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Interview with James Franklin Wade

By Margaret Skovira

With additional comments from Blair Terrel Wade

[Items enclosed in brackets [] are editorial notes inserted for clarification]
(Items enclosed in parentheses () are recorded on the tape but may be confusing and can be ignored.)

SKOVIRA: July 3, 2007 I'm here with Jim Wade and we are going to talk about his recollections of the Brownsburg Community. Jim could you tell me your name and address where we are sitting today.

WADE: James Franklin Wade and I live at, near Wades Mill, 73 Kennedy Wades Mill Loop, Raphine, Virginia.

SKOVIRA: OK. And when were you born Jim?

WADE: I was born in 1924, June 10th.

SKOVIRA: And where were you born.?

WADE: I was born here at Wades Mill House.

SKOVIRA: Were you born in this house?

WADE: Wades Mill House.

SKOVIRA: The house across the stream [currently 55 Kennedy Wades Mill Loop].

WADE: That's where my – that's where we lived. That's where I was born and lived.

SKOVIRA: That's where your mother was at the time. OK, I'm going to stop.

[break]

SKOVIRA: Who were your parents Jim?

WADE: My father was Walter Hale Wade and my mother was Bessie Berry Wade.

SKOVIRA: And did you have brothers or sisters?

WADE: I had 4 brothers and 4 sisters.

SKOVIRA: Ah. Did- are any of them left here in the area?

WADE: I have two sisters left, one, Mary Alice Talbert and Frances Wade Sterrett. (They live in Blacksburg –) Frances Sterrett lives in Blacksburg and Mary Alice lives in Swanannoa, North Carolina.

SKOVIRA: And do you know what brought your family to Rockbridge County and when they came?

WADE: Well my grandfather moved here in 1882 and bought the mill [now Wades Mill]. And he formerly lived down near Waynesboro. But his children were all brought up here at the mill.

SKOVIRA: And he bought the mill and did he then start operating it as a mill?

WADE: He operated the mill and the farm back of it here – 100 acre farm.

SKOVIRA: What kind of farming?

WADE: Well just grain farm mostly.

SKOVIRA: Did he uh He ground his own flour then from his grain? At the mill?

WADE: Well Farmers brought grain in.

SKOVIRA: Mmm.

WADE: Farmers brought grain in.

SKOVIRA: Where did they come from?

WADE: Oh around here. Everybody was farmers around here. You didn't have any dairy farms or - didn't have many cattle farms.

SKOVIRA: So it was mostly grain?

WADE: Most farms had mostly grain – wheat, barley, rye, and corn.

SKOVIRA: And how long did your grandfather run the mill and farm here?

WADE: He - about 'til about 19 and 10 or 12. And he developed mill asthma allergies and he sold the mill and 12 acres of land here and this house I live in now to my father.

And the farm he sold to his other son, Charlie Wade, who [had] built this house here I live in, and Charlie Wade [then] built a house up on a hill right now where Mary Patterson lives [now 109 Kennedy Wades Mill Loop]. But my father originally owned a house in Raphine just the edge of Raphine and he was a mail carrier. So he moved over here to the mill and my grandfather and grandmother moved back to his house in Raphine.

SKOVIRA: Tell me about mill asthma – what is that?

WADE: Allergies from dust I guess.

SKOVIRA: Did they do anything for it or he just stayed away from the mill?

WADE: I guess he just tolerated it until the point where he felt he needed to get out of the mill.

SKOVIRA: OK.

SKOVIRA: So all of that happened before you were born.

WADE: Oh yes.

SKOVIRA: So when you were born your father was running the mill?

WADE: Yes. I don't remember either of my grandfathers.

SKOVIRA: Tell me what you remember about your childhood. You were living in the big house next to the mill

WADE: Yes.

SKOVIRA: And what was your day like when you were a child?

[pause]

SKOVIRA: Well you went to school at some point.

WADE: I went to school when I was 7 years old.

SKOVIRA: Where did you go to school?

WADE: Brownsburg, grade school, high school, I went there my total schooling.

SKOVIRA: And how did you get there?

WADE: We had a bus that ran. Uh

SKOVIRA: A regular school bus?

WADE: A regular school bus. Ruth Patterson drove it and they didn't travel all over the country like they do now.

SKOVIRA: Well, they had a lot of children close by, right? If there were nine of you getting on the bus -

WADE: Well that's true. Of course when I was going my brothers and sisters had already about finished school going on their journey. I was the youngest of all of them.

SKOVIRA: Oh, you were. OK.

WADE: My sister Frances was near me so we both went to school together. She graduated two years ahead of me.

SKOVIRA: Did uh – what kinds of things did you do – learn – in school. Just regular subjects?

WADE: Just regular – arithmetic and geography and all those things. (Molly Sue – she wasn't my teacher though.) First grade – Isabelle Leach Huffman was my first grade and second grade teacher and they would split. I'd go to one in the morning - first grade I'd go in the morning and the afternoon you'd let out and they just played around after school on the school grounds. And the second year you'd go in the afternoon and play around in the morning.

SKOVIRA: You'd play all morning?

WADE: Well, yes. I don't know what all we did.

SKOVIRA: Was there a teacher supervising you.

WADE: No.

SKOVIRA: And how about lunch. Did you carry your lunch?

WADE: Carried your lunch.

SKOVIRA: All of it. They didn't supply it.

WADE: Not until way on up into high school and then they developed some kind of soup kitchen.

SKOVIRA: After school the bus brought you home?

WADE: Yes.

SKOVIRA: And then did you play? Did you have chores?

WADE: Played. I didn't have too many chores when I was a little kid. When I got older I milked cows. We kept a couple 3 cows all the time.

SKOVIRA: You kept cows to sell milk or just for the family?

WADE: Family use.

SKOVIRA: When did you start helping out with the mill, or did you?

WADE: Well, when I was a boy I used to help out some in various stages of it – when I was well you know 10, 12, and teenaged.

SKOVIRA: Did you go to the New Providence Church then?

WADE: Yes, my whole time.

SKOVIRA: Did they have activities for people?

WADE: They had Bible school in the summer time and Sunday School on Sundays and we'd have other kind of functions.

SKOVIRA: Do you remember a particular pastor that make an impression?

WADE: Reverend Morton Hanna was my first remembrance of a pastor. He had 2 boys my age. Morton Hanna.

SKOVIRA: So they were friends? They were friends of yours?

WADE: Yes, very much so. We played together. I'd walk across the hill from here to their – the church. It wasn't far from my house right across the hill.

SKOVIRA: Right.

WADE: You wouldn't have anyone take you.

SKOVIRA: Did you walk to church?

WADE: No we rode in the car.

SKOVIRA: What kind of car did you have?

WADE: First one I remember was a Studebaker.

SKOVIRA: Oh really. Did you have farm machinery, tractors and that kind of thing?

WADE: No. We borrowed a horse to plow the garden with from a neighbor. The mill had a tractor and it was used as auxiliary power. And we didn't have to have any tractors. We used horses for everything. Even farmers around didn't have tractors then.

SKOVIRA: So your uncle who had part of your grandfather's farm he was using horses?

WADE: Horses entirely.

SKOVIRA: And he was growing wheat?

WADE: Wheat and corn. He had some milk cows that he milked and sold the cream. He had a good many milk cows.

SKOVIRA: Did the homes have electricity when you were a child?

