

November 2007

Interview with Wallace Hart Beckner

By Isabelle Chewning

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

Isabelle Chewning: My name is Isabelle Chewning. Today is November the 2nd and I'm here in Mr. Beckner's house to interview him for the Brownsburg Community Association. Mr. Beckner, could you tell me your full name?

Wallace Beckner: My full name is Wallace Hart Beckner, nickname of Bunny. And that's what I get from the older people, and I get all sorts of nasty names from the young people!

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] How did you get your nickname Bunny, or is that a secret?

Wallace Beckner: It's not a secret, but my mother made a bunny suit for me when I was about six years old [laugh] and I had to play bunny at her Easter egg hunt at church. So I got the name Bunny from that time on.

Isabelle Chewning: So you've had that nickname a long time then.

Wallace Beckner: Yeah. That's carried me through school. And at the present time, Freddie Whipple, because his dad always called me Bunny, still calls me Bunny. And of course, that's my nickname in the Ruritan Club, too.

Isabelle Chewning: Right. When were you born, Mr. Beckner?

Wallace Beckner: July the 4th, 1926, so I'm a hot firecracker! [laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: Oh, you're a July the 4th baby!

Wallace Beckner: I don't remember it, but they said it rained awfully hard that day, and my aunt came over to be with my mother when I was born. With Dr. Campbell. They couldn't get home. So Uncle Homer borrowed a horse and rode the horse back home because roads were washed out and so forth.

Isabelle Chewning: Oh, my goodness. And so where were you born?

Wallace Beckner: Born right here on the farm [269 Dry Hollow Road]. And I spent the rest of my 81 years here. Except the time I was in Service and in college, I was here on the farm. And I reckon when they dig my grave, they'll have to bury me here somewhere! [Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] You mentioned Dr. Campbell was the doctor who assisted in your delivery?

Wallace Beckner: Uh-huh. That's what they tell me. I don't remember. [Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: Where was Dr. Campbell from?

Wallace Beckner: He was living in Brownsburg, I think, at that time. I think he also lived over around the Fairfield area. But of course, then, later we had a doctor in Brownsburg and the doctor's house was built there, where Ag Patterson lives now [2744 Brownsburg Turnpike].

Isabelle Chewning: Right.

Wallace Beckner: And there were a number of doctors, Dr. Bailey and Dr. Williams, and then several others after that.

Isabelle Chewning: Do you remember them? Dr. Bailey and Dr. Williams?

Wallace Beckner: Yes. I was a teenager when they were here, and an adult when Dr. Williams was here. But Dr. Kennan was the real, shall we say, the hero. He lived in Raphine. But he was a real hero during World War II because he was the only doctor available. And most of the work of doctors then was in home calls. And he would come--it might be a day late, but at one time he had to have a driver. He would try to catch a nap between houses as he would go visit people in the community.

Isabelle Chewning: And would he come all the way out here to your farm?

Wallace Beckner: Yes.

Isabelle Chewning: That's a good distance.

Wallace Beckner: Yeah. He would come to this area which was relatively heavily [populated] for a rural area, there's a lot of homes here. Ours, the Runkles, the Conners, the Blackwells. The Wades and Swishers were all here. And there were more elderly people than there were young people because most of the young people were either in industry working for manufacturing anything that the government needed for fighting World War II. So there were a lot of elderly people, a lot who didn't have cars that he would come and visit.

Isabelle Chewning: Do you consider this Bustleburg or Rockbridge Baths or Brownsburg or McElwee?

Wallace Beckner: [Laugh] Well, we call it – this is Dry Hollow Road

Isabelle Chewning: Okay.

Wallace Beckner: And the reason why it's called Dry Hollow is because the road is about three miles long and we live on the west end of it, I guess you'd say. And there's no running water from here to Brownsburg. There are springs but they go back into the ground. Like out at the Bares [Bluegrass Farm] they have a spring and a big pond or lake there. But nothing runs away from that property. Anyway, so that's why we get the name Dry Hollow.

Isabelle Chewning: I see. What were your parents' names?

Wallace Beckner: Well, of course, they were Beckners. [Laugh] Dad was William Walter. His father was William. And my mother was a Hart and she was Frances Hart Beckner. She grew up down around the Cedar Grove area. Both of them were from large families. In my father's family there were several that died in infancy.

[Phone rings. Tape stops momentarily]

Isabelle Chewning: Back on the tape. We had a little phone call for a second. But you were saying that a lot of the people in your father's family died in infancy?

Wallace Beckner: There were two brothers that died in infancy. And my father was crippled. He had-- they called it "white swelling" in those days, which was probably polio. And it settled in his left leg and there was--he had really no knee. It just grew as a child into solid form. So he was a very active man and yet, as he said, he learned to use his handicap to his advantage.

Isabelle Chewning: How so?

Wallace Beckner: To make every lick count!

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] Was he a farmer?

Wallace Beckner: Well, he was a farmer but in his earlier years--and I was going to talk about that later about [when we talk about] schools. He taught school for a few years before he came back to the farm.

Isabelle Chewning: How many brothers and sisters did he have?

Wallace Beckner: He had--I think it was five brothers and there were two sisters. And one of them was the mother of Mr. [William] Armentrout who taught school at Brownsburg in later years, from the Natural Bridge area.

Isabelle Chewning: Did all five of the brothers work on the farm?

Wallace Beckner: I want to say two of them died, and then the others left the area. I'm sure they worked on the farm as children, as teenagers. But we talk today about people, the young people, leaving the community, and yet we look back, and history repeats itself. Very few families stayed intact during the late 1800s or the [early] 1900s and so forth. They went elsewhere for work, too.

Isabelle Chewning: How many generations of your family have been on this farm?

Wallace Beckner: I don't know about generations. But the farm that we live on now was deeded to some great, great, great grandfather somewhere along the line in 1750.

Isabelle Chewning: Oh, my goodness.

Wallace Beckner: This was part of the Borden Grant. And there were 612 acres deeded to Robert Kirkpatrick. See, my grandmother on my father's side was a Kirkpatrick, so this farm that we live on has been in the Kirkpatrick, and now in the Beckner name, since 1750. But we do not have the full 612 acres. Some of it evidently was sold off along the way.

Isabelle Chewning: How many acres is your farm now?

Wallace Beckner: About 220. So really, I wasn't born in Brownsburg except as such, but I was close enough that I claimed it as being the closest village--

Isabelle Chewning: Right. How many brothers and sisters do you have?

Wallace Beckner: I have one brother and two sisters. I'm the youngest. I'm the caboose of the family. [Laugh] And I have a sister that is next to me, lives in Waynesboro.

Isabelle Chewning: And what's her name?

Wallace Beckner: Her name is Mary Frances. She taught school for a while. And then her husband was a so-called disabled veteran from World War II, but he taught and worked in rehabilitation at Woodrow Wilson [Rehabilitation Center in Fishersville] for many, many years. My brother is a retired doctor who practiced in Hagerstown, Maryland and later came to Lexington and practiced until he retired. And he now lives in Winchester. And my oldest sister lives--she taught school and lives in Waynesboro also. And she did a lot of work in the summertime -- before she was married -- working and teaching Bible school in West Virginia, and in Highland County where she taught a mission school during the year. And then in the summertime, she would teach Bible School in those areas.

Isabelle Chewning: What's her name?

Wallace Beckner: Her name is Bernice.

Isabelle Chewning: And what's your brother's name?

Wallace Beckner: Bill, or William. He's William the third, not that we're any kings or anything like that! [Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] Sounds very royal. And you mentioned some of your neighbors who lived out here in Dry Hollow.

Wallace Beckner: Well, the Runkles were the closest--their farm adjoined ours. The Hutchesons.

Isabelle Chewning: Which Runkles were they?

Wallace Beckner: Well, they were the parents of Mr. Russ Runkle, or grandparents of Bobby and John Runkle and so forth. And they lived in the brick house about a half a mile east of here [32 Clever Lane]. And those houses must have been built around 1800 because they were similar: ours, and the Runkles, and the Watts place below here [324 McElwee Road]. And people who know more about structures than I

do said that it was around 1800 because all of them had the rafters in the attics [that] are numbered with Roman numerals. So that they fitted them on the ground, and hoisted them up, and put them in place. And that's how they could keep them marked and put in the proper place because everything was hewn by hand, and what would fit one place, the next one might not fit. So, as I said the Runkles and then there were Wades and Swishers.

Isabelle Chewning: Which Wades?

Wallace Beckner: Well, Mr. Bud Wade, he and his wife lived adjoining us for many years [near 107 Dry Hollow Road]. And that is, of course, Janis Ayres' mother and father. And of course, he ran the barber shop in Brownsburg for many years. And I've gotten many a haircut there. I always liked the little plaque that he had up on the wall. It was a picture of two old tramps sitting on a log, and each of them had a stick with a can tied on the end of it heating their food. And one said to the other one "If you're so damn smart, why ain't you rich?" [Laugh] So I always remembered that and I can still envision it in my mind. I wonder if it's still out there somewhere.

Isabelle Chewning: Was it at his house, or at the barber shop?

Wallace Beckner: It was at the barber shop where Ms. [Catharine] Gilliam owns now [2707 Brownsburg Turnpike].

Isabelle Chewning: Right. And he at one time had a barber shop in the back of Supinger's store; right [the current location of Old South Antiques]?

Wallace Beckner: Right. That was in the earlier days when Saturday night was the biggest day because all the farmers and people around would come to Brownsburg to get a few groceries, or their coffee and sugar and so forth like that, and to share news and spread news, and a little bit of gossip. And the barber shop was always full of men, some of them had gotten haircuts, some didn't need it, and some were waiting for haircuts. And I could tell you a real good story on Fred Whipple. [Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: Oh, please do.

Wallace Beckner: Fred was there one Saturday night and it was pretty well filled. And Fred had gotten thirsty and he said--walked up to Bud and whispered "Do you have something to drink?" And Bud said, "No." And a little bit later Fred came back and he said, "Bud, I see a bottle there back of your radio." That was the old Philco, kind of oval shaped one that works sometimes. And he said, "I see it back of there." And Bud said "Okay, put it under your coat and go out there on the back porch." So he did. When Fred

came back in, he was kind of white and he said “Bud, that wasn’t whiskey, that was hair tonic!” [Laugh] Fitch’s Hair Tonic which is greasy. [Laugh] That might be taken from the record.

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] That’s a good story.

Wallace Beckner: And another one was Mr. Mote McClung. He and his two sisters--none of them were married--lived down where Jen Heffelfinger bought and restored [Level Loop at 567 Hays Creek Road] and so forth. He would come in about once a month to get a shave. And one day someone said to Bud, “You know why he comes once a month? He wants to get his razor sharpened.” Because Bud would always whet it on his razor strap to get it good and sharp before he shaved you. And he said, “That’s the only reason why he comes. He can’t sharpen his razor.” So the next time he came in, Bud lathered him up but he didn’t whet his straight razor at all. He just lathered him up. And when he came down, Mote slid down in the chair about six inches. [Laugh] And the next time he [Bud] went on the other side, he [Mote] went down a little bit lower. And that was the last time Mote ever came in to get a shave. [Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] So you would bring your own razor when you came?

Wallace Beckner: Oh, yeah. Well, normally you didn’t but Mote would say, “Use my razor because razors spread germs.”

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] How do you spell Mote? M-o-t-e?

Wallace Beckner: I think so. That was a nickname. And they were a nice family. He was a graduate of college which was unusual in those days. But Mr. Clint Troxell who later was kind of the community tramp, at one time did farming and he plowed their garden for them one spring. And when they got through, they asked him how much they owed. And he said \$3. They said, “That’s too much.” So each one of them gave him \$2 each!

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] So he got \$6 instead of \$3!

Wallace Beckner: Six instead of three.

Isabelle Chewning: Was one of the sisters Sally Reid McClung? I’ve heard that name before.

Wallace Beckner: Probably so. I’m not sure. As I said, my dad told me that, and it had to be factual because Dad was a man of few words and it was always well thought before he ever expressed anything.

Isabelle Chewning: How about school, Mr. Beckner, where and when did you start school?

Wallace Beckner: I started school when I was six years old. And in those days you weren't supposed to start until you were seven. Of course, you didn't have kindergarten. You started in the first grade. Being the youngest of the family, I wanted to go to school. I didn't know what it was all about then, so I said, "I want to go to school." So I got permission. Dad and Mother got permission, and Mr. and Mrs. Bob Stuart got permission for their son, Boyd, and I, to start school early.

Isabelle Chewning: Who would you get permission from?

Wallace Beckner: My parents went to Mr. Irby who was the Superintendent of the Schools. And for many, many years he was Superintendent. So he gave permission. And so, really, I ended up being the youngest in my class all the way through school which really wasn't an advantage because I always felt like I wasn't big enough or capable enough to do what the other class members did. But I'll have to say this, that I survived it! And when we went to Brownsburg School for the 3rd grade, I think it was 3rd grade, I met a friend, and he has always been my friend, Mc Sterrett. And we kind of buddied up together and now he will be 82 in [November] and I'm 81 now. And we've always been friends, very close friends. When he had a bout with cancer, my son and I drove him some to treatments. And then when it was my turn to go for treatments to the burn center, he drove me back and forth for treatments.

Isabelle Chewning: That's great that you've been friends all this time.

Wallace Beckner: We call each other--I call him the old man. And then when I catch up with him in July, he calls me the old man.

