

**March 2009**

**Interview with R. Tate Alexander**

**By Isabelle Chewning**

[NOTE: Material enclosed in brackets [ ] is not on the audio file, but is included in the transcript for clarification or elaboration. Notes from R. Tate Alexander's son, C. Bruce Alexander have also been included in the transcript.]

**Isabelle Chewning:** Today is March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009. My name is Isabelle Chewning and I'm here with Tate Alexander today to interview him, to talk a little about his memories of Brownsburg. Could you tell me please what your full name is, please?

**R. Tate Alexander:** It's Robert Tate Alexander.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Where were you born?

**R. Tate Alexander:** I was born in Norfolk, Virginia.

**Isabelle Chewning:** When?

**R. Tate Alexander:** February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1918.

**Isabelle Chewning:** 1918.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Mm-hmm.

**Isabelle Chewning:** And then when did you move up to this area?

**R. Tate Alexander:** We were already here on the farm. There was no hospital. We lived down near Midvale, if you know Donaldsburg.

**Isabelle Chewning:** I do.

**R. Tate Alexander:** From Brownsburg, that's a neighbor "city". So my mother went down to Midvale and caught the N&W [Norfolk and Western Railroad] and went to Norfolk to "find" me. There was no hospital here.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Who was in Norfolk that she stayed with?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Well, my father's sister [Nancy Alexander] was an RN at a hospital in Norfolk. I don't know the name. I do know it was a Catholic hospital, because the Catholics, you know, thanks to them, we had hospitals. After I guess a week, 10 days, two weeks, or whatever, she brought me back. She decided to keep me, brought me back to the farm! [Note from C. Bruce Alexander (CBA), son of R. Tate Alexander: "Dad's sister, Nancy Alexander, had convinced her brother, John Alexander and Janet Fultz Alexander to come to Norfolk for Janet's delivery of Dad."]

**Isabelle Chewning:** That's interesting. Did a lot of people do that, go to the hospital?

**R. Tate Alexander:** It was uncustomary in those days. Children were born at home, but she'd had a hard time with my older brother, and they thought it was far best for her protection, her health as well as "the critter", and so that was the option.

**Isabelle Chewning:** What were your parents' names?

**R. Tate Alexander:** John Alexander, John Addison, and my mother's name was Janet Fultz.

**Isabelle Chewning:** F-U-L-T-Z? Janet Fultz.

**R. Tate Alexander:** F-U-L-T-Z. There were three boys. I was the middle one.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Who was your older brother?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Jim. James Gibson. James G. Alexander. He's the one who started the dairy business, because Dad died when we were quite young.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Oh, he did.

**R. Tate Alexander:** As a matter of fact, I do not remember him. They say you're supposed to, and I was nearly four, but I don't. That's the reason I warn you now, my memory's still not what it used to be.

**Isabelle Chewning:** I think your memory's probably just fine.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Well, but after Dad died, then my mother moved over to Cherry Grove [5239 N Lee Highway] where the folks were. That's where we grew up, where the dairy is.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Who did she move in with there?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Her mother, my grandmother, Ida Fultz. She was very kind, her mother. She moved in with three brats! It's a wonder she didn't pick them off with her shotgun.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Was your brother Jack born in Norfolk as well, or was he born--?

**R. Tate Alexander:** No, no, no, he was born at the farm.

**Isabelle Chewning:** What did your father die of that young?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Pneumonia. He was an old man, 39. [Note from CBA: "According to my records, he passed away from complications of influenza and pneumonia. Following the death of John Alexander, Janet and the three boys moved into Cherry Grove Farm. During this time, and through the Depression, Janet kept both the Donaldsburg farm and Cherry Grove Farm running with at least three tenant families. Dad's paternal and maternal grandfathers had also died at young ages. His paternal grandfather was James Alexander, who was at one time in charge of the Rockbridge County House for the Poor. His maternal grandfather was Joseph Fultz, the owner of Cherry Grove Farm. After the death of Dad's father, Dad lived a year in Charlottesville with his uncle and aunt, Al and Catherine Bennett. Catherine was Janet's sister. Al Bennett, at the time, was Superintendent of Schools for either Albemarle County or Charlottesville. There was some consideration of Dad going to school over in Charlottesville, but he moved back to Cherry Grove and finished in Fairfield."]

**Isabelle Chewning:** Oh my goodness.

<break in recording>

**Isabelle Chewning:** We stopped just for a minute for a phone conversation. You were telling me about your brothers.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Jack and Jim and I, we grew up at what's now the dairy.

**Isabelle Chewning:** At Cherry Grove.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Cherry Grove.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Your grandmother, Ida, grew up in my house [2249 Sterrett Road], right?

**R. Tate Alexander:** That's right. She was about 12 years old when the Union forces came through. [In June 1864, David Hunter's Army (Crook's Column) bivouacked in the meadow at Mulberry Grove Farm.]

**Isabelle Chewning:** And she remembered that, didn't she?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Oh yes, she did. Remembered favorably, because one of the officers lifted her up on his horse and gave her a ride.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Is that right?

**R. Tate Alexander:** She never talked too much about it. I didn't inherit this, but she was a lady of not too many words. But when she spoke, she had a purpose.

**Isabelle Chewning:** You listened when she spoke.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Absolutely. It was very, very interesting. That was a different generation, totally. Her husband, she was widowed too. He died of pneumonia when he was either early 40s or late 30s.

**Isabelle Chewning:** What was her full name?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Ida Willson Fultz. Two L Willson not one--

**Isabelle Chewning:** Right.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Never referred to-- her husband's name was Joseph. She only referred to him as Mr. Fultz. Never anything else.

**Isabelle Chewning:** How old was he when he died?

**R. Tate Alexander:** I'd say either late 30s or early 40s.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Oh my goodness.

