

Interview with Virginia Whitesell

By Rachel Koeniger

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[Text enclosed in brackets [] is not on the audio, but is included here for clarification.]

Rachel Koeniger: Okay, do you want to give me your full name and your date of birth.

Virginia Whitesell: First name and just middle name, like I put on there?

Rachel Koeniger: Like you put on here is fine.

Virginia Whitesell: Virginia Whitesell, and--

Rachel Koeniger: What was your date of birth?

Virginia Whitesell: December the 8th, 19 and 20.

Rachel Koeniger: Were you born in Brownsburg?

Virginia Whitesell: No.

Rachel Koeniger: Where were you born?

Virginia Whitesell: Rockbridge County.

Rachel Koeniger: In this part of the county?

Virginia Whitesell: Over about where Richard lives now [10 Anderson Farm Road], next to Bustleburg, between Rockbridge Baths and Brownsburg.

Rachel Koeniger: Okay, and that was your family's farm?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, my Daddy bought it, yeah.

Rachel Koeniger: Who were your parents?

Virginia Whitesell: Mary and Roy Wade, or Roy and Mary Wade.

Rachel Koeniger: And did you have brothers and sisters?

Virginia Whitesell: I had three sisters.

Rachel Koeniger: And who were they?

Virginia Whitesell: Mary Frances Poole, Bernice Nye, and Ruth Beard.

Rachel Koeniger: How long have you lived in Brownsburg?

Virginia Whitesell: Sixty-five years.

Rachel Koeniger: And what brought you to Brownsburg?

Virginia Whitesell: Well, my husband <laughs>.

Rachel Koeniger: You married your husband.

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah.

Rachel Koeniger: And then moved to Brownsburg.

Virginia Whitesell: Right.

Rachel Koeniger: So what year was that?

Virginia Whitesell: '43 maybe.

Rachel Koeniger: Can you tell me what your first memory of Brownsburg was when you came here sixty-five years ago?

Virginia Whitesell: Well, I went to school up here, in high school, before I came over here to live, and I guess the school is what brought me here. And it's changed a lot now to what it was then.

Rachel Koeniger: Tell me about what the high school was when you went to school there.

Virginia Whitesell: Well.

Rachel Koeniger: Can you tell me who some of your teachers were?

Virginia Whitesell: <clears throat> And the first year that I came my home room was in the old academy, and Mrs. Patterson was the home room teacher, and then we went over in the stucco building for the other classes, for the main, well all of them were main classes. And some of the teachers that I had, Mrs. Rosenell Patterson, Miss Ellen Montgomery was the seventh grade teacher, they didn't have eighth grade then, Fred Arnes [ph?] was the second year high school teacher, or classroom teacher, that was the home room, and Miss Trimmer for junior and senior class, and she taught English and taught Latin, coached softball, coached basketball <laughs>, she was it all.

Rachel Koeniger: She was the principal then too?

Virginia Whitesell: And the principal too <laughs>, she was everything.

Rachel Koeniger: She was a Jack of all trades.

Virginia Whitesell: All trades, she was everything.

Rachel Koeniger: Did you play basketball?

Virginia Whitesell: Played basketball and softball, and we had to walk out to Mc Sterrett's meadow [Mulberry Grove Farm] to have our softball games.

Rachel Koeniger: That's where you played softball?

Virginia Whitesell: That's where we played softball, and didn't even have an indoor court for basketball, had to play on an outside court.

Rachel Koeniger: Were you part of their award winning basketball teams?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, we did pretty well.

Rachel Koeniger: You had good teams?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, uh-huh. I think Fairfield and Lexington were the only two schools that had a court inside, the rest of them were outside.

Rachel Koeniger: And did you play them?

Virginia Whitesell: We played Fairfield and we didn't play Lexington, maybe for a practice game or something, I don't know, I don't remember, but when we had our championship game I think we played on an indoor court then, that's the only time, only when we played Fairfield.

Rachel Koeniger: And they had a softball team too?

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh, I played those in the afternoon, went around to the different schools, Effinger and Fairfield, Goshen, and all the other schools around.

Rachel Koeniger: On a school bus, did the school buses take you, is that the way you got to the away games?

Virginia Whitesell: No, we went in cars, Miss Trimmer would take her car and take what she could, and she'd get some of the other students.

Rachel Koeniger: Sort of a caravan.

Virginia Whitesell: Yes, we took school buses then.

Rachel Koeniger: What classes did you particularly enjoy while you were in school?

Virginia Whitesell: Well, I guess I enjoyed all of them that I had, yeah, I had chemistry, math, Latin, and literature, English literature and grammar, and just ordinary high school that we took, we--

Rachel Koeniger: You enjoyed school?

Virginia Whitesell: Yes I did, I really liked to go to school. Of course I went over to Oakhill in grade school, to sixth grade.

Rachel Koeniger: And you told me that that was near McElwee Chapel?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, Uh-huh.

Rachel Koeniger: And you also said that that building--

Virginia Whitesell: Was moved and is up here back of this stucco building now.

Rachel Koeniger: And that's the one that's up here now?

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh, it was just a two room school, and had a stage in one of the rooms up at the front of it, or the back of it, that was a curtain across <laughs>, and we had a play or something that's where we all went in that room.

Rachel Koeniger: Theater <laughs>.

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, it didn't even have water, we had to carry water from down the Firebaugh Spring.

Rachel Koeniger: And what grades did you go to in that?

Virginia Whitesell: Through six, came up here for the seventh.

Rachel Koeniger: And they didn't have eighth?

Virginia Whitesell: No, didn't have eighth grade then.

Rachel Koeniger: From seven to nine?