Isabelle Chewning: Well, where did you go to school before you went to Brownsburg?

Wallace Beckner: Went to a little two room school, Oak Hill, which is now on McElwee Road. And it was closed after we went two years there, I think. It was a community school, but consolidation. And it sat empty until about 1938. And at that time it was moved and restructured and put up at the back of the Brownsburg schools up on the hill. And that was [the] Vocational Agriculture and Shop school. This was the introduction of Agriculture and Shop into the school systems of Rockbridge County. And I have a picture laying right there of the school when it was down here at Oak Hill below McElwee Chapel. Right there in the turn of the road. The foundation -- concrete foundation is still there. You can see it. But it was used as a community center. They used to have cake walks and things like that to raise money for the school and for the chapel and so forth there.

Isabelle Chewning: So was it associated with the chapel?

Wallace Beckner: No. In fact, the chapel used to have services there before McElwee was built. McElwee celebrated its 100th year in 2004. So that school building was around for a good many years before that. And it must have been around about 1938 that it was moved to Brownsburg. And what was one classroom became a shop and the other was still used as a classroom. [Shows photo.]

Isabelle Chewning: That's a pretty building.

Wallace Beckner: And it's still up there but they put brick around it <inaudible>.

Isabelle Chewning: Oh, really?

Wallace Beckner: And in later years, they used it as a band place.

Isabelle Chewning: Do you remember who your teacher was at Oak Hill?

Wallace Beckner: Bless her heart. [Laugh] Miss Elizabeth Ward.

Isabelle Chewning: Oh, really? She was my teacher too.

Wallace Beckner: She taught in Highland County three or four years and then she came to Oak Hill and she taught at Oak Hill till it was closed. And then she taught at Brownsburg until she retired. She taught me, and she taught both of my sons in the first grade. She was a good teacher, but she was very strict. And in the first grade, you only went a half a day. You walked home at lunch time. And being younger, I was slower and she would bend my hand back and swat it with the ruler. She tried to make me hurry up, and I would just cry, and get that much slower. [Laugh] So that meant, when I did get out at lunch time, I'd have to run to catch up with the others to get home at the same time. [Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: How many grades were at Oak Hill?

Wallace Beckner: I think at one time there were seven grades.

Isabelle Chewning: And then after they finished 7th grade, did they go to Brownsburg to high school?

Wallace Beckner: Yeah. Of course, you had combination grades. In other words, I think we had first, second, and third in the room where I was. And one teacher taught all those. There were two teachers at Oak Hill.

Isabelle Chewning: So you had Ms. Ward for a lot of years then.

Wallace Beckner: I had her for two years.

Isabelle Chewning: Two years?

Wallace Beckner: Yeah.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you get any faster after--

Wallace Beckner: I got less ruler <inaudible>.

Isabelle Chewning: Was she still as strict when Wally and Jimmy [Mr. Beckner's two sons] had her in the first grade?

Wallace Beckner: As strict as the law would allow. [Laugh] But she was a good teacher. It was just that maybe she taught us more discipline than we would have had otherwise. And Miss Williams taught me, I guess, when I went to Brownsburg. I think she taught me in the 3rd grade.

Isabelle Chewning: And who was she?

Wallace Beckner: She was related to the Dices that lived in Brownsburg. And she lived with Mrs. Watts down the road here [324 McElwee Road]. She was a sister-in-law I think to her. She was a good teacher, as I said, but as long as she taught probably--she taught the Shorter Catechism in the classroom, which would be illegal in today's world. But that was one of her requirements. You learned the Shorter Catechism in that class.

Isabelle Chewning: Did Miss Ward live out here somewhere or did she live in Brownsburg when she taught out here?

Wallace Beckner: I think she lived in Brownsburg. I'm not sure. She may have lived around Bustleburg but it seems to me like she lived with her mother in Brownsburg. That's the log house across from Richard [Kauffman].

Isabelle Chewning: Right. Where Sterrett Road dumps into [Route] 252 [2763 Brownsburg Turnpike].

Wallace Beckner: Yeah. I think that's where she lived. Of course, right below there was the community cannery.

Isabelle Chewning: You're the first person who's said that. I thought I had a vague recollection of that cannery.

Wallace Beckner: I would say it was probably in the late '30s. I read not long ago where the government established canneries around in the country, and Brownsburg was designated as an area for them. And you could take your vegetables there, and they had cappers that would seal the cans for you. You could buy the cans there. And that was when people used to can maybe a hundred quarts of tomatoes and so many of beans and vegetables and so forth. Then in the fall of the year, they would can meat, sausage and tenderloin and things like that. I think it was maybe about three cents a can. That would pay for the can and for the work and the fuel for cooking them after they were canned.

Isabelle Chewning: Was it seasonal? Did it just open certain times of the year? Summer and fall?

Wallace Beckner: Yeah. Summer and fall.

Isabelle Chewning: And were there local people who worked there?

Wallace Beckner: Yes, there were. And I don't remember the details. I remember being there with my parents. I think there were one or two people who worked there seasonal, but most of the time you went there and you did the work. It's just that they assisted you, or would get the cans and look after the equipment and so forth. They might advise somebody new how to can, or how to season or something like that. But it was mostly a community aid to help you do your own thing.

Isabelle Chewning: When you started to school at Brownsburg, did you ride a bus?

Wallace Beckner: Rode a bus to Brownsburg. But when we went to Oak Hill, we walked, which was about a mile and a half. But there were, I'd say, five or six of us from right here. Myself and Henry Swisher, which is John Swisher's brother; and two of the Wade boys; and a Wade girl; and Betty Jean Mohler. We would walk down to Oak Hill until we got smart, and that's when Harry Mohler took over as mail carrier for this area. And he had--it was like a model A but it was a Chevrolet model car. And we would learn to time ourselves to be at the forks down here about the time he would go to start the mail route. And he'd always stop, and we would climb on, hanging on about three on each running board outside, maybe one inside if there was room, and sometimes hold onto the spare tire at the back end. But he'd always take us for a ride down there. He got a new job and a new wife. That was the talk of the community. He got that mail route and got married and he married Nell Wade who is Nell Mohler. She's in

a nursing home now, but she was a sister to John Wade, Mr. Ott Wade, Mr. Kite Wade and all of those. But he replaced this mail carrier, Mr. Fulwider, who drove a horse and a buggy. So we progressed during his time from a horse and buggy to an automobile.

Isabelle Chewning: That's real progression.

Wallace Beckner: That's real progression.

Isabelle Chewning: But you caught a ride going down the hill. Is it more uphill coming back from school?

Wallace Beckner: Oh, yeah.

Isabelle Chewning: Too bad. [Laugh]

Wallace Beckner: We didn't have to get home on time. [Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: I see.

Wallace Beckner: Bit we had to get at school on time.

Isabelle Chewning: Well, what was the school bus like when you rode into Brownsburg?

Wallace Beckner: Let's say it was a store bought type of bus. [Laugh] I think they were Chevrolets and they were more like a box. And there was no heat on them. But it beat walking. The first bus that I remember [was driven by] Mr. Frank Patterson, that was Ed's father, Bruce's grandfather. And it looked like you'd made almost like a house -- except it didn't have a chimney -- and put it on the back of the truck with wheels. And I remember the siding looked like it was tongue and groove like so much was made out of wood in those days. You didn't have a lot of metal. And it was very crude. You just had fastened benches inside to sit on but no individual seats or anything.

Isabelle Chewning: Did it have windows?

Wallace Beckner: Yeah. It had a few windows but not full like now. I didn't ride on that as such, but I remember seeing it in Brownsburg when it was being used.

Isabelle Chewning: So there's an upgraded school bus--

Wallace Beckner: Yeah. When I started. But the bus came down the road and picked--no. I'm wrong. It didn't come down the road to start out with. It came around by Bustleburg and came up, and we met it down at the intersection down here which is a half a mile. And then it went on up Dutch Hollow and picked up and circled around back into Brownsburg.

Isabelle Chewning: So you'd ride the bus for quite a while then.

Wallace Beckner: Yeah. It was about 45 minutes, in good weather. In bad weather, it could be longer because you might have to stop and put chains on.

Isabelle Chewning: Did it break down a lot?

Wallace Beckner: No. I think back in those days buses were owned by individuals, not by the county. And they took pride in their buses, and they liked to keep them clean and nice inside. The bus that we rode, Mr. Bud Wade and his brother, Mr. Kite Wade, owned it together, and they took turns driving it. And it was always cleaned out in the mornings when you got on, and they took pride in it. And then in the summer time, lots of times they would use the bus to maybe haul children to community Bible Schools at New Providence, Bethesda or Grandview which is out on the road to Lexington, different places like that. And sometimes other groups, like young people, would use them. Because back in those days, you would have a young people's group with 30 or 40 people, and they would go places like Cave Mountain Lake and Crabtree Falls and places like that, and they would get a bus. Sometimes they would just ride open trucks, cattle trucks we called them, to go to places like that. Or if it was too many, maybe even go to a church rally on a truck.

Isabelle Chewning: Did your family go to Bethesda [Presbyterian Church in Rockbridge Baths]?

Wallace Beckner: We've been at Bethesda. I know my grandfather was an elder there because his name is on the memorial windows. And my father. And then I've been a member since 1939. So it's been the, shall we say, the family church.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you sometimes go to McElwee [Chapel]?

Wallace Beckner: My mother and father taught Sunday School and that was there at McElwee, but they went to Bethesda in the morning.

Isabelle Chewning: Sunday school was in the afternoon?

Wallace Beckner: The McElwee service was in the afternoon, at that time. But the Bethesda bell on Sunday -- and though it's five miles away, most of the time we could hear it here. And Mr. Ed Carr, who was the caretaker at the church, a black gentleman, he would ring the bell at 7:00 o'clock, which was to remind everybody it's Sunday. [Laugh] And at 9:00 o'clock he rang the bell again, which was saying "You better be on the road because you're driving your horse and buggy." [Laugh] And then of course, services started at 10. I mean, Sunday school at 10 and services at 11. And they rang the bell at 10:00 o'clock, and at 11, and then when it was over they rang the bell.

Isabelle Chewning: Your bell got a good workout on Sunday!

Wallace Beckner: Yeah, it got a workout. And [it was] real good clear bell. The casting must have been good because it carries a long ways. So Bethesda has been our home church, although I've been reading a lot of the bulletins that Dr. Ralston put out when he was pastor at Bethesda and were saved. And this was back from about 1930 up to '41, something like that. And Bethesda, particularly young people, and New Providence, did so much together. They planned things together and worked together. We're talking about probably a combination of 30 to 50 young people doing that, that were in the community at the time.

Isabelle Chewning: That must have been a lot of fun with a group that big.

Wallace Beckner: It was different from it is now. And what is interesting to read is to find that all of their festivities and so forth, they always had a worship service with it. Somewhere in it, in their getting together, they had a time for worship. And they would go to a place right below the church there. The Davises had a farm there [address?] and it was the spring down over the hill, not too far from the river. There was flat area down there, and they used to go down there and have picnics a lot. And later they had a weenie roast. But when they first started having them, they didn't have weenies in those days! [Laugh] That was a later addition to the grocery line! But during that period of time, one bulletin stated, "Will the women bring their money for eggs that the chickens laid on Sundays during the month of April. This is to go to pay for your literature this year."

Isabelle Chewning: How interesting.

Wallace Beckner: So life was--I guess you'd say we were all poor. Everybody was poor. This was during the Depression. Everybody was poor, but we didn't know it.

Isabelle Chewning: A lot of people have said that, that out in a rural area, it just wasn't the same because you had food to eat, and people worked on the farms and so they had work.

Wallace Beckner: Yeah. And they patched their clothes and repaired their shoes, which brings up another point. In Brownsburg, one of the first things that I remember remembering, if that makes sense, was Mr. [Harvey] Matheney had a--I don't know what you would call it. It looked like a wagon but it was like a little house on it. And he lived there. Lived by himself. And he repaired shoes. And it was parked there kind of across from where that little garage is going up Bob Driver's driveway [22 Hays Creek Road]. And of course, there used to be a road that went up that way to the school. It kind of went up and circled around. Now, that was before the stucco building was built. And it was before the brick building that was torn down, because the school that Mc and I went to was a two story long school building up where the playground is now, the tennis courts and so forth. And the upstairs was a big auditorium. And that was used for community for meetings and court hearings and everything. In fact, I think that was where some of the shooting took place that Mrs. Jen Heffelfinger had recorded and so forth in her history. Of course, that part of it was ahead of -- before my time.

Isabelle Chewning: So the stucco building, did you ever go to class in the stucco building?

Wallace Beckner: Took Home Economics in there. [Laugh] The Agriculture teacher, Mr. Layman, and Miss Watson, who was the Home Economics teacher, they got together and they would let the girls take shop for a month, and we boys would take Home Economics for a month. And it was interesting, I'll tell you that.

Isabelle Chewning: Was it? [Laugh] Did you have to do it?

Wallace Beckner: Well, I don't know whether we had to or not but everybody did it. Back in those days, if you were told to do something, you didn't protest. You went ahead, and lots of times made a fun thing out of it, you know.

Isabelle Chewning: So did you learn to cook?

Wallace Beckner: Well, it was more than that. We had to learn how to set a table proper, and our manners were corrected some, shall we say. [Laugh] Don't eat with your fingers and a few things like that! But it was interesting, and it gave the girls a chance how to--of course, a lot of them probably knew how to use a hammer and saw without hurting themselves. Making little things and--

Isabelle Chewning: That's really progressive.