WADE: When I was real young most homes did not but (now) we had electricity because we had a big generator that the mill turned the generator that provided electricity for our home. So I've never been without electricity. But when the power line came through which I remember then we had a switch on the front porch that we would switch to the electric power – Virginia Electric power - and when the mill closed down at night we didn't run the mill all night usually – sometimes we did. So we had the mill was DC current and Virginia Power was AC current so we'd switch it off because it would save a little bit of money that way probably. Later on it got a lot of work to keep the generator working and repaired and my daddy switched all totally to Virginia Power.

SKOVIRA: Do you remember when the Virginia power came through?

WADE: Oh, about – I'd say about 1930 maybe.

SKOVIRA: How about plumbing? Did you have full plumbing in the house?

WADE: We had a bathroom. The water came in from the mill race through a pipe in the ground run by gravity into the bathroom. And we had a water heater that heated from the back of the wood stove, the cooking range had what you call a water back in it that was used for years – a water heater. In fact we had one right in this house here.

SKOVIRA: And did you have septic or did it go in the stream?

WADE: It went in the stream.

SKOVIRA: That way pretty typical.

WADE: That was pretty common then.

SKOVIRA: And there was one other – when did you get your first TV? We're really skipping forward into the future.

WADE: Well, when we married and moved here the first TV came around when our kids were real little. So it must have been in 1940 – late 40s.

BLAIR WADE: Probably 40...

WADE: We came here in '49, so about 1950.

SKOVIRA: Where would the station have been – the closest station?

WADE: Well, Roanoke – a couple stations in Roanoke. And some people got Lynchburg real well. And PBS out of Harrisonburg. Man by the name of Lyle Koogler, one of the Kooglers in Raphine, he started selling TVs, came in and set them up and put the antennas up – I think it may have cost you \$200 or so then for the whole thing

SKOVIRA: That was a lot of money then though

WADE: Yes. \$250, \$300 somewhere right in there.

SKOVIRA: Sort of like the

WADE: We used antennas for ten years. We still use antenna for the (kitchen radio – uh) kitchen TV.

SKOVIRA: The telephone – that was the other thing.

WADE: We always had a telephone. The telephone office was in Brownsburg. And most of us had one single line ran out – we didn't have double lines like they have now.

SKOVIRA: You mean everyone was on the same line?

WADE: Yes. Pretty much. They had different lines for different areas but like the line we were on there would be maybe half a dozen people on it you had a certain ring – your ring was so many rings and but then we had a phone to start with I reckon it was Brownsburg and then Raphine ran a line from the Raphine switchboard but they had – everybody between Raphine and here was on the same line.

SKOVIRA: Did they have operators – you pick up the phone and give your number?

WADE: You'd have to ring and then the operator would pick and she'd transfer you to wherever – the person you wanted to go to, but if you were on the same line you could ring that person's ring, like so many rings for somebody up the road here.

SKOVIRA: I didn't know about that. During this time, from the time you were six or so, was the Depression Era in the United States. Do you recall that? Were you aware of it - of there being a depression? And how did it affect life here?

WADE: We were aware of it. And what I gathered from the mill from the economy. I remember wheat got down to about 60 cents a bushel

SKOVIRA: And it had been what?

WADE: Well I don't know what it had been. [] ...cheap then. We never hurt for anything. We had a big garden and had our own cows and milked and pigs. We butchered hogs and got from the mill and so we never wanted for anything. Canned a lot of stuff. Had a lot of meat we raised. I remember mostly we butchered 9 hogs a year. We cured all that meat – canned some meat.

SKOVIRA: In the community, were there people who were unemployed or hurt by the depression that you were aware of?

WADE: Well yes, I know people who, the head of the house would go out and work by the day – a dollar a day – you know, help farmers or whatever – work you could get. A dollar a day would go a long way. So those people were hurt by it but everybody found work of some kind and everybody had gardens and cows, you know, and pigs and the people canned and made out you know. You only bought at the store what you just had to have you know like sugar, like flour from the mill.

SKOVIRA: Where did you go to the store?

WADE: Raphine mostly, but Brownsburg.

SKOVIRA: There was a store in each community?

WADE: Oh Brownsburg had 4 stores.

SKOVIRA: Grocery stores?

WADE: Mmhmm.

SKOVIRA: So how did you decide which one to go to?

WADE: Well, most of our stuff we bought in Raphine in Montgomery's store. And when the mill truck delivered flour and stuff around to the stores he'd usually pick up Mama's groceries and sometimes they would go get it but other people would just go to the store – they had a car, they had a buggy or however they went, but

SKOVIRA: Were they cash transactions?

WADE: Well, they were mostly cash transactions but a lot of stores had credit. People would buy on credit until they got their... a lot of people paid by the month too

BLAIR WADE: They traded eggs – that’s what we did.

WADE: They traded things, eggs and maybe sold chickens, and stuff like that some people did. We kept a lot of chickens. We raised a lot of little chickens and had our own fryers and roasting hens.

SKOVIRA: You had a lot of animals in what seems like a small area.

WADE: Oh yes.

SKOVIRA: When your father took the flour to the store, did they pay him for it?

WADE: Yes. They paid him when it was delivered

SKOVIRA: And he had bagged it up?

WADE: Oh yes, everything was in bags. The biggest flour bag was a - what is now a 100 pound bag – then it was 98 pounds. And a 10 pound bag was a 12 pound bag then, and a 25 pound bag was a 24 pound bag. The measure then was different – you didn’t go by – a barrel was 196 pounds. That was 2 hundred pounds you might say.

SKOVIRA: You’d say two hundred pounds but it was really 196 is that what you’re saying?

WADE: Oh no, you’d say 196. Then they changed the equivalents of measure. It went from a barrel from 196 to 200 and from 98 pound bag to 100 pound bag.

SKOVIRA: So they changed the actual amount in the bag?

WADE: That was during the thirties they changed that. Maybe the forties. Early forties.

SKOVIRA: Was there someplace that set these standards that all the mills did the same?

WADE: Well, all over the country. Commodities were different.

SKOVIRA: When the farmers brought their wheat to be ground, did you father buy that and then sell the flour?

WADE: Well they mostly bought what the farmers had to sell but some farmers would bring in so many bushels and it was put on a ledger that they could draw the flour and the hull off of it during the year. It wasn’t kept separate – it was just dumped in with all the wheat – but they had that ledger that gave them so much flour and when they needed flour they’d come and get it. And then deduct that from the lot of the wheat... And they

got I think about 60 pounds of flour – no that was wrong – a bushel was 60 pounds then – they'd get about 30, 35-40-40 pounds of flour to the bushel and the rest was hulls. Of course the mill would get a little toll. They would get a toll out of it.

SKOVIRA: Had to make some money.

WADE: That's the reason they didn't get all total the flour that was in there. Corn – we didn't do corn that way but a lot of them would bring corn and have it ground right there and if they wanted feed they'd bring corn and they would grind it on the stones and then after that they had what you called a steel mill a more modern grinding for grinding cow feed and horse feed and everything. But they kept all that and sold it too.

SKOVIRA: So the farmer could bring it and just have it ground and take it away, or he could sell it.

WADE: That's right. Or he could trade it in – bring so much corn in – and we'd have it already ground and we'd give him so much back. Take out our toll.

SKOVIRA: So that's how you got paid was in a certain amount of corn that you kept?

WADE: When they brought the grain in and got grain for it we'd get paid out of the toll. Of course we sold the toll.