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh, and up here for high school and when we had our graduation in '38 we couldn't even-- we had to go out New Providence Church and have a back yard sermon and senior play and everything back and all, because the building had been condemned.

Rachel Koeniger: So were you around here when they dedicated the new school, I think that was in the fall of 1938, Senator Harry Byrd was here, and I think the Governor came, do you remember anything about that?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, I think I remember that, yeah, not a lot about it though.

Rachel Koeniger: You graduated.

Virginia Whitesell: I graduated that spring.

Rachel Koeniger: And what did you do after you graduated from high school?

Virginia Whitesell: Well, I worked at the dime store in Lexington - Newberry's - for a while, just most, well, on Christmas time or something I worked fulltime, but the rest of the time mostly on Saturday.

Rachel Koeniger: And where was that located?

Virginia Whitesell: On Main Street, I don't know what store, what building's in there now, but there was Newberry's, and there was another one, was it Rose's, there was two dime stores, I worked at Newberry's.

Rachel Koeniger: How long did you do that?

Virginia Whitesell: Not a long time, just whenever they needed me <laughs>.

Rachel Koeniger: Were you still living at home?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, yeah.

Rachel Koeniger: You lived at home til you married?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, and my Daddy had a mail route from Rockbridge Baths to Timber Ridge for two terms, which was eight years I guess, or maybe longer, and when I turned sixteen I got my driving permit and he let me carry it. So I carried the mail from Rockbridge Baths to Timber Ridge twice a day, left at seven-thirty in the morning and got done about ten o'clock and left at four in the afternoon and got back about five-thirty or something.

Rachel Koeniger: That was a job, did you enjoy that?

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh.

Rachel Koeniger: And how long did you do that, just while he was?

Virginia Whitesell: Well, I don't know whether one term of it was four or less, did four years, you bid on it, carried it for nothing <laughs>. And I think he carried it for two terms, bid on it, or maybe longer, and now it's been so long I can't remember.

Rachel Koeniger: What did your Dad do, did he farm?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, he had a farm, and I helped with that what I could, course kids worked on the farm and they don't do it now <laughs>, and he furnished horses, had riding horses, and he furnished up to a girls' camp, Miss Chesterman's camp up at Rockbridge by Camp Okahawa's up at Rockbridge Baths, and I helped with that a lot.

Rachel Koeniger: Oh he did?

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh.

Rachel Koeniger: So he had the horses?

Virginia Whitesell: He had eight, would take eight or nine up there in the summer, the two months that they were there.

Rachel Koeniger: And you would help with that?

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh, lead the horses up there, he usually rented pasture closer to the Baths, and turned them out there at night, and get them the next morning and take them up to camp and leave them up there all day, there's a riding ring up there, it was across from Wilson Springs up in the woods, Miss Chesterman from Richmond ran it. And I don't know how many girls were there, but they had riding lessons in the morning, and in the afternoon they'd ride out on the road or go up Jump Mountain sometimes.

Rachel Koeniger: Is that the camp that Benny Fauber worked in?

Virginia Whitesell: Well, uh-huh, when Daddy quit Benny took over.

Rachel Koeniger: Benny took over after your Dad?

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh.

Rachel Koeniger: What year was that, do you know?

Virginia Whitesell: Oh golly, before we were married, we were married in '43.

Rachel Koeniger: '43. You said that you had three sisters.

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh.

Rachel Koeniger: Were you the oldest?

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh.

Rachel Koeniger: You were the oldest, then who's next?

Virginia Whitesell: Mary Frances and then Bernice and Ruth, Ruth's the baby.

Rachel Koeniger: And of course Ruth, where does Mary Frances live?

Virginia Whitesell: Waynesboro.

Rachel Koeniger: Waynesboro?

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh.

Rachel Koeniger: Ruth and Bernice are--

Virginia Whitesell: Here.

Rachel Koeniger: In Brownsburg.

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh.

Rachel Koeniger: So where did you meet Mr. Whitesell, had you known him in school?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, I knew him in school, and I think after I graduated, I had graduated, and, well maybe I did date him a couple of times, and they had a basketball game in Goshen or somewhere, and I went, I don't remember whether I went with him or somebody else, I must've gone with somebody else, because they're about ready to play, he had his ring on, high school ring, and he gave it to me to hold, while they were playing <laughs>, and that started right then.

Rachel Koeniger: So at a basketball game.

Virginia Whitesell: Well, I guess I knew him at school or something, but then after when he'd asked me to hold his ring I might have--

Rachel Koeniger: So you all got married in, was it March?

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh, March the 4th.

Rachel Koeniger: 1943, and where did you move to in Brownsburg when you got married?

Virginia Whitesell: Where did we what?

Rachel Koeniger: Where did you live after you got married?

Virginia Whitesell: We lived with Mom and them up Rockbridge Baths for a while, he was driving the bus, and then we came out here and lived here.

Rachel Koeniger: At the house that you're living in now [2664 Brownsburg Turnpike]..

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh.

Rachel Koeniger: So you've been here for most of those sixty-five years.

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah.

Rachel Koeniger: And then can you tell me about what you did for a living?

Virginia Whitesell: Well, well I guess he [Virginia's husband, John Layton Whitesell, who was also interviewed] told what he did, he was driving the bus and drove the school bus from here to Lexington for the colored people down here. And we lived in Charlottesville one summer for two months, he went to work at Preddy's Funeral Home and they told him they were taking boys in the service and said soon as anybody come back out of the service and take your job, and the man told him he'd take him, he had to serve his apprentice for the undertaker, and he had to work under an undertaker. So we moved over there and <laughs> the man's son was in the service and they claimed that couldn't anybody come out of the service and take your job back, I mean take their job, he could keep it. And he came home from the service and told John Layton he didn't need him anymore, took his son, so <laughs>.