Wallace Beckner: Yeah. It was a good idea and it worked great. I enjoyed it. In fact, I made a better grade in that than I did in Agriculture. [Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] So did you go to school in the two story brick building, the modern [1938] building that's been--

Wallace Beckner: Yes. We went there until '39, I think it was. That was when the new brick building was built down facing the road.

Isabelle Chewning: And the stucco building, when was the stucco building--was it always there?

Wallace Beckner: It was there, but it was built between the time of the old brick building and the new brick building. I don't remember. It was probably there when I went to Brownsburg.

Isabelle Chewning: Were they attached or were they all separate buildings?

Wallace Beckner: No. They were separate buildings, all three of them. All separate. That may have been used for the high school. The stucco building may have been used for that, for further education. And Ms. Jen [Heffelfinger] speaks in her recollection of the Brownsburg Academy. I don't know whether that was the same building that I went to or not. I don't know the timing of that.

Isabelle Chewning: So there have been at least four buildings there then.

Wallace Beckner: Uh-huh. Now, my father graduated from Brownsburg Academy. He graduated—as I said, he was crippled. He taught school for a few years. And he started out teaching up at Dutch Hollow. And I don't know how many years he taught there, but he rode horse back every morning. And he got paid \$19 a month for teaching. Now, he also taught up at Little River, which is just outside of Goshen. And I heard him say that the kids there used to -- would turn a bench upside down and let him ride that as a sled because his leg was stiff. So they'd let him slide down the hill inside of the bench turned up. The others would use homemade sleds but they fixed that up for him.

Isabelle Chewning: I wonder if it was hard for him to ride a horse with his leg like that.

Wallace Beckner: The stirrup length had to be so much longer and it stuck out. But let's say he was a man who--he had to swing that leg out as he walked, but he cut corn by hand, he did everything. He plowed and so forth. He did everything that anyone else did. It's just that--well, the Runkle boys told me several times how they thought "I'd like to work for that old man because he moves slow." And maybe he'd say "Well, will you boys help me cut corn?" And they'd take off and they were ahead. And before long, he was ahead because he never stopped. And he told me, he said "It was an advantage because I learned to make every lick count." So he never wasted energy. He never wasted breath talking. He never

said anything--if there were three people in a room, he would never open his mouth. If there were two people, you and somebody else, he'd carry on a great conversation. But he was very quiet and we used to laugh and say that, at church, if he would stand up, if we were having a meeting or something, and if he stood up, you could hear a hush go over the congregation for two reasons. One is that they knew he had thought through it, and what he was saying was worth listening to. And the other one was he talked so low, you had to be quiet to hear him. [Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] How about some of your teachers at Brownsburg, did any of those stick out in your mind?

Wallace Beckner: Well, of course, I went through during Osie Trimmer's time. She was a history maker. She taught English. She was principal. She coached basketball, girls and boys' basketball teams. In fact, she did all the coaching in her earlier years. And in later years, they hired a man and he coached baseball. We had a football team about two years, and then that's when World War II broke out. So all sports were eliminated during the war and physical therapy – or P.E. took the place of that. We used to have to do exercises, and run and jog and so forth. We had contests in distance, running and so forth like that. But no sports.

Isabelle Chewning: Why was that?

Wallace Beckner: Well, first of all, there couldn't be any competition because you couldn't travel--

Isabelle Chewning: I see. Because there was no gas.

Wallace Beckner: Gas was rationed. In fact, when Mc [Sterrett] and I graduated, of course gas was rationed. That was in 1943. And if you had a three gallon a month card, you could use it to go to the store and you could go to church. If necessary, you'd go to the doctor. But no pleasure driving. So we had to have our baccalaureate service at New Providence on a Sunday night so people could come. Because that [was] coming to church.

Isabelle Chewning: Coming to church . Oh, I see.

Wallace Beckner: So we reneged on that. And during that time, there was a lot of switching and so forth with stuff that was rationed. You'd get a gallon a month for your washing machine if you had a gas motor on your washing machine. And lots of people scrubbed their clothes [by hand] and burned that gallon of gas to go somewhere. [Laugh] We didn't drink coffee in our home, never learned to. Our parents didn't drink coffee. And we acquired a lot of friends who wanted coffee rations. They would call mother up and say, "Mrs. Beckner, do you happen to have a coffee ration? We've got company coming." So if we had

and somebody else hadn't gotten them, we would share them. And likewise, they would share things, too. The old community spirit that's gone now, I'm afraid.

Isabelle Chewning: So did you have Miss Trimmer for any of the classes?

Wallace Beckner: I had her for English. She was a real good teacher, but she was a disciplinarian. And when we got into high school, somehow if you went out somewhere the night before, she knew it the next morning. And you might get called to the office for your behavior the night before. I don't know how she learned this, but she knew what went on. And she ruled with an iron hand.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you ever get called to the office?

Wallace Beckner: Not individually; [laugh] as a group sometimes. But as I said, I was the youngest of the family. My oldest sister [Bernice] was a good student but she had to work for it. Bill came along and he was valedictorian of his class. He could kind of loaf through and still get straight As. Mary Frances was the same way. Then I came along and Ms. Trimmer wanted me—or thought I ought to follow their steps. And I rebelled. I wanted to have fun. [Laugh] And I just wasn't interested in school as much. I liked Agriculture and some classes. And Ms. Trimmer came to see Mother one time and she said "I know Wallace can do it." Of course, she was thinking what my brother and sisters had done. And he wanted me to be the same way. And everybody's different. And she said, "You know, I get on him, and he'll just look up at me and smile a little bit, and that's the end of it." So my senior year I didn't have any classes in the afternoon so Dad said "Well, son, if you don't have classes, why can't you come home and help me shuck corn?" Well, I said, "I'm sure Ms. Trimmer will let me do it but you'll have to write her a note." So he did. So I'd walk home at lunch.

Isabelle Chewning: That's a long walk.

Wallace Beckner: Yeah. But it was better than school. And shuck corn or hauling corn, and so forth. Along in November, Ms. Trimmer said "Don't you think y'all are through shucking corn by now?" [Laugh] Of course, we'd been done a month, but I was still walking home to get out of the school. [Laugh] But she kept up with everything.

Isabelle Chewning: So then did you stay in the afternoons after that?

Wallace Beckner: Yeah.

Isabelle Chewning: What did she have you do if you didn't have classes?

Wallace Beckner: She told me to study, and sometimes she would give me chores to do if I wasn't studying.

Isabelle Chewning: Who taught you Agriculture?

Wallace Beckner: Mr. Layman. He was our first Agriculture teacher and he was--

[End of Tape 1, Side A]

Isabelle Chewning: I flipped the tape over and we were talking about Mr. Layman. He was your first Agriculture teacher.

Wallace Beckner: He was the first Agriculture teacher. Then Mr. Zigler followed, and then Mr. [Lynn] Woody. And all three of them were men who were interested in developing the total person. And if they saw a particular talent or gift that a person had, they tried to enrich that, and encourage the young people to follow up with those traits or talents that they had. And in shop, we were taught metal working, woodworking. We had a blacksmith shop and we learned to make some tools, chisels, punches and so forth. And we learned how to temper them. With chisels, you would temper them by putting them in oil. Otherwise, you would cool them with water. But the temper would come from getting it a certain color and then putting it in oil and that would temper the metal. We did welding of metals together with heat where you would get them white hot and put a flux between them and overlap them and beat them together -- the two pieces of iron --and that would weld them together. And this was used whether it be on tools, or wagon wheels where you had to shrink them so they would fit and stay tight. This was the way of shrinking them or cutting them and then re-welding them together and so forth. These are pretty much lost arts but they were ways of surviving back in those days.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you have Animal Science or Animal Husbandry or any of those kinds of classes?

Wallace Beckner: We had Animal Science, which was history. There was some -- nothing extensive like today where you have plant nutrients, you have chemical application and animal nutrients, and science and so forth. Back then, it was mostly very limited. Kudzu, which has now taken the country and become an obsession, was so-called discovered back in those days. And I remember talking about here was something that could be planted on the old red clay eroded fields of North Carolina where they'd raised tobacco for centuries and centuries and wore the ground out. Kudzu grow on it and revitalize it. And they said that it could be cut and used for hay. We've seen it now almost taking over the roadways. [Laugh] If you cut it for hay, you'd have to climb trees to get it. But I remember two things from that, shall we say, about the plants. One was, we had not planted alfalfa, and we didn't know what alfalfa was in this part of the country. We'd heard of it but nobody had ever planted it. But reading it in the book, there was a picture of Mississippi in the black Delta ground there. They had dug down and an alfalfa root was 24 feet

deep in that. And we thought that was unbelievable because in this type of country, once they hit that red clay hard packed ground, it probably wouldn't go quite that deep. And the other one was, it showed a mule in Australia that had a foal. And it's always been proclaimed that the cross between jackass and a horse, it produced a mule, but the mule was barren. But this was a picture of one that has happened in Australia. And I think it's happened several times since. But those are two of the --that's how much I learned! A little bit more than that, but well – [Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] You remember a lot. How about FFA [Future Farmers of America]? Were you a member of the FFA?

Wallace Beckner: Yes. I think during the four years of Agriculture I served--I don't think I was ever president, but I served in all the other offices, I think. And that was a real asset, and it still is today, in that it gives people training to speak, to think, and so forth. Recently I was talking with—well, last year talking with Dr. Strecker, and he was saying that [in] our agriculture program here in the county --which is more shop than anything else -- the FFA is not active. And he was saying this is good training for young people for later in leadership, learning to be able to speak, to learn, and to be better qualified. I know you can go to college and get classes, or maybe in high school, and get many trainings but that is a good program. And I watch it on television on the farm channel when they have their conventions. It goes on about three or four days, or up to a week. I enjoy every bit of it, seeing these young people taking leadership and being able to handle it, and looking at the other areas that this enhances. Well, they enhance each other; of learning responsibility, of learning jobs, of understanding politics, understanding world situations. It's just a good step in broadening a young person's life.

Isabelle Chewning: What sort of activities did you do with the FFA? Did you have cattle judging and those sorts of things?

Wallace Beckner: We had cattle judging and we used to go to Mr. Frank Patterson's--where Bernice Nye lives now. He raised pure-bred Herefords. He had one cow that was special. She had twin calves every year. And he used to take them to the County Fair and sometimes to the State Fair and show them. But Mr. Layman would take us down there, and Mr. Patterson would bring out maybe six or eight cows and they all looked the same at first, and we'd have to judge them and so forth. Then after we'd made our mistakes, Mr. Layman and Mr. Patterson would go by and point out the good points and the bad points of each one of them so that we could see how to make up our minds and so forth. The night that Mc [Sterrett] and I graduated [in 1943] --I said we had a baccalaureate service out at New Providence Church—in the middle of the program of the service, it came I would say the worst electrical thunderstorm that we've ever experienced in this area. I think there were 21 horses that the paper announced were killed by lightning that night. And Mr. Frank Patterson that I was talking about lost his prize bull and prize cow. They were in a lot together at the front that night. And the speaker was Mr. Harness who was our minister at Bethesda. And when the lights went out, he just kept on until it was over with. And everybody was amazed at it, but very few people realized that his vision was so poor that when he read the scripture,

he always carried his own Bible because it was really large print. So he never read a sermon. He preached a sermon from memory. So that night he just went on as if the lights were still going on, and everybody marveled that he could do this. I was younger than most in my class, Mc and I. He was about six months older than I was. And I never dated anybody in my class in high school but there was a girl that was a sophomore that I liked a lot, and she wouldn't go with me very much but she said she would let me take her home from commencement exercises. I never did find her that night in the dark. [Laugh] So I got cheated out of that one.

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] Too bad. What did you do after you graduated?

Wallace Beckner: Well, see, I was 16 when I graduated and I worked here on the farm. And then when I became 18, being on the farm and Dad being crippled, I got deferment. But I didn't want deferment. So in early '45, this was just before the war had ended in Europe--of course, in the Pacific, it was still going wild - I joined the services. And I was in the Army then until '47.

Isabelle Chewning: Where did you go to boot camp?

Wallace Beckner: I went to Camp Meade here in Virginia and then I went to Fort Belvoir which is up near Washington. Which is engineering, although I was in infantry. I went in, and it was about 60 days later I went overseas.

Isabelle Chewning: Where?

Wallace Beckner: I went to the Pacific. And we went through the Philippines. And then the atomic bomb dropped on Japan, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And we moved on into Japan then, just weeks after that and stayed there until '47, early '47. It was in February of '47 when I came back.

Isabelle Chewning: What part of Japan were you in?

Wallace Beckner: I was in Beppu which is the southern most island of Japan and we were on the southern end of that. And the climate was much better there. In Northern Japan, Mt. Fuji stays covered with snow, you know. But the Tokyo area and so forth is sort of like here. You get a lot of snows and so forth. Where we were, I remember snow flurries one time, and that was I think on Christmas day the first year we were there.

Isabelle Chewning: And what was your mission there?

