a Governor of New York. But I never knew them, I only knew Carrie. And I never – they had a house [1486 Dry Hollow Road] that I'm sure is around Brownsburg today –

Mrs. McCorkle: Oh, it's down on the way to our place.

McCorkle: And it was – wasn't a bad looking house. I think it was a storey and a half. But she was – as long as we were there, she was the maid there. And they were – of course, they were educated. How, where, or what not. Of course they – after they had to put in black schools. They didn't have to put white ones – white schools – but there were black schools by 1870 because the Reconstruction said the schools had to be built for all blacks. But the white schools didn't – New Providence Academy was the school that relatives and other people came to for what would be high school or junior college today. And the schools – real public schools – didn't start until somewhere in the 1900's. My dad went to school in the basement of his home. I guess mainly in the family. And that was his main education. But there were relatives and other people that came to Brownsburg and boarded around there. Anne has a report card from there of a cousin of hers and I can't picture having to learn Hebrew –

Chewning: Oh, my goodness!

McCorkle: And Latin and English and what was the fourth one, there was a –

Mrs. McCorkle: Was it Math?

McCorkle: And all this math and what not.

Chewning: Where was the black school in Brownsburg?

McCorkle: Where it – well, right next to the [Finley] Pattersons [Old School Lane].

Mrs. McCorkle: Yeah, but it wouldn't be there now, hasn't it been torn down?

McCorkle: Yeah, I'm sure it has. I saw in the paper they had some sort of reunion there.

Mrs. McCorkle: Not far from where Lib Ward lived [2763 Brownsburg Turnpike]?

McCorkle: Yeah, Lib Ward was on one side, and the Pattersons on the other, right in the curve of the road there not far from the creek. And then, if they went to high school, they went to Lexington.

Chewning: Oh, so they went to Lylburn Downing if they wanted to go beyond seventh grade or –

McCorkle: No, they had the – I don't know what the name of the black school was in Lexington.

Chewning: Lylburn Downing, I think.

McCorkle: But they – all the people in Lexington came to Brownsburg Academy – the New Providence Academy for that stage of their education if they had it. And then there was Liberty College [Liberty Hall Academy] and then Washington College in Lexington for those

that went on. I don't know, as far as I – it was a college, I don't know when it became a university. But W&L has always been a university that I've known. I guess sometime after Lee came there. And of course, the Brownsburg school was an academy, originally. And Anne's older sister – two sisters, I guess – paid tuition to go to Brownsburg. Fortunately we didn't – I guess fortunately or unfortunately. Maybe – it must have been a pretty good system. I guess Brownsburg was named for the preacher?

Mrs. McCorkle: Um hmm. Brown. From New Providence.

McCorkle: And then there was a Brown at the Academy, wasn't there? Miss Virgin Brown.

Mrs. McCorkle: We were at that academy. That's where we started to school, in that academy. It's torn down now. It was an old brick building. We used to oil the floors down. It was dusty. Was that where that Walker trial was held?

McCorkle: Yeah, that's the one thing that you remembered from the Strains. Uncle David Strain was there at the trial, and when the shooting started, he jumped out of the second storey window! [Laugh]

Chewning: [Laugh]

Mrs. McCorkle: Did you hear about that Walker trial?

Chewning: Um hmm.

McCorkle: They would have the choir, and Miss Trimmer would say, "Sing!" [Laugh]

Chewning: So she directed the choir, too?

Mrs. McCorkle: Oh, she did everything.

McCorkle: Oh, yes indeed! She really had the – and we – I don't know, I guess it was the public schools – we had graduation out there, but we normally had at the church, we had Baccalaureate. Marched in singing. I think they finally gave up on me after she kicked me out a couple of times. [Laugh]

Chewning: You weren't a singer?

McCorkle: During that period, they had church activities. I think about the way they're operating today. As I say, she'd be in the penitentiary. [Laugh] For life! And a couple years after!

Chewning: But for then, she gave you a good education.

Mrs. McCorkle: That's right.

McCorkle: Oh, unbelievable. I didn't think at the time. But I always carried my Latin book. That helped me. And I went to some movie in Lexington and I always had my Latin book with me. [Laugh]

Mrs. McCorkle: She didn't see through that at all, did she!

Chewning: [Laugh]

McCorkle: We were both big con artists!

Chewning: Well you said she had a two year degree, and then she went during summers to get –

McCorkle: Yeah, to finish out.

Mrs. McCorkle: Then the teachers didn't have to have as much, but then they had –

McCorkle: Well, Mollie Sue [Whipple] was two years.

Mrs. McCorkle: to do two years. Had to come to summer school.

McCorkle: Evidently it was a good two years. I don't know how –

Chewning: Cause she was already a principal, even after just two years?

McCorkle: She was principal, right. She got her degree while we – I guess we were up towards high school.

Chewning: Where did she go to take her classes in the summer?

McCorkle: I don't know, somewhere around Washington, I think.

Mrs. McCorkle: Oh, but her initial degree was that –

McCorkle: Where did she go? She used to talk – she got her thesis or something was in Old English. Which I'd never heard of before, and I haven't heard since.

Mrs. McCorkle: Seems to me it was something else. Mc [Sterrett] had her – your dad had her, too.

Chewning: Um hmm.

McCorkle: One thing that would happen. When they had a ballgame or anything. If anybody – I don't care whether it was a visitor or anybody else – booed, you saw this old gal [Ocie Ellen Trimmer] going up through the crowd. I mean, she'd nail their hide up on the wall! She'd – I don't care, they could have been four times bigger than she was but [laugh] she didn't allow that!

Mrs. McCorkle: Well, Mollie Sue, Mollie Sue's father was a Hull in Goshen. And he was refereeing a baseball game and she didn't approve of what he was doing, and she marched out on the field, and he said, "You come out here one more time, Miss Trimmer, and you're going to make me stop this whole game and forfeit." She was not a good loser.

Chewning: So you had a baseball team, and a basketball team.

McCorkle: And then we had a football team.

Mrs. McCorkle: Yeah, have you showed Isabelle – did you see the picture of the football team? [Shows picture of football team.] Was this the first football team? I think they're all dead but maybe –

Chewning: Oh, look at that!

Mrs. McCorkle: There's Dave. Al Lunsford, Al Lunsford here. John Layton Whitesell.
George [unintelligible]

Chewning: Oh, my goodness!

Mrs. McCorkle: Homer Blackwell. He's dead, isn't he? Bill Sterrett. What Mynes –
Claude Mynes?

McCorkle: Claude Mynes.

Mrs. McCorkle: Is this a McCormick from Fairfield? Sid Martin's dead. Albert Woods is living. George Slusser, I said that before, didn't I?

McCorkle: George [Slusser] was killed in Italy.

Mrs. McCorkle: That's Lelan Kennan. His father was a doctor in Raphine. George Slusser. Jim Wade.

Chewning: Oh, my goodness!

Mrs. McCorkle: And Fulwider. See, I don't remember the names. Is this your first football team? 1940?

McCorkle: I don't know. My only one, I guess.

Mrs. McCorkle: Hardly have enough to even –

Chewning: Oh, that's incredible. And this is sitting on the steps of this building? [Points to picture of the brick high school building]

Mrs. McCorkle: Um hmm. Yeah.

Chewning: Oh, that looks familiar to me. That looks – oh, that's a wonderful picture!

McCorkle: That's where I would watch these kids count their weeds out [under the NYA Program]. Government worker.

Chewning: [Laugh] To get your six dollars?

McCorkle: Government worker.

Chewning: Your first government job!

McCorkle: [Laugh] My first government job! I used to say I was in the NYA studying for the WPA.

Mrs. McCorkle: [Shows photo.] There's Dave's mother and father at the Strain place.

McCorkle: We had the WPA, we had the PWA –

Mrs. McCorkle: [Shows photo.] These are McCorkles. Lula Dunlap Strain she was, and married Samuel White McCorkle. [Shows a different photo.] Now, this is on the other side of the family. This one had nine children and died at 33 and went to their father.

Chewning: Oh no.