Rachel Koeniger: So he served enough of his apprenticeship that he could?

Virginia Whitesell: Well, he got-- well, but he did, but we finally just gave it up and well, he started driving Trailways Bus, when he was over there, he saw a Trailways Bus going through, and after we came back, after he couldn't do that, he said "I'm going to forget it and drive the bus." So he started driving the bus, and they wanted us to move to Washington, and he said no, I said "Well you can go if you want but I am not going to Washington to live with children," I had children, to live in Washington. So that's when we decided to open the store, he quit after he couldn't get his apprenticeship served, well he just gave up the undertaking.

Rachel Koeniger: So he didn't do that at all, he never did that?

Virginia Whitesell: He helped his Daddy. Well, he and his mother carried it on for a little while after that, but not long.

Rachel Koeniger: So what year did you open the store?

Virginia Whitesell: About 19 and-- I think it was about 1947, I wouldn't say for sure.

Rachel Koeniger: And tell me a little bit about the store, what did you have at your store?

Virginia Whitesell: Just about everything that a grocery store has, and it had gas on the side, and--

Rachel Koeniger: How many stores did they have in Brownsburg when you all opened yours?

Virginia Whitesell: Must've been four.

Rachel Koeniger: And there was plenty of business for all of them?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, yeah, seemed to be, and of course, he got the post office in '50, I guess it was.

Rachel Koeniger: Where had the post office been before that?

Virginia Whitesell: In the building down there beside the bank, the long building that Bosworth's owned [2707 Brownsburg Turnpike].

Rachel Koeniger: Oh okay.

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh, Miss Bosworth was postmaster until she couldn't run it and Mattie Wade had it, and then it came open for Civil Service exam and Maddie and John Layton took the Civil Service exam, and he passed it and she didn't <laughs>.

Rachel Koeniger: So he got it.

Virginia Whitesell: Well, some of them wanted to take it over again, wanted her to have it, so they gave it to them again, or gave it to her, and she failed it again, so <laughs>.

Rachel Koeniger: It just wasn't meant to be was it?

Virginia Whitesell: She had helped Miss Bosworth some, and I think that's the reason, but she didn't get it.

Rachel Koeniger: How many boxes did you have, do you remember?

Virginia Whitesell: Golly, I can't tell you.

Rachel Koeniger: Everybody in Brownsburg?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, yeah, Uh-huh. I don't know whether there's quite as many people in here at the end as-- well, maybe as many too, because down there they have so many from out around, come get their mail there.

Rachel Koeniger: And did you all have meat?

Virginia Whitesell: Meat?

Rachel Koeniger: Meat, the groceries.

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, a truck from Harrisonburg Meat Brothers came through here every, I don't know whether it's twice a week or once a week, I know they came on Friday, to bring fresh meat.

Rachel Koeniger: Was it just the two of you, or did you have other employees?

Virginia Whitesell: No, Bernard Poole helped us some one time.

Rachel Koeniger: What year did you all close?

Virginia Whitesell: The store?

Rachel Koeniger: The store.

Virginia Whitesell: I think it was '81.

Rachel Koeniger: I know it hadn't been closed too long when we moved here because I know people were still missing it, it was sort of a community center that the people would come to.

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I have some pictures of it -- well, there was a man came from, was it the gazette [Lexington News-Gazette newspaper], some office, there were papers in Lexington, and took some pictures over in the store one day, and when John Layton got his mandolin, and I had the picture of him standing in the store playing his mandolin, and they had a write-up in the paper about it.

Rachel Koeniger: That'd be nice to have for the museum. Okay, do you remember anything, this is just something that we've sort of been interested in, we've been asking people that have been around here a long time about the cannery, do you remember anything about the cannery?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, Uh-huh, I used to go down there and can, when [Lynn] Woody was in charge of it.

Rachel Koeniger: Oh really?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, he was the agriculture teacher and he was in charge of it.

Rachel Koeniger: Was that Joan's [Joan Whitesell's father]?

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh, and it was right there below Lib Ward's house [2763 Brownsburg Turnpike]. I can't imagine that somebody doesn't have a picture of it.

Rachel Koeniger: I was going to say--

Virginia Whitesell: I said that we can't seem to--

Rachel Koeniger: Can you tell me a little bit about it, about how it worked?

Virginia Whitesell: Well--

Rachel Koeniger: It just had the facilities for you to. . . ?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, everything was all ready to use, you just had to take what you wanted to can and they had the can, tin cans, and you bought them, yeah. And capped them, put them in the things they cooked them in, and brought them home. People, a lot of people went there in the fall and made soup canned, and made soup, well, anything you wanted to can you could can it, it was always just out- - I think it was just a couple of days a week, as well as I remember, I don't think it was every day.

Rachel Koeniger: Do you remember what time period it was?

Virginia Whitesell: No I don't, course it was after I was married, but I just can't remember what year it was, course I never thought I'd ever have to use it <laughs>.

Rachel Koeniger: Well, Dot Martin remembered a little bit about it, she had worked there.

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, yeah.

Rachel Koeniger: But didn't really remember.

Virginia Whitesell: I can't imagine that somebody not having a picture of the building anyway since it was a colored school.

Rachel Koeniger: Yeah, and did they move it or did they tear it down?

Virginia Whitesell: Tore it down, as well as I remember.

Rachel Koeniger: It had just sort of fell, it was in bad repair.

Virginia Whitesell: It just-- after they quit using it, didn't need it for a cannery, or for some reason or something or other.

Rachel Koeniger: You would think somebody would have some pictures of it.

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh.