SKOVIRA: And that's how you made money. And is that basically how your father supported the family with the mill operation?

WADE: Yes, the mill was profitable then. It was a profitable business. This was a larger mill than a lot of them around the country.

SKOVIRA: And could you tell me the area that the farmers came from. Were they coming from Brownsburg, Raphine? How far did they come do you think.

WADE: Well they came around the area from – within I'd say about a five mile radius or so.

SKOVIRA: Because there were other mills?

WADE: Oh yes, there was one in Vesuvius, and there was one down west of Brownsburg – Hays Creek Mill – and one at Rockbridge Baths. One at Greenville. There were mills everywhere then.

SKOVIRA: Interesting. Ok, when did you graduate from high school?

WADE: 1942.

SKOVIRA: And about how big was your class?

WADE: My class was about the largest one that graduated at that time; it was 37 or something wasn't it? Maybe we started in high school with 37 so it was 28 or 30.

BLAIR WADE: 28 I think.

SKOVIRA: Was Blair in your class?

WADE: Mmhmm.

SKOVIRA: We should mention who Blair is. Would you tell us who Blair is?

WADE: Blair Terrel Wade. She was born and brought up in Rockbridge Baths. Her father was a farmer.

SKOVIRA: And she is? And she is now? Your wife.

WADE: My wife.

SKOVIRA: For the record. So we know who she is.

WADE: We have two children.

SKOVIRA: Yes Ok. In 1942 what did you do when you graduated from high school? What were your plans?

WADE: Well, the plans were the army was looking you right in the face. And, they were soliciting young people, men and women, to vocational schools. And over here Sid Martin right down the road, he and I went to Danville, Danville Institute in Danville Virginia and they had machinists' courses and welding courses and that type of thing. Preparing these boys to go work in the shipyards and so forth. That's where I went. We were there about 6 months – we stayed there and they paid you 10 dollars a month or something – maybe 20 dollars a month – and paid you and you lived there.

SKOVIRA: You were a civilian?

WADE: Civilian. And then I went there in probably September maybe and finished up there in – anyway - after I finished that course I went to the Norfolk Naval Yard and worked as a machinist's helper in the navy yard building ships.

SKOVIRA: Did Sid Martin go there too?

WADE: He went to Newport News Shipyard I believe.

SKOVIRA: You were not with any of your friends from home at that point?

WADE: At that point Blair – [who is now] my wife – had already gone into nursing school at King’s Daughters’ Hospital in Portsmouth. Portsmouth was where the Naval [Shipyard was].

SKOVIRA: How convenient

WADE: And so I went there for that reason. We were already – we had been sweethearts all during school you know. So I went there and so she and I were both there. Two other boys that went there from here – Doris Lunsford, Doris Blackwell Lunsford’s brother Elmer went there and James Fix, Monty Fix’s father went there too. They went to this training school.

SKOVIRA: Did they go to Norfolk with you?

WADE: Yes.

SKOVIRA: And how long did this go on then that you were a machinist’s helper?

WADE: I worked from about October, I finished up down there about October I went to Portsmouth, and the army called me – I got one deferment, three month deferment, and the army called me up in May so I had to go in the Army in May.

SKOVIRA: This is now 1943?

WADE: Yes. I went in the Army. You asked me about ...

SKOVIRA: No, that’s ok. Go ahead. You went in the Army.

WADE: I went in the Army. And at that time you only had two choices, Navy or Army. And I kind of decided on the Army and thinking about going something in the Air Force, but they said, “Army is Army and you don’t have any choice.” So they put me in a medical battalion. [Camp Picket in] Blackstone, Virginia.

SKOVIRA: Where is that?

WADE: It’s down – just the other side of Richmond. Between Lynchburg and Suffolk. Blackstone, and we camped there for three months. I could come home there quite often. Took a bus from there and come home. Get passes. And then the Army called me. Blackstone and then we finished there they shipped us out to Northern Ireland. There was a division - Fifth Infantry Division - moved from Iceland down there and they were replenishing the troops and so I was in the Fifth Medical Battalion in the Fifth Infantry Division as a medical soldier.

SKOVIRA: And were you a corpsman? That’s a Navy term I guess. What were you called?

WADE: Well we weren't called corpsman. We belonged to a battalion and the battalion was part of the division.

SKOVIRA: Were you trained medically?

WADE: Well, yes, to some degree. But mostly on the field. We bound up wounds. You could give some a syringe – a morphine syringe – they had a thing developed if the person was suffering on the field you could inject this thing. And of course some people maybe got put in a hospital or – they had field hospitals of course then. You had a battalion that served a line – an infantry line – litter bearers, stretcher bearers, some drove ambulances. I was a litter bearer to start with. After we went to Europe – we're in Northern Ireland and then after the invasion, after the initial invasion we moved, they moved us to Normandy Beach – it had already been established so I didn't have to wade in – almost had to wade in but it was already established.

SKOVIRA: We're talking about D-Day now, about June of '44 or so.

WADE: D-Day. Yes. And then we – I had to – there was fierce fighting in the Normandy hedgerows and they took some of the – some of us out of our battalion and moved us to another division as litter bearers.

(Timer goes off.)

SKOVIRA: Go ahead.

WADE: And there I was injured. Fortunately it wasn't severe but I received a purple heart. Injuries from shrapnel wounds. But I did get back to the battalion and I was put on as an ambulance driver. We shuttled people from the front lines back to a collecting hospital and from there on back to a field hospital. We shuttled back to the local hospital which was not very nice cause the roads were being bombed and strafed and shelled so it wasn't as bad as on the front line but it was

SKOVIRA: It was dangerous. I'm going to stop this ... (break in recording)

WADE: The break in the war came then. The Germans retreated back more toward Germany, Northern France - and my division was moved to General Patton's Army and we started a movement around southern France, south of Paris had a few skirmishes in there and then went on to Reims France and we had to stop there because we were going so fast they couldn't keep gasoline supplies to us so we were holed up there for about - it seems like about a month or three weeks or so and then the invasion – the movement started again and we pushed further north west, the Moselle River Valley which was very fierce fighting and that was accomplished and then the Battle of the Bulge started over in Belgium and they moved our division over there. So we moved over there and I was still driving ambulances or assistant driving, one or the other, there was two of us on an ambulance and winter was fierce over there and Christmas Day I was in Luxembourg. And it was very fierce fighting there as anybody who studies world history knows and we

traveled ambulances to the division and back and we had some casualties of some of our drivers and then the war advanced – the Battle of the Bulge was defeated and we really started moving north into Germany. So we moved north into Germany, from Luxembourg north, Frankfurt Germany, the Ruhr Valley. And I might stop there to say that we had German prisoners – German soldiers we had to handle as medical patients. And I remember going into – sent into country homes where these soldiers had been in this fierce winter and their feet were frozen and we had to carry ‘em and put them in an ambulance and transport ‘em back – we’d back up to the house and carry ‘em piggy-back down to the ambulance if we couldn’t get right up to it. That’s the way we treated the German prisoners.

SKOVIRA: How did they happen to be in the house?

WADE: Well, they were captured there. When the infantry forces went in and found them there they sent us in to get ‘em you know. But then at that point the war was nearing the end and we were moved from Germany to the last resistance – we traveled by convoy over to Austria and Czechoslovakian border. So that’s where it ended. I was there when the war ended in Austria/Czechoslovakia. And the war ended there on (June –) May the 8th

SKOVIRA: How did you find out that the war was over?