Mrs. McCorkle: Welsh background and English, so we've got a mixture here. [Shows newspaper clipping from News-Gazette published about the time that the Brownsburg High School was about to be demolished.] Now that's something about the school.

Chewning: [Reads] “New school now complete.”

Mrs. McCorkle: Yeah, and all the things that were wrong. This is – I think this about the date right before they were going to tear it down. I don't know, I guess it was new, but then

–

Chewning: Um hmm.

McCorkle: Most places, over the years around, Ruritans have taken over these schools. And they've kept communities operating. Because, once you close a school down –

Mrs. McCorkle: Oh, as a community center.

McCorkle: you've closed the community down.

Mrs. McCorkle: Well, they tried to do that in Brownsburg, didn't they try to –

Chewing: Right. The Community Association tried to – well, they did buy the building and tried to get a small business started there, and they were unsuccessful. And so they sold it, and now the building is gone, and some people have bought the stucco building behind and may convert it to a residence.

Mrs. McCorkle: Really?

McCorkle: You know why the stucco building's there, don't you?

Chewing: No.

McCorkle: It would cost you a fortune to tear that down.

Chewing: Ahh. Harder to tear down than brick?

McCorkle: No. Getting rid of the asbestos. It's all asbestos, stucco. They put through Harrisonburg here, on [Route] 42, they were going to buy these buildings. The state was going to buy these homes along High Street, [Route] 42. Then they discovered they were all asbestos stucco. So the road goes right up against the front door of these houses because they didn't want the expense of disposing. We had a furor here in Harrisonburg. Everybody wanted to keep it – wanted the city to keep it and what not. And back when the asbestos thing started, they said, "Well, you can paint over it." It was just loads of asbestos. And I was glad when the college got the building, because they can worry about – they've got a blank check, colleges in Virginia. But stucco is a – we had a colored school near our farm. And this woman had given it to the Fire Department to burn. Well they came out to burn it, and they discovered it was stucco, and they went back, so I don't know – they just dug a hole and buried it in the ground right there. And it's still right there. And so it caused a lot of trouble.

[Tape stops momentarily.]

McCorkle: And I couldn't think of a thing. It was all blank to me. And all of a sudden in my head, there came in "one, and only one line can be drawn between two points." And I wrote the proofs up, all on one page. I looked over there, and Mary [Sterrett Lipscomb] had four or five pages.

Mrs. McCorkle: Do you want to copy that, or is it of any use to you [referring to a picture]?

Chewning: Oh, if you have a copy, I'd love one.

Mrs. McCorkle: This is an old '41 newspaper. I don't know whether you want it or not. Interested? No.

Chewning: Well –

Mrs. McCorkle: It might be – I don't know.

Chewning: Can I look through it and bring it back?

Mrs. McCorkle: Yeah. Well, you can have it. I don't know what –

Chewning: Are you sure?

Mrs. McCorkle: Yeah. I don't know what good it's going to do me. You think I could do this on the copy machine? Looks like that's what's been done.

Chewning: Um hmm.

Mrs. McCorkle: I'll go down here and make a copy of this.

Chewning: Okay. [Mrs. McCorkle leaves.] So let me go back through my questions and see what we maybe didn't cover. What about particular individuals? Are there characters in Brownsburg that you remember?

McCorkle: Oh, there were characters! One I can remember. At Anne's home, they had a recording or something called "Bill Bailey." "Bill Bailey, Won't You Please Come Home," and so forth. Well, there was a character that came in there, he had a guitar on his back. A black guy. And he'd be there at the porch – we he mainly was there at the one on the other side of the street, where the Farm Bureau was. And he'd get drunk, and he'd finally get to the point where he'd go to crying. And it seemed that he was a butler or something for Dr. White in Lexington. And Dr. White had a horse called Silver. Well he decided he wanted to go see this girl over at East Lexington. So he took Silver, and he goes over there, and on the way, the horse dies or something. And he would start out, and he'd say, "Come on! Get up, horse! Come on, Silver! Dr. White gonna kill [me]! Get up!" Well, he left. He never went back. He was gone for thirty years or more. And how he got down to Brownsburg, I don't know. He was there for a while. And I don't know where he stayed. But anyway, he'd be there on the porch, and when he'd get – every time he got looped, he'd go to pleading with Silver!

Chewning: What was his name?

McCorkle: Bill Bailey.

Chewning: Oh, Bill Bailey was his name. [Laugh]

McCorkle: That's the reason I can always remember it. [Laugh] You know, the song was "Bill Bailey, Won't You Please Come Home."

Chewning: Right. [Laugh]

McCorkle: [Laugh] I don't know whether Dr. White wrote that or not!

Chewing: Any other characters you remember?

McCorkle: Well, we were all characters, I guess. They – of course, Anne’s dad [Eugene Buchanan] kind of held court. You see, there wasn’t any television, and some people had radios. Cause see, there wasn’t electricity there except – as I was saying, Aunt Eva wouldn’t let them have it. But they ran it out to the church. And then all the rest of them were on REA [Rural Electrification Authority]. Which I guess everybody around there is REA now except that line. I don’t know where – what VEPCO covers around there now. But I don’t know who all would be – well, everybody, all the men around there. And of course, Mollie Sue was across the street. But she couldn’t go over! [Laugh]

Chewing: Because ladies didn’t go? [Laugh]

[Mrs. McCorkle enters the room]

McCorkle: And I learned a whole lot. Everybody had tales to tell, and they talked about the world things, and local. Everything, it was – they were all pretty well informed in the world.

Chewing: Did you listen to the radio a lot?

McCorkle: No, didn’t have radio.

Mrs. McCorkle: We did.

McCorkle: Well, you had it, because her Uncle Bill [William Buchanan] liked to listen to the – he got his prices on cattle and what-not from the radio. He was a – well, they were both into dealing, but Bill did most of the traveling and buying and selling and moving animals.

Mrs. McCorkle: Tell us how we got electricity in the house. Isabelle and I, we were wondering how we got electricity in the house.

Chewning: I was saying, when the houses weren't wired for electricity, then electricity came, how did the houses get wired?

McCorkle: They weren't wired, but a lot of the houses had acetelene gas lights.

Mrs. McCorkle: And was it Delco ones that we had, that –

McCorkle: Well, Delco was an electric – it was already electric.

Mrs. McCorkle: Evidently we didn't have it, it just had been there.

McCorkle: Well, now the – who were the people across the street?

Mrs. McCorkle: The Browns?

McCorkle: Browns had a generating thing. They generated their own electricity.

Chewning: And that was in Brownsburg?

Mrs. McCorkle: Well, it was –

Chewning: Oh, no, across the street from you,

Mrs. McCorkle: Yeah, where Dunlaps lived. Doesn't one of them still live there?

Chewning: Bill Dunlap lives in the house by the mill [803 Hays Creek Road].

Mrs. McCorkle: Oh, beside the mill. Does anyone then live –

Chewning: I don't know who lives in that house [address is not marked on house].

Mrs. McCorkle: But Adair – is it the two of them who are separated?

Chewning: No, Adair is the secretary for the church, and she's married to Bill. His first wife was Barbara.

Mrs. McCorkle: Oh, okay. Okay.

McCorkle: Where was I?

Chewning: Well, I just wondered; there wasn't electricity, and then there was –

McCorkle: Well, electricity came about the time we left up there.

Chewning: Who even knew enough about electricity to wire your house?

McCorkle: Well, there were plenty. Of course, we – see Dad put electricity in all the houses on the coal camp.

Mrs. McCorkle: But he didn't put the Strain house.

McCorkle: And the power plant. Built the power plant. You just needed to be able to read and write.

Mrs. McCorkle: Well, a little more – more for me!

McCorkle: Well, I mean, I'm sure that's where they got the information because, as you say, they had this big power plant and generated there. And here, in this area [Rockingham County], there was an electric plant down here on the river. There was one in Mineral Creek. And they were just taken in to either VEPCO or REA when the – when we moved here, REA was generated at Dayton, and the Harrisonburg plant was down on the river here. I don't

know where they got the electricity; I've often wondered that. For that area on REA. Unless they bought it from VEPCO, which they do buy a lot. There were electricians from around there somewhere.