Rachel Koeniger: Do you want to tell me about your family, how many children do you have?

Virginia Whitesell: Two.

Rachel Koeniger: What are their names?

Virginia Whitesell: John and Richard.

Rachel Koeniger: And they both grew up here?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah.

Rachel Koeniger: And went to the Brownsburg School?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, both of them graduated from Brownsburg, and John Miley graduated from [Virginia] Tech, and Richard started there and then he had to go into service, so when he got out of the service he finished graduating from JMU [James Madison University], went down there, yeah.

Rachel Koeniger: Okay, and they both--

Virginia Whitesell: They're retired now, yeah.

Rachel Koeniger: Can you tell me about who some of your neighbors have been over the years?

Virginia Whitesell: Well, <clears throat> Leatha Greene and them [Ronnie Greene] lived over here [2682 Brownsburg Turnpike], well they lived there when we were married I guess, and Fred Buchanan lived over on the corner. And when we moved here Miss [Mamie] Morris and the Bowles's [Edith and Edgar Bowles] lived in the house over here [2671 Brownsburg Turnpike], she had that church over there, and she was a minister there.

Rachel Koeniger: Do you remember anything about that, about the church?

Virginia Whitesell: I went to it several times, and then my Grandma Wade used to go to it, she'd go about every Sunday she could and I used to come with her, so.

Rachel Koeniger: Where did they have it, where was the church?

Virginia Whitesell: In this lot, it was back from, not right out front, there was room, you know, and they parked along the road. And I found a picture of it here the other day and I can't find where I put it to save my neck, there's three of them, and I said "Well, I'm going to give one to Doris [Lunsford] and one to Betsy [Anderson] and keep one myself." You can see Doris's house [2651 Brownsburg Turnpike], and the little house that they moved up to the back was down at the road, where you turn to go up a alley, and you can see the part of the church where it is on the lot over there, and part of Betsy's house [2671 Brownsburg Turnpike].

Rachel Koeniger: What kind of church was it, do you know?

Virginia Whitesell: Well, I used to know, John Layton would probably remember, and I think he said it on what he gave, but I can't remember what it was, it wasn't Presbyterian or Methodist, it was, I call it a home brand [ph?] <laughs>.

Rachel Koeniger: <laughs> A home brand.

Virginia Whitesell: Yes, she wasn't a holy-roller, but they moved it, finally moved after she was rid of it, they tore it down, moved it to Staunton, and built it up down there, and it burned down then after several years down there.

Rachel Koeniger: Really, so they just disassembled it?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, but it looked just like it did over here, the front of it and everything.

Rachel Koeniger: Was she from here or was she from somewhere else?

Virginia Whitesell: Well, she came here from somewhere else, but she was here when I came here, and different people lived in the house over there with her, she had preachers who would come and their wives, and lived over there with them for a while. And she had two girls that were nurses, when Dr. Bailey was here, I guess, I can't remember their first names, one of them was a registered, and one was a practical nurse as well as I remember, and that little building in the back of the house, [William Penn], Miss Morris made a hospital out of that, made it white inside with the hospital beds and everything in it, and the nurses took care of it, they lived there with her. And I remember the first patient they had was Leona Mynes that used to work in the lunchroom at the school, and she's still living.

Rachel Koeniger: Really?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, and I can't remember what was wrong with her, but they brought her over there, and that's where she stayed while she was sick, and I went to see her, in fact she was a little bit kin to me.

Rachel Koeniger: So they took good care of her.

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, yeah.

Rachel Koeniger: And she's still around.

Virginia Whitesell: Yes, she lived over _____, and she worked in the lunchroom over at the school for years and it hasn't been too many years ago.

Rachel Koeniger: I was going to say, the name is familiar.

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, and she had several boys that went to school, I think one of them is a preacher now, I'm not sure.

Rachel Koeniger: Some of the people I've talked to have said they remember getting their vaccinations over there, do you remember anything about that?

Virginia Whitesell: No, I can't, I don't remember that. Uh-uh, I don't know that I ever got it.

Rachel Koeniger: You didn't, okay, all right, let's see what else. We want to know the names of other relatives who have lived in the Brownsburg area, and you said two of your sisters are here, how long have they been here, when did they move to Brownsburg?

Virginia Whitesell: Gosh, I don't--

Rachel Koeniger: After you did?

Virginia Whitesell: Oh yeah, yeah. I can't remember even what year they were married now, I should've, you know, asked that, I just can't remember what year, but Ruth [Beard] has lived back there [near New Providence Church] ever since they were married, and Bernice and Harvey lived in Lexington for a good while, and then they bought this farm down [2843 Brownsburg Turnpike] here after we-- a long time after we were here. We lived a--

Rachel Koeniger: They've been here a long time too?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, they lived over on the highway, where that Burch boy lives, they built that, they lived over there and then this was for sale and Harvey wanted it and so they sold that and bought it.

Rachel Koeniger: It's nice to have your sisters close.

Virginia Whitesell: <laughs>

Rachel Koeniger: Okay, let's see. I know you operated the store, did you ever farm?

Virginia Whitesell: Not here, I did over there before we were married, when we lived over on the farm.

Rachel Koeniger: Mr. Whitesell's never farmed?

Virginia Whitesell: No, we didn't have any land here to farm.

Rachel Koeniger: So I guess you can't tell me about the tractors and everything.

Virginia Whitesell: We didn't even have a tractor then <laughs>.

Rachel Koeniger: You didn't use tractors when you were farming.

Virginia Whitesell: We used horses <laughs>.

Rachel Koeniger: Did you have other animals, other than the horses when you were growing up?

Virginia Whitesell: Hogs, calves, cows, chickens, just had everything that you have on a farm.