**R. Tate Alexander:** She was widowed quite young with five daughters and one son.

**Isabelle Chewning:** So then you grew up with her in the house. It was you and your three brothers and your mother.

**R. Tate Alexander:** That's right.

**Isabelle Chewning:** And then your grandmother lived in the house together.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Draper [Fultz] was an RN, a public health nurse in North Carolina and was on a sabbatical at the University of Columbia for a masters, or a writer's study, when she contracted rheumatic fever and became disabled. Had to retire. [Note from CBA: "Draper Fultz was a graduate of nursing school in Richmond, I believe St. Luke's. Then she became one of the first public health nurses in North Carolina. Her sabbatical at Columbia University in New York must have been in the 30's. She retired because the medical treatment for rheumatic fever was a year of bed rest at the time. She was then a permanent resident at Cherry Grove.]

**Isabelle Chewning:** This is your aunt?

**R. Tate Alexander:** She came home. My mother's sister, Mary Draper [Fultz]. Question?

**Isabelle Chewning:** Your wife, can you tell me who you married? Tell me a little bit about your wife and how you met her.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Well, she was a city girl, a native of Bustleburg! And moved to Fairfield when, I guess, she was in the sixth or seventh grade.

**Isabelle Chewing:** What was her name?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Elizabeth Firebaugh. Sara Elizabeth [Firebaugh].

**Isabelle Chewing:** Sara Elizabeth. Oh, I didn't realize that.

**R. Tate Alexander:** S-A-R-A.

**Isabelle Chewing:** Her family lived in Bustleburg, and did they have the Firebaugh kiln in Bustleburg?

**R. Tate Alexander:** It was in the family, but I'm not sure who had it, what family member had it, but I never heard of it originally. [Note from CBA: "The kiln was owned by John Firebaugh, who was Mom's grandfather. The farm actually included what was part of the Bustleburg ballpark, and the kiln has been excavated by officials from Washington and Lee University, and actually written up in several craft magazines. The kiln was near a springhouse which is now in poor repair, but still on the property."]

**Isabelle Chewing:** Where did they live?

**R. Tate Alexander:** They lived -- part of the farm has a recreation on it now. If you go down to Bustleburg behind the creek, they lived in that farmhouse there, below where -- help me out a little bit.

**Isabelle Chewing:** Oh, McElwee --

**R. Tate Alexander:** Well, not the McElwee Chapel.

**Isabelle Chewing:** Not that far.

**R. Tate Alexander:** But a farmhouse down below Bustleburg and I'm trying to say, the family had the brick house up on the hill.

**Isabelle Chewning:** I don't know. But that's where she--

**R. Tate Alexander:** She grew up there.

**Isabelle Chewning:** And then did her father move the whole family to Fairfield? [Note from CBA: "Mom and her family moved to Fairfield in 1927 and moved in with her grandfather, Calvin Dunlap. His wife, Ossie, had just passed away and they moved in with him."]

**R. Tate Alexander:** I remember, her grandfather was a blacksmith for Fairfield, Mr. Calvin Dunlap.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Where was his shop?

**R. Tate Alexander:** His shop was almost directly across from the Fairfield Presbyterian church [5508 North Lee Highway], the building. The house they moved into was the one Mrs. Chittum, Beulah Chittum lives in, and the blacksmith shop was adjacent to it, not adjoining, but in the lot next to it.

**Isabelle Chewning:** That was her grandfather. What did her father do?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Her father [John Greenlee Firebaugh] was a farmer and worked for the state, which is now VDOT [Virginia Department of Transportation].

**Isabelle Chewning:** Did you and she go to school here in Fairfield together?

**R. Tate Alexander:** She was a class ahead of me in the elementary and high school.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Did you have a lot of association with the people over in Brownsburg, or did the ridge in between keep the communities separate?

**R. Tate Alexander:** We did not have much actually contact socially, but we knew a good many of the youngsters who played athletics and so on. They were the rivals.

**Isabelle Chewning:** So there were organized sports teams when you were in school.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Yeah.

**Isabelle Chewing:** Where did you graduate from high school?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Fairfield.

**Isabelle Chewing:** When was it?

**R. Tate Alexander:** The old Fairfield building now where-- it's adjacent to where the elementary school is now. It was the old building that was torn down.

**Isabelle Chewing:** What year did you graduate?

**R. Tate Alexander:** '34. As I say, I went to Washington and Lee [College in Lexington, VA] a couple of years. Back in those days, in '34, you were right in the Depression, so I was lucky that I could – I think the costs for county students at Washington and Lee, the tuition was around \$100 a year.

**Isabelle Chewing:** Gee, \$100 a year for Washington and Lee.

**R. Tate Alexander:** So I went to Washington and Lee. We didn't have \$100, but I worked out something. Worked in the dean's office, seems to me around 50 cents an hour. But we finally paid for that \$100. [Note from CBA: "One of Dad's sources of revenue was that Cherry Grove became a tourist home run by Great-grandma Ida and Grandma Janet. Boarders would stay there for days and weeks because it was on U.S. Route 11. Dad and his brothers got tips for luggage and that kind of thing."]

**Isabelle Chewing:** How did your mother support herself and three sons?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Well, she didn't have a lot of money as far as I ever knew, but she had the farm. We had the home farm and the place up here. She managed both of them, and then she did everything.

**Isabelle Chewing:** Did she?

**R. Tate Alexander:** She sold insurance loans. She worked in 4-H, she worked in 4-H camp. I know the money was very small. I'm amazed at what she was able to do to raise the kids. As far as I know, she never used any credit or loan on the farms.



**Isabelle Chewning:** That's really remarkable, I think.

**R. Tate Alexander:** It was amazing. She was a remarkable lady in many ways. I marvel at it, but she-- as I like to say, she could be an angel and a first sergeant at the same time. [Laugh] But she was a great disciplinarian, make no mistake about it, because in those days, discipline was a part of raising your kids. I won't get off on that, but today it ain't. [Note from CBA: "Grandma Janet also opened the first soup kitchen in northern Rockbridge County. As one of her grandsons, I felt like she was royalty. Whenever I went out with her, she was paid a great deal of respect and was referred to as "Miss Janet." In addition, she was the first person to take me hunting."]

**Isabelle Chewning:** How about your grandmother? Was she a strict disciplinarian as well?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Well yes, but she didn't interfere. I'm sure she and my mother had some words, but I don't know.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Well, it's certainly a big house. There was plenty of room for two families to spread out in there!

**R. Tate Alexander:** There were a couple of times I heard her say, "Janet, I think these boys are going to kill each other."