Chewning: How about the roads? Which roads were paved, and which ones were –

McCorkle: Well, there weren't any paved. Maybe in Brownsburg. The road by the Strain place there – this fellow, Lotts, worked for Uncle John had an old McCormick tractor. And he made more pulling cars out of the red mud on that hill between there and Brownsburg than he did working for Uncle John.

Chewning: [Laugh]

McCorkle: And Uncle John let him use the tractor [laugh] and they used to – they used to contend he'd haul water up there and put it on [laugh] the road. But they lived across the street there. I mean, across Hays Creek, there was a house.

Mrs. McCorkle: Mary Lotts' father?

McCorkle: Could be. I thought and thought when they surfaced that road. I remember it was very dusty at times. But somewhere along there they hard-surfaced that. To the church. Always to the church! [Laugh]

Chewning: Because that was the center!

Mrs. McCorkle: Yeah, that's right.

McCorkle: Anne's dad always contended when they went by horse and buggy, or however they came, if there was something in front of them, he passed them! [Laugh]

Chewning: [Laugh] He was a fast driver!

Mrs. McCorkle: I don't know about that! I think he had a horse then.

Chewing: Were you a good horseman?

McCorkle: No indeed! I killed two before I was 12 years old. Of course, I had horses here. I had a good team of horses here.

Mrs. McCorkle: Mike and Sue. Mike and something.

McCorkle: Ah, what was it?

Mrs. McCorkle: I don't know. Then you got tractors.

McCorkle: Mike and Jeff, or something.

Mrs. McCorkle: So how many people do you have to interview?

Chewing: Well, we have about 40 on our list. There are a group of us who are doing them. That's the plan. To try to interview about 40 people.

Mrs. McCorkle: Of course, the longer you put it off, the less people you've got.

Chewing: Right. That's exactly right.

McCorkle: Oh, there's a lot – there's a lot of stories you couldn't tell!

Mrs. McCormick: [Unintelligible]

McCorkle: There was a fellow at Vesuvius making liquor. And young blacks, I don't know, teens, late teens – well, they were older than that. But anyway, they got to dying. And it

seems they were buying this liquor over there, and the fellow was making it with a radiator. I guess lead poisoning got them.

Chewning: Oh. Oh.

McCorkle: Just little things like that. It didn't make any to-do. In the nine years I was there, I saw a sheriff down there twice. But you know, they used – about every time they had the lawn party there at the black church, somebody got killed. But maybe the sheriff would come, and sometimes they didn't bother.

Mrs. McCorkle: Isabelle was asking about lawn parties. And I don't remember that many lawn parties at New Providence.

McCorkle: Just the blacks had them. We didn't have them.

Mrs. McCorkle: We had dinner on the grounds, sometimes, you know. When we had a special celebrity or something.

McCorkle: There was that flower festival.

Mrs. McCorkle: Oh, the Chrysanthemum Show. And you'll see from that little recipe book, that really – that was in 1905. So it had at least been going on for four years.

[Phone rings. Mrs. McCorkle excuses herself to answer it.]

McCorkle: But somewhere I've got a knife; it was someone was killed by a knife and they never found it. Frank Patterson found it, and then I bought it from Sam [Patterson] for a dollar. [Laugh] And I guess it's probably still down there at the farm down there somewhere. It was a hunting knife. But they never did anything about it. The only thing, the fellow that killed Goodrich Whipple, but they didn't do anything to him for killing Goodrich, but they gave him five years in the Pen cause he wouldn't let the doctor come in to

do anything 'til the Sheriff got there. So they gave him five years, and he was to never come back to Brownsburg. But he did come back and pay for his wife's funeral at midnight, so John Layton [Whitesell] said.

Mrs. McCorkle: Well, we never knew how that little Quaker got to Brownsburg. Have you heard or read anything about her?

Chewning: About Mrs. [Mamie] Morris?

Mrs. McCorkle: I don't know how in the world she got to Brownsburg.

Chewning: Lou Wiseman Stuart was telling me about Mrs. Morris. Because I guess they lived right there next to her – her church.

McCorkle: Well, I don't know anybody that went there. But she said, if she needed money, you know, it would come. I guess she was a missionary or something.

Chewning: Lou gave me the little wooden collection plate –

Mrs. McCorkle: Well, I'll be darned.

Chewning: from Mrs. Morris' church.

McCorkle: Is that right! I never knew who went there, or if anybody did. Of course, John Layton [Whitesell] was right across the street. I guess she dealt at their store.

Chewning: A lot of stores. I guess – was there a lot of competition for business between the stores?

McCorkle: Oh, I don't know. They –

Chewning: Did you just shop at one or the other?

McCorkle: I know that [Bob] Supinger, he would get upset. People would run a big bill up on him. And then they would, they would just drive by on Saturday and go to Lexington to shop [laugh] after they got a big bill. And he was really upset. Well, most stores in that time did go out of business because of the credit.

Mrs. McCorkle: Well, it was just hard times everywhere, too. I was telling Isabelle about him writing up your little ticket – your charge thing on a piece of paper and then stringing it up.

McCorkle: Brown wrapping paper.

Mrs. McCorkle: Bookkeeping!

McCorkle: And that was a good experience – that's a good experience I had, working at stores. Because you wrapped everything in the brown paper. I mean, there were no bags –

Mrs. McCorkle: With string.

McCorkle: or plastic things or anything. You wrapped everything in the brown paper and tied it with cotton string. That was good experience because –

Mrs. McCorkle: Well then, early on, I remember –

McCorkle: A lot of shapes and sizes.

Mrs. McCorkle: It was a barter. I remember I'd take eggs. I'd take three eggs, and could get candy. Just like down at Abingdon, the Barter Theater.

Chewning: Um hmm.

McCorkle: And that, all of those eggs and things came to where Mary ate dinner today. [Referring to Mary Lipscomb going to lunch at a restaurant in Harrisonburg.] The truck came through came twice a week, picked up the eggs and chickens and what not –

Mrs. McCorkle: Oh, they picked them up.

McCorkle: -- that they'd bought at these various stores. They all had a place downstairs where they put the chickens and what not. And the eggs. And the only test on the eggs then, was to shake them. If they rattled, they were rotten! [Laugh]

Chewning: Was there a pool hall then?

McCorkle: Yeah.

Chewning: Did you go in the pool hall?

McCorkle: Well, yeah, the barber shop was in there.

Mrs. McCorkle: Bud Wade's. I never was in there.

McCorkle: I don't know, it wasn't used a whole lot, but it was used some.

Mrs. McCorkle: No gossip in there, buddy?

McCorkle: No, that was out front!

Mrs. McCorkle: Oh, okay!

McCorkle: Out there on the concrete steps there across the way. I know that every election, somebody would get a Republican sticker and put on Anne's [Eugene Buchanan] dad's car.

Chewning: Because he was a Democrat! [Laugh]

McCorkle: Then, every so often they'd go out there and pick the back end of the car up and put a stick under it so that when he got in, the wheel would just – [laugh]

Mrs. McCorkle: Now I haven't heard that one before.

McCorkle: -- just swirl. I don't know, I'm having trouble remembering. I was back here trying to remember ramps.

Mrs. McCorkle: Oh, we never had ramps.

McCorkle: Well, the article in "West Virginia" magazine this time was on ramps. Have you ever eaten ramps?

Chewning: No, I've never eaten ramps.

McCorkle: Well, it says that if you go to the ramp festival you have to eat ramps. Because if you don't everybody smells! [Laugh]

Chewning: What did you have growing in your garden?

McCorkle: Well, just about everything.

Mrs. McCorkle: Oh, you all made wine, didn't you, Dave?

McCorkle: Hmm?

Mrs. McCorkle: You made wine, didn't you?

McCorkle: Well, that was Uncle John's. Well, it was Paul's outfit. Yeah. That was a nuisance. I had to take straight pins and paper bags and put over each of these clusters.

Mrs. McCorkle: To keep the Japanese Beetle out?