Rachel Koeniger: And it provided a lot of?

Virginia Whitesell: Well yeah, that's what we used to buy groceries with, yeah, take eggs to the store and trade them for groceries. Raised our own hogs for meat.

Rachel Koeniger: Pretty self-sufficient.

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh.

Rachel Koeniger: Okay, the next question's about the area churches, have you ever attended any of the area churches?

Virginia Whitesell: Well, when I was a kid, or well, a teenager I guess, maybe that, I went to Oakhill, I went to Bethesda for the young people, I belonged to the young- youth group, and we had meetings up there on a Sunday night just like the young people do out here. And I went to McElwee Chapel on Sunday afternoon to church, the same minister was over there that was up at Bethesda.

Rachel Koeniger: So like it is now.

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh, and I taught Sunday School over there to small children for several years.

Rachel Koeniger: And did you start going to New Providence after you married?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, joined straight after we was married, and taught one Sunday School class out there for a while, upstairs where Christopher [Rev. Christopher Crotwell] has his office, I guess it is, that long room with the windows [on the third floor].

Rachel Koeniger: There was a Sunday School class, and it was a children's class?

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh, small children, smaller.

Rachel Koeniger: What other activities have you participated in at the church over the years?

Virginia Whitesell: Well, I belonged to the Session for I don't know how long, Sunday School superintendent, or helped in the Sunday School office, and just most anything, Women of the Church, yeah <laughs>, and just most anything they asked me to do I'd try to do it.

Rachel Koeniger: Were you ever involved in the Chrysanthemum Festival?

Virginia Whitesell: The what?

Rachel Koeniger: The chrysanthemum festivals that they had out there?

Virginia Whitesell: No, that was before my time, I have been to it, but we used to have ice-cream suppers, lawn parties, make homemade ice-cream back there and sell it.

Rachel Koeniger: And was that in the summer?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, Uh-huh, in that side yard.

Rachel Koeniger: And was it a covered dish and people would bring things, or did they serve?

Virginia Whitesell: No, it just had homemade ice-cream and cake, Uh-huh.

Rachel Koeniger: And I guess the membership, did they have more members then than they do now? I know at one time back in the early part of the Twentieth Century I think there were over seven hundred members out there I've read?

Virginia Whitesell: There used to be a lot, well, I don't know exactly how many it was when I started going out there, but I know the church was pretty well filled, Uh-huh. That one minister that was out there years and years ago was kin to John Layton, from all the _____ pictures out there on the wall, one of the first ones was up there.

Rachel Koeniger: Which one?

Virginia Whitesell: And I can't tell you now, I don't know, no I can't.

Rachel Koeniger: When did your family first own an automobile, do you always remember your family having an automobile?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, I can remember having one, but I can't tell what year it was, uh-uh. I remember a horse and buggy, Mr. Fulwider used to carry the mail for us with horse and buggy.

Rachel Koeniger: Really?

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh, and after we moved out to farm we were kids and we'd go back out to where I was, well where I was born at Grandma Wade's because Daddy was in the service, and we

lived with them when I was a baby for a while, and we'd know about what time Mr. Fulwider was coming with the mail and we'd start to walk home from out there, it was right good a little ways, and he'd always stop and pick us up and let us ride in the buggy <laughs> like carrying the mail.

Rachel Koeniger: What about the train, did you ever ride the train?

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-uh.

Rachel Koeniger: And the buses, you say that Mr. Whitesell drove a bus.

Virginia Whitesell: That's right.

Rachel Koeniger: Did you ever ride the buses?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, I used to go some with him, where these kids were going.

Rachel Koeniger: Did you get the newspaper to keep up with what was going on in the county, or just word of mouth?

Virginia Whitesell: Seems to me like we got some kind of little newspaper then, but I can't remember what it was, I just can't.

Rachel Koeniger: You listened to the radio a lot?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, we listened to the radio, of course didn't have television, and when I was in school we didn't even have electricity, we had lamps <laughs>, what stopped us from going blind, the lamps <laughs>.

Rachel Koeniger: I guess you just got all your work done in the daytime.

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, that's right.

Rachel Koeniger: When did you get electricity?

Virginia Whitesell: I don't know what year we moved from, or on the farm to Rockbridge Baths, but it was before that, I'm pretty sure, I just can't remember, it's been so long.

Rachel Koeniger: Do you remember any people, Brownsburg residents that stand out in your memory as being memorable, any characters or anybody you can tell us about that lived in Brownsburg, since you've been here?

Virginia Whitesell: Well, I knew a lot of them that were here, and I could tell you some things that wasn't too good but I won't do that <laughs>. But I remember Miss Bosworth, and Mattie and-- Mattie Wade and Osie Supinger, and Bob Supinger, those folks, Miss Fisher is over here, Mr. John Bosworth, and Whipples, and the people, Miss Morris that was the minister over here and the people that lived there with her. And Thomas Wiseman lived up where the Lunsfords and them lived [2651 Brownsburg Turnpike]. Miss Potter and them lived up on the corner [2610 Brownsburg Turnpike], and a good many colored people that I knew, a little old lady lived here beside of us, she was real nice, and I used to give her things.

Rachel Koeniger: That was something that I was talking to Betty about, the blacks and the whites in Brownsburg seem like they've always gotten along.

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, I never heard anything about it.

Rachel Koeniger: Friendly, a nice place, she said some of her playmates were, Betty Brown was telling me this, Louise and Carolyn Martin when she was growing up.

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh, well, John Miley used to get out here even after he went to Tech, and he'd come home on weekends some, he was way up here like this, and kids would come calling to him and he'd pick them up on his shoulder and go walking down the street with them, and get out here and play ball in this lot, when not going through Leatha Greene's window <laughs>. Go here in these fields and sleigh ride.