**Isabelle Chewning:** [Laugh] How much difference in age was there between you?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Two years.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Two years between Jim and you and then two years between you and Jack.

**R. Tate Alexander:** A little bit of friction with – little girls don't fight, but boys do.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Sometimes girls do, but I think boys are a little more rough and tumble than the girls are.

**R. Tate Alexander:** I don't want to ramble too much. What are your questions?

**Isabelle Chewning:** What do you remember about Brownsburg on the occasions that you were over there for sports events? Were there people in the Brownsburg school that you knew?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Well, we knew Miss Trimmer, who was the principal. Mr. Kester was the principal here.

**Isabelle Chewning:** What was his name?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Kester. He coached basketball and she coached basketball, and she [Miss Trimmer] was red-headed and hot-tempered. He was not void of temper either. In those days, of course, the Sniders, Carl Swope, of course. You'll remember some of the older names. I enjoyed sports, athletics, but I wasn't too much of an athlete in those days. The thing I remember about Brownsburg, and that's what I'm wondering, I wanted to ask you a few questions when you're through.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Okay, go ahead.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Well, I'm sure you've got much information on Dr. Henry McLaughlin.

**Isabelle Chewning:** We've interviewed his grandson.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Sandy [Samuel Brown McLaughlin, Jr.].

**Isabelle Chewning:** Sandy. We're hoping to interview his daughter-in-law, Rosa McLaughlin. There's a lot of information about Dr. McLaughlin in the New Providence history room.

**R. Tate Alexander:** He was amazing in his own time. And to me, that's one of the most exciting individuals I've known of. I never knew him. I knew his wife, his widow.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Oh, you did.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Big Momma [Nell Swan Brown McLaughlin].

**Isabelle Chewning:** Big Momma. That's what Sandy said everyone called her, Big Momma.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Sure, Big Momma. She was around the camps. Lee [McLaughlin] and Sam, Sandy's father, were just good friends over the years, tremendous influence on me and our boys.

**Isabelle Chewing:** Were they really?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Oh yes.

**Isabelle Chewing:** Did your boys go to camp?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Bruce [Alexander's son] worked for Sam in Camp Briar Hills. [Note from CBA: "Being around Sam and Nancy and the whole family in Briar Hills was a wonderful experience."]

**Isabelle Chewing:** When it was in Brownsburg?

**R. Tate Alexander:** It was Briar Hills, you know where Sandy lives [76 Briar Patch Lane in Pisgah], and that's where the camp was. To me, it's interesting to me because Bruce was in high school, doing extremely well, and he kept talking about wanting to get into medicine. As far as we, Libby and I, were concerned, education is the one thing that you spend money for when you don't have it. And Sam taught at Woodberry [Woodberry Forrest, a boys preparatory school near Orange, Virginia]. I don't pretend to know all the prep schools, but no school had a better reputation than Woodberry. So Bruce and I went to Woodberry to see Sam. Woodberry cost more than college in those days, but we were determined that if in Sam's judgment -- Bruce didn't need it, but he wasn't getting as much as he would get there in preparation for his profession. Does that make sense?

**Isabelle Chewing:** Absolutely.

**R. Tate Alexander:** We had a tremendously good visit with Sam. I'd known Sam and Nancy [Sam's wife, Nancy Harrison McLaughlin] for a long time, so it was a friendship, but he had an extreme interest in youngsters and he knew Bruce. He had two questions, if Bruce was a problem. Is he a problem at home? Heavens, no, we didn't even think about it. His conclusion was and his recommendation was, keep him at home. He'll get a good education at Fairfield High, at Rockbridge High. That was a consolidated high [school] then. When he comes to Hampden-Sydney [College] -- because Sam was Hampden-Sydney, 150 percent-- he's going to be behind his classmates. But at the end of the first year, going into the second, if he works like I think he will, he'll be even. [Note from CBA: When I was sitting on a 48 on my first chemistry test there, I didn't think I was going to stay very long."] So I've always been indebted to Sam for that, because we thoroughly enjoyed having Bruce here.

**Isabelle Chewing:** I'm sure.

**R. Tate Alexander:** I told him, the money difference, it did help us save some.

**Isabelle Chewing:** When you have four sons to put through college, it helped you a lot, I guess. [Note from CBA: “Another anecdote from having four boys in college – Dad took a sabbatical from the insurance business then and became the Commissioner of Revenue for the County. He was originally appointed to serve out a term, and then on election got over 90% of the vote, which is pretty good for, as he says, “a Revenuer.””]

**R. Tate Alexander:** Well, I can't tell you how much the boys helped themselves, you know. But that to me, one of the biggest chapters you've got in the book that you're putting together is Dr. Henry McLaughlin.

**Isabelle Chewing:** He, as I understand, was instrumental in getting the bank started.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Well, there's a story I got from [Dr. McLaughlin's sons] Sam and Lee. We think of ministers today community people, but he was totally community. He took one of his congregation men to Staunton on a train to a doctor. This was a night trip, or an awkward trip, I don't know if the train even ran at night. That's the reason I say I don't want to embellish! But when he came back, so it was reported to me, or I invented this, he concluded that we needed a doctor in Brownsburg. And with his influence, and his influence on the community, the community responded, and they had a doctor in Brownsburg.

**Isabelle Chewing:** And they built a house for him.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Right. Dr. Henry McLaughlin was instrumental. He did essentially the same thing with the bank, because the farmers needed credit. And Lexington was a long ways away, and so was Staunton. A little bit different from now. They concluded that a bank in Brownsburg would be the answer. It was his position that we're going to have a bank. I think, from what I know about Dr. McLaughlin, he would resent anybody saying that he was responsible. But from what I gather talking with others about him, if it hadn't been for him, it would have been a long time before they'd have a bank.

**Isabelle Chewing:** He certainly seems like a dynamic person. We have our Sunday school building at New Providence [Presbyterian Church] to thank him for.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Other things, too, for which he was responsible, to say nothing of his family.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Exactly. All those little outposts at New Providence, there were, I think, three or four little chapels around that he helped get started. One out in Pisgah, and a couple of others, I think.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Then of course, I know you all have a chapter on Mr. Gene [Buchanan], Roberta's [Fauber] grandfather.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Oh, Mr. Buchanan.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Gene Buchanan, Mr. Gene.