McCorkle: Well yeah, not the Japanese Beetle, there wasn't any Japanese Beetle. The birds.

Mrs. McCorkle: How do you all get rid of them?

Chewning: Spray.

Mrs. McCorkle: Huh?

Chewning: We spray for Japanese beetles.

Mrs. McCorkle: And Dave wondered if –

McCorkle: There wasn't any Japanese beetles.

Mrs. McCorkle: -- cherry blossoms. We were talking about the cherry blossoms in Washington. I wonder if that's when they brought the Japanese beetles in.

McCorkle: They say they were very bad. I remember I was – I had a room in Fredericksburg and that was in '49, '50. I went over when I left on Friday, this woman's garden was just beautiful, shrubs and everything. I went back Monday morning and there were just sticks there. Those beetle – that was the first time I saw them. And they had just literally cleaned up everything in that one weekend. And they used to check my car up on the mountain because they didn't want the beetles to get into the Valley which they did. But they were trying to keep them from – because they came from D.C. down, and that made you suspicious of the Japanese. And when they hit Fredericksburg.

Mrs. McCorkle: That's something we did. We played softball in one of the pastures across from you all – across from where you live.

Chewning: Um hmm. Um hmm.

McCorkle: Well the baseball and everything was there.

Mrs. McCorkle: Yeah.

McCorkle: And the thing of it was, we didn't have enough gloves for the team. So we'd have to borrow the gloves from the other team [laugh] when they came. But we won!

Chewning: So you had a good team?

McCorkle: When Ocie Ellen Trimmer was around, you had a good team, or else! [Laugh] There wasn't any tolerated – didn't tolerate losses!

Chewning: Were they school baseball games? When you played over in our meadow?

McCorkle: After school. You didn't have any sports in school, basically.

Mrs. McCorkle: About the only time we could wear slacks.

McCorkle: We walked out there most of the time.

Mrs. McCorkle: I don't think I did.

McCorkle: Well, you were teacher's pet. [Laugh]

Mrs. McCorkle: [Laugh] I got that from my sisters. It's a wonder I even grew up.

McCorkle: I don't know, my mind's getting blank. I'll have to look here. [Looks at notes.]

Chewning: How about significant events that happened in Brownsburg? Anything stick out in your mind?

Mrs. McCorkle: I remember that airplane during World War II that landed.

McCorkle: Well now the doctor, Dr. Bailey had a plane that he landed out there. They called it the Lotts place, but it belonged to McClungs.

Mrs. McCorkle: Oh right there near Jen's [Level Loop at 567 Hays Creek Road] – above Jen's?

McCorkle: [Unintelligible]

Mrs. McCorkle: I know a fellow that was killed on a motorcycle on that road.

McCorkle: Mollie Sue said he [Dr. Bailey] had a family in Roanoke and a wife here –

Mrs. McCorkle: Bailey?

McCorkle: -- and he flew back and forth! [Laugh] That was when a plane was really a novelty.

Chewning: Where did he land?

Mrs. McCorkle: In the meadow, David.

McCorkle: You know you go out of – you go out of – I don't know who has it now. It did belong to McClungs, but Lotts lived there and everybody --

Mrs. McCorkle: That abrupt turn as you go down, like to our house [on Hays Creek Road].

Chewning: Oh, um hmm. Okay.

Mrs. McCorkle: In the meadow.

McCorkle: And then there's a long straight run.

Chewning: Um hmm.

McCorkle: Well right beside that's where the planes landed.

Chewning: [Laugh] I didn't know Brownsburg had an airport!

McCorkle: Well, it was – well, it was where they landed. I don't know whether they even had a sock out there.

Mrs. McCorkle: And of course that thing – we didn't have a radio, but I know that Mollie Sue has talked about it. That Orsen Wells thing back in the thirties.

McCorkle: Yeah, I wondered what the heck everybody was raising – when we went to school the next morning, cause we didn't have a radio.

Mrs. McCorkle: Yeah. Well, they said we should just go out and get another scuttle of coal because we were going to all be dead. And now, you know – that was really – we just thought the end of the world was imminent. Oh, I don't know. Well, I was telling Isabelle these shootings – that there were knifings, I guess. The Blacks knifed a lot on Saturday night. I guess they got drunk, and I don't know what else.

McCorkle: Well, and there were a lot of fights among the Blacks. I used to watch them.

Mrs. McCorkle: Watch them fight?

McCorkle: They never – the Whites and Blacks never had any trouble. But the Blacks would get in a fight. And the unique thing about them, when they were fighting, they were beating each other to death, and they never stopped talking, either one of them. [Laugh] Both of them talking! Old time, but you see, there were – I'd say there were half or better Blacks around there then.

Mrs. McCorkle: Well, we were together, but we were separate. And we had none of this animosity that we have now.

McCorkle: Now, you can spot a Brownsburg Black. You don't have to know who they are, you can spot them. Cause they speak. They don't speak "Black English". We've had occasion in Harrisonburg to run into one. And dealt with one at the bank in Lexington – First Union, or whatever it was. And then, Libby Moore had a woman working for her taking care of her, from over there on the hill below you all. I noticed there was no Black accent to any of them. Which is very unusual. Because here in Harrisonburg where there aren't many of them, you can detect it on the phone and what not. So I don't know how that got obliterated in that area. But it was unusual. I was, I don't know – a couple of cousins, Halsted Dunlap and somebody else. We were up at the zoo. We ate at the zoo. There was a restaurant there.

Mrs. McCorkle: Washington.

McCorkle: And this Black fellow came up. I mean he treated us royally.

[Whistle sound]

Mrs. McCorkle: What was that?

Chewing: Smoke alarm?

Mrs. McCorkle: Hmm?

Chewning: Is that what the smoke alarm sounds like?

McCorkle: Could have been that, but it just hit once. I mean, we were treated royally. I never did find out his name. Several times we were in there. But he was from Brownsburg.

Mrs. McCorkle: He knew you all were from there?

McCorkle: We've got class! Well, he recognized me, I didn't recognize him. They all recognize me cause I was a freak from somewhere else! [Laugh]

Chewning: [Laugh]

Mrs. McCorkle: When did they stop going to New Providence?

McCorkle: They didn't. I don't know, it was after we left there.

Mrs. McCorkle: No Dave, I don't remember too many Blacks there.

McCorkle: Well, sure there were, Anne!

Mrs. McCorkle: In the balcony.

McCorkle: You must have had a stiff neck and didn't look up!

Mrs. McCorkle: I had a little Yankee ex-daughter-in-law. And she said, "Why did they sit in the balcony? Why don't they sit down here with the rest of you." She asked me.

McCorkle: Well, they didn't. We were separate but equal.

Mrs. McCorkle: I have a picture in there of my dad [Buchanan, Eugene]. They had baseball games when he was young. You all have a wonderful historical society at the church, don't you?

Chewning: Um hmm.

Mrs. McCorkle: And Ed [Patterson] has given you a lot of memorabilia. Or will.

Chewning: Well, I hope Ag [Patterson] might loan us some of it.

Mrs. McCorkle: Oh.

Chewning: But yeah, he had a wonderful collection.

McCorkle: Well, I took stuff up there over the years, cause I figured, who in the heck would know where Brownsburg is with all the industry gone.

Chewning: He had a whole room in the house.

Mrs. McCorkle: Maybe you'll get things, too. I know there are these people, this husband and wife are doing – started a book on mills in Rockbridge County. By the time they got to the third mill book they put a sign across the back: "No More Mills." They just got all this stuff.

McCorkle: You see, there was a lot of grain, or wheat growing, and of course they made corn meal. But there wasn't transportation, so these mills were pretty close together. Because you couldn't haul a crop of wheat with horses and wagons very far.

Mrs. McCorkle: So we had Wade's Mill.

McCorkle: There were a lot of mills in that area, too. And a lot of areas named for the mills. That Wade's Mill was running full blast when we were there. I used to take corn in a bag back behind the saddle and take it out there. And Mr. Wade would grind it into corn meal. We took our wheat out there and would get the – just get the flour. But I don't know why we just took the corn meal as we used it, basically. Maybe because of the –

Mrs. McCorkle: Buggers in it.