Rachel Koeniger: Oh really?

Virginia Whitesell: Oh yeah.

Rachel Koeniger: Who had the sleigh?

Virginia Whitesell: Sleigh ride, just with the regular sleds.

Rachel Koeniger: Oh the sled, okay.

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh.

Rachel Koeniger: That's a good place for it isn't it?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, on those hills.

Rachel Koeniger: Do you remember much about the Depression, you weren't very old?

Virginia Whitesell: I remember my sugar was rationed, and there was somebody over at Fairfield that had got it and had it stacked up and we could go and get some from them once in a while <laughs> if we needed some. And seems to me our coffee was rationed at one time, wasn't it?

Rachel Koeniger: Was that during the Depression or during World War II?

Virginia Whitesell: That must've been the war, that must've been-- I don't remember the Depression.

Rachel Koeniger: What was Brownsburg like during World War II, did anything out of the ordinary happen here?

Virginia Whitesell: <sighs> I don't know--

Rachel Koeniger: I think I read or heard that they had air raid drills or something.

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, they used to have over at the school or something.

Rachel Koeniger: They'd ring the bell.

Virginia Whitesell: Yes, Uh-huh, Uh-huh.

Rachel Koeniger: What would you have to do, just close your windows?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, I don't think I was up there then, I don't remember that, but I remember having air raids here, I mean you'd ring a bell or something and you'd have to get in.

Rachel Koeniger: A drill?

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh.

Rachel Koeniger: Nothing ever happened here.

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, nothing ever happened.

Rachel Koeniger: Okay, let's see. What changes, good or bad, have you seen take place in the Brownsburg area during the time that you've been here, can you tell me?

Virginia Whitesell: Well, I don't really-- it's kind of hard, the place was-- the road was hard surface before I came here.

Rachel Koeniger: That was my question I was going to ask you.

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah.

Rachel Koeniger: But I guess all the side roads probably were still gravel or dirt weren't they?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, yeah, and the roads used to go down these alleys, and went down the-- or with the creek down there, instead of--

Rachel Koeniger: And they were dirt and gravel?

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh, course I didn't-- that was before my time too, I just heard John Layton talking about his daddy and talking about that.

Rachel Koeniger: What about the telephones, have you always had a telephone?

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh, everyone knows on the wall it's you, I mean <laughs>.

Rachel Koeniger: And you were a party line I guess, right?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, oh yeah, yeah.

Rachel Koeniger: Everybody knew everybody else's business.

Virginia Whitesell: That's right.

Rachel Koeniger: Has the location of any of the roads changed?

Virginia Whitesell: Most where these alleys were, was a road that went down, and I think a road went down towards it, or followed the creek down maybe somebody said, I don't know how close through it was.

Rachel Koeniger: Parallel to the turnpike.

Virginia Whitesell: Evidently.

Rachel Koeniger: We had your store here, tell me about some of the other stores that were in Brownsburg.

Virginia Whitesell: Well, Bob Supinger was down there where the antique place is now [2741 Brownsburg Turnpike], and then when he closed, Carl Swope ran it, and--

Rachel Koeniger: And what sort of store was that?

Virginia Whitesell: Just a grocery store, Uh-huh. And then across the street, back years and years ago, the Rockbridge Farm Store was down there on the corner, where Dick Barnes lives [8 Hays Creek Road]. And the back part of it, a room back in it, Ronnie Greene had his-- he had a peanut route, and he kept his supplies down there in the room back in there.

Rachel Koeniger: A peanut route?

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh.

Rachel Koeniger: Tell me about that.

Virginia Whitesell: He had a truck over here that he sold candy and just like these trucks that go through now, and deliver to stores and things.

Rachel Koeniger: Services the vending machines.

Virginia Whitesell: The store, they didn't have vendors, he'd just take them in and sell it to the stores, just like they used to come to our store, sell them his peanuts and just different breads and everything like that.

Rachel Koeniger: And so he was just sort of an independent.

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, on his own, Uh-huh, Uh-huh.

Rachel Koeniger: That's what he did?

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh, and had the farm out there too.

Rachel Koeniger: And they were living here when you came, you said, the Greenes?

Virginia Whitesell: No, but they wasn't married then, she [Leatha] was married to Carl Swisher then, and lived over there, and then after he died she married Ronnie Greene.

Rachel Koeniger: Were there any other stores?

Virginia Whitesell: Any what?

Rachel Koeniger: Any other stores?

Virginia Whitesell: Oh yeah, Bosworth's had one down there, where Catharine Gilliam owns now [2707 Brownsburg Turnpike], next to the bank [2711 Brownsburg Turnpike], they didn't have everything in it like the other stores had, and the post office was in there, that's where we moved it from, from up here, from down there up here. Huffmann's had a store, and they had this general store, everything, like we had, and then ours, and I guess there's--

Rachel Koeniger: Yours was the last one to close?

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh, there was five of us at one time.

Rachel Koeniger: So you were the last one?

Virginia Whitesell: And the bank, the bank was where the building is now, and the telephone office was up over the bank [2711 Brownsburg Turnpike].

Rachel Koeniger: Upstairs.

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh.

Rachel Koeniger: And who worked in the bank, do you remember?

Virginia Whitesell: The first people that I remember was Jen Heffelfinger, and Bill [Heffelfinger], when they were there, then Jane [Wade] and Doris [Lunsford] and them got it later.

Rachel Koeniger: Do you remember when the bank was robbed, were you around?