**Isabelle Chewning:** I talked to Anne McCorkle, and she talked about him a little, but I really don't know that much about him. He was a big Democrat I think, right?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Oh, 110 percent!

**Isabelle Chewning:** Did you know him?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Oh yeah. Made him mad one day when I made some remark about Brownsburg baseball. Because they had, you know, Reeses and Sniders and Hockmans. They had tremendous ball players. And that was his pride and joy, next to, and second only to the Democratic Party.

**Isabelle Chewning:** So he loved baseball, but he had all those girls [four daughters].

**R. Tate Alexander:** Because he had -- well, Mag [Margaret Buchanan Bates Martin] told me later -- Mag and Libby were real good friends. Well, Mag was a friend of everybody. She's Anne's [McCorkle] older sister. Mag Bates Martin, you know. She said, "You don't make fun of your baseball around Dad." It was a remarkable family, and his wife was a Bear from out in the Churchville area. Mrs. Buchanan was quite a lady. Anne reminds me a good deal of her.

**Isabelle Chewning:** She's just such a gracious, nice person, I think, Anne McCorkle, awfully nice person.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Oh yes, lovely. Not too well now, I hear.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Oh really?

**R. Tate Alexander:** I don't know.

**Isabelle Chewning:** I hadn't heard that.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Mary [Lipscomb] was telling me something recently. Maybe it was David, David [McCorkle] had not been too well. One of the two.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.

**R. Tate Alexander:** I think they're still around; I think David's able to talk.

**Isabelle Chewning:** I interviewed him. I enjoyed talking to him. He told me a lot about farming in Brownsburg, and I really enjoyed hearing that. What do you remember about the Depression? Did you realize the situation was as dire as it was? A lot of people have said it was such a rural community and people, helped each other, that they didn't realize.

**R. Tate Alexander:** My mother never talked too much about money management. When we got down to 60 cents a bushel, we knew that money was short. We didn't have money, but no one else had it either. But I can tell you one thing, we did not go hungry. That's when you got your barrel of flour and about the only thing you bought was sugar and salt. The butchering the meat and all that was available. You had that.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Did she have help on the farm? Were there hired people who helped her on the farm?

**R. Tate Alexander:** She had a manager on each place.

**Isabelle Chewning:** She was able to pay them?

**R. Tate Alexander:** They worked on shares. It was not a business as you know it, you would think of today, when they're on salary. They were on shares. They knew the situation. I know more about the Depression from what I've read about it than I did personally under the experience. Of course, when you're 10, 11, 12 years old, it's not going to register too much, and your parents as a

rule are not going to talk about it negatively. So it was an experience that gave you the sense of value of the money in your income, and how to handle money.

**Isabelle Chewning:** We talked a little bit about Washington and Lee, and then I think I got sidetracked. You went for a couple of years to--

**R. Tate Alexander:** I went to Washington and Lee.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Washington and Lee, \$100 a semester, \$100 a year for local people.

**R. Tate Alexander:** That year, what I did, I earned a scholarship and the cost was \$100.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Did you go right on from Washington and Lee to Virginia Tech (Virginia Polytechnic Institute)?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Went to Tech, Washington Lee-- Dr. Hale Houston, everybody called him Uncle Bud, but he retired and that was in civil engineering. I decided I wanted to go to Tech so I could get engineering.

**Isabelle Chewning:** So you were taking engineering classes at Washington and Lee and then the department--

**R. Tate Alexander:** First two years were about the same, regardless of whether you're engineering or not. The basics. Included in that was German, I know not why, because I'm still having trouble with the English language. Language is not my thing.

**Isabelle Chewning:** I took German in college, too, and don't remember very much of it.

**R. Tate Alexander:** I think out of the goodness of his heart, Dr. Farrar gave me a passing grade, but I transferred to Tech and finished there in chemical engineering, and worked at Covington. [Note from CBA: "While in Covington, Mom was the city tennis champ, and she and Dad had established quite a nice social network at Westvaco until the war broke out. After that, with the decision to join the Navy and override his deferment, Mom moved back to Cherry Grove, which, I would say, would probably have been a challenge for any woman: to be there with not only her mother-in-law, but also her grandmother-in-law. But it was a wonderful family that supported her."]

**Isabelle Chewning:** What did you do at Covington?

**R. Tate Alexander:** West Virginia Pulp and Paper, now Mead Westvaco . So I was there about four years when the war came along. I decided I needed to help Rosie the Riveter! I was on deferment, but I went into the Navy.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Why were you on a deferment?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Engineers were pretty well deferred during the war.

**Isabelle Chewning:** I see.

**R. Tate Alexander:** I'm not talking about me in that case, but I wanted to do it. Libby was supportive it and God bless her, that was it.

**Isabelle Chewning:** So you were married then.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Oh yeah.

**Isabelle Chewning:** When did you get married?

**R. Tate Alexander:** I was married here in Fairfield.

**Isabelle Chewning:** When did you get married?

**R. Tate Alexander:** In November 20<sup>th</sup>, in '40.

**Isabelle Chewning:** 1940. So you hadn't been married long at all then.

**R. Tate Alexander:** No, I'd not. It had been just two years. Three years, actually. I volunteered in '42 and went in in '43.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Did you go down to Norfolk with the Navy?



**R. Tate Alexander:** No, I was never in Norfolk. The Pacific and the west coast. I was in Miami. I went in as an ensign and served first at Fort Skyler in the Bronx, New York. That was a six or eight weeks shakedown. From there I went to San Diego, to torpedo school.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Did you take a train out to San Diego?

**R. Tate Alexander:** No, I took an old propeller DC -- 13 hours from DC to Burbank, California. Flew right over the mountains here, and I could see old Cherry Grove under the wing. I was in San Diego when Bob was born, our oldest boy. Then transferred back to aviation ordinance in Jacksonville, Florida. And then from there, it's a long story, but I was assigned to the fitting out of a USS AV-11. It's Norton Sound, a sea plane tender. I was aviation ordinance officer on that. We were at Long Beach for all the fitting out before it was commissioned. I've seen a ship being built, and very few have that opportunity.