WADE: Oh, well, I don’t know, we had, our headquarters had communications.

SKOVIRA: So somebody came out and told everybody?

WADE: Oh yes, we found out, and that was one of my happier days. Of my life was that I was alive.

SKOVIRA: I’m sure.

WADE: We stayed there for little while and I thought maybe we would be occupational forces, but soon they moved us out of there because we were in a unit where there was a lot of young men like myself, twenty-one years old, just hit twenty-one, and a lot of older men there who had been in the original division in Iceland, they were older. So they moved us down on the Danube River and we set up camp – it was tent camp – and so they took the younger men, myself, and sent us back to the states. We went to le Havre got on trains and went to le Havre, France and the older men stayed there as occupational. And they sent us back to prepare for the Japanese war. So we boarded ship there in le Havre and came to New York and were let out there for thirty days to come back home . I’d been away for over two years. So while I was at home the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and the war was ended so that was another happy day in my life. I didn’t have to train to go to the Pacific theater. And then I had to go back to Camp Campbell, Kentucky and was there for a couple of weeks or so and then we went to Camp Breckinridge, Indiana and was mustered out there. Came back home. That was the end of my Army (but I was regular little ? the towns people) – now in the war you come back in

six months or less – some never come back of course – but we were gone from May [1942] (– from October really) We never saw home from September probably of forty-two until [August of] forty-five.

SKOVIRA: Wow. I wanted to ask you were there – you hear about the families who all went together into the war and then lost a lot of people from one family. Were there other people from your community in your division or with you in Europe.

WADE: There were a couple people I knew from this area. From Lexington – Entsminger boy. There were four sections of the battalion, A, B, C & D. I was in (A I believe, or) B. and this boy was in one of the other companies, but you didn't really get to see anybody too much.

BLAIR WADE: Frank Lackey?

WADE: Well, Frank Lackey got moved out of the medical and he went in the – he finally complained about being a medic and he went in the signal corps 'cause he'd worked for the telephone company at some point. Frank was a lot older than me – one of the oldest. [Frank's wife still lives in Lexington.]

SKOVIRA: Ok. So you were pretty much on your own.

WADE: Pretty much, pretty much alone. There wasn't too many boys in my – some were from Virginia around, but not...

SKOVIRA: Not from your home town. When you got back did you notice any changes? Did you kind of – was it pretty much the same? How did you feel coming back home after three years?

WADE: I like to believe it was pretty much the same, but I don't know. We didn't really have any big celebrations for you coming back. I was disappointed as I look back on it you know. Wasn't any acknowledgement made sailors coming back. Of course the family (?)

SKOVIRA: I'm sure. So what did you do then?

WADE: Well we moved to Roanoke when I was

BLAIR WADE: We got married.

WADE: We got married.

SKOVIRA: A minor detail.

WADE: We got married on November 12, November 12 '45. And we went to Roanoke and I enrolled in National Business College and I was there for a short time. It was

something that didn't suit me at that time. I worked at Norfolk and Western Railroad for awhile. And then the mill – the man who worked here at the mill had to quit for health reasons and my Daddy urged me to come back down here so we moved back down here in '49.

SKOVIRA: Is that when you moved into this house?

WADE: Mmhmm.

SKOVIRA: Which is called the miller's helper's house?

WADE: It was called the miller's house then. Although my uncle built it here in 1900 but he was still a miller's helper because he worked for his father. We moved here in '49 and been here ever since.

SKOVIRA: When you moved back was your uncle Charlie still farming over the hill?

WADE: He owned the farm but he had leased out to other people to farm.

SKOVIRA: And your father was running the mill here as he had been all your life.

WADE: When I came back here he had already retired back to Raphine and my brother Winston was running the mill and he and I ran the mill together. And then my uncle Charlie Wade, he and his son, his son worked for DuPont in Waynesboro, they decided to buy the Hays Creek Mill so they ran that for [5 years]. (Two years) After that my uncle died and his son kept running it until he died. He died young.

SKOVIRA: So it was you and your brother. And was business about the same as it had been before the war?

WADE: Business was about the same but then it tended to decline. The new generation, I won't say after the war, they didn't bake flour – or bake bread like they used to and the flour business went down. People didn't keep cows and hogs and so forth like they used to so you didn't sell that kind of feed. And the ones that did the co-op feed stores moved in and kind of took over and people bought from them a lot and so the mill really went down where it wasn't profitable for all of us. So we closed the mill and in '60s – somewhere there. And I went to work for the Bank of Rockbridge.

SKOVIRA: Which was located where?

WADE: In Raphine. Part-time in Raphine and part-time in Brownsburg.

SKOVIRA: They had an office in Brownsburg?

WADE: Fairfield too but I didn't work in Fairfield.

And – so I worked there for them until – (it's on the paper there, on those two – the 70s). In (1970) [1960] I decided to make a change from the bank there and I went to work in Staunton at the Augusta National Bank and I stayed with them for 24 years – them and the other banks that merged us up clear on through 'til Sovran Bank and I retired from Sovran Bank.

SKOVIRA: And it is now the Bank of America.

WADE: Yes. Now the Bank of America.

SKOVIRA: Where was the Bank of Rockbridge – what building in Brownsburg?

WADE: The same one there – right there but somebody's living there now. Across from the gas station. The Bank of Brownsburg is still a bank building - it looks like a bank building. But they redid it into a lodging.

SKOVIRA: Oh yes, I know where you mean. You split your time between the two banks. How did you do that – did you split a day, or one day you'd go one place one day you'd go the other?

WADE: No. I'd go I think two days one and three days the other. And when the manager was away – Miss Margaret Wade was manager then – I ran the bank. If she was on vacation or sick or anything I was there full time.

SKOVIRA: Who did business with the bank in Brownsburg? I'm particularly interested in Brownsburg.

WADE: Well, all the local people lived around there. Of course the stores that were there then. But when I was there Whitesell's store was about the only one there; the rest of them had closed up.

SKOVIRA: I'm trying to get an idea – did people keep just regular banking and checking and savings?

WADE: Checking and savings and loans and so forth.

SKOVIRA: What kind of loans?

WADE: Oh – most of the time loans. You'd sign a note and pay on it as you wanted to. We didn't really have installment loans set up then but take the back of a note and you have an installment section on the back of it and record when they paid.

SKOVIRA: Did they have to have collateral of some kind?

WADE: Yes – sometimes they did and sometimes they didn't.

SKOVIRA: Did you do much mortgage business?

WADE: Yes, some. Our house mortgage right here was carried in Brownsburg Bank and paid off.

SKOVIRA: When did the Brownsburg bank close? Was it still operating – I've forgotten what you said – when you went to Staunton?

WADE: It was still going. When I went to Staunton Winston Wade's wife Jane went to work for the Brownsburg Bank. And finally was the manager there. Jane Wade. And I can't remember when it closed but Doris Lunsford was the manager then and they sent her to Fairfield and closed the Brownsburg Bank.

SKOVIRA: So you commuted to Staunton after that.

WADE: I commuted every day.

SKOVIRA: You drove to Staunton.

WADE: 23 miles one way.

SKOVIRA: You went up 252 I'm sure.

WADE: Part of the time I did, part of the time I went to Greenville and down. Sometimes I – when the interstate came through I went the interstate.

SKOVIRA: You did use the Interstate?