Virginia Whitesell: Doris [Lunsford] told me about that the other day, but I remember when it happened but I don't know how long it's been, and I don't--

Rachel Koeniger: I think it was in the Seventies, some time in the Seventies.

Virginia Whitesell: Yes, probably so.

Rachel Koeniger: We wanted to interview Jane [Wade], she wanted to talk about it, but she got sick, and we just never could get together with her.

Virginia Whitesell: Did anybody talk to Doris [Lunsford]?

Rachel Koeniger: We want to talk to Doris.

Virginia Whitesell: Well, she can tell you about it, because we were talking about it in the post office the other morning, and Dick Barnes was asking her questions about it, she had come home for lunch, and went back down.

Rachel Koeniger: Yeah, she missed the excitement I guess, but she could tell us all about it anyway.

Virginia Whitesell: And she can tell you about it. I think they always thought they knew who it was, but they never did get-- and I think they parked down there right beside of Barnes' store <laughs>.

Rachel Koeniger: I guess they knew it wouldn't be too much of a getaway. Do you have any interesting family history stories you'd like to share with us, or any Whitesell family history that you know about, regarding Brownsburg or the Civil War or Revolutionary War or anything like that?

Virginia Whitesell: No, Dad was in the war, I guess that was in 1918.

Rachel Koeniger: World War One.

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh, and I think he went overseas, in fact I had a brother go in while he was overseas, and he died, he never did see it and he always wondered _____.

Rachel Koeniger: Did your family use any kind of home remedies or cures or anything like that that you could tell us about?

Virginia Whitesell: <laughs> I don't know what the other cures were <laughs>.

Rachel Koeniger: So you didn't go to the doctor very often?

Virginia Whitesell: No, there just wasn't many doctors around back when I was born.

Rachel Koeniger: When you were little.

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh.

Rachel Koeniger: But they always had doctors in Brownsburg didn't they?

Virginia Whitesell: As long as I can remember they did.

Rachel Koeniger: Do you remember who they were?

Virginia Whitesell: I remember Dr. Bailey, John Layton probably remembers Dr. Green, but I don't remember him, Dr. Bailey.

Rachel Koeniger: Where was Dr. Bailey's office?

Virginia Whitesell: Down there where Ag lived [2744 Brownsburg Turnpike], that's where they all were, and Taylor, Dr. Taylor, and Dr. Williams, he was in the basement, and Dr. Taylor, let's see, he moved up, had his office when he closed up over the Farm Store [8 Hays Creek Road].

Rachel Koeniger: Dr. Taylor?

Virginia Whitesell: I think it was Taylor, I'm not sure, I don't think it was--

Rachel Koeniger: Was Ag already in the house?

Virginia Whitesell: I don't know, I don't know why, whether he just wanted to move or--

Rachel Koeniger: Did the doctors usually live in the house and then have their office in the basement or how?

Virginia Whitesell: They had the office in the basement and I think lived upstairs, one of them lived out in the house that belonged to Margaret Wade and them out at the church [Castle Carberry], I think that was Dr. Taylor.

Rachel Koeniger: Were your children born at the hospital?

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-uh.

Rachel Koeniger: They were born at home?

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh, well, John Miley was born here and Richard was born in Rockbridge Baths, at the Methodist Parsonage, _____ lived there. Dr. [Joseph] Williams was the doctor then, Uh-huh.

Rachel Koeniger: So you had doctors that came?

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh, Dr. Williams delivered both of them.

Rachel Koeniger: I want to know what diseases were most feared, I guess there were a lot of things that went around, polio, were you ever worried or concerned about polio?

Virginia Whitesell: Well, I guess we were a little concerned and I know there was a epidemic of mumps one time when Grandma Wade died, and that was in, what year that was, it's a year that his daddy got sick, she was the last person he buried, and he said if he ever felt bad like he did that day he hoped they never buried anybody else <laughs>, I think he was the next one. That's before we were married. But we had measles and mumps and but like everybody else in--

Rachel Koeniger: You didn't have any vaccinations or anything?

Virginia Whitesell: Not really, uh-uh.

Rachel Koeniger: That came along later, what about the holidays, how did you all celebrate the holidays, did you have a big Christmas and Thanksgiving?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, yeah, well we had the big holiday about every Sunday when we lived over on the farm <laughs>, when the kin people would go to church up at Bethesda and they'd all stop there to eat your dinner <laughs>, I think sometimes we had as many as twenty-four on a Sunday.

Rachel Koeniger: What did you do with them all?

Virginia Whitesell: Oh well, we just, I don't know, just had them.

Rachel Koeniger: Had a big meal in the middle of the day?

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh, Uh-huh, people don't like to cook now, John does, I do too, I have a lot of them, but there's so many of them now it makes so many, if we have one John Miley and Richard's all together, I'll have one family and then the other one.

Rachel Koeniger: What about Christmas trees, did you have Christmas trees when you were growing up?

Virginia Whitesell: Oh yeah, yeah.

Rachel Koeniger: I guess after you moved.

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, even when we lived over on the farm we did, and that first thing we'd wake up early on Christmas morning, we'd want to go see what Santy Claus brought us <laughs>. It's the way, we didn't know any different, first thing we'd look for was fire crackers and Roman candles <laughs>, stick them out in the fence and light them at four o'clock in the morning <laughs>.

Rachel Koeniger: Good thing that you didn't have neighbors that you could disturb anybody else.

Virginia Whitesell: Well, they did the same thing so <laughs>.

Rachel Koeniger: Okay, is there anything else you can think of you'd like to share with me?

Virginia Whitesell: I don't think so, I think it's-- I've enjoyed living in Brownsburg, it's been a good life.

Rachel Koeniger: It's changed.

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, there've been a lot of-- yeah, yeah, there's a lot of changes.