McCorkle: Yeah, the weevil and what not got in it. Of course, everybody had –

[End of Tape 2, Side A]

McCorkle: You didn't want to cook them [the weevils]. Of course, I guess the protein wouldn't have hurt you.

Mrs. McCorkle: Well, I'm sure your poor brain is just full of stuff from us!

McCorkle: And that wheel used to freeze up totally. And Winston [Wade] and – I was in on it a couple of times. You had to watch cause that ice would fall off. It was dangerous. But they had to get the ice off the wheel to get things operating. And they had electricity there because they had the generator there that ran off that mill wheel, too.

Chewing: Jim [Wade] is on our list of people to interview so I hope somebody can talk to him and get a lot of that information about how the mill was run.

Mrs. McCorkle: Right.

McCorkle: Well, I spent a lot of time talking to his dad in the office there, waiting for things to be done. And I remember when they got the white – they got some kind of deal in there that made the white flour. That was a big day there.

Chewning: Did it just get rid of the hulls a lot more?

McCorkle: Well, I don't know whether it was a bleaching process, or what it was. They – white flour and white sugar were two big items. They really watched after white sugar because most of the people before our generation had brown sugar.

Mrs. McCorkle: Is the mill doing okay?

Chewning: Very well. Um hmm. I think the Youngs have enjoyed it.

Mrs. McCorkle: Well, you've got some other little small industries there. The Herb Farm [Buffalo Spring Herb Farm]. The knitting place [Orchardside Yarn Shop]. So it's, in a way, it's been revived.

Chewning: Right. It's a nice little entrepreneurial community in northern Rockbridge County.

McCorkle: Of course they made those saddles, but that was before we came there.

Chewning: I'd love to –

McCorkle: The Wilbourn saddle.

Chewning: -- find one of those saddles.

Mrs. McCorkle: Do you have one?

Chewning: No.

McCorkle: Well we used to have them. There were a lot of them around.

Chewning: What did they look like?

McCorkle: They were a smooth saddle. Very low in the front.

Chewning: Do you know anybody who has one?

McCorkle: I wouldn't know. There were – we had them there at Brownsburg, but I'm sure rats or something – I had a saddle that came from, I guess the War Between the States that I brought here [referring to the Rockingham County farm]. And I didn't use it. And one day I was looking and the rats had eaten the leather off. The base was still there when we moved away.

Mrs. McCorkle: What did Paul Brown get down at the old Strain place? He found something on their porch.

McCorkle: No, he found it on a beam in the barn.

Mrs. McCorkle: Was that a saddle?

McCorkle: No, it was a – they had put the date and the name and everything –

Mrs. McCorkle: No, over at the Strain place, they gave him something.

McCorkle: I don't know. I've forgotten. But I guess that's a big deal. I wondered how in the world could you operate a business like that.

Chewning: Was it a big business?

McCorkle: Well it is now. The water –

Mrs. McCorkle: What are you talking about, the mill?

McCorkle: The water plants, that was a Strain place. Where the water –

Mrs. McCorkle: Oh, ah, the water pond, the water gardens –

McCorkle: Water garden.

Mrs. McCorkle: are at the old Strain place in Greenville.

McCorkle: We were down there, they were just starting. There was a pond there, and he was growing weeds. Weeds, I call it. A lot of water plants.

Mrs. McCorkle: I don't know the name of it.

McCorkle: And apparently he's [unintelligible] gone big time.

Mrs. McCorkle: See, there were Strains and McCorkles at ah – I'm trying to think. Not Vesuvius. Right there –

McCorkle: That's where the other end of –

Mrs. McCorkle: Steeles Tavern. Because a McCorkle married a Steele or vice versa.

McCorkle: Thomas – great-great grandfather married a Steele and ran Steeles Tavern. That's where they used the McCormick reaper the first time was in their fields.

Mrs. McCorkle: But some -- a few of those are buried at that church which is nearby [Mt. Carmel Presbyterian Church].

McCorkle: I don't know, that seemed – I don't know how those people traveled backwards and forwards. I guess they weren't in a hurry. It was the same group.

Chewning: Is there anything else you can think of –

McCorkle: Oh, I could think all night!

Chewning: [Laugh] Maybe I'd better go type this and see what else you've thought of in the meantime!

McCorkle: Well, let's see. McNutt, [unintelligible] Oh, these are the neighbors we had. The McNutts and the Pattersons and the Martins and the church.

Mrs. McCorkle: Well, as I said with the telephone operators, we were just all sort of interdependent on all of us. All contributed to –

McCorkle: Well, the type of thing that was in the county – I came from West Virginia, and I used to help my uncle deliver milk twice a day in Lexington.

Mrs. McCorkle: This is Lou Sterrett's – Lou Sterrett is Dave's first cousin. Lou's mother and Dave's daddy were brother and sister.

McCorkle: I was in trouble all the time. Cause I didn't know that bunch of people. And I was supposed to call some such-and-such cousin. Back to the fifth generation, they were kissing cousins. And I would call an aunt a cousin – and I was in trouble. And I'd call a cousin an aunt and I was in trouble. I'd call a cousin an uncle and I was in trouble. I was in hot water continually. The Penicks, they were cousins, I guess. And I always got in trouble over the Penicks.

Mrs. McCorkle: Yeah, Doug Sterrett and Rachael are living over here at Massanetta.

Chewning: Oh they are?

Mrs. McCorkle: He had to retire because of his health.

Chewning: Oh he did? So they're not in Warm Springs?

Mrs. McCorkle: Uh uh.

Chewning: Oh, I didn't realize that.

Mrs. McCorkle: He's such a nice guy – well, they're both a lovely couple. They had a son who was in Scotland who's a minister, so they went over there to see him when he was installed.

Chewning: Oh, I didn't know that.

[Tape stops for discussion unrelated to Brownsburg oral history]

McCorkle: He had a – his, when he wasn't doctoring, he worked with bees.

Chewning: This is your great-grandfather Dr. [David Eldred Strain]–

McCorkle: And he had the winery.

Chewning: It was your great –

McCorkle: Yeah. Somewhere, he was in with the Clemmers in making whiskey, I guess. But Aunt Eva used to talk about that.

Mrs. McCorkle: Was this for medicinal purposes?

McCorkle: I'm sure it was [laugh]!

Chewing: And the wine, too?

McCorkle: And the wine. I don't know what they – I used to help make the wine. We made it in a five or ten – ten gallon crock, I guess it was. We'd squeeze them in.

Chewing: Were they Concord grapes?

McCorkle: Yeah. And they had some grape juice, of course grape juice if you don't have it sealed right goes to wine. Of course, I used to help Mrs. McNutt fix communion when I lived there. And she – Mollie Sue said it was dandelion wine. But she'd had it a long time. She made the unleavened bread – genuine unleavened bread. Then we came to Harrisonburg, and of course we always had grape juice here. And there was a woman that made it. I mean, she – there couldn't be any creases in the cloths or anything. And then when she was gone, creases started showing. Now they make it up – apparently they made it on Friday. And of course they served it. They'd put it in the cups and everything. I mean it was – it had totally fermented by Sunday! [Laugh] It was hot! And the lady that made the – fixed the communion there, she – what was it? She wouldn't – she wouldn't eat vanilla ice cream because there was alcohol in the vanilla! [Laugh]

Mrs. McCorkle: This is David Strain's recipe book [shows book].

Chewing: Oh, really!

Mrs. McCorkle: Look at all this business about New Providence. [unintelligible]

McCorkle: The doctors in that community had him up for a hearing. Because his diphtheria patients weren't dying. The formula he used – all of my dad's family had diphtheria, but none of them died. They used Paw's [Dr. Strain's] treatment. You see, in diphtheria, your throat closes up, and you just – you know, you die for lack of air, or I don't know what all. This thing [Dr. Strain's formula] has chlorine, I think, in it. But anyway, his patients didn't die, and there was some that thought he was practicing quackery because his patients didn't

die. [Laugh] The medical profession has been through a lot. They did a lot of bleeding. Aunt Eva used to help him bleed people.