Wallace Beckner: We were occupation. Of course, we went in with the purpose of making sure that their surrender was genuine. And I would say that the Japanese were so totally bewildered because Shintoism said that they would be the ruler of the world and they went into China in the low '30s with that, and that was the beginning of their conquering the world. So when the atomic bombs hit, and their leaders surrendered, their nation and their god were gone. And so here were a people without government, you might say, or very little to start out with, and no religion. And we saw very, very little bit of resentment or anything. It was bewilderment. And I think at that time they saw a lot of kindness, consideration that maybe occupational forces now don't see. Of course, every war is different in the way it's fought, the purpose and everything else. You look back at pictures of the Revolutionary War and the Civil War and here are multitudes gathered together fighting against multitudes over here, just massed together. And World War II was different. The mechanism was in force. And of course, in World War II, the airplane was playing a major role in that. Everything was different. They were a bewildered, lost people. And would you believe that before I left in '47, early '47, the Japanese government dictated that they would teach the Bible in English. Now, the intent was double there. One was to teach the Japanese people English because that was--that's the dominant language of the world. And with occupational forces there, they soon learned communication and so forth is a problem in the world. And then I think missionaries in Japan, a lot of orphanages that were in Japan and survived throughout World War II, like the Church of the Nazarene, it's a Pentecostal. Not only just line denominations but all these other so-called, that we thought were minor had orphanages there and survived during the war. And of course, this was about the time that back in America we were taking the Bible out of the school. And that's another subject because in today's world, freedom of speech, freedom of right has been exercised and de-exercised and a few other things to the point where freedom often times ruins a nation. And that's kind of a broad statement to say, but it can. What Hitler said during World War II, that he would take Poland in 30 days, which he did. He said he would take France in three months, which took about that or a little bit more; and he said, I think it was two years, he would take England. And they asked him what about America, and he said that will happen from within. And we're a great nation but you wonder if we aren't destroying ourselves.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you follow the war? On the radio or in newspapers?

Wallace Beckner: Yes. We didn't have electricity but we--my brother at that time, he'd finished Hampden- Sydney College in '41, and he went to work for DuPont in Pryor, Oklahoma, where they made gun powder. They worked in safety shoes, safety glasses, all wool clothing. Of course, there wasn't air-conditioning in those days, and the plant, he said, at night never got below about 98 [degrees]. So during that period of time, he got a rationed car. Of course, they had to ride because this plant was out in nowhere being a powder plant. So two years of that, and he said the Army couldn't be any worse, so he volunteered for the service. So he left the car here.

Isabelle Chewning: And what year was that when he volunteered?

Wallace Beckner: I think it was in late '42 that he went in. But he left his car here, and it had a radio in it. So I used to go out, and managed to listen to the radio at lunch time just enough to get the news, and then go in and tell Mother and Dad. And then we would snatch a little bit of washing machine gas and keep the battery charged up a little bit.

Isabelle Chewning: Was he overseas?

Wallace Beckner: Yes. With his chemical background, the first thing he did once they enlisted, the Army put him in chemical warfare, and so he went to school and trained down in Alabama, I think. Then they sent him for three months to University of Ohio which was a testing lab during war for ammunition and so forth. And that's the only place he ever got wounded. He walked past--somebody was working with TNT in the first nitrate stage which is supposed to be nonexplosive. Anyway, it blew up in this test tube and the glass cut him in the neck a little bit. So that was his greatest wound of war. [Laugh] But then he went overseas, and they put him in the post office. So he and another guy volunteered for the 82nd Airborne Division. So he jumped in the Battle of the Bulge.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you have any idea where he was or what he was doing? Did he write letters home?

Wallace Beckner: We'd get a letter about once a month but we didn't know. You know, you couldn't write anything where you were or anything.

Isabelle Chewning: They were all censored?

Wallace Beckner: Yeah. And you might get a letter and it would have part of it cut out, some lines cut out or something like that. Yeah. As I said, he went through the Battle of the Bulge without being wounded. And he still carries that scar when that test tube blew up. [Laugh] So there was humor to everything. But that was the way we kept up. And of course, if you got a chance to go to Lexington to the movie, then they would have a news reel for about 15 minutes that updated you, and you would see scenes. And in fact, during the Normandy Invasion, some people recognized Fred Tolley. That's Clarence Tolley's brother, but he was younger than Clarence. On Normandy Beach. But everybody shared what information they had because, in this area, we didn't have electricity here. Now, Brownsburg had electricity when I went to school in the late '30s, or mid '30s. I don't know when they got electricity in Brownsburg.

Isabelle Chewning: When did you get it out here on the farm?

Wallace Beckner: We got it through here in '43 under the Rural Electrification Act. And of course, you got electricity and you had a light in each room and maybe an outlet, one outlet. I know Mr. Bill Allen down here, he put a light in each room and he had one outlet, and that was out on the porch.

Isabelle Chewning: Who came through and wired up your house when you got electricity? Or did you do it yourself because you learned it in Shop?

Wallace Beckner: There were some people -- now I've been reading in here when we wired the Bethesda church and the manse. And that was about a year and a half or two years before we actually got it here. And the Methodist church [in Rockbridge Baths] was wired. It cost--with fixtures and everything, I think it was 400 and some dollars to wire the manse and the church. And they mentioned a couple names that I wasn't familiar with, but here we had my Uncle Alec who was the father of the cousin I was talking about before we started recording, he was a retired welder. He helped put the first wireless stations in Alaska. He was in the Service at the time. This was the Spanish-American War at the time. And he helped put in the first wireless. He retired. He had a business in Norfolk and retired to the home place where Don Hart lives now in that area [address?]. And he helped a lot of people with wiring. He wired over at home, and he and I wired the [McElwee] Chapel. And I learned a little bit about wiring then, because it was so simple. Now I wouldn't dare try to do anything. But then it was so simple and so limited that it wasn't that complicated. Now, they did say in Dr. Ralston's bulletin [from Bethesda Presbyterian Church] that the electricity wasn't turned on this week because the inspector--and I didn't realize they had inspectors--the inspector would not approve the entrance of the current into the church. So I don't know whether that was the electric company's fault or what. And the Methodist church, they got electricity and they sold their lamps, a lot of lamps to McElwee Chapel down here. And they used them until Uncle Alec and I wired it which was probably--it wasn't wired for a couple of years after we got electricity because they had services in the afternoon there. Then after it was wired and they started having--we'd have evangelistic services at night then.

Isabelle Chewning: Did electricity change your lives? Did it make a big difference?

Wallace Beckner: Yeah. Let's say a lot of old things--like, we had water rams and they were wearing out. They were very limited. We had a ram down here at the spring that pumped water up to the house.

Isabelle Chewning: How did it work?

Wallace Beckner: You use water to pump water. Water comes in, and it has to with be a certain amount of pressure. It was coming out of the spring and we had it in a deep place that was dug down in the ground so that the water was falling down and was building up a certain amount of pressure. And that pressure would make the valve come up on the ram. And when it did that, it pumped a little bit of water from that spring, I mean the spring on the rod, the plunger. It would cause that little bit of water to go into

the pipe. And so you would pump about that fast [demonstrates]. So you didn't get a lot of flow but eventually you'd have a little trickle of it.

Isabelle Chewning: So most of the houses probably around here were built somewhere close to a spring--

Wallace Beckner: Close to springs. In fact, you can go--we used to do custom combining and you'd go to all these farms, and you'd see if so many of them were built near a spring or else they had a spring house at the spring. And that's where they would carry their--keep their milk cool and carry food that they wanted to keep and so forth down there.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you have a cistern, too?

Wallace Beckner: A lot of people did. Now, we didn't. Well, there was a well or a cistern at the back of the house that had been filled up that I remember. But now, whether it was--I don't think it was a hand dug well because Dad had filled it in with rock to keep us children from falling in. I think it must have been a cistern. But people, a lot of people kept their cisterns if they didn't have a spring or a spring house. They kept their cisterns after they got electricity because first of all, if you put an electric pump in it, you'd use all the water out too quick and wouldn't have it until the next rain. [Laugh] But electricity very definitely has--a fellow from Colombia who's a doctor had bought property down here, down here at the intersection. He's a urologist down on the eastern shore. He says electricity is the greatest invention that man ever made because from that, everything else radiates, you might say.

Isabelle Chewning: What were your chores when you were growing up on the farm?

Wallace Beckner: Well, you had to milk the cows like your dad did.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you have morning shift or afternoon shift, or both?

Wallace Beckner: Both. And my brother didn't learn to milk because he cut the end of his finger off, and he said he couldn't milk. That was an alibi. So he would kick me out and I'd have to go and milk. And that always griped me because I was younger than he was and he'd make me get out of bed to go do it. [Laugh] Yeah. You'd milk twice a day and your dad could tell you how that was because he milked a lot more than I did.

Isabelle Chewning: How many did you milk?

Wallace Beckner: We kept about six or eight cows. Of course, your dad--well, I can remember when they went into the dairy business, and they grew from a smaller group and went up, became a large dairy. Of course, he used milkers later too. But I remember asking Mc [Sterrett], "How do you remember the names of all these cows?" And he kind of grinned, and he said "If you shook hands with a person twice a day, you'd remember their name." [Laugh] But you know, your dad had his front teeth knocked out.

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] I know.

Wallace Beckner: And he [Mc Sterrett] was carrying a couple of buckets of milk, I think, to the house. And scared old Charlie. And Charlie reared up and hit him in the mouth and knocked his teeth out.

Isabelle Chewning: I didn't know it was Charlie.

Wallace Beckner: Yeah, it was old Charlie. And I ended up buying old Charlie.

Isabelle Chewning: Oh, you did?

Wallace Beckner: Uh-huh. In fact, I've got a picture of him here. He was quite a horse. He was a large gaited horse, very spirited, high-headed and so forth. I said he was so spirited that I think Mr. Mc [Mc Sterrett, Sr.] was glad to get rid of him. I traded a cow and a calf for him because you could work him if you wanted to, or you could drive him to the buggy, or you could ride him. But I eventually got him to the point where I could ride him without a bridle or saddle and come across from there and take the poles down. This was pasture over here and old Charlie would throw that head up and he would till he'd see the cattle, and he was just like a dog. He would bring them in and so forth. You'd just sit there and hold on the best you could. But I got your dad's downfall.

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] He's never cared much for horses.

Wallace Beckner: I can understand why. But old Charlie was a tall bay with three white stockings and a white star. He was a beautiful horse, but he was very high strung and spirited. Sometimes Bennie [Fauber] would hook him up with one of his [horses] and they'd go for a carriage ride. Thank goodness Bennie's was a little bit less spirited than old Charlie, so they would manage to get there and back.

Isabelle Chewning: What's the difference in age between you and Bennie?

Wallace Beckner: Well, I'd say about nine years.

Isabelle Chewning: So you really didn't know Bennie well at all then probably.

Wallace Beckner: Well, you see, during the time of World War II, everybody learned to know each other better because you couldn't go places. You had to do things together, and work together and so forth. And we young people all had horses, and Bennie had horses then. So Mc [Sterrett], Carl Wiseman, Ed Patterson and that whole crew used to do things together, you know, as young people. And Sunday afternoon we'd get on our horses, and ride to Rockbridge Baths or Fairfield or anything like that. I don't think Mc ever rode much.

Isabelle Chewning: I just don't think he liked them.

Wallace Beckner: And there was a Swope boy that got killed. He had a horse that he rode. And Bud Wade down here and Kite Wade, they all had -- everybody had riding horses. And they rode a lot because there wasn't any gas and you could still do that.

Isabelle Chewning: We were talking about your chores on the farm. Did you have chickens, hogs, sheep?

Wallace Beckner: Yeah. We had chickens. Mother used to order a hundred chickens every spring from a mail order company. They'd come in a box and you'd feed them. Curdled, or what you call cottage cheese now, you'd make it and let them eat that. It was semi-solid form, like it is today. That's how you started them out with feed. And you'd generally keep them in the house in the box for a few days until they got started. You might have to stick their bill down in the water a few times for them to learn to drink, but it didn't take them long. And you would keep the pullets, and they would furnish you your eggs then when they became adults. And you ate the roosters, or you took them to Wade's store [in Bustleburg] and sold them, because eggs and chickens were the biggest produce that you took to the store to buy your sugar, salt, clothing. You could buy -- they would keep -- stores would have bolts of cloth. You didn't have to go to Lexington. Most of the stores had to have things like that. So you didn't have any money except your produce that you took.

Isabelle Chewning: How many of the hundred chickens would live?

Wallace Beckner: Oh, I'd say probably 90. It was pretty good because you took care of them. They were individuals, not like the thousands that they have in a brooder house. You took care of them. Lorene Steele, who's a good friend of mine now, grew up on the farm right below us here [361 Walkers Creek Road]. We were laughing the other day about--she got kind of choked and I said, "Have you got the gaps?" and she started laughing. Because if you let the chickens out before the dew went away, there was little worms that would be on the grass and they'd be pecking around. And they would swallow them and then that worm would come back up and infect the throat. So you would take bluegrass, you know how when it comes in a head? You would skin the seed off, and that left kind of little arms on the plants,

you know. They were small and tender. You would put it in kerosene and put it down their throat and turn it a few times and yank it out, and most of the time you'd get that little worm out.

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] Oh, gee.