WADE: [I did] in my later days. But I was working here. My wife, she worked for Doc Kurt Fox in Fairfield as his nurse. She worked there – how many years 29?

BLAIR WADE: (28) [29]

WADE: (28) [29] years and our two children here in school and everything and we just never did move.

SKOVIRA: Did you still help out at the mill?

WADE: Yes I did when I worked at the Bank of Brownsburg and Raphine – I didn't work very long hours. Get off at 2:30 or so, 3 o'clock. And I helped my brother then.

SKOVIRA: How long did he continue to run the mill?

WADE: Not too long after that. But I don't know exactly how long. He went to work for Grand Piano and Furniture Company until he died and was ready for retirement when he died.

SKOVIRA: But he stayed here.

WADE: He lived here and we rode back and forth together a lot.

SKOVIRA: And all your children when to the schools in Brownsburg? Your children, his children? The Brownsburg school still went from the first grade through 12?

WADE: No. they changed the high school to what is now the Rockbridge Middle School. So our children went to Rockbridge High School which is now Rockbridge Middle School.

SKOVIRA: What can you tell me about the '50s and particularly the '60s in this area? The '50s I think of as the time of kind of a boom, growth. The economy doing well. Was that evident here?

WADE: Well, farming took off. More farm equipment. People had tractors and farm machinery. And then a lot of people left the farm or some of their children – see everybody had big families then usually – and so they went on off to work other places. Some went of course to college and some went to DuPont and various places.

SKOVIRA: Did the farmers who were able now to buy tractors – were they borrowing money to do that?

WADE: Oh yes. They didn't borrow much from local banks.

SKOVIRA: They did not?

WADE: Well, they may have but most of your – when you bought tractors and stuff like it is today they'd be financing more through tractor dealers.

SKOVIRA: How about the '60s and the kind of social upheaval that included the civil rights movement and the anti-war movement? Did you see any of that here?

WADE: Yes, well, yes we were here. Not in our school. We didn't have any (segregation) [integration] - the black children went to school here down this end of Brownsburg. When they closed that little school they bussed them to Lexington to Lylburn Downing in Lexington. They bussed them all the way to Lexington.

SKOVIRA: It was still segregated?

WADE: Yes.

BLAIR WADE: Our kids went to school with blacks [at Rockbridge Baths Elementary School].

WADE: It was segregated then, at that time we are talking about. They bussed them to Lexington. Then the (segregation) [integration] started

SKOVIRA: Integration

WADE: Integration started. Then the blacks started going to the Rockbridge school.

SKOVIRA: The high school.

WADE: The high school.

SKOVIRA: What about the Fairfield school?

WADE: Same way over there. Fairfield was a high school too.

SKOVIRA: And the Brownsburg school?

WADE: Brownsburg was an elementary then.

SKOVIRA: Did they integrate that also?

WADE: Yes. And the high school was very orderly – there wasn't any problem at all. One of the - Some of the football players that were playing in Lexington – he was a good football player and he helped - they liked him. Of course the black children somewhat kept to themselves you know, and they still do I think in school. But it was no problem whatsoever. In our school, Rockbridge.

SKOVIRA: And what about the anti-war, the Vietnam disturbances?

WADE: Well, that was something that was not in this area. Of course it's like now – people did not like it but we don't have demonstrations here like they do in the big cities and around. No demonstrations. I don't ever remember a demonstration about anything.

SKOVIRA: We're coming up to – speaking of demonstrations – we're coming up to the 4th of July which is tomorrow. Did Brownsburg celebrate holidays like that with parades?

WADE: No.

SKOVIRA: Did you ever go someplace to a parade on the 4th of July? How did you celebrate the 4th of July?

WADE: No. Staunton had a 4th of July festivities back in the 50's, or maybe the 60's. Somewhere along there.

SKOVIRA: Did they have fireworks?

WADE: Yes, I think so, yes.

SKOVIRA: So you would go to see the fireworks?

WADE: Well they'd have a parade and park festivities and Statler brothers would put on their shows and so forth. We wouldn't go every year.

SKOVIRA: What about other holidays?

WADE: Lexington had a Christmas parade every year and we took our children to that when our kids were little.

SKOVIRA: What about when you were small – did you ever go to Lexington to a parade or something like that?

WADE: No. They used to have a county fair there – and I remember maybe going to a fair there.

SKOVIRA: Where were the fair grounds?

WADE: On the south side of Lexington where the Lexington high school, the old Lexington high school, along in that area. They had fairs there.

SKOVIRA: Did you have any other reason to go – I'm back to your childhood now – to Lexington or Staunton?

WADE: Well my parents would go to Staunton probably about once a month to buy incidentals. I would say once a month. But I expect it was that. I remember going as a child with them.

SKOVIRA: Did your mother make your clothes? Or your sisters' clothes?

WADE: Oh yes. They make the clothes and hand me downs and stuff.

SKOVIRA: You didn't have to shop as much as we do today?

WADE: No. And we didn't ... We always had clean neat clothes but you didn't have varieties of stuff. You just had Sunday clothes you know, something special at school you wore your Sunday clothes.

SKOVIRA: We didn't talk very much about the church. Has that always been sort of a Brownsburg church?

WADE: Well, pretty much so. We had – the black people went to the black church in Brownsburg. Old Providence was operating at the same time right over here – and Mt.

Carmel just like it is now – it was pretty much a community church, it brought people in from Raphine clear over to Jump Mountain.

SKOVIRA: Were you active in the church during your time here?

WADE: Yes. Very active. Lot of positions in the church. Taught Sunday School a lot. Choir – in the choir for fifty some years. most positions in the church – committee positions, elder, deacon, receiving treasurer – I was moderator of the congregation. There were two things I didn't do, one was clerk of the session and the other was disbursing treasurer. I didn't do those two things but most other things I had a hand in.

SKOVIRA: Well, that's what keeps a church going.

WADE: When I was a boy the church membership was about 700. They didn't always come to church, but the membership.

SKOVIRA: What is it today?

WADE: 300. Not all of them come now but we have about 100 to 150 on Sunday.

SKOVIRA: You were also active in the Ruritan I know.

WADE: Yes – in the Ruritan for twenty some years. Got tired of it. I held positions in the Ruritan: president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer.

SKOVIRA: When you were first – when do you think you joined the Ruritan?

WADE: Oh – in the 50s sometime.

SKOVIRA: What kinds of things – did they do community service kinds of things?

WADE: Yes, community service, it was a community service organization.

SKOVIRA: Does anything stand out projects ...

WADE: We had a horse show every year.

SKOVIRA: Still do.

WADE: Still do. Made money and then – that was the main money maker. And then those funds were disbursed out to good causes. We had a meal, dinner meal, every meeting once a month. Picnic once a month – once a year.

SKOVIRA: Were there any other organizations like the Ruritan that you belonged to? Or any other activities that we haven't talked about.

BLAIR WADE: ??

WADE: Winston [Jim's brother] belonged to the Masons. There was a Masons' hall in Raphine which was right over the bank over there. I didn't ever belong to the VFW or ... I'd had enough of war and it just didn't suit me – the VFW or American Legion or any of those I did not – I wasn't – I got through with the war I was through. Anything war related. (I was a – in Staunton) I was a director of the Salvation Army in Staunton.

SKOVIRA: Oh, were you.

WADE: During my time at the bank I took part in that.

SKOVIRA: Did that cover all of this area, that Salvation Army?