Mrs. McCorkle: They used leeches?

McCorkle: No, they just bled them. It was supposed to be good for you.

Mrs. McCorkle: I think Doug was having that problem, wasn't he? Doug Sterrett? Too much blood.

McCorkle: I know – well, a fellow here used to talk about it. He thought that bleeding saved his life, but I can't think it would help. I guess they do do that.

Mrs. McCorkle: 1872 [reading from the book].

McCorkle: They do it to me all the time, but they put it in little tubes. [Laugh]

Chewning: [Laugh] Um hmm.

McCorkle: Oh, there's an interesting thing there, right there in the front. Peruse that newspaper thing there.

Mrs. McCorkle: Can't you tell us? [Laugh] Can you go ahead and tell us?

McCorkle: Well, it's a newspaper battle on – they stopped charging for the pews. Paw [Dr. Strain] wanted them to keep charging for the pews. Somebody else says they ought to be free, and you know. The back pews in the church were free.

Mrs. McCorkle: They were elevated at one time.

McCorkle: But as this person – the person said, “Well, if we did that, and just from the giving, we could probably pay the preacher \$600.” And then Paw [Dr. Strain] says, “Well, we’re paying him more than that now!” [Laugh]

Chewning: Huh. So the elevated pews were the free ones?

Mrs. McCorkle: Were they the free ones?

McCorkle: Yeah, the ones right in the back.

Chewning: Um hmm.

Mrs. McCorkle: And the Amen Corners.

McCorkle: And when we moved here [referring to Brownsburg], why, Aunt Eva would say, “Now you sit in the second pew in the center on the right hand side.” Slussers were in the other end. I think that came from Mrs. Slusser’s –

Mrs. McCorkle: Tiny’s. Tiny. I guess some people bought their pews, but you know, we had this fellow renting our farm who went to church at Loch Willow. And he sat down in a pew and this Miss Bare said, “That’s our pew.” And he said he never went back again.

McCorkle: You were very careful about it.

Mrs. McCorkle: Well, if you bought your own. I can see if you paid for, but not very –

McCorkle: Well, they had to pay every year on them.

Mrs. McCorkle: Suppose you couldn’t pay, then they’d give them to somebody else?

McCorkle: I guess they did, knowing that group! [Laugh] Probably put you out in the cemetery. [Laugh] But I know here, when the Cobbs – Mr. Cobbs came here, an administrator. And they came to church – First Church in Harrisonburg. We had moved over in the Negro section. It was empty, there wasn't anybody over there, and the left hand side was getting crowded, so we moved over on the front row of the far side of the Negro section. And shortly after that, the Cobbs came here, and somebody told them that they were sitting in their seat. And then Price – this fellow Price was president of everything – heard it, so there we were. We were on the front row. The Cobbs the next row, and the Prices the next row. [Laugh]

Mrs. McCorkle: Well, we had our three children, then Roberta Fauber and Isabel McCorkle were going to JMU. So we'd sort taken them in, and they said, "Oh, what a lovely family you have!" Well, Roberta's dark, and Biddy, our daughter was dark, and Isabel. They all sort of – [laugh] I'd like to claim that everyone would think we'd educated them. Have you met Betsy McCorkle? Have you met Betsy?

Chewning: I remember her. It's been a long time since --

Mrs. McCorkle: Isabel, of course, died of cancer. We knew her better.

Chewning: Dot and Torq [McCorkle] were more my age.

Mrs. McCorkle: And of course she [Dot McCorkle] was killed.

Chewning: Um hmm.

McCorkle: But in any Presbyterian church, if you look up and you see a balcony, you know they had Black members. I was on the history committee here in this church, and I mentioned to this historian about how many Black members did the Harrisonburg – "Oh, they never had any Black members in the Harrisonburg church." Well, I knew that section – no one ever sat in that whole section. The place could be overflowing, and that area was –

And later on, she came and said, “Now, I was going through the old rolls, and there was ‘col’ written by some of the names. What would that mean?” [Laugh] So she’d eventually found them, and finally began to realize that there were members here. When we came here – and it was that way at New Providence – as far as I know (other than some college professors) they were all middle class in First Church Harrisonburg. Well, they’re not now. But then, everybody in there basically had their own businesses. I was a farmer, and there were several other farmers there. And the rest ran businesses there in Harrisonburg. But that’s not true today. Very few people have their own business in the Presbyterian church. And it was that way in Brownsburg. Most of the people that went to New Providence were the doctors, and the rest of them were farmers. So, it’s just the way that ran.

Chewing: This tape is starting to make a little noise. It’s making me nervous again.

McCorkle: Oh, is that right? Tear that one up, then.

[Tape stops momentarily]

McCorkle: You attended school as long as you could make it. There were fellows that I knew that were out in the first year of high school, and the second year of high, and the third year. But if you got into the third – if you passed – I didn’t find out this until a lot later. But if you got through the third year, you were going to make it. And they knew by the end of the first half that you were going to graduate. But we didn’t know that! [Laugh]

Mrs. McCorkle: What happened to Joe when he was 23?

McCorkle: Well, it took him that long to get there. I don’t know whether he spent all that time there or not, because I think there were four Tolleys in our class. One of the – next to Joe –

Mrs. McCorkle: Fred and Joe and [unintelligible]

McCorkle: The one had been ill for a couple of years and got back. And I don't know what happened to Joe. Maybe he started late, I don't know. But he was head of the Health Department or something in Tennessee. All from Brownsburg!

Chewing: All from Brownsburg! [Laugh] Brownsburg has produced some stars, I think!

McCorkle: But you know, he didn't – I don't know who he knew. He said it was who you know. [Laugh] And it did work. It did for me.

Chewing: Well –

McCorkle: Because towards the end, Hugh Hammond Bennett wanted the Soil Conservation Service eliminated. He wanted it 20 years; he didn't want another permanent agency. And you couldn't picture the politics that went on in the United States to save it. It was voted in with a 100% vote from Congress. They only item that ever really got 100 percent. But in 1935 to 1955, it was only kept by one vote. If one vote had changed in Congress. And I mean the group hated him with a purple passion. We were out at a Soil Conservation Society meeting – I guess that was Logan, Utah. And there were these long lines. They were having a feast. And there was a line over here that was real short. So we went over in that line –

Mrs. McCorkle: It was rattlesnake meat.

McCorkle: -- and here, it was Dr. Bennett and his wife. And they wouldn't even get in line with him. He was against building dams instead of practicing conservation. But now, when you go up to the Department of Agriculture, you walk in the door, and here's a big picture of Dr. Bennett. [Laugh]

Chewing: Was he Secretary of Agriculture?

McCorkle: No, he was Administrator of the Soil Conservation Service. But they have a big picture in the Department of Agriculture. Because he really did a whole lot for the whole

country. Got the thing changed around. I'm still worried about it. Because we raise a bushel of corn, we lose a bushel of soil. And they don't pay any attention to that anymore. But he was from South Carolina, he was a great fellow. He was a soil scientist who realized that we were getting in trouble. This valley's basically not a farming valley anymore. So much of it's lost. We have to use so much fertilizer. Here in this county, we're completely over-fertilized.

Mrs. McCorkle: Do you have all this poultry in Rockbridge?

Chewning: A few turkey houses.

Mrs. McCorkle: [unintelligible]

McCorkle: Moneymakers.

Chewning: The Moneymakers have a turkey house.

Mrs. McCorkle: Where we lived there were ten. We were surrounded by ten turkey houses.

McCorkle: And the thing of it about it, we used to have a lot of family visiting and they came and they'd stay with us. And you know, after those turkey houses, for some reason they never came – they didn't even eat with us! [Laugh]

Mrs. McCorkle: Well, we got older, and they died off too.

McCorkle: This fellow that bought my cattle that's from –

Mrs. McCorkle: Oh yeah, what was his name? Rockbridge –

McCorkle: I don't know. He was very happy with the cattle. But his wife was down here once, and she wouldn't come back. And when he took the load of cattle out, he said "This is the last time I'm coming in this county!"