**Isabelle Chewning:** So you were an ensign, but you were really probably doing work as an engineer.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Well, it was <inaudible> so I was. You're going back sixty years.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Did you have any time at sea?

**R. Tate Alexander:** From as soon as the ship was commissioned, what they call a shakedown, where we learned the operation of the ship when it gets underway. Then we went to San Diego for fitting out supplies and all that, and headed west. You were getting into west of San Diego and west- - and that's way away from Brownsburg!

**Isabelle Chewning:** Right, it is.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Yeah, we ended up in Okinawa and Tokyo, and left the ship in February of '46 at Yokohama, Yokosuka, in the Tokyo Bay after the war.

**Isabelle Chewning:** And then flew back?

**R. Tate Alexander:** No, came back on a liberty ship into Seattle. And then the train east through the snowstorm of North Dakota, so '46. That's too much about me, not Brownsburg.

**Isabelle Chewning:** We're interested in you, too.

**R. Tate Alexander:** I appreciate that.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Had you had opportunities to come back on leave?

**R. Tate Alexander:** When I had the transfer from San Diego, I got immediate proceed orders. That means you go right now, to Jacksonville, Florida. I didn't have a ticket. I got on in San Diego on the railroad into L.A. The Super Chief was getting ready to pull out, and here I was, no ticket, so I got in line. A Navy lieutenant commander, whom I did not know, but he was next to me. I was following him. He said to the conductor, "Get him on that train, put him on a chair." He turned to me and said, "I want you in a chair on that shared car." I said, "Anything, even the deck." So I went 39 hours overland to Chicago. That was about as quick as you could go on a train. I don't know if you've ever been into Chicago on a train. You go in one station, you can't leave on that. You have to go to one or more others

**Isabelle Chewning:** That I didn't know, no.

**R. Tate Alexander:** From San Diego, the Super Chief came in on one station, B&O was leaving from another. So I caught a taxi as soon as I hit the curb, got to that station. That train was pulling out, getting ready to pull out, and I almost put my foot in the door to keep it open. That's from there to Baltimore and then from into Staunton, and I was able to be home a couple of days before I proceeded to Jacksonville. But that was a hassle you had there.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Yeah, getting all the way cross country.

**R. Tate Alexander:** I don't know. A Navy buddy used to say about tight situations like that if things worked, is that it was the grace of God and a fast infield. Now if you ever played baseball or softball, a fast infield was your best defense. So he wouldn't be a blasphemy. He was just stating a fact.

**Isabelle Chewning:** So you were gone from this area then during the whole war, virtually.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Well, I really was. I was in on two occasions.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Did Libby have to deal with rationing?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Oh yes, very much.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Where was she living then? Did she move back with her parents?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Her parents lived at Fairfield, so she was there, and then up home at Cherry Grove.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Cherry Grove.

**R. Tate Alexander:** She and my mother became fast friends, which was to me a joy. But she was able to come to California and meet with me on two occasions.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Did Bob come?

**R. Tate Alexander:** She brought Bobby out when he was just a year old. He had to-- bless his heart, when he got there, he had to learn to walk again. He'd been riding for seven days.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Was that the first time you'd seen him?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Oh yes. Yes. I'll talk to you about this when we get to it.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Okay.

**R. Tate Alexander:** You've asked me about Bruce. Enough of this.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Okay. So did she [Libby] talk a lot about what the war experience was like back here in this part of the country?

**R. Tate Alexander:** They relayed that, Mother and Libby and others. There was rations. She loved her coffee, but she learned to take it without sugar.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Were you in communication a lot? You were here in the country a large part of the time. You were able to send letters?

**R. Tate Alexander:** We sent letters all the time. Of course, when I got to Shanghai -- I was going to mention that Bruce arrived when I was in Shanghai, and I got a double whammy. As a matter of fact, he was born the 9<sup>th</sup> of November and we pulled into Shanghai on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November and I got the word the 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Isabelle Chewning:** That was pretty quick news then.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Yeah. The Red Cross and the USO helped a lot in wars. Didn't use email!

**Isabelle Chewning:** Had you already picked out names?

**R. Tate Alexander:** We had kicked names around. [Note from CBA: "I think Charles comes from a good friend in the Navy, and Bruce comes from Bruce Alexander "Alex" Lipscomb. Alex was Dad's first cousin who was raised as a brother. Dad and Alex were the best of friends and actually were both in the Pacific with Alex Lipscomb being in the Army. Dad once invited Alex on board the Norton Sound for the officers' meal, which was rather elegant. Alex had spent most of his time as a foot soldier, and after this decided that any of his children going into the military had to go in the Navy!"]

**Isabelle Chewning:** When you were growing up here, you went to Fairfield Presbyterian Church?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Oh yes.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Did you have any interaction with the New Providence crowd?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Well, we did with Timber Ridge. Of course when we were on the old farm before Dad died, we were at Timber Ridge [Presbyterian] Church. That's where my father was a member and my mother too. That's where I was baptized, they brought me home.

**Isabelle Chewning:** When did you start going to Fairfield Presbyterian?

**R. Tate Alexander:** When she [Alexander's mother, Janet Fultz Alexander] moved over to the farm, over to Cherry Grove.

**Isabelle Chewning:** How old is Fairfield Presbyterian?

**R. Tate Alexander:** We kick that around a lot, '46. It was an outpost of Timber Ridge. If you go to Timber Ridge, you tell them that Timber Ridge is an outpost of Fairfield! But you know the history of Timber Ridge. In '49, I think they built about the same time as New Providence [Presbyterian Church], am I right? 1749?

**Isabelle Chewning:** 1746, our congregation [the New Providence congregation] was formed, and then I'm not sure when the first building was.

**R. Tate Alexander:** I'm not sure of Timber Ridge either. Fairfield became an independent church and I forget when. It was in 18 something, 1840s, '49 is the date that sticks in my mind. I wasn't here then! I don't know if I mentioned that!

**Isabelle Chewning:** What were the farming practices like when you were growing up? Was your farm a subsistence farm, or were there actually--?