Wallace Beckner: So that was the way of—you didn't have medications. That's the way, if the chickens got out and you got some gaps, you got busy. You were your own veterinarian. Same way with livestock. If they got cut, you'd use some carbolic acid or something on it and wrap it up with a bed sheet and most of the time they got well. So we had a veterinarian, a Dr. Glover from Staunton that would come out in rare cases. But most of the time everything was pretty much the farmers did it themselves, or they'd call in somebody to help them, or sometimes there was someone who was pretty good at it -- with calving problems, or a colt or something like that. Lorene's grandfather [W.A. McCurdy] that lived up at Rockbridge Baths, he pretty much was a veterinarian for that area back in, we'll say 1900 up to--well, he kept a dairy up until '34 when he died. He recorded in his diary every day. It was quite interesting. And he would say "Went to such and such and tended to two colts," which meant that he went up there and castrated the male colts. But he used the word tended. And he was the community -- in that area, the Rockbridge Baths area -- I guess you'd say undertaker. He'd record where "so-and-so died today and I went up and helped lay him out," which is the terminology because, of course, they didn't embalm them then. But they cleaned the body and prepared it. And the next day then he'd record, "Went to Lexington to get a casket." Of course, that was on the wagon. And the next day "was buried." Never saw the word funeral ever mentioned. "Buried" was the terminology. "Buried Mr. So-and-so or Mrs. So-and-so." A lot of children died, small children in those days. But in 1928, he recorded that--and I forgot who it was that was buried--and he says "We used automobile hearse today." Borrowed it from Harrison's [Funeral Home in Lexington].

Isabelle Chewning: Interesting.

Wallace Beckner: So the people were very self-sufficient in those days.

Isabelle Chewning: Resourceful.

Wallace Beckner: Yeah. And in these questions here, the word Decatur doesn't appear, and yet people around the [Rockbridge] Baths particularly used Decatur as the railroad place. They hauled railroad ties there. They hauled staves. Like 300 staves to a wagon load. And every day or two, they would say "Hauled a load of staves to Decatur." That's to make barrels out of. Also, they would ship tanning bark.

Isabelle Chewning: What's that?

Wallace Beckner: Used for dyeing. You know how a walnut, it'll stain you? Well, oak bark and other different barks will give you different stains, and that was used a lot in dyeing back in those days. And they'd load them on the rail car and sometimes a car would come in on a certain date and all the people who, particularly in the winter time who had time, would take a load of bark or tie [??] over and sell them and ship them and so forth. Now in my day, we used to have our fertilizer to come in on the rail car at Decatur, and Mr. Frank Rees there at Brownsburg was an agent. And then there was a Mr. Frank Armentrout, who lived there where Branner [sp?] Tolley lives [3413 Maury River Road]. Our agent. And they would go around in the spring and in late summer to each farm and say, "How much fertilizer are you going to need?" and order it.

Isabelle Chewning: And what did he use for fertilizer? What was it?

Wallace Beckner: Well, mostly what you would get then is 16 or 18 percent phosphate. You didn't have nitrate or you didn't have potash. But they put potash in because most of the time they had manure and that furnished the nitrogen that they needed. But the fertilizer came in 167-pound bags, and now you get fertilizer in 50-pound bags. Feed in 50-pound bags. Mainly because women do the work now. And I could never lift one. I could sometimes drag a bag. But we would go, and everybody would go -- when the rail car came in -- with your wagon, and wait in line until you got up there and then Mr. Rees or Mr. McCurdy or Mr. Armentrout would say "Okay, Mr. Beckner, you get 20 bags." So they would load the 20 bags on the wagon. You'd come home. I was a small kid and I went with Dad one day and we were waiting in line over in Decatur and you come over Decatur Hill--and of course right at kind of the foot of the hill is where the railroad went through. We were waiting in line. And in that house--it's still there on the corner [get address] --there was an old parrot on the back porch. And I had never seen a parrot. I had read about it in school books. But the old parrot was saying "Polly wants a cracker. Polly wants a cracker." And I was fascinated. And the old parrot got tired of hollering I guess. He said "Polly wants a cracker. Damn it. Polly wants a cracker." [Laugh] I knew that was a bad word, I wasn't supposed to use it. So Dad changed the subject.

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] That parrot was going to corrupt you!

Wallace Beckner: Because I never heard my father use--the strongest word I ever heard him use, and I only heard him use it one time, he said "dern." A lady had aggravated him to death. And he said, "Shut your dern mouth." Strongest words he ever used, but she was standing up the road telling him what to do. He was working with a horse that had gotten in the creek. And she said "If you weren't so tight, the boys would come down and help you." And at that point Dad turned and he said "Shut your dern mouth," and he went back to work. And that's the only time I ever heard him say even doggone or anything.

Isabelle Chewning: Was your farm mainly pasture, or did you have a lot of crops growing?

Wallace Beckner: We did mostly crop and some milk cows.

Isabelle Chewning: What did you grow? Did you grow wheat and corn?

Wallace Beckner: Wheat and corn were the two main because you had to have wheat to take a portion of it to the mill, and you drew off of it for flour throughout the year.

Isabelle Chewning: Which mill did you go to?

Wallace Beckner: We went to the one out here next to Bill Dunlap's place [803 Hays Creek Road, currently known as McClung's Mill].

Isabelle Chewning: Was it called Wade's Mill too?

Wallace Beckner: Yeah. That was one of the four or five Wade's Mills in the area. Of course, Harold [Wade] ran that most of the time that I remember. And of course, he lost his arm in some machinery out there.

Isabelle Chewning: Oh, in the mill?

Wallace Beckner: Yeah. But he could tie a string with one hand on a bag of feed so quick that you didn't see what he was doing with that one hand. He was good--well, all of the millers, they had to be good people to stay in business because you could go over here if you didn't. And they were all--Mast had one up here at Rockbridge Baths. And of course, the Wade's Mill out there where Jimmy Wade lives and so forth. And there was one at Greenville and the one over here at Hays Creek. And of course, they were all water powered. Both of them, I'd say about ten years before they went out of business, got some diesel powers because they could grind with different types of grinding equipment faster. That's when they went in more into feed because the flour production wasn't needed as much and then commercially, the flour in different grades and so forth was being sold in the stores. But they were all a group of people that were interested in you. In other words, when you went to get something, you cried on their shoulder a little bit about the cow that died, or something like that and they were sympathetic and they would tell you "So-and-so lost one or so-and-so had twin calves." Sort of like the barber shop. They were a place of communication and so forth. Not like going in WalMart now where you may meet your neighbor in there but you're going to meet a whole lot of neighbors that you don't know.

Isabelle Chewning: Right. Did you use horses to do the farm work?

Wallace Beckner: Yes. We used horses till 1946, just before I came back to the United States. We used horses to do all of the farm work. In fact, old Charlie that we were talking about, your grandfather used to work him and then the boys would drive him at night. He might be plowing during the day, but they kind of doubled up on him because he may be smaller, but he was gritty. Like I was speaking about, everybody raised horses just like we raise cattle, because they had to keep a certain amount and they would sell them. And not all of them turned out to be the best, so they got rid of them. In fact, Lorene's father [Fred McCurdy] who was--speak of him, Fred went to Lexington to get such-and-such and sometimes he'd go twice a day and ride horse back from Rockbridge Baths into Lexington. And court day was when everybody brought their horses in to trade which, was once a month. And Mr. McCurdy recorded "Fred went to town today and traded his horse for a watch." We're not sure whether it was a gold watch, or the horse was no count, which was which. But that was kind of unusual to trade.

Isabelle Chewning: Didn't seem quite even. Didn't seem quite balanced.

Wallace Beckner: And when they were hauling grain, generally you would store your grain in garner in the granaries.

Isabelle Chewning: What's a garner?

Wallace Beckner: That's just a blocked off area with boards. Maybe four or five feet wide and maybe [it would] go back six feet. And you had garner boards in front, about six inches wide that you would slide down. As it got fuller, you'd put another board in, and so forth. And in the winter time, you would take it and sell it. You'd take it to the mill generally from the threshing machine, but lots of times if you were going to sell it, by that time you knew how much you were going to use yourself, and you'd sell the rest. And they'd bag it up in two-bushel bags and take it to the train. Now, Dad used to speak of going to Raphine to put it on the train. And he said that at the foot of -- out there near Wade's Mill [55 Kennedy Wades Mill Loop], they would keep extra teams of horses there, the community would, when they were hauling. Cooperating together. And to go up Raphine hill, since it was so deep and so long, they would hook another team of horses in front and make four horse teams to get it up, because in the winter time it could get real rutty and so forth.

Isabelle Chewning: Because it was a dirt road.

Wallace Beckner: Dirt road. And Dad said that was the first hard surfaced road in the area. That the farmers did it to get better roads to haul their merchandise or produce over to Raphine. You can see it would be a long hard run. But neighbors would keep some extra teams there, so that when so-and-so got here, they'd hook up to the front tongue and take four horses to pull up there. As you can see, it's more of a total cooperation. Everybody didn't live to themselves. They lived with each other. And if we sold veal calves, you had to take them and put them on the railroad and send them--they either went to Chicago or

Baltimore. Those were the two markets. I remember one time we took a veal calf and I'm not sure whether--I believe we took that to Decatur, though. And my brother and I were holding him. Of course, we had a rope around his neck and kind of a halter on him in the back seat of the model T, and he kicked the door. And the model Ts had--it was a form of cardboard covering over it. Now we have plush and so forth on the inside. Anyway, he kicked a hole in that and that hole was still in there when Dad traded it off in '33. [Laugh] I guess one of us was supposed to been back there and catch it from kicking but we didn't. And then Mr. Bill Buchanan lived over where Freddie Whipple bought [1397 McElwee Road]. He was a livestock dealer and he'd come around in the summer and look at your lambs and offer you a price on them and so forth. In the fall of the year, he would--your calves, if you raised some calves or if you had some veal calves to go around about that time when he was making up a load, he'd buy them from you. And you may haul them in a wagon, or you might drive them. He used to drive cattle that people would keep when they'd wean the calves, stock cattle. He would hire local boys and drive cattle to Highland County for the summer, for pasture out in Bath County because there was a lot of acreage out there that wasn't farmed and it was great bluegrass country. And I never did drive any because I was too young when that was going on. But that was something that the older teenagers or young men would look forward to. It would take about a week to drive them out there, and about a week in the fall of the year to round them up and drive them back and so forth. But everything was taken care of in its way.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you have a big garden?

Wallace Beckner: Oh, yeah. Garden was the life line of the family. You raised wheat and corn. You could get cornmeal. Cornmeal was used a lot, too, for various things. Mush and corn bread and things like that. But canning, like at the cannery. Of course, you raised a lot of potatoes, a lot of sweet potatoes, cabbage. Turnips, and so forth like that, they were raised and buried in the ground. And in the fall of the year, you'd dig a hole and line it with leaves or straw and put your vegetables down in there and then put straw or something over top and then put four to six inches of dirt on top of that and that would keep it. And you'd go out in the winter time, and if you needed a cabbage, you'd dig out a head of cabbage and take it in and use it for slaw or cooked cabbage or boiled cabbage and so forth. Of course, your potatoes, apples and pears and so forth. Most people either had a ground cellar, which was a hole in the ground with pretty much just a roof over top of it. And it would be sealed tight enough that you wouldn't freeze in there. But the temperature was such that you would keep apples and stuff like that in there.

Isabelle Chewning: And it wouldn't freeze?

Wallace Beckner: Wouldn't freeze.

Isabelle Chewning: Because it was far enough below ground?

Wallace Beckner: Yeah. Most of them were kind of walk-in. With a door out here, put it on the side of a hill, you know, and dig back. And you had a roof over it to keep the water out. You could make it as crude as you wanted to, or you could fix it up, put some shelves or something in there, a box, wooden boxes.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you all have one of those?

Wallace Beckner: We had a basement in underneath the house which was in two parts. One part was -- during slave times -- where they prepared the food, a big wide fireplace probably about six feet wide with the hanging arms and so forth that swing in and out. We used it when we would butcher to render lard and cook the food for sausage and so forth. We've canned in it when we had our own capper. We'd seal the cans up and put them in the water and cook them there. And we made apple butter there. But then the second part of it we called it the upper cellar. This had a brick floor, but this upper cellar was just a dirt floor. And there were bins in there and crude tables that we would put canned goods on. And back on the back side was big bins there that we put the potatoes in, because the darkness, since there was no light and all in there, they wouldn't start sprouting.

[End of Tape 1, Side B]

Isabelle Chewning: Today is November 19th. My name's Isabelle Chewning, and I'm back to interview Mr. Wallace Beckner a little bit further. We had to stop last time because I was headed off to work, but hopefully we'll be able to finish the questions today. If you wouldn't mind, Mr. Beckner, I know we talked about your neighbors last time but I wasn't sure exactly where some of them had lived. Can you help me out with that? You mentioned the Runkles. Where did the Runkles live?

Wallace Beckner: The Runkles lived, and it was the Runkle home place, was where Claude Bare and Ada lived out here [get address]. And of course no one's in the home right now, but the grandson, Booper Bare, is right below there, built a house right beside it [get address].

Isabelle Chewning: And was that Mrs. Ada Bare's family place?

Wallace Beckner: Yes.

Isabelle Chewning: She was a Runkle?

Wallace Beckner: Yes.

Isabelle Chewning: And you mentioned the Hutchesons.

Wallace Beckner: The Hutchesons bordered our farm on two sides and that -- it belonged to Robert Steele Hutcheson who was kind of a businessman here in the county, and then later his son, Dr. Hutcheson in Roanoke was the owner of it. And then it's been sold numerous times since that, and actually it's been kind of subdivided.

Isabelle Chewning: And you mentioned the Wades. Can you tell me where the Wades lived?

Wallace Beckner: All around us. [Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: Lots of Wades.