WADE: Well the Staunton area. They had one in Waynesboro too, Harrisonburg. I don't know if Lexington had a Salvation Army or not.

BLAIR WADE: I don't think Lexington ever did.

SKOVIRA: What have you thought of that I haven't asked you that you'd like to tell me about?

WADE: I thought of something I'd like to tell you about. And it dates back to my first remembrance of life here. You didn't ask me to get back that far.

SKOVIRA: No, I meant to..

WADE: One of the first things I remember as a child, and I don't know how old I was then, maybe four years old or something, we had big snow and we made a path from the house to the mill. And I wanted to go out in the snow. And I remember distinctly my Mom saying, "Well, you stay in the path. Don't get out of the path." And I remember that as being a big snow. And then I do remember when the traffic from Raphine road had to ford the creek right here in front of the house. There was not a bridge there then.

SKOVIRA: Where the bridge is now was a ford?

WADE: (No, up this way right –) [It was close by – 200 feet.]

SKOVIRA: Oh, closer –

WADE: The road came right down in front of this house we're living in now, forded the creek and then went toward the mill. Our mail box was in front of our yard over there. Ford the creek. And the same way on the creek going toward Raphine there wasn't a bridge there – forded the creek there. And down below the Herb Farm where the bridge is now the – originally they may have had a ford there but the state built a concrete low water bridge there. Just low water, when the creek went up it went over the top of it. I

remember that. And down at the next bridge, we call it the Hite bridge, they had a suspension bridge there it was for wood floor bottoms. But that was a suspension bridge there. Same way in Brownsburg there was a suspension bridge over [Hays Creek]. Big metal columns on each side

SKOVIRA: As you go into Brownsburg?

WADE: But I do remember the traffic fording – vaguely remember. And I do remember quite well when the bridge was built here in front of the mill. Because they had to blast with dynamite and so forth and I was standing out back of the house there

end of side A

WADE: [The] bridge in front of the mill was put in in the late 20s maybe 27 or 28 along there. Somewhere right in there. And [it was] just replaced here just two years ago.

SKOVIRA: Right, I remember that. So you're a little guy when you remember the ford

WADE: Yes – I was tiny little – but I remember it I remember people were hesitant about going through the ford and my brother would say you can get through there – go slow and you can get through. But the creek now has been washed out. It's got deeper banks than it was then.

SKOVIRA: I can't picture a ford.

WADE: Yes.

SKOVIRA: Now when they put in the new bridge then they must have changed the road a little bit to go to the bridge and you ended up with...

WADE: Well they changed the road like it is right now. It goes right on up.

SKOVIRA: So your house was no longer right on the road.

WADE: No, it was not.

SKOVIRA: But it was originally.

WADE: My father bought a little triangle of land which we still have here which I own. And my father bought that from the farm below us here, [what is now the Herb Farm].

SKOVIRA: Did you have anything else that I didn't ask you?

WADE: We came here we had a cow, a couple of pigs, and chickens. Blair canned. Later on we got a freezer then we just canned. Cured our meat. Lived country style. Of course she was a country girl so she knew all about that stuff.

SKOVIRA: And you – I'm not sure we mentioned your children. You have two children.

WADE: Yes, Frank – James Franklin Wade, Jr. – he graduated from Rockbridge, he went to Dabney Lancaster in Clifton Forge for a year, I think it was about a year. Then he went in the Army. That was the Viet Nam era. And he fortunately was sent to Okinawa and he was in a medical depot there that housed all the medical supplies for Viet Nam so he didn't have to go to Viet Nam.

BLAIR WADE: He was too big.

WADE: He was a tall guy. Anyway, they would have sent him if they'd needed him I'm sure. But he hadn't been in that area. He came back then he went to - he had the GI Bill and went to Madison. And he's a teacher. He got his Master's at Madison and he's been a teacher and assistant school principal and so forth. Still in the school system.

SKOVIRA: In Staunton?

WADE: Augusta County.

SKOVIRA: Augusta County.

WADE: Married a school teacher, Betty Wright. She is now retired. She started teaching earlier than he because she wasn't in the service you see. So she got out a little earlier than Frank.

WADE: Elizabeth. She graduated from Rockbridge and went to Longwood in the social area. Graduated there and went to work for Western State Hospital as a social person.

SKOVIRA: Social worker.

WADE: Social worker. Then she went to VCU in Richmond and got her masters in counseling or whatever – psychology. And then she got a job at St. Alban's Hospital in Radford, psychiatric hospital. And it was bought out by Carillion and moved to Radford Hospital. She's still there and is supervising. Quite a nice job – big job.

SKOVIRA: Yes. Very nice. Very nice.

WADE: She has a daughter.

SKOVIRA: I wanted you to bring me up to date on the mill. The last we talked about it Winston had gone to work for Grand Piano and you were working at the bank. Winston still owned the mill, correct?

WADE: Yes.

SKOVIRA: Bring us up to date on what happened to the mill since then.

WADE: Well, since then in closed and then a few years later, I don't know exactly when, his son Charles – Charlie - Charles, Winston's son, we're talking about the mill. Winston's son Charlie went to Virginia Tech and graduated and then he went to Dabney Lancaster as a lumber person working – teaching forestry. He wanted to open the mill again, so he did. He moved back here and he had a man that he knew that helped him with finances. His father had already died then. No – yes he did. Anyway, he opened the mill and they operated the mill grinding flour and meal and so forth.

SKOVIRA: So did he make a little money at that?

WADE: He made a little money, but if he'd been over on the interstate it would have been a gold mine. But he didn't catch the tourist trade then and he had a big family and so he had to close the mill. But he went from there into the forestry business – forestry division working for forestry people.

SKOVIRA: And he sold the mill then?

WADE: Well, his mother [Jane Wade] owned it. He didn't own it. His mother owned it. And so she sold it later. She lived there a long while. She retired from the bank and I guess she went to Sunnyside after she sold it – after she decided to leave there.

SKOVIRA: She was still there when we first came here in the 90s.

WADE: Then it was sold. It was sold at that time.

SKOVIRA: And I just want to get it on the record that you are still helping with the mill because I saw you last week helping Jim Young load flour or something or unload flour

WADE: Well, occasionally I will help him now hoist up some grain or something. But when he first came here I did help with things I knew in the mill, machinery and operation of the mill I did know and I helped him with that and he had to work on the water wheel occasionally to get pins in the wheel when some of the cog wheels and so forth and the belts and how things go. So I was helpful for him when he first bought the mill.

SKOVIRA: And is the mill the way it operates today pretty much the way it always has?

WADE: No it wasn't. It was a roller mill when our father owned it.

SKOVIRA: What does that mean?

WADE: Well, they had steel rollers. They still used a stone to grind meal and stuff on but they had what you call a roller process and sifters and it was called paten flour. It was ground by the wheel and then the rollers would mash the grain up and then it was sifted

and the bran taken off and then it would go through silk rolls – they were reels, they were about 10, 12 foot long the reels and the flour would go through there and sift out with these silk cloths. You had to put silk cloths on them. And they was paten flour and they bleached it, even had a chemical they put in to bleach it, make it whiter. People wanted whiter flour then, they didn't want regular. And

SKOVIRA: So that equipment is no longer there?