**R. Tate Alexander:** It was a general farm. You had everything, sheep and hogs and cattle. Corn and wheat and barley.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Did the farm sell cattle and sheep?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Oh yes. Depending on your cattle dealer.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Mr. Buchanan was a cattle dealer, wasn't he?

**R. Tate Alexander:** That's right, Bill Buchanan.

**Isabelle Chewning:** That's right, yeah. Did you deal with a dealer here in Fairfield?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Well, you know, Jerry Swisher, his grandfather, "Otho" Swisher.

**Isabelle Chewning:** What's his name?

**R. Tate Alexander:** His nickname was OT, O-T. Not Ot, but Otho, I believe. But he was a cattle dealer. My mother dealt with him. And then Jerry and Keith [Swisher] came along, their sons, his sons, and those two still I think work for the dairy quite a bit. It's a very unusual family. You don't tell them this, but they have a tremendous reputation of honesty, which you have to ride them.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Absolutely. The Swishers are sort of characters, I think.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Well, so are the Alexanders!

**Isabelle Chewning:** Do you remember when your family got their first car?

**R. Tate Alexander:** We had a car before Dad died.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Oh, you did? So your mother knew how to drive and drove the car?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Oh yeah. She had to be everything, mechanic and chauffeur and gofer.

**Isabelle Chewning:** How about a tractor?

**R. Tate Alexander:** I can't give you the first one. The old tractors were metal, not on pneumatic tires. Nor do I remember-- I think a Farmall, but I'm not sure of the make and model. But virtually all of them were metal.

**Isabelle Chewning:** What were the barns like at Cherry Grove.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Well, you still have the big barn, the big bank barn. It's an integral part of the dairy. All the sheds out from it aren't so old, but that's where the Allen, the old threshing machine was set up and blow the straw in the front of the barn for the straw stack like you have in most of the old ones you see. Most of the hay was brought in by -- loose hay, and then put up in the mow with your hay fork, with the horse pulling it over. That was one of my jobs. Not that I did a whole lot of this when I was a youngster, but that was the horse I would look after when they let me.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Did you have specific chores?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Oh, we had chores all the time.

**Isabelle Chewning:** What were some of the chores?

**R. Tate Alexander:** The joy of pulling weeds, feeding the hogs, and things of that type.

**Isabelle Chewning:** You had a big garden?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Oh yes, absolutely. She had help with the canning when you have this -- my mother had three boys, as I told you. So the boys had to help with the canning and the cooking and whatever. Of course, I appreciate that now to the extent that I -- There's no bragging about my cooking, but Libby died six years ago, and I had to find out whether I could boil water or not. It was good experience, and she expected us to handle our jobs.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Did she do canning at home, or was there a cannery here in Fairfield that she used?

**R. Tate Alexander:** The cannery, actually, the one we used most was out in Stuarts Draft. It was a community gathering. I remember there were others around. But much easier for canning meats or things in any quantity. But yes, a lot of canning was done at home in our house. Those were sort of the holidays on the farm, the butchering days, the threshing days and sometimes a boy became a man when he was able to sit with the help when they were eating lunch.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Your mother and your grandmother cooked a big lunch for the workers?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Oh yes. Same as with your folks. I mean, if anybody came around at lunchtime, they were going to have lunch. They weren't told, "Do you want to?" "You stay and have lunch." That's the way it was with us. Put some more water in the soup or do something!

**Isabelle Chewning:** What was your water situation at Cherry Grove? Did you have a cistern?

**R. Tate Alexander:** A spring way up in the meadow. Gravity put it in the house. Much before its time. Of course, when the [I-81] rest stop came by, that messed up that.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Oh, it did.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Oh yes.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Oh, it was way up in the meadow then, wasn't it?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Oh yes. It was above the interstate.

**Isabelle Chewning:** I have to keep my eye on the tape to make sure it doesn't run out.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Oh, I hope it's registering something.

**Isabelle Chewning:** It is. How about electrification? Do you remember when electricity came through over here?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Well, I do remember, but I can't tell you the year. It was a great day when the electricity came through Fairfield. At Cherry Grove we had gas. I don't know when that was replaced with electricity. I remember when it was done, and over on the farm out at Donaldsburg, we didn't have electricity, we didn't have water in the house, except what we carried in. So many rooms and a bath, and so on and so forth instead of so many rooms and a bath.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Do you remember Donaldsburg at all?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Yes. I do, because I started school from there.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Oh, you did.

**R. Tate Alexander:** I think I was five when I started, or six. It was about that time we moved up to the farm over at Cherry Grove, within walking distance [of Fairfield School].

**Isabelle Chewning:** So you walked to school.

**R. Tate Alexander:** From Cherry Grove, sure.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Back to Brownsburg, do you remember any of the businesses?

**R. Tate Alexander:** We did not do business there. Of course, I remember Carl Swope, he a store, but that was when I was -- I don't know that I was ever in it until I was in high school. I would not have experienced --

**Isabelle Chewning:** When you had athletic events in Brownsburg, did you travel over in people's cars?



**R. Tate Alexander:** Yes. I don't know if we took a bus. I don't remember.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Did you play basketball on the outside basketball court?

**R. Tate Alexander:** The original one.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Did Fairfield have an indoor basketball court, or did you play outside?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Played outside when I started, and then the school had an indoor basketball court, but that was about it. You didn't have room for any fans around it except standing right on the line. It was outdoor courts and gravel. I mean, that was good on knees!

**Isabelle Chewning:** I can't imagine how rough that must have been. And so Miss Trimmer had a hot temper?

**R. Tate Alexander:** We never experienced it. All I know is what people tell you. Rule of thumb, it goes with red hair.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Right, right, exactly. My sister had red hair before it turned gray, but she never was that hot tempered. We talked a little about some of the people in Brownsburg. We talked about Mr. Gene Buchanan and Dr. Henry McLaughlin. Are there other people in Brownsburg that stand out in your memory?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Well, of course I'd have to mention Dr. Dick Hutcheson in my lifetime. Brownsburg never had a finer man.

**Isabelle Chewning:** He was a really good minister for New Providence.

**R. Tate Alexander:** He was my pastor too when he was there. We moved here [to 258 Red Hill Road] in '57, and he and Mrs. Hutcheson joined us one evening for dinner, to sort of dedicate the place and it meant so much to us. But I don't think the man ever knew what he meant to me.