Wallace Beckner: Yes. When I was married, my wife was from Fishersville. When we came up, I said, "Don't ever say anything about anyone in this community because they're all related."

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] But where did Mr. Bud Wade live?

Wallace Beckner: Mr. Bud Wade lived adjoining our farm, you can see it from here. The house has been torn down, or it practically fell down from termites, and a new log house was built there about two years ago [get address]. A great couple from near Atlanta moved here and built the log house there.

Isabelle Chewning: And how about Mr. Kite Wade?

Wallace Beckner: Mr. Kite Wade lived actually over where Richard Whitesell lives now [10 Anderson Farm Road]. That was the Kite Wade place or-- well it was called the Mortar [??] place when he was there and we now we call it the Kite Wade place. And he [Kite Wade] drove a school bus. He and Bud [Wade] had owned one together and they drove it kind of a day apart. Mr. Kite was a -- he was kind of a horse trader and livestock trader, too; in other words, he dealt with horses mostly but if somebody wanted to trade a cow for a horse he'd work something out too. [Laugh] And his daughter, Bernice Nye lives in Brownsburg now [2843 Brownsburg Turnpike]. And of course see -- and Virginia Whitesell was his other daughter. He had four girls.

Isabelle Chewning: And was Ruth Beard one of those?

Wallace Beckner: Right.

Isabelle Chewning: I see.

Wallace Beckner: And Mary Frances--.

Isabelle Chewning: Your sister Mary Frances?

Wallace Beckner: No, Mary Frances Wade married Roscoe Poole from up in Dutch Hollow. They lived, I think, kind of in the Waynesboro area, over the years.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you go to school with those?

Wallace Beckner: I was in school between Bernice and Ruth. Ruth was the youngest and Bernice was next, and I think there were -- let me see, yes, Ruth was a year behind me and Bernice was a year ahead of me.

Isabelle Chewning: We had talked a little bit about your time in the Service in Japan, and then I don't think we got around to talking about what happened when you got out of the Service.

Wallace Beckner: I got out of the Service and went to Hampden-Sydney for awhile. I did not graduate there but I attended -- because I had some problems in Service and college. I had a nervous breakdown, which it actually happened in the Service. And so I came back to the farm and worked here.

Isabelle Chewning: Were your parents still living?

Wallace Beckner: Yes.

Isabelle Chewning: When you came back?

Wallace Beckner: Yes. In fact when I came back from Service, came in through Washington, Fort Lawton, Washington, on the west coast, and received my discharge there and came by train through Chicago and then on down to Washington. And in Washington, a good friend of mine from- who was with me all the time during Service, lived in Staunton; and for some reason, I just wasn't ready to come home. When we got to Richmond I said, "I'm not going home," and he said, "Yes you are, Beck." And I said, "Well, for some reason I'm just not ready." And of course I had a brother living in Richmond and he was at med school. But he talked me into it. So I came on home and rode the bus then to Lexington and got a taxi to bring me out. And it was two or three o'clock in the morning, and I slipped in the house, and I was

going upstairs to the bedroom, trying to be as quiet as possible, and I can hear my mother now say, "Is that you Wallace?"

Isabelle Chewning: Oh she knew.

Wallace Beckner: And they knew I would be coming home sometime soon but I didn't get a chance to slip in.

Isabelle Chewning: She must've been so happy to know you were on your way home.

Wallace Beckner: Yeah. And so I worked here for -- about '56 I think, I went to work at Burlington, or it was Lee's Carpets of Glasgow then. And I worked there 34 years, retired from it. And I was an administrative manager there, and that was the customer service end of it, and I've listened to all the complaints that people have had.

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] Well Lee's Carpets was a pretty big industry then, wasn't it?

Wallace Beckner: When I went there, there were about 1400 employees there. And of course it actually covered about 40 acres of ground, the buildings and manufacturing and storage and so forth. And it was a big business and [employed] people from all over the county. They ran a bus, a school bus for employees. One came to Fairfield, one went out in Collierstown and one went toward Bedford and one went toward Roanoke. So you had an influx of employees from, you might say, all around. But I don't know whether I should say this or not, but I'll say it anyway. They had the monopoly on industry in the county. And between that, and Lexington being a college town, other industry was not welcomed. Because Lexington wanted to remain a college town and Burlington, Lee's Carpets, wanted to have the monopoly on the industry. So that's one of the things -- we talk about our county economy now and the lack of industry and so forth. It goes way back, the restriction; not really the restriction, but the discouragement of anything else coming in.

Isabelle Chewning: Inhospitable atmosphere for new industry then.

Wallace Beckner: Right.

Isabelle Chewning: Was it still Lee's Carpets when you retired or had it changed to Burlington?

Wallace Beckner: No it was Burlington for probably 15 years, before that.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you start in the administrative end or did you work yourself up to being an administrator?

Wallace Beckner: I started as an inventory control clerk in broad wool, because in those days carpet was made out of wool. And of course when I left there were no wool carpets being made at Glasgow at all, it was all synthetic fiber. In fact, this carpet right here [indicates carpet on floor of his house] is known as Kodell fiber, which was a byproduct from Kodak Company. And it has the qualities of wool as much as anything that's been developed, but they could never get it as fire retardant as they would like to. So it was only used a few years.

Isabelle Chewning: Well it certainly looks like it's held up.

Wallace Beckner: It's probably 30 years-old. So, as I said, it has great qualities except it's not fire retardant.

Isabelle Chewning: And did all the supplies, materials, raw materials come in on the train at Glasgow?

Wallace Beckner: Yes. Of course when I first went there everything was all wool, and of course it came in in huge bales, about 3 feet square and about 4 to 8 feet in length, baled up of wool. And that, all the wool that goes into carpet, it's imported from India, Pakistan, places like that, because the fiber is coarser, and can be used and it has more wearing ability. American wool is what goes into sweaters and things like that.

Isabelle Chewning: I didn't know that.

Wallace Beckner: Because it's a fine, softer wool.

Isabelle Chewning: It's just different types of sheep?

Wallace Beckner: Different type of sheep, and some-- there was one type of wool that came from Pakistan that if you look at it through a magnifying glass it looked rough, and it looked almost like, shall we say, a horse's mane or something. And sometimes -- well all of the carpet had wool blends in it. You didn't use one type of wool, you used three or four, and in some cases even more than that, different types of wool, and spin them together and process them. And that you gave you the wool blend and like it gave some -- like one might have more wearing ability, another might have more ability to curl down to create designs and so forth. So I started out in raw wool, inventory clerk.

Isabelle Chewning: And worked your way up.

Wallace Beckner: Yes, and so-- but I was the Administrative Manager for 26 years.

Isabelle Chewning: Oh you worked your way up pretty fast then.

Wallace Beckner: Yes, I was very fortunate. I had several good breaks. I was scheduling production after I left raw wool, and I did something that I thought was very simple, in scheduling, and giving a report to the Superintendent by just using a scale of saying we have this many types of orders to make this type of carpet. I would have a scale across, by days and weeks and months and so forth; this'll run us up till the, we'll say the 5th of December, in 12-foot looms. Now we've got some others that'll run us, a short order, but that will only last two days. But it gave them a way to plan their schedule because we used to be known -- you'd work 7 days one week and 4 the next. So, and this helped in the area that I was scheduling in, and so they put in Customer Service at Glasgow. Then they asked me to do the administrative end. So I had to hire -- well, one time I had 33 telephone operators that were taking orders from all over the United States.

Isabelle Chewning: That's a big operation.

Wallace Beckner: Yes, it was.

Isabelle Chewning: And did your crew work five days a week?

Wallace Beckner: We used to say when we hired them, it's like Mrs. Smith has been wanting carpet for two years and finally she has the money, or she's finally decided what she really wants; so she places an order for it. And she could care less whether somebody is out sick or whether the order got there Friday. She would like to be able to go to the mailbox and pick up her order the next day, but she knows that's not possible; but the following day she's got hopes for it. And so, in Customer Service, we had a vice-president that told us "You will stay open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, if the public demands it." So we hired people under that aspect. Now they didn't have to do it all the time, but let's say they knew that if the occasion arose that they would do that. And as he said, it's like a filling station on the interstate: somebody's got to be there, whenever the need is there. So we operated under those conditions and we had -- we took orders and we processed the orders two shifts, in the office, and a skeleton shift on the third shift. And that -- because we would receive the orders and we had to get them ready for the mill and tell them what piece of carpet, because we had 3000 to 5000 rolls of carpet in the warehouse and we had to tell them which roll to cut it off of, on the order, and where the location where that roll was.

Isabelle Chewning: So you were an inventory manager too then almost.

Wallace Beckner: Yeah. And so yeah, it all tied together. Now later, we started into with what we called flexowriters. You've probably never heard of that.

Isabelle Chewning: No.

Wallace Beckner: You know the calculator, the big monster calculators that they had, then they went to flexowriters which gave- you could type in the size, like a 12 by 15, and you'd hear it kind of buzzing, and then it would print out then what the square yards were. And you would type in the price and it would extend it out, and so forth. Then we went from that to the monster computer which the first one was about the size of this room. [Laugh] And when I left there most of the people were using laptops. And you notice, I don't have one, I don't want one!

Isabelle Chewning: It's awfully easy to get dependent on them if you have one.

Wallace Beckner: And so sometimes I'd feel embarrassed when someone said, "Give me your email number," and I'd say, "I'm sorry, I don't have one." But I'll survive.

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] You probably will, you'll do just fine. Can you tell me about when you met your wife?

Wallace Beckner: I met Lula in, let's see, about '44 or '45 -- it was in '44.

Isabelle Chewning: So this is before you went in the Service?

Wallace Beckner: Um hmm. We were in -- well both of us were on the Presbytery's, Youth Council. We had a retreat up at -- above Rockbridge Baths, Goshen Pass there. It was New Monmouth Church had a cabin -- they called it a cabin, it was a large kind of camp there. And many churches used it and so forth, and the Presbytery had a retreat there. And I met her there. She was a District Chairman for her area which was -- as I said, she lived in Fishersville and went to Tinkling Springs. And I, of course, went to Bethesda. And so that was that. And I went in the Service.

Isabelle Chewning: What was her name?

Wallace Beckner: Lula Shaver. She was the only girl and four boys.

Isabelle Chewning: And is it s-h-a-v-e-r?

Wallace Beckner: Um hmm. Her father was in charge of maintenance of schools in Augusta County. They later gave him the big name of Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds. And her brother took over then, after her father retired in the schools. And so I got a letter from her, after I went in Service, and we started corresponding. And I laughed and said that she took advantage of me because the day I got her letter it was rainy and dreary, and it was in I guess you'd say boot camp. And when mail call came, we had been out picking up cigarette butts on the ground. [Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] She caught you in a weak moment then, didn't she?

Wallace Beckner: Yes. And so we corresponded during Service. And I went to -- overseas in November, and--.

Isabelle Chewning: What year was that?

Wallace Beckner: That was in '44. And she sent me a fruitcake, and I got that fruitcake in February, and we ate every crumb of it. [Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] I bet you did.

Wallace Beckner: It was dry and it was hard but people, the guys were almost ready to fight for it! But I got, I guess it was a week before I got my first letter, from the time I left the United States in November, until I got my first letter, because we were moving fast and the mail didn't get up with us. And so I got that letter one day and the next day I got 27 letters.

Isabelle Chewning: Oh, she had been busy writing letters, hadn't she?

Wallace Beckner: Well they weren't all from her, they were from home, and my two sisters were pretty good about writing and so forth.

Isabelle Chewning: And so when you were in the Pacific, was your brother [William Beckner] in Europe at that time?

Wallace Beckner: Yes, he was coming home actually. Because see, I was in before the war with Japan was over with; but the European war surrendered before that. So he was on his way home when I was over in the Pacific area.

Isabelle Chewning: Oh your poor mother. She got one home and then had to send the other one off the other direction.

Wallace Beckner: Well I volunteered. I wasn't drafted because – But, as I said, Lula and I corresponded during those three years. And then when I got back, why I proposed. Well we had led up to it in letters over the years and so forth. And I proposed to her and she said she would marry but she wouldn't accept a ring, she was afraid her mother would get upset at it, being the only girl. [Laugh] So it was a couple of years before that happened, before she would take the ring. And of course her mother, well her whole family accepted me as one of the family. In fact, her brothers would, I think would've taken up for me before they would've her, it seemed. She was -- had been the only daughter. She was -- I won't say spoiled, but she was -- let's say she was hard to convince of things sometimes.

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] And had she gone to college while you were in the Service?

Wallace Beckner: She was working. She had finished at Dunsmore, a business college, and she was working for the Augusta County School system as Secretary to the Superintendent. But she always wanted to do church work. And so she was doing -- helping Dr. Dunbar Ogden at the First Presbyterian Church there in Staunton, on weekends. And he talked with her, and she got a scholarship to Flora McDonald through -- with Dr. Ogden's help and so forth. Because her father's concept was that a woman's job was either in the home or maybe a secretary or something like that, or teaching but generally was very limited. His concept of what a female's position was in the world was different. So she went on her own, went to Flora McDonald.

Isabelle Chewning: Where was that?

Wallace Beckner: It's in, near Asheville, North Carolina, and not too far from there. And so she had a work scholarship there, and she worked in the Treasurer's Office. And the lady that she worked for there was an old maid, shall we say, and very domineering. And the first year when they were sending out W2s to all the employees there, at the college, she [Lula] typed up the letters and the envelopes and like she put Mr. or Mrs. or Miss So-and-so. And most of the employees were black, and Mrs. Brown, her boss, made her retype all of them. She said, "We don't use Mr. or Miss or Mrs. for these employees."