WADE: That equipment Charles did not use. He went all to stones and he put in some new stones. Same stone process but they were driven by electric motors. 'Cause the old stone wouldn't grind fast enough to supply the trade. And Mr. Young now uses those electric driven stones. There still stone ground, but it does it a lot faster than the old stones.

SKOVIRA: Well what does the water do then?

WADE: Well the water doesn't do anything much now. But it runs the – it pulls the rope up. When you want to pull up, or it has bucket elevators you could run to move wheat and corn from the bottom.

SKOVIRA: I see. But it doesn't actually run the grinding stones any more.

WADE: No, it does not.

SKOVIRA: I didn't realize that.

WADE: But it would run, it would run the stones. But he doesn't use that stone much anymore. But it would still run.

SKOVIRA: But he could do that.

WADE: Yes.

SKOVIRA: Anything else in the history of the mill?

WADE: Well, there's been a number of dams built up the creek up here. And floods would come through and wash them out and have to be rebuilt.

SKOVIRA: Tell us why there has to be a dam.

WADE: Well, you have to turn the water into a channel to bring it down here. See it comes from way up, it used to come from an open channel down along the field up here and then it goes into the water wheel. But the first dam I remember washed out and they had to move the dam on up the creek further and they used open channel and pipe – 30 inch pipe to bring it down. And then it washed out when Camille came, all that washed out in hurricane Camille. And then Charlie built a dam on up in the meadow up there

which belongs to Mary Patterson and they put a big, over 24 inch, pipe underground and ran it back down toward the mill. And that's still in operation but Mr. Young has had to do a lot of improvements on it [get rid of the] sludge and so forth [and] put a lot of rock in up there.

SKOVIRA: A lot of maintenance required there.

WADE: So mainly the water comes in more or less just to run the wheel.

SKOVIRA: As a visual thing.

WADE: Well, right.

SKOVIRA: Well that's interesting.

WADE: He could run that rope off of the – somehow he could put a motor and run that flour stone if he really wanted to but [otherwise] he needs a water wheel for that. The water wheel was put in when I was born. My mother told me they were working on it – that steel water wheel. Before that they had wooden water wheels.

SKOVIRA: This one's steel? 'Cause I thought it looked wooden to me.

WADE: It's steel. It's steel. The wooden wheels one like the one over at the McCormick farm, that's wooden wheel over there. Most original ones were wooden. And they would get out of repair. I don't remember that. They had them covered – you didn't see them. They had a wooden cover house built over them. For two reasons – one reason freezing weather they didn't freeze because the fresh water would keep the wheel from freezing as much. And then they claimed that they wouldn't scare the horses. Because back then you know most everything came by horse and wagon. Some trucks then of course started coming in but the horse and wagon then.

SKOVIRA: So the wheel that's there now is the one that was put in....

WADE: The wheel that's there now is 83 years old. And it hasn't required much maintenance.

SKOVIRA: It sure does pack up with ice in the wintertime.

WADE: Yes. It did then. It did then and when it got frozen up we had a big gasoline engine in the bottom of the mill that would operate it to some extent. And then when the water was a little low it would supplement the water wheel. In a drought the water can get pretty low. You didn't run out but it would get low. And you didn't have as much power.

SKOVIRA: Very interesting that mill. We're fortunate to have it.

WADE: Yes. It's fortunate that someone came in and put it in repair and keep it here.

Originally the mill, the top of the stone structure, the roof frame went up off of it. It didn't have those two stories. And it burned sometime back before my grandfather bought it. He said it was relatively a new mill when he bought it. And now you can see timbers of it that have been burned on the second floor there and you can see where the second floor was plastered and the first floor was plastered still has marks in there and dates that people scratched in there. So when they build the back they built the two floors on top, but originally it was only two floors.

SKOVIRA: But your grandfather built it the way....

WADE: No, it was built when my grandfather bought it.

SKOVIRA: But, the way it looks now is the way...

WADE: The way that he bought it.

SKOVIRA: That he bought it. OK. It was repaired from the fire before he bought it.

WADE: He lived, his family lived in Waynesboro and he went over to Nellie's Ford - lots of people know where that is now, across the Skyline Drive up (there across). And worked for a man's mill called Harmon's Mill and he married Mr. Harmon's daughter, married Alice Harmon who became my grandmother. And that's one way he got into the milling business working with Mr. Harmon over there at Harmon's Mill. Why he went over there and got interested in that mill I don't know.

SKOVIRA: I don't have any other questions. Is there anybody that you can suggest that we should be interviewing? We have a long list of people but

WADE: Well, I'm getting to be the older one around here you know. And I'm proud of that. Glad to be old.

SKOVIRA: We're glad to have you here.

WADE: Never thought I would live this long. But I don't know - John Layton Whitesell is a year older than me I'm sure he's been interviewed.

SKOVIRA: John Whitesell?

WADE: Yeah. And the grocery in there. His father ran the mortuary there.

SKOVIRA: There was a mortuary in Brownsburg?

WADE: Mmhmm. Somebody's filled you in on Brownsburg but as I said I remember four stores - grocery stores - a gas station. There was a blacksmith shop, maybe two, there was one there Walter Potter operated. There was a shoe repair person - McVeeneey was his name - and he had a, he'd gotten a kind of work shanty we'd call it now, four

wheels on it and he'd pull it out to a worksite and the workers would have their tools in or some way. Anyway he got it hooked somehow and parked it right there right to the back of the house where Richard Barnes lives, park right alongside the road there. And he repaired shoes. I can remember my mother sending me down there with shoes for him to repair. He'd set right there – it wasn't stationary it was on wheels, a big long thing.

SKOVIRA: And you said your mother sent you. How did you get there?

WADE: Oh I'd get out of school and she wanted notebook paper or something or tablets or something some reason they'd send you down there to get it you know.

SKOVIRA: You'd walk all the way to Brownsburg?

WADE: No, I'd walk from the school down there.

SKOVIRA: Oh, from the school.

WADE: Yes I'd get out of school...

SKOVIRA: Well, what else did they have in Brownsburg?

WADE: They had the Carwell's garage right back of the antique store there, Dick Barnes'. Still there.

SKOVIRA: Was that a repair....

WADE: Repair shop. Mmhmm.

SKOVIRA: Now I know they had a car dealer in Raphine. Did they have a car dealer in Brownsburg?

WADE: No. The store where Barnes' house is right now was a store belonged to D.D. Woody and he ran a store but then closed it and went to Lexington and opened a Chevrolet dealership and that was the first dealership that was around there and he also I think was instrumental in getting the dealership in Raphine – the Chevrolet dealership there.

WADE: And then Supfinger had a store where the antique store is and Bud Wade had a barbershop in the back of that store building. And the store building where the Brownsburg plaque is up there was where Boswell's store – that's where we used to go down and get tablets and stuff, pencils. Not a lot of kids did that but my Mom had me do it. And then the Post Office was in there then at that time I think, Mr. Boswell ran it. And right below there was a bank building and telephone office right over the bank building.

SKOVIRA: What was the building that is the Post Office now? What was that?

WADE: (That was a grocery store – oh no, where the Post Office is now?) That was a – just a home. Mr. Heffelfinger tore down part of the homes along there and kept that one. (There was other homes right across from – by the post office –

SKOVIRA: Where the empty lot is

WADE: – kind of a long kind of a rowhouse like. Of course you know – the people who lived there....)

SKOVIRA: Speaking of Post Office – how did you get your mail?