**Isabelle Chewning:** How did you know him?

**R. Tate Alexander:** When you have a man like that in Rockbridge County, you're going to find out about him. I can't tell you who introduced me. I don't know that. But in all likelihood, I met him at

Presbytery or through the church. I don't know if you knew Jesse [Hutcheson] or not. I doubt if you did. His son was a – he died quite suddenly. His mannerisms and everything, he was Dr. Dick all over. But he was a pastor at Blacksburg, when I finished at Tech. He went to Piedmont, I'm not sure where, but started his own church. It wasn't too long after that, so Dr. Dick would retire to Brownsburg. Mind you, this was back in the days that even New Providence didn't pay pastors much. None of us did. It's like they had to double [New Providence pastor Rev. Donald] Campbell's salary after Dr. Dick. It was touch and go. Dr. Hutcheson went to Staunton. I keep rambling, getting off. He started his church in Staunton. I asked him later, I said, "In your retirement years, I appreciate what you're doing, but you're starting a new church?" He said, "I couldn't let Jesse get ahead of me!" He was just a tremendous individual. I loved the guy.

**Isabelle Chewning:** We all thought an awful lot of Dr. Hutcheson. And were happy to have him back in Brownsburg too when he lived there. He had grandchildren about my age, and they would come in the summer and we really enjoyed playing with his grandchildren. Any other people in Brownsburg that stand out in your memory?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Well, not a whole lot. A lot of people in Brownsburg that I know. Carl Reese, Wayne Reese's father, Big Eye is what they called him.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Right, right.

**R. Tate Alexander:** What a catcher! A hard nosed baseball player. Of course, Carl Swope played in those games. I was Commissioner of Revenue here on one occasion, four years. A good many of the farmers I called on, just like all businessman. You try to get the feedback from them, some of them. So that's where I got to know Carl. Remembering names. That's where senility steps in! You forget your own name, you forget--

**Isabelle Chewning:** I don't think you have to worry about that.

**R. Tate Alexander:** [Information provided subsequently by Alexander: The Wade family of Wade's Mill should have been my first answer when you questioned me about "Brownsburg memories." My family and I were very much involved with the Wade's Mill Wade family. Winston Wade, the third or fourth generation owner of the mill, and I married sisters. Winston married Jane Firebaugh, and I married Libby Firebaugh, and thus began our enjoyment of "our Wade's Mill Family."

I have often referred to Jane as our four sons' second Mom, for they adored her – and often teased their mother, saying "Aunt Jane is the best cook in the family!" to which she agreed.

Winston was an equal influence of me and our four. Our boys were always fascinated with the mill and its operation, and Winston, with his patience, was a great and healthy influence during our sons' growing-up years. I am so pleased to remember Winston in many ways. Yes, he was my brother-in-law, but more than that, he was a very real friend. His quiet devotion to his family, his church, and his community were inspiring to observe – quite an influence.

Of course, Winston and Jane helped us to know and enjoy Dr. Dick and Mrs. Hutcheson. For this we were always grateful.

After Winston's death and Jane's decision to move to Sunnyside, she decided to sell the mill. Fortunately, Jim and Georgia Young bought the mill, thus being a new and happy chapter for Wade's Mill and the community. The Youngs were so good to Jane and family (including Libby and me). Jane brought groups of Sunnyside friends to visit the mill as often as she could, and was made to feel most welcome by Georgie and Jim. All this in the years the Youngs improved the mill and surrounding area, and began a memorable type of Fourth of July celebration for the community. I have had the pleasure of enjoying the Young's Fourth of July celebration and join in saluting Georgie and Jim for such a wholesome and patriotic evening! I would wish that all communities could enjoy such a Fourth – 'twould do much to improve our great country!]

**Isabelle Chewning:** Let me just flip this tape over.

<break in recording>

**Isabelle Chewning:** When were you Commissioner of Revenue?

**R. Tate Alexander:** It was in '58, I guess. Mr. Whitmore had been Commissioner for years. When he died, I was appointed. Why, I don't know. I just felt like at the time, it was a good job -- position to get into. So I served County of Rockbridge and the town of Lexington. I was in it for four years until the town went to a city. When the town went to a city, they cut compensation about 50 percent, which encouraged me to get back into the insurance business!

**Isabelle Chewning:** So you were out of the insurance business while you did that.

**R. Tate Alexander:** I had a license, but I didn't do any business in Rockbridge County. I had weekends and other times I could serve outside the county. I made a point not to do any in the county. It just wouldn't have been right. There was no law about it, but it's a question of conflict of interest. I didn't want to take a chance.

**Isabelle Chewning:** But you traveled around and talked to people, talked to your constituents.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Well, in Rockbridge County, I did. I did in Rockbridge, the business people, because they were -- what do you know about the Commissioner?

**Isabelle Chewning:** Not enough.

**R. Tate Alexander:** It's a position everyone should have for a few years, because I think it gives you an appreciation of the checks and balances that are in the structures of our counties and cities. And it gave me a great sense of confidence, and I would say pride in the way it worked, because here I was, Commissioner in Rockbridge County. I worked very closely with the Commissioner in Buena Vista, the Commissioner in Augusta County, the one in Staunton, the one in Harrisonburg, in Waynesboro. Not only through our association, but also on what we call the border runners, the ones that would come across the county and those were the -- The cooperation was good. But the Commissioner is charged with assessing or putting values on properties. And in those days, you had income return. They got away from that but they assisted in income returns which was so time consuming. Have to value your automobiles, and your household property. When I inherited the office, you would come in, or your husband would come in and list your jewelry and would list your household items, and all the rest of the valuables.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Oh my goodness.

**R. Tate Alexander:** It was crazy. Well, I'd been in insurance business enough. When I was in fire and casualty, when you insure a house for \$100,000 at a certain percent, that's what automatically for your dwelling, or your household contents. When I did that for taxes, I had to run down many of the houses and contents and all of that. I found that if you used the same percentage, you came within the same ballpark. There were some up, some way down. And so we adopted that. There weren't too many years after I left that counties and cities did away with personal property. The same thing was true with farm equipment. And with automobiles were used the Blue Book, and the Blue Book was on the value for wholesale and retail and so on. So you already had -- we had a great variety of values on the same model automobiles and the same year and the rest. You want uniformity, don't you? You want equity. So the Blue Book gave us a uniform. But it was an education, let's put it that way.