Isabelle Chewning: Oh. They didn't get titles of respect.

Wallace Beckner: No, there was no title of respect. And of course that was heavily black populated there, and a lot of Indian blood there too; there was a settlement of Indians not too far from there, I think about 8 or 10 miles from there. So then she -- two years and then she came back and she taught at Beverley Manor until we were married.

Isabelle Chewning: When were you married?

Wallace Beckner: In '51. And I'd built the house in 1950. You know when you go fishing, you bait the hook. [Laugh] So, but the--.

Isabelle Chewning: So it's this house that you built?

Wallace Beckner: This house, but it was much smaller. We added on both ends of it after we -- over the years. In other words, we kept a mortgage all of our lifetime. [Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: Well it must've been pretty good bait. [Laugh]

Wallace Beckner: And after we were married Mr. [Floyd] Kaye, the [Rockbridge County School] Superintendent, gave her a job teaching at Fairfield. But in August of that year, she went to see him about -- or went to the principal, and he sent her to Mr. Kaye -- about which room she would have. And she was teaching a combination of first and second, that was what it was. She finally found out that she would be teaching in a little wooden building beside the Presbyterian Church there [5508 North Lee Highway], with a coal stove in it. And she went in to talk to Mr. Kaye about it. She said, "I don't know, I can't -- I don't know about building a fire and keeping it going," in these little potbellied stoves and so forth. And she found out that she would be teaching this combination class of students who, let's say, maybe their IQs or home environment were not up to snuff. And so it ended up she said, "Well I will not teach under those conditions." He said, "Then you won't have a job." So she went to secretarial work and was secretary to Mr. Samples, who was Superintendent of Lexington schools. And then the County PTAs were behind it, wanted to put music in the schools. And so they pretty much gave -- left it up-- and Mrs. Jen Heffelfinger was one who worked in this area about it. And they came to Lula and asked her if she would teach music. It was part-time. So she taught music, I think, at Rockbridge Baths, and I don't know whether it was Fairfield or not. But I know she had -- she taught music at Brownsburg and she had the Glee Club at Brownsburg. And I think she did that three years, and then she reapplied and she got the second grade at Brownsburg, and she taught the second grade. Well she taught 34 years all together, between Augusta County and here. And she went -- the year that our youngest son, Jimmy, would've been in the second grade, she and Wilma Mast switched grades. She taught the third and Wilma taught the second, for that year, so that she wouldn't be teaching Jim. She taught Wally, and that was enough. He complained all the time that he always had to stay -- had to be at the back of the line, he never got a chance to do this or to do that, that the other students did.

Isabelle Chewning: I had Mrs. Beckner for the third grade. I think I was supposed to have Mrs. Mast but she was sick for a year maybe.

Wallace Beckner: Could've been, I don't- may have been when Carrie was born. So that I don't know.

Isabelle Chewning: I enjoyed having her for a teacher. Poor Jimmy, poor Wally.

Wallace Beckner: Jimmy, she never taught Jim, because as I said they switched that year; and so that was good, because Jim would've given her a rough time. He's a different personality from Wally.

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] Oh those second children.

Wallace Beckner: Yes. [Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: So you got married then in 1951 and moved into this house.

Wallace Beckner: Um hmm.

Isabelle Chewning: And when you were working at Lee's, were you also farming?

Wallace Beckner: Right.

Isabelle Chewning: In partnership with your dad?

Wallace Beckner: Yes.

Isabelle Chewning: When did you have time to do that?

Wallace Beckner: Evenings, Saturdays -- didn't work on Sunday, except feeding and so forth.

Isabelle Chewning: Was it primarily a beef operation at that point?

Wallace Beckner: Mostly. And also during that period of time, I used to buy all the calves that your grandfather [Madison McClung Sterrett, Sr.] had at the dairy.

Isabelle Chewning: Bull calves?

Wallace Beckner: Um hmm. And I raised -- I had some milk cows that I would raise the calves on, and sell them as vealers, during that time. So I've -- the last five years, I've been farming, supposedly full-time,

for the first time in my life, and yet I've farmed all my life. But after I got out of the Burn Center five years ago -- of course my wife had Alzheimer's and it was becoming progressively worse, at that time. And I said, "I will not go back to work, I'll stay here with her." So of course at that time I was working at the Farm Bureau. I'd retired from Burlington in '87. So I've been retired the first time for -- 20 years ago. And then I retired from Farm Bureau at Fairfield, it'll be five years ago.

Isabelle Chewning: Let me look through my questions here and see what else we might have missed.

Wallace Beckner: There was a question, something about when did mechanism -- I can't talk this morning -- first came to the farm. We bought -- Dad bought the first tractor in 1946. That was when they first switched back, from World War II, from military production to, shall we say, normal production farm equipments. And I bought the first combine in 1954, and that was, I think, the first combine in Rockbridge County.

Isabelle Chewning: That was a huge piece of machinery.

Wallace Beckner: Yes.

Isabelle Chewning: So did you do a lot of combining for the farmers around here?

Wallace Beckner: We did custom work. Carl Reese, "Big Eye" as we called him, operated it, helped me operate it. He would run it during the day and then I would come home from the plant and get on it and we would -- then work as long as it didn't get too tough or something. And we would start out at Rockbridge Baths, because the river bottom's there, and the grain would ripen about two weeks earlier there than it would in the Spottswood area, which is high. So it'd give us a longer working -- operating time. And so we would start out with barley there, and move through, and then we'd go back and start out with wheat which is generally about two to three weeks later maturing than barley. And then we'd do the wheat through the area, in Rockbridge Baths, here in the Brownsburg area, and then move over to the Spottswood area. And then sometimes there would be rye and oats after that, that we'd go through. So it was -- I'd say we kept it busy for about two months.

Isabelle Chewning: And who were some of the farmers that you did custom work for?

Wallace Beckner: Well up at the [Rockbridge] Baths, we did it for the Chittums, and Jake Mohler and the Fixes up there. And in this area, we used to do a good bit for Ed Patterson when he lived in Back Draft; he and Ag lived back there when they were first married, and they had the Moore place down there, which was a big farm then. But we traded back and forth. He had a square baler and I didn't, and so he would bale my hay, and I would do his combining. And then all the farms around here-- the Mohlers that lived on

the Hutcheson place; McCurdy's that lived on Miss Dot Wade's place, right below us here. And well just all around, the Bare's and everybody. We did all of the combining that was done. Now it started out, people didn't like the idea of the combine because they said wheat wouldn't -- hadn't gone through the sweat and such things as that, you know.

Isabelle Chewning: What did that mean?

Wallace Beckner: It dries out to a point, and then there's still some moisture in the grain, and it kind of will stay there for a period of time. I'm talking about maybe a week. And it used to be when you'd cut it with a binder and you'd put it in the sheaves and shocked it up, it would be probably a month before you'd get around to threshing it with a threshing machine; so it dried it. But people had the concept that it hadn't gone through the sweat, so when you put it in the garner in your barn- in your granary, it would sweat and mold on you. Well, that turned out to not be the problem that farmers thought it was going to be. You waited until it was good and dry, and then you were all right. And Tom Bare ran it after "Big Eye" [Reese] wasn't able to. He helped me a couple of years.

Isabelle Chewning: Was it still the same machine?

Wallace Beckner: No, it was a different machine, and we had two that we ran several years. When we did two, one we did a lot of grass seed, orchard grass seed. And one year we got about 40 acres to do up at Fancy Hill, next to Natural Bridge. And we had two big truckloads of orchard grass seed, if you can imagine.

Isabelle Chewning: That's pretty small seed.

Wallace Beckner: And we used to do it for Bruce Slusser; cut a lot of grass seed, Fescue seed for Bruce, up on the Lyle place, which is on up around the turn there, the first road leading off, after you pass where Bruce lived [Cloverdale, 4216 Brownsburg Turnpike]. We went up there.

Isabelle Chewning: How much did they cost, combines?

Wallace Beckner: Well I bought it -- the first one I had, I don't remember what I paid for it, because it had been used one year.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you have to take a loan to buy it?

Wallace Beckner: I usually did. And I know in '64 I traded in the first one, and I bought a new one, and it cost -- it was 1964, and it cost 6400 dollars, which nowadays that's a used vehicle, a used car. But at that time it was a lot of money.

Isabelle Chewning: And where was the equipment dealer, where did you buy them?

Wallace Beckner: We had a dealer in Lexington. It's on the lot where the -- well it's right above the Italian restaurant [Café Michel, 640 North Lee Highway], that's where you would go in there, there at East Lexington. And the new buildings that are built back in there, government buildings and so forth, that was all the Baker -- Bud Baker had it. He was a Case [equipment] dealer, and they, the Baker Brothers had I think four dealerships. There were six brothers. One of them happened to be a vice-president for Case, and so that enabled them, after the war, to get -- to have priority in getting new equipment. And but Mr. Bud Baker, who operated the one up here, when they sold that out-- in fact he tried to talk me and my brother Bill into buying it -- he went to Augusta County and started Augusta Tractor Company. Well he called it Staunton Tractor. It was next to Rowe's [Restaurant] there, on [Route] 250, and later they moved up to their present site, which his son operates now. And another brother-- of course he went to International Equipment -- another brother kept Case but they went out of farm equipment and went into construction equipment. And they had built a new place just closer to Staunton. It's up there where Augusta Equipment is now, that sells New Holland; but they sold out.

Isabelle Chewning: What kind of tractor was your first tractor?

Wallace Beckner: The first tractor was a John Deere B. When I got home from Service and it was over there in a little shed that they'd built for it, and I looked at it and I said, "Where's the motor?" [Laugh] Because all this empty space between that and the front part. And I didn't know what two-cylinder putt-putts were like then. And so that was the first one, and we're still using John Deere equipment.

Isabelle Chewning: I see all those big John Deere's over there. Do I see you sometimes go by with a bale?

Wallace Beckner: Yes, taking it out to Larry McKemy's [1870 Sterrett Road], round bales. But we have a putt-putt over there. It's a 1959 model, diesel. They had just gone into diesel then. And that, it was manufactured in November and they stopped making two-cylinder John Deeres in December of that year. So this is one of the last models. And we use it in the summertime with haying for raking and things like that.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you all have any help on the farm while you were working at Lee's Carpet, or was it just you and your dad doing everything?

Wallace Beckner: Well it was just me. Dad died in '56.

Isabelle Chewning: How old was he when he died?

Wallace Beckner: I think he was 75.

Isabelle Chewning: How about your mother?

Wallace Beckner: She died in '85. She was at Sunnyside [Presbyterian Home in Harrisonburg, VA], when she passed away.

Isabelle Chewning: How long was she down there?

Wallace Beckner: About three years. She had been in other homes because there wasn't an opening at Sunnyside.

Isabelle Chewning: And then did Wally move into the house soon afterwards?

Wallace Beckner: No, Wally was -- he was still small then. Dad -- the last statement that Dad made before he passed away was -- during a blizzard he took pneumonia and Dr. [Tom] Bosworth came out and gave him some medicine on a Sunday. And he -- Wally would stand in there, and he would stand up on his tiptoes to look at it to watch Dad walk up from the house up there. So he was real small then. And in fact he was born in '54, and so he doesn't remember him. But I had him with me that Sunday night, and he said, "Wally, now come back to see me," and that's the last words that he spoke to any of us that we know of, and so forth.

Isabelle Chewning: So your mother was there quite a while by herself.

Wallace Beckner: Well she was there several years, and then she went to two different homes in Waynesboro and one in Fishersville. Of course, in those days there were more just homes that would take several adults in, and so forth. Because here she would wake up and get up in the mornings and she would maybe eat a little bit of breakfast, and then she'd lay down on the couch and sleep, go back to sleep, and when she'd wake up again, she didn't know whether she'd eaten or hadn't eaten. And I had a nephew that's -- he was in the sixth and seventh grade -- that stayed with her two years, and I just finally told my sister, "This is not being fair to him." So we got her in a home in Waynesboro. And of course both of my sisters lived in Waynesboro, so they could check on her. And then she finally got into Sunnyside. But at that point she was -- she never adjusted. If she'd gotten there earlier she probably would have.

She never adjusted. And her room was on the end of the building, it was a second story high room, and she would look out, and there was a meadow there and you could just see the top of the barn, and that was home [to her]. And they had difficulty with her striking out to go home. And so, but a friend came by and they walked to the chapel and sat, one Sunday morning -- and that's what they'd always do. But anyway they had been to breakfast and the friend said, "Well I'll come by and we'll go to church together." When she came by, Mother had laid down and passed away, slipped away. Yeah.

Isabelle Chewning: How old was she?

Wallace Beckner: She was -- she must've been 80 or 81, something like that. But she was from a large family. I think there were 13 in her family.

Isabelle Chewning: What was her maiden name?

Wallace Beckner: She was a Hart, Fannie Hart.

Isabelle Chewning: And that's where you got your middle name.

Wallace Beckner: Yes. I'm half-hearted! [Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] We talked a little bit about who -- individuals that stand out in your memory. I know you mentioned Miss Trimmer. Are there others that you have particular memories of in Brownsburg?