Rachel Koeniger: But it's still a pleasant little community.

Virginia Whitesell: One of the [New Providence] ministers, you know, his mother lived down here in the Bosworth house [2703 Brownsburg Turnpike] for a while.

Rachel Koeniger: Which one was that, do you remember?

Virginia Whitesell: Let's see, <ruffles papers> I wrote some of those ministers down, let me see who I did, Coblentz. Remember Mr. [David] Coblentz, he went to Lynchburg didn't he, and I think he moved her [his mother] in down here at this house.

Rachel Koeniger: Well, didn't another of the ministers live somewhere in Brownsburg maybe, in Catharine's house, that might've been it.

Virginia Whitesell: That's where his mother lived, uh-huh, yeah, that house, and he bought that house, as well as I remember, and she lived there by herself, and they went to Lynchburg.

Rachel Koeniger: Well, did you write anything else down?

Virginia Whitesell: No, I just wrote some of the ministers' names down, and some of the teachers' names was all, but I told you those.

Rachel Koeniger: Okay, thank you very much, I've enjoyed it.

Virginia Whitesell: I went out to church and wrote the ministers' names down because I couldn't remember all of them <laughs>, and wrote the years that they were there.

Rachel Koeniger: Hard to keep track <laughs>.

Virginia Whitesell: Were some of my-- well I remember most all of them, I guess, yeah, because Walthal married us, and he came here in-- he was here from 1938 to '43, so all the other ones I always remembered.

Rachel Koeniger: Were you married out at New Providence?

Virginia Whitesell: At the Manse.

Rachel Koeniger: At the Manse?

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh. And I remember all of the other ones, they had their pictures out there and the year they were and everything.

Rachel Koeniger: That's amazing.

Virginia Whitesell: Uh-huh.

Rachel Koeniger: Been around a long time.

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, eighty-seven, eighty-eight years almost, will be in December, that's a good while yet, if I'm living.

Rachel Koeniger: Well, I think you will be, you're amazing, and I'm grateful that you agreed to talk to me, and I've enjoyed chatting with you.

Virginia Whitesell: <laughs> Well, I hope it'll be worth-- <audio ends abruptly>

Rachel Koeniger: Okay, we're back now, Virginia's thought of a couple of other stories she'd like to share with us.

Virginia Whitesell: <laughs> When I was in school, and our principal, Miss Trimmer was sick, and couldn't come to school and she asked them to let me come and get the mail every day from the post office, which was at Bosworth's store, and I would always come down and she'd say "Send her up to my home now before she goes back so I can send messages back to school with her."

Rachel Koeniger: So you were sort of the messenger?

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah <laughs>.

Rachel Koeniger: And you were telling me about the prom, the Brownsburg High School prom?

Virginia Whitesell: When I graduated from high school, we had our senior prom down at the Bosworth house where Miss Trimmer boarded, and had it in a huge big dining room, and the boy that I afterwards married, he and his father, Miley and John Layton Whitesell, played the music for it.

Rachel Koeniger: What kind of music did they play?

Virginia Whitesell: I guess he played his mandolin and his daddy played a guitar I guess.

Rachel Koeniger: Well, that's neat. And who was your date, do you remember?

Virginia Whitesell: No I don't, I guess--

Rachel Koeniger: You only had eyes for the musician?

Virginia Whitesell: <laughs>

Rachel Koeniger: Okay, these are the kind of stories that we like to hear, so if you think of any others, just jot them down and when I bring your interview back maybe we can get some more from you, because these are great stories, we like to hear these.

Virginia Whitesell: I guess they've always all told you about the drum, where you'd have to march into school with everything.

Rachel Koeniger: I haven't heard that.

Virginia Whitesell: You haven't?

Rachel Koeniger: I haven't, no.

Virginia Whitesell: Rudolf Dunaway was the drummer, and we had to line up after recess to march to go in classes in either one of the buildings, and we had to get in line and march to get on the bus, he'd beat the drum, "Left, left, left-right, left."

Rachel Koeniger: So you had to keep time.

Virginia Whitesell: Keep in time with the drum.

Rachel Koeniger: To get on the bus and to go into the school <laughs>.

Virginia Whitesell: And to go out to get on the bus, and go in from recess, you had to line up outside, and go up those steps and up whichever building you went in to.

Rachel Koeniger: Was that Miss Trimmer?

Virginia Whitesell: Miss Trimmer was the principal, yeah.

Rachel Koeniger: Her technique huh?

Virginia Whitesell: I don't know who was principal before she came. She was a good person.

Rachel Koeniger: That's what I've heard.

Virginia Whitesell: And she could control.

Rachel Koeniger: That's what I've heard, that she was strict but fair.

Virginia Whitesell: Yeah, and she wasn't afraid of anybody, man or woman, she could stand up to them, we had a dance up there one night and everybody was, like Saturday and all were invited, I can't remember who made the music or anything, but some man, I don't remember who that was, came in and was drinking some, and she knew it and she asked him to leave, and he didn't do it, and she went up to him again and she said "I asked you to leave and I'm not going to ask you any more," he left <laughs>.

Rachel Koeniger: Now was she here her whole career or did she retire from Brownsburg, or did she leave and go somewhere else?

Virginia Whitesell: She left and I think was old enough to retire, I don't think she taught after that, I'm not sure, but I don't think she did.

Rachel Koeniger: She certainly sounds like a--

Virginia Whitesell: She was a good teacher though, and she taught English and she taught the Latin classes and everything, and still coached and all.

Rachel Koeniger: Need more like her today. Okay, well, can we think of anything else?

Virginia Whitesell: No <laughs>.

[Interview ends.]

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