**Isabelle Chewning:** I'm sure it was. That sounds like you made a lot of difference in the time you were there, if you got them to switch the system.

**R. Tate Alexander:** I don't mind bragging about that a little bit because I had a good staff and I had Mr. Gene Cummings. He's about as old as I am now. Anybody my age now's not in it. He was

considerably older than I, and he'd been in the office for a good number of years. He didn't want to change. As soon as he figured out what we were doing, he went right down the line with me. That to me was a joy, because I was able to keep the whole staff all four years. There were two or three that tested me.

**Isabelle Chewning:** That says a lot to your management skills if you were able to keep them all for four years.

**R. Tate Alexander:** You know, these people needed to work. Jobs were awful hard to find, and they were well up in years. So I didn't sacrifice--

**Isabelle Chewning:** You must have known everybody in the county then.

**R. Tate Alexander:** I did.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Between insurance and Commissioner of Revenue, you probably knew everybody.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Well, if I didn't, I had to, so it was my fault. As I say, the Commissioner of Revenue, I think everyone should have it.

**Isabelle Chewning:** It certainly sounds like a big job.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Well, there was a point there when wasn't many waiting. But when you walk up to the counter to assess, you ought to be able to put your own values on what you have, and know that it's in line with everybody.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Who replaced you after four years?

**R. Tate Alexander:** The City of Lexington had to appoint its own. The judge had to appoint. The judge appointed someone from the county. A man by the name of Baker was appointed, he's no longer living. It's a problem. As they say, that you outlive too many of them, too many people.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Was there a significant black community here in Fairfield like there was in Brownsburg?

**R. Tate Alexander:** In Blacksburg. If you know where it is.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Near Jonestown Road?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Jonestown. Here Blacksburg is at Crossroads.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Okay, right.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Cornwall, up on the ridge up there. Great families involved in that, just like you have in Brownsburg.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Yeah, in Brownsburg, it seems like it was more people lived closer together, I think. The blacks and the white community. It was all right there.

**R. Tate Alexander:** And Betty--

**Isabelle Chewning:** Betty Brown.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Betty Brown.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Betty Pleasants Brown.

**R. Tate Alexander:** I ran into her in Wal-Mart a couple of weeks ago. We had a big hug. I never got-- she's a delightful woman.

**Isabelle Chewning:** She is. She's a great person.

**R. Tate Alexander:** She is what she is at all times. Still runs the Post Office.

**Isabelle Chewning:** She and Eugene [Fitzgerald]. Her daughter has been in Iraq and I think she's home right now for leave. Jennifer.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Yes, I don't know the children.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Between Betty and Eugene, they keep our Post Office in Brownsburg up to snuff. Can we talk a little about medicine and childhood diseases? You mentioned your father and your grandfather both died of pneumonia.

**R. Tate Alexander:** My grandfather was appendicitis. [Note from CBA: Joseph Fultz had appendicitis with the complication of peritonitis. He was operated on, so the oral tradition goes, on the dining room at Cherry Grove. This was in 1903, without the benefit of modern medicine.]

**Isabelle Chewning:** Oh, I'm sorry, I thought you said -- appendicitis.

**R. Tate Alexander:** Peritonitis. Infected him. Of course, both at home.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Did you have the typical childhood diseases?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Oh yes, and a fear of polio, of course. Some of my friends were afflicted with polio. That was a frightening thing, the polio season.

**Isabelle Chewning:** When was polio season, during the summer?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Summer, possibly. It was, I would say almost a seasonal thing, but I'm not too sure it was narrowed down to just summer.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Weren't there quarantines sometimes when people-- when children couldn't go out?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Parents would quarantine or hold them in. Mother would keep us from going out where we were exposed. It was a fear of the unknown. It's hard to fight something you don't know and can't see.

**Isabelle Chewning:** How about home remedies? Did your mother and your grandmother use any home remedies?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Some for a chest cold and the rest. Salve, ointments that would reek to high heaven. That was the only thing we had in those days.

**Isabelle Chewning:** You got a smallpox vaccination when you were little?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Yes. That was even back in those days.

**Isabelle Chewning:** How about holidays? Did you have big holiday celebrations? I know you mentioned that butchering day was pretty much a celebration.

**R. Tate Alexander:** And quilting days.

**Isabelle Chewning:** Quilting days.

**R. Tate Alexander:** We had a great gathering of aunts and uncles, aunts around the quilting frames up at Cherry Grove. That's where we kids could listen to the conversation, but don't interfere. Holidays as such, there were no real community holidays that I would think of. Of course, Christmas was a church activity, and Thanksgiving was one of giving thanks at the church.

**Isabelle Chewning:** What about the Fourth of July? Was there any acknowledgement of Fourth of July?

**R. Tate Alexander:** No big celebration as such. There was recognition of it, yes.

**Isabelle Chewning:** How about your ancestors? Anyone involved in the Revolutionary War or the Civil War? Any of those kinds of stories?

**R. Tate Alexander:** I'm ashamed to say I didn't follow up on the— I'm not a Son of the American Revolution, but I could have qualified. I just didn't follow up on it. Libby was a Daughter of the [American] Revolution. Yes, we had ancestors involved. My grandmother, Ida Willson [Fultz], her brother [uncle] was one of the last to be killed in the Civil War, the War Between the States. He was shot and killed, I don't know, but I think the day of the Appomattox surrender. It was that close. His name must have been James Willson, raised and brought up in New Providence. That's about it.

**Isabelle Chewning:** I think I've gotten through most of my questions. Are there other things, other memories of Brownsburg you have that you'd like to share with us?

**R. Tate Alexander:** Not really.

**Isabelle Chewning:** I appreciate your time.



**R. Tate Alexander:** I hope it's readable.

**Isabelle Chewing:** It will be. I really appreciate your time and your stories and your information.

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