Mrs. McCorkle: Well, we had this disposal plant down at Mt. Crawford.

McCorkle: I don't know – we didn't notice it.

[Tape stops for a topic unrelated to Brownsburg]

McCorkle: McNutt had a Hampshire boar. And one year I sold shoats from those two. And I had a scrap with Dad and Aunt Eva because I made more on those shoats than they made off that whole 400-acre farm! [Laugh] And they wanted some of the money! And I did that after I came to – I never had – people came and bought it because my contention is that the hogs brought people through the Depression. They'd buy these hogs, and just feed the slop from their table. And they'd get a three – 350 pounds of meat which would carry them through the year. And I usually charged about double what other people charged for their shoats, but I sold them all. Cause they weren't too fat. You know, thin hogs. And I sold them here, after I came here. I used to sell a good many.

Mrs. McCorkle: When did Aunt Eva – when did they kill all those pigs? The early part of the Depression?

McCorkle: Yeah, it was through the Depression, all the way through.

Mrs. McCorkle: The market was glutted, was that it?

McCorkle: Yeah, it was – what was that DeKalb man who was Secretary of Agriculture?

Mrs. McCorkle: Wallace?

McCorkle: Wallace. He had all kind of brainstorm.

Mrs. McCorkle: A Democrat – he was a Democrat, I guess, right? Of course when we grew up, Roosevelt was President for hundreds of years!

McCorkle: The thing that always struck me was that Anne's dad [Eugene Buchanan] was Chairman of the Democratic Party. But he would never participate in any Government program of any kind! [Laugh] He didn't do any of those things that they put in. It was kind of like – well, he and Miss Trimmer, they were the ones that were fighting this NYA thing. I mean, none of those programs would he – But you see, up until Supreme Court came in with the “one man, one vote,” rural areas were important because they had weighted votes. The founders of the country realized that if we were going to populate this country, that the rural areas had to have rural representation. And that “one man, one vote” basically finished Brownsburg. You name it, all over the country. Anne and I, the last time we went west, we took one of these blue lines that goes from the Interstates out and realized that this country is empty. We'd go by places about the size of Bridgewater, and no one. The farm store would have wire fence across the front of it. And we were in Shamrock, Texas, or somewhere, and I was – Anne went to a Ben Franklin store – the only thing that was open in town. And I was standing there, and I couldn't figure. Everywhere you went, there were tractors – big tractors sitting in the field. Nice tractors. And I said, “How do these fellows afford those tractors?” He said, “Well, I don't know, but I'll tell you this. If they miss a payment, that tractor comes into our bank or down to the farm loan place immediately.” But on Saturday afternoon – well, after dinner – through Sunday, those tractors moved all the time. Monday morning, you didn't see anything moving. I don't know where those people went to work. Evidently, they just went somewhere. Well, in Murdo, South Dakota, the fellow who was traveling with us asked how much the land was. Well, the girl said, “I don't know, but the cook back here comes 200 miles to work. I'll ask him.”

Mrs. McCorkle: A dollar an acre. Was it a dollar an acre?

McCorkle: It was \$200 an acre –

Mrs. McCorkle: Well that's better.

McCorkle: if you're crazy enough to buy it! [Laugh] That's the way it came back. But the next time we went through, they were having a terrible drought. The next time we came through it was hay everywhere, and things were doing great. But at that time, it was sad-looking.

Mrs. McCorkle: Sixty years ago.

McCorkle: At Brownsburg, all the Governors, Congressmen, Senators, everybody came there to Brownsburg to make a call. And today, that would be the last place in the world they'd think of going to. But the votes counted more. I never did know how much difference there was there. But it was the same way here. These politicians all came to visit us. Well, one day not long ago, they had in the paper this precinct. Well, there were seven votes, and that answered it, because four of the votes were in our house. [Laugh]

Chewning: [Laugh]

Mrs. McCorkle: And you studied the record. And now, you know, there are these states – is it Ohio? They can almost tell how these elections are going to go. And we wonder next time how they are going to go.

McCorkle: But this country is – I saw here not long ago. The big percent – there's sixty-some percent live in city areas now. Along the east coast and west coast.

Chewning: And the whole middle's empty?

McCorkle: It shows something. I don't know what. But it shows what political power will do to an area. There's a lot of difference. One Representative in Montana having that much

territory to look at. And then New York or San Francisco, they go about three blocks and they've seen all of their constituents.

McCorkle: And you know, there used to be there in Brownsburg discussion of salvation from the "stirrup to the saddle."

Chewning: What did that mean?

McCorkle: Well, that means that you could become saved from the time that you put your foot in the stirrup until you went in the saddle.

Chewning: [Laugh]

McCorkle: It was always a discussion of how long, you know.

Mrs. McCorkle: Well, I can remember those revival services.

Chewning: Uh huh.

Mrs. McCorkle: In August. Those bats. They never hit anybody, but you just [swats]. But you just – I guess Eugenia [Mrs. McCorkle's sister] was the one –

McCorkle: And mud daubers and wasps.

Mrs. McCorkle: -- that really went forward. But then Jean [Eugenia] later on was – became an atheist. She didn't talk about religion. Went to this Episcopal church up in Connecticut, and I don't know what happened.

McCorkle: They were very active up there.

Mrs. McCorkle: Backed away from it all.

McCorkle: Then they went west on us.

Mrs. McCorkle: Um hmm. They retired in Santa Fe.

McCorkle: But their remains were brought back and are in some Episcopal church up in –

Mrs. McCorkle: Danbury.

McCorkle: So I don't know about people. But I was discussing with Skip Hastings. The thing about the churches in that area – today I'm sure it's somewhat different. But I was asking him about Oxford church.

Mrs. McCorkle: Collierstown.

McCorkle: In Collierstown. Just across the fence, practically. You can walk there. In fact, you could walk to New Monmouth not too far. But people – the older people and the people in the past – didn't move from this church to this church.

Chewning: Um hmm.

McCorkle: They stayed where they were. So it kept those churches alive. If they had of moved, and they got – one church got a good minister, in this day and time, the other one would be closed down. And just studying Rockbridge County, that's kept those churches alive. If it had been like our church in Harrisonburg, they've got a committee to try to find Presbyterians. Most of the members there now are Baptists, came from a Baptist church or a Methodist church. And there's probably 10 percent of us that are left that are Presbyterians.

Mrs. McCorkle: Young people move. And it happened after John Lewis [minister at New Providence from 1989-1996] left, right?

Chewning: Um hmm.

Mrs. McCorkle: A lot of people left.

McCorkle: And if John Sloop would leave our church, I doubt if we'd have enough people to take up the offering. Because they're disciples of John Sloop. But that didn't happen in the old Presbyterian churches. The church was the important was the thing, and the elders –

Mrs. McCorkle: Well –

Chewning: And the minister was secondary?

McCorkle: The minister was just another elder that could teach.

Mrs. McCorkle: Yeah, but that parish where Doug Sterrett had – what did he have, seven churches? Out from Winchester? They wanted to stay with their churches, didn't want to give them up.

McCorkle: They had nice little clean churches, but there were a dozen or so people there. And they'd tell you that the children had moved on out. But they'd keep the nice churches. Of course, every so often, some of them would begin to grow.

[Tape stops momentarily; topic unrelated to Brownsburg.

When tape resumes, conversation is about Al Lunsford.]

Mrs. McCorkle: Where, in Raphine? Fairfield?

McCorkle: It would be on – over on [Route] 11. Whatever --

Mrs. McCorkle: You had to carry a suitcase.

McCorkle: You carried suitcases to Mrs. McNutt's.

Mrs. McCorkle: That was a nice welcome, wasn't it?

Chewning: [Laugh] He was the new teacher in town [referring to Al Lunsford]?

McCorkle: I've walked over there –

Mrs. McCorkle: Yeah. He taught chemistry and coached.

McCorkle: When I'd come back to Harrisonburg. And then Ellen Montgomery had a car, and she would haul – haul him over if he was going somewhere. And she hauled me a time or two. But there was a lot of walking going on.