Wallace Beckner: Well Miss Trimmer, of course, taught me. And Mrs. Patterson, Mrs. J.K. Patterson, she was the math teacher in high school, and she had taught Algebra and Geometry and Trig so much that she knew all the textbooks, and she would say, "Well look on page such-and-such, example such-and-such." And she was a real unusual person, a lady that I had a lot of respect for. And they lived down there where Mr. [Milton] Reid lives now [Sleepy Hollow at 2645 Sterrett Road], there in Brownsburg, because your grandfather [Madison McClung Sterrett, Sr.] bought the land, the farm, that went to that. See that used to have a lot of land that now belongs to you all. But during the war -- well, first of all she was very strict in her class, yet very calm about it and all. And we used to always say if you had chewing gum in your mouth and you never chewed it, she must've been able to smell it because she knew it [laugh]. And of course you weren't allowed to do that in classes then. But it was -- that was during the first part of the war, when Mc [Sterrett] and I, your Dad and I -- and every once in awhile she would say, "You go into the class, close your books, let's talk about world events." Of course in those days in Brownsburg they had electricity -- we didn't have it here. And you'd listen to the radio and some big, an invasion here or something like that. And she would say, "Today, the events that are going on today are just as important today as Algebra is."

Isabelle Chewning: Oh.

Wallace Beckner: And she would talk about it, and we would discuss it and so forth. And it might take all class, all the class period of time, or it might, if it took half then we would go to that. She also, lots of times when she knew we had, this got into Geometry and Trig, some really, things that we didn't understand, didn't know, you'd come to class, you know, upset, because you weren't prepared, you didn't know how to do it and so forth, maybe. And she could sense it, and maybe her years of experience had taught her when it got to that point. And she's say, "All right, just close your books." And she'd read us Uncle Remus. Uncle Remus and Brother Rabbit in the Briar Patch. And she could read it with so much emphasis and dialect that it was fascinating. And, you know, after 10 minutes of that, and you relaxed, and then we'd start class. Now, she didn't do this every day. It was, you know, maybe, well, during the war, maybe one day a month or something like that, or various times like that, but she had a great sense of the human being and recognized tension. She was very patient with her teaching and so forth. She told her mother that she didn't do much visiting from the school because she said, "I don't have any children, or never had an operation so I don't have anything to talk about." [Laugh] But she was a great teacher. I mean, I had good teachers. Mollie Sue Whipple. She wasn't -- she was Mollie Sue Hull when she came there. She and a Miss Montgomery both came there, and I think they boarded with Mrs. Wade, I'm not sure. Which was characteristic in those days, you know, teachers came in and they boarded with people around the community. And she taught down in the lower grades, Mollie Sue did, and Miss Montgomery taught the seventh grade. And I think that's the first year that we were in the brick building, which was in '39. Anyway, we kids used to josh and laugh and say, "Well, now, tomorrow is Miss Montgomery's time to wear--

[End of Tape 2, Side A]

Isabelle Chewning: You were telling a story about Miss Montgomery?

Wallace Beckner: Yes, Miss Montgomery. We would laugh and say, "Sell, it's so and so's time, Miss Montgomery's time to wear the striped shirt -- blouse tomorrow," or something like that. Because they traded clothes. They were about the same size, and of course, just out of college. And back in those days clothing wasn't, let's say, they were more tradition than they were competition, like we are today.

Isabelle Chewning: Are there other teachers that stand out in your memory?

Wallace Beckner: Well, along about that time we got our first male teacher, a Mr. [A] Lunsford, and I believe he was the one who coached the first football team at Brownsburg, which I think only lasted one year because, as I said, during the war there were no sports. There was Physical Fitness and calisthenics, but no sports; basketball-- as I said that was the end of football until a number of years later, baseball, or none of that, it was always physical fitness during the war. And as I said, Mr. Lunsford was a teacher, and I think he taught history, I'm not sure, or maybe geography, I'm not sure. Because both of those were

stressed a lot in those days, and of course, during the war, geography was even more crucial. But we had two brothers in one of the classes that Mr. Lunsford taught and their name were Christ [pronounced "cris"]. And for the first couple of months he called them "Christ," and of course that was humorous to us young people. And we didn't dare laugh out loud, but we would smile and then after the class we'd say, "Hey, you righteous guy!" But we had a number of other teachers that I really didn't remember too much about, didn't make that much impression. We did have a lady, older lady, who taught, and she taught history and she should have been in a college because she loved to lean against the desk (and it would creak and groan because she was a big lady), and shut her eyes and lecture. And whenever she closed her eyes and got wound up, you'd hear an eraser hit the wall over here, or a piece of chalk or something. And she became more afraid of the principal, Miss Trimmer, than we did. Because Miss Trimmer would get on her. And so the boys were prone to go away on weekends and mail her a card and send it back to her and sign it, "love you, the Lone Ranger," or something like that. [Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] You were naughty boys!

Wallace Beckner: And it got to the point where she would give us a test every morning when we walked in the class. First thing she gave us a test on the lesson we were to have for that day. And that became a real tragedy because it worked -- you'd study. And then we found out that you didn't -- she wasn't always recording the grades because there were too many to do that every day. So we found out you got the same grade whether you took the test or not. Some few studied it, and took the test, some kept their books open and took the test, and some of us just didn't take the test. And we all passed. So you can understand why it became she was more scared of the principal than we were. [Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] How about relationships with the black people in the community? Did your family have any relationships at all with the black community? Was there a black community that was sort of at the Brownsburg end of this road, Dry Hollow Road?

Wallace Beckner: There was the house at the intersection out there, we called that Schoolma'am's house [1486 Dry Hollow Road]. The black teacher [Miss Carrie Peters] who taught at the school which later became the cannery there in Brownsburg [lived there]. When they closed that [school] then they bussed the students, of course, they had got buses by that time, and bussed the students to Lexington. Now, the school in Lexington [Lylburn Downing] was a very high level school. In fact, they got, we used to say they got things at their school that we couldn't get at our school. But the relationship with the black people, you know, they were just-- it was still a feeling, you know, they had their own church, their own school and so forth. But they were respected, you'd meet them on the street, you spoke to them, and they would speak to you.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you know their names?

Wallace Beckner: Oh, yeah.

Isabelle Chewning: And were there any around your age that you ever played with?

Wallace Beckner: Well, not really, because, as I said, well, first of all, we were not-- we grew up here on the farm, we didn't go to Brownsburg regular, once very couple of months. And now they would help, the boys and the young people and so forth, would help the farmers around or different people, and so forth. Now, they had their own problems within themselves on weekends, and sometimes the sheriff would have to come out and take somebody in, but generally by trial time they'd all forgot it, and they didn't know nothing about it, so they wouldn't testify against each other. I have to tell you one good one, though. There was a fellow by the name of Jim Brown, a black fellow, very likeable, but he was quite a character, and he worked for Fred Whipple at the dairy. Some weekends he would get carried away after he got paid, so he didn't show up for work on Sunday and Monday to milk, so Fred would lay him off. And then about two weeks later, he'd end up hiring him again. And on one of these lay-off cycles he was in Carl Swope's store there, where the antique shop [Old South Antiques, get address] is now. Well, I remember it as Mr. Supinger's store, and before that I think it was Mr. Whipple's store. But anyway, Jim was in there one day setting on the chair that didn't have a back on it but it was up against the middle post in the store there. And they were teasing him that Fred wasn't going to hire him any more. And he said, "Well, I can go and get a job anywhere." And Carl Swope said, "Jim, you know you can't go anywhere and get a job." Said, "Who would recommend you?" And I can see him now, he looked up at Swope and he said, "You would, because I owes you money!" [Laugh] A lot of truth there! And one other time Jim was laid off and he had a toothache and he's setting on that chair, same chair I was talking about, and some of them made it up that they would pull that tooth. So they got a pair of pliers and somebody pulled his-- I don't remember who was it was-- pulled his arms around back of him and Frank Patterson pulled his tooth.

Isabelle Chewning: He actually did pull it?

Wallace Beckner: He pulled his tooth with a pair of pliers and then they loaded him in the car and took him to Lexington and bought him a fifth of whiskey. So he was happy! [Laugh] The stores were the center of entertainment.

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] I remember. They called it "loafing" in the stores. You'd just sit there and hang out and gossip.

Wallace Beckner: Yeah, particularly on rainy days. It was-- and whoever didn't show up that day was the one that was the guinea pig--

Isabelle Chewning: They talked about? [Laugh]

Wallace Beckner: Yeah, they talked about.

Isabelle Chewning: You mentioned the Schoolma'am's house. Is that the house that's still there across from J.L. Swisher's?

Wallace Beckner: Yeah, that's it [1486 Dry Hollow Road]. And there were also black people lived up here on the top of the hill where the Tillery's are [1139 Dry Hollow Road].

Isabelle Chewning: I don't know where that is.

Wallace Beckner: Do you know where [John] Runkle has his shop, out here on the road? You see those cars setting there [1054 Dry Hollow Road]?

Isabelle Chewning: Oh, okay.

Wallace Beckner: Going toward Brownsburg. The house setting right on the crest of that hill up there, right against the road. Black people lived there. I don't remember, some black people lived there and then a fellow came in and married someone. And he was a black man but his name was White, so we used to say, "Mr. White, he's black but he's white." But now--

Isabelle Chewning: Did the road always go out to Hays Creek Road or was there a short cut from Dry Hollow over to Brownsburg?

Wallace Beckner: No, this is the road in my time that always existed. Now, years ago this road didn't exist, it crossed down here back where the forks in the road is down here [at the intersection of Dry Hollow Road and McElwee Road], right above that. And it came up through that back hollow, you see those cedars through there, and came on up and went up through the Hutcheson's place, and went out across the McManama place where Freddie Whipple bought [1397 McElwee Road], and came out over there onto the road over there, going up Walker's Creek. But it crossed down here, circled around, and came out down at the Blockstons [??] in front there, went down to Oak Hill where Oak Hill School was right below McElwee Chapel. And right in that turn, there's a trailer setting back in there now [77 McElwee Road], that was the road that continued there and went down Grove Creek and came out down there on [Route] 39 where the fill-in is. You don't know where the fill-in? Okay, where 252 and 39 meet. Just going down, before, you kind of go down like this and then go up. That road used to come about halfway down there and go in where it is Hart Road now and come back up the creek a ways across the creek and went down and then went back onto Rockbridge Baths.

Isabelle Chewning: Is it named Hart Road?

Wallace Beckner: Yeah.

Isabelle Chewning: Is it named for the Hart's in your family?

Wallace Beckner: Yeah. But I can remember, and that was a big deal, when they hard surfaced the road, [Route] 252, through Brownsburg and on down through. I remember my mother and my aunt talking about it, they had to sign right-of-way papers for them to widen the road through here, I mean, through Brownsburg on down. They also filled in that road where you turn into Hart Road, and, oh, it's -- the creek is down probably 50, 60 feet below that, they put in a culvert there, I mean, a big concrete bridge, and hauled dirt and hauled dirt and hauled dirt. And in the flood of '69 [Hurricane Camille], the water was so great that it built up and took that out again, and this time in '69, then they went up around the turn up there where the dumpster is [on Route 39, Maury River Road], going up toward Rockbridge Baths. And if you look on both sides up there, you see this galded [??] earth, you know, red clay, and so forth? That's where they gave them the dirt to refill that in. In fact, we came over it the night of the flood, probably within an hour before it went out and had no knowledge of it at all until the next morning [we] found out. You could put that barn over there in what was washed out.

Isabelle Chewning: I remember that flood, too. We just didn't have the notice that you get now with all the hurricane warnings.

Wallace Beckner: No. And I'm not so sure but what maybe it isn't just about as well. [Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: I know I had gone out to the movies the night before, and my mother wouldn't have let me go if she'd known bad weather like that was coming.

Wallace Beckner: Oh, gosh, no.

Isabelle Chewning: Do you remember any particular events in Brownsburg that stand out in your memory?

Wallace Beckner: As a child I remember a lot of talk about Mrs. [Mamie] Morris' church [Friends Lighthouse Mission Church] out there [formerly located next to 2671 Brownsburg Turnpike]. And the reason why I did is because Bill Allen, who lived next door down here, he went out there, attended church out there. And I guess that was kind of the first venture into the Pentecostal type of churches that sprung up in later years, and some of them becoming very prominent now. In fact, when I was in Japan, there were some orphanages that survived in Japan and they barely got enough food, but they didn't have

anything like soap or anything like that. And they were supported by, there was one there from the Church of the Nazarene. Church of Nazarene, and there was another one, but they weren't so called line denominations, that had orphanages there, that we didn't know anything about. We went into Japan and found them, you know. And of course, we gave them their first candy bars and first soap bars and a few other things. So I had a different respect for some of the so-called, what we thought, "minor" denominations for the work that they had done, do, all over the world.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you meet Mrs. Morris?

Wallace Beckner: No, I was a small child when that happened. I just heard him talking a lot about going there and then over the years he worked a lot, would come up here and help me and then I'd go down there and help him because he didn't have any equipment much and he farmed about 50 acres. So he'd always tell me about that. Because he was very religious, he loved to tell you how many times he'd read the Bible. He would sit down there on the porch and read his Bible, and sometimes he should have been out in the field working. [Laugh] But going to school, of course-- well, my aunt that passed away while we were living -- I was 9 or 10 years old -- that lived with us, and that's the first time I ever heard the word "cancer". She died with cancer.

Isabelle Chewning: Whose sister was she?

Wallace Beckner: My mother's sister. She was a Hart. Never married. And Dr. Leach did the surgery. And Dr. Bailey would