WADE: We had a rural route. See my father carried by buggy and horse. When he came to the mill he came thru here and went on over as far as Pisgah and Goose Creek and on in there.

SKOVIRA: And he did that until he....

WADE: Until he bought the mill. After he quit the Post Office they bought some kind of carriage and then they went to the automobile.

SKOVIRA: And it came from Raphine then?

WADE: Yes.

SKOVIRA: So when did Brownsburg get a Post Office?

WADE: They always had one.

SKOVIRA: But they didn't deliver from there?

WADE: They didn't deliver, no.

SKOVIRA: They never delivered? That's interesting.

WADE: I don't think they ever did. I never heard anything about it.

(Dog barking)

SKOVIRA: Is this somebody coming you need to ...?

WADE: I don't know who it is. Blair....

SKOVIRA: She went out.

WADE: I don't know who it is. We'll let her work it out.

SKOVIRA: OK. It's interesting. Things keep coming up and you can just keep talking if you want.

(dog barking, knocking, recorder turned off)

SKOVIRA: I wanted to ask you about your health and your family's health. Did you go to the hospital, did you go to the doctor and how did you handle all of that?

WADE: Well, we'd go to the hospital if you had serious problems. The only one in the family I remember going to the hospital, my Dad went for a hernia operation when I was a young boy, a teenager or pre-teen or something. We had a doctor in Brownsburg and then Dr. Kennan came to Raphine. They were good doctors they took care of pretty near everything then unless it was really something serious.

SKOVIRA: What was the name of the doctor in Brownsburg?

WADE: The first one, and I don't remember what he looked like, but it was Dr. Campbell. And I think he delivered me. And then they had another doctor, a Dr. Williams who then moved to Staunton as a doctor and was quite well known here and he was well liked. And he was still here when Blair and I got married because he gave me my blood test. And before him there was a [Dr. Bailey, then] Dr. Taylor was there and he moved away and Dr. Williams moved away. I think that was the end of doctors there.

SKOVIRA: Did they come – if somebody got hurt did they come?

WADE: They visited or you can go to the office and they visited a lot too. Dr. Kennan was basically our doctor after he came here.

SKOVIRA: In Raphine.

WADE: I don't think there was one in Brownsburg after Dr. Williams left. He had a great practice, Dr. Kennan did. He called and visited a lot. People and was our doctor and family doctor and long as they lived and he was still there practicing. Then he retired.

SKOVIRA: Did you think that health care was expensive?

WADE: No – in younger days it wouldn't be anything like it was then.

SKOVIRA: Did you pay the doctor with money?

WADE: Usually, yes.

SKOVIRA: You didn't give him a chicken?

WADE: No, I didn't do anything like that. I don't know what other people did. Course my Daddy had money, but doctors didn't charge much and they disbursed medicines you know too.

SKOVIRA: So there wasn't a drug store in Brownsburg?

WADE: [No.] I know my mother, when they would go to Staunton she'd have prescriptions filled at Wilson's drugstore in Staunton. And she always – my Daddy and Mother both had pills they had to take every day. I know they kept them on the dining room table you know. And I don't remember what they exactly were for whether blood pressure – back then they didn't have much for blood pressure – I don't know what they called them.

SKOVIRA: OK, I want to thank you for your time. This is very interesting. And if you think of something else please give me a call and I'll come back with a fresh tape.

WADE: OK.

James F. Wade Oral History

INDEX

I

1950s and 1960s · 19

A

Army · 12
 Camp Campbell, Kentucky · 14
 Camp Picket · 12
 Fifth Infantry Division · 12
 Fifth Medical Battalion · 12
 Purple Heart · 13
Augusta County · 25
Augusta National Bank · 17

B

Bailey, Dr. · 32
Bank of America · 17
Bank of Brownsburg · 17
Bank of Rockbridge · 16
Barnes, Richard · 30
Blackstone, Virginia · 12
Boswell's store · 30
Brownsburg · 8, 16, 19, 20, 24, 32
 black church · 21
 businesses · 29
 grade school · 3
 Post Office · 30

C

Campbell, Dr. · 32
Carwell's garage · 30
Chevrolet dealership · 30
Clifton Forge · 25
corn · 10
country style living · 24
county fair · 21

D

Dabney Lancaster · 25
Danville Institute · 11
Danville, Virginia · 11
Depression Era · 8
DuPont · 16

E

electricity · 6
Entsminger · 15

F

Fairfield · 16, 18, 20
Fifth Infantry Division · 12
first remembrance · 23
Fix, James · 12
Fix, Monty · 12
flour · 8, 9, 16, 26
ford · 23, 24
Fox, Kurt · 18

G

grain · 10
Grand Piano and Furniture Company · 18

H

Hanna, Reverend Morton · 5
Harmon, Alice · 29
Harmon's Mill · 29
Hays Creek Mill · 10, 16
Heffelfinger · 31
high school · 10
Hite bridge · 24
holidays · 20
Huffman, Isabelle Leach · 4
Hurricane Camille · 27

J

James Madison University · 25

K

Kennan, Dr. · 32
King's Daughters' Hospital · 12
Koogler, Lyle · 7

L

Lexington · 21, 30
Lunsford, Doris Blackwell · 12, 18

Lunsford, Elmer · 12

M

marriage · 15
Martin, Sid · 11
Masons · 23
McCormick farm · 28
McVeeney · 29
mill asthma · 2
mill dam · 27
mill machinery · 26
mills · 10
Montgomery's store · 8
Mt. Carmel church · 22

N

National Business College · 15
Nellie's Ford · 29
New Providence Church · 5, 21
Newport News Shipyard · *See* Martin, Sid
Norfolk and Western Railroad · 16
Norfolk Naval Yard · 11
Northern Ireland · 12

O

Old Providence church · 21

P

Patterson, Mary · 28
Patterson, Ruth · 4
plumbing · 6
Portsmouth, Virginia · 12
Potter, Walter · 29

R

Radford Hospital · 25
Raphine · 16, 23, 30
Rockbridge Baths Elementary School · 19
Rockbridge High School · 19
Rockbridge Middle School · 19
Ruritan · 22

S

Salvation Army · 23
school integration · 19
Sovran Bank · 17

St. Alban's Hospital · 25
Staunton · 17, 18, 21, 33
Sterrett, Frances Wade · 2
Sunnyside · 26
Supfinger · 30
suspension bridge · 24

T

Talbert, Mary Alice · 2
Taylor, Dr. · 32
telephone · 7
toll · 10
TV · 7

V

VCU · 25
VFW · 23
Viet Nam era · 20, 25
Virginia Tech · 26

W

Wade, Bessie Berry · 1
Wade, Blair Terrel · 11, 15, 18
Wade, Bud · 30
Wade, Charles · 26, 27
Wade, Charlie · 3, 16
Wade, Elizabeth · 25
Wade, Frances · 4
Wade, James Franklin, Jr. · 25
Wade, Jane · 18, 26
Wade, Margaret · 17
Wade, Walter Hale · 1
Wade, Winston · 16, 18, 25
Wades Mill · 1, 2, 16, 18, 25, 29
water wheel · 28
Waynesboro · 2
Western State Hospital · 25
wheat · 9
Whitesell, John Layton · 29
Whitesell's store · 17
Williams, Dr. · 32
Woody, D.D. · 30
World War II · 13, 14
 Battle of the Bulge · 13
 D-Day · 13
 German prisoners · 14
 post-war · 15

Y

Young, Jim · 26, 28