Chewning: I wonder how he ended up in Brownsburg from Alabama?

McCorkle: He went to – what's the Methodist school? Randolph Macon?

Mrs. McCorkle: Yeah.

McCorkle: He played football.

Mrs. McCorkle: Over in Ashland?

McCorkle: And I guess there was more work here than there was down in that country at that time.

Mrs. McCorkle: We just missed seeing him. Roberta [McCorkle's daughter] was on the [USS] Lexington down in Pensacola. We drove up to Foley, Alabama. And he died about what – couple of weeks before we got there.

McCorkle: Three weeks.

Mrs. McCorkle: Probably wouldn't have remembered us anyway.

McCorkle: But you see, the buses over there – that's where Brownsburg missed the boat. Dr. McLaughlin was wanting them to get the railroad through that way, but he didn't get it.

Mrs. McCorkle: He did a lot, though.

McCorkle: And we didn't have any bus service.

Mrs. McCorkle: I have his book that's interesting. Have you read that book?

Chewning: "The Glorious Ride?"

Mrs. McCorkle: Yeah.

Chewning: Yeah. Um hmm.

Mrs. McCorkle: Isn't that something?

Chewning: Um hmm.

McCorkle: But the unique thing that I've noticed was that those teaching elders really kept that community moving forward. Started the bank. Started the wool pool. Started the –

Mrs. McCorkle: Got a doctor. We didn't have a doctor.

McCorkle: Yeah, got a doctor in Brownsburg. After Paw [Dr. Strain] went out of existence

–

Mrs. McCorkle: When did he die? Late 1800's?

McCorkle: Yeah, right around 1900. But they seemed to be the sparkplugs of keeping things going. They didn't just preach. They were active in the community.

Chewning: Who was the doctor that they got?

Mrs. McCorkle: Well, Dr. Williams was there.

McCorkle: Dr. Leech was there. He was one of the first.

Mrs. McCorkle: Was there a Geason? Dr. Geason was from Staunton. Williams was there when I was in high school.

McCorkle: Dr. Williams. Dr. Bailey.

Mrs. McCorkle: Yeah, we've talked about Dr. Bailey – whatever. [Laugh] But they lived down – it's where Ag [Patterson] is [2744 Brownsburg Turnpike].

Chewning And so they –

Mrs. McCorkle: It was under the house.

Chewning: Oh –

Mrs. McCorkle: Offices.

Chewning: Office. I see.

McCorkle: And Miss Pett [Berry] operated the place basically.

Mrs. McCorkle: You mean by word of mouth?

McCorkle: She knew whether the doctor was in our out. [Laugh]

Chewning: Who was she?

Mrs. McCorkle: She lived near the Post Office. Did she live where the Post Office is [2741 Brownsburg Turnpike?

McCorkle: I got one of the worst chewings that I've ever had in my life there. Her husband was drunk, and some fellow asked me – I was in high school – to help take him home. And I did. “Oh, you take my husband out here and get him drunk!” [Laugh] And I was just helping! [Laugh] Everybody complained about her, but I always figured she was a big asset!

Chewning: Mrs. Pett?

McCorkle: Yeah, because she kept up on things, you know. And she knew whether the doctor was there, and wasn't there.

Mrs. McCorkle: Was she crippled or something? Wasn't she crippled?

McCorkle: I think she had a peg leg, didn't she?

Mrs. McCorkle: Um hmm.

McCorkle: It's where the Post Office is now, I guess, isn't it?

Mrs. McCorkle: Um hmm. Well now, Jen Heffelfinger had done a lot of history, hadn't she?

Chewning: Um hmm.

Mrs. McCorkle: That was so tragic about her daughter [Grace Pierce Heffelfinger].

Chewning: Um hmm.

McCorkle: But they've –

Mrs. McCorkle: This woman who came in here just a while ago was a minister's wife. She was at Montreat when Margaret Wade did something – was Treasurer or something of Montreat College. I remember Margaret had this ring that was a watch. Just about that big. [Demonstrates size.]

Chewning: Hmm.

Mrs. McCorkle: I was fascinated with that.

McCorkle: I wish I could remember all the people that were there on that porch. I know there was a –

Mrs. McCorkle: Mr. Troxell?

McCorkle: Clint wasn't there too much. He was working.

Mrs. McCorkle: I know Dad [Eugene Buchanan] would pick him up, and he'd say, "If you don't take a bath, I'm never going to pick you up again."

McCorkle: He was the plumber.

Chewning: Mr. Troxell?

McCorkle: [unintelligible] about electricity.

Mrs. McCorkle: And he lived way on down there on – over on Dutch Hollow.

McCorkle: Now he, he was – he didn't use a tape measure or anything. If he was repairing a pipe, he went in and he measured that pipe and then he came out like this [holds hands a couple of feet apart] and he cut the pipe. And I mean he put all the plumbing in that blue-gray – I mean Black and White –

Mrs. McCorkle: Tourist Court.

McCorkle: Tourist Court in Fairfield. He did all that.

Mrs. McCorkle: How'd it come out? Pretty good?

McCorkle: He did the McNutt's plumbing. He'd come there. He did all the plumbing around there. But that's the way he did.

Chewning: [Laugh] He had a good eye for it!

McCorkle: Wasn't any of those yardsticks, or – [laugh] He couldn't read and write. He was kin to Governor Price some way. And the Governor was there, and they talked. And the Governor wrote him a letter or two. And he'd have you read the letter to him.

Mrs. McCorkle: It's like Maria [referring to a Sunnyside resident], she said, "I left my glasses." When she had birthday cards. It's embarrassing. I don't know how it is when you can't read.

McCorkle: And of course Page is also kin to the – to that Governor Price.

Chewning: Who's that?

Mrs. McCorkle: Page Price.

McCorkle: Page Price that's here.

Mrs. McCorkle: Father was – well, his father has a drive named for him. He was a very good businessman.

McCorkle: Well, he arranged to get the land here, and get Sunnyside here. I guess he did a lot of plumbing around there, and probably some of the people there are still using it.

Chewning: Plumbing that he did.

McCorkle: Plumbing that he did.

Chewning: What was his name again?

McCorkle: Clint Troxell.

Mrs. McCorkle: T – R – O – X

McCorkle: You haven't heard of Clint?

Chewning: I don't think so.

Mrs. McCorkle: He was a – whacha call it? A character.

McCorkle: He was the character you were asking about. [Laugh] He definitely was.

Mrs. McCorkle: He had a family.

McCorkle: I never knew the family. Where was the family?

Mrs. McCorkle: They must have come from Rockbridge Baths. I don't know.

McCorkle: I don't know where he lived.

Mrs. McCorkle: Mollie Sue's daughter [Sue Whipple Hecht] lives back in there somewhere, doesn't she?

Chewning: Um hmm. Um hmm.

Mrs. McCorkle: The Pooles? Was it the Poole place? Or I don't know. Dutch Hollow, I guess?

Chewning: Um hmm.

McCorkle: Let's see.

Mrs. McCorkle: Well, I'll say, if Mag [Mrs. McCorkle's oldest sister, Margaret], being 10 years older would know – you know, each of us would know different angles. Dave's brother was there so seldom, wasn't he?

McCorkle: Very. Very seldom. They'd come in from West Virginia in a Model A coupe.

Mrs. McCorkle: With a rumble seat?

McCorkle: All weather. Rumble seat. That was when he was in the mining. He came out of Blacksburg when, you know wasn't any work. Of course, everybody knew he was from West Virginia. At McComas they hired him to take care of the mine lamps. And the fellow that was helping him had a PhD, but he couldn't find a job either, but they hired him. And the union – they had to be in the union – they were raising Cain because these two fellows

weren't coming to the union meetings. So finally they threatened them to a point they went to the union meetings. And of course they had their, their rules and regulations printed. And the meetings weren't going anything like the rules, you know. So they began to stand up and point out that the rules weren't – well, that was the last meeting there they ever insisted they attend!

[End of Tape 2, Side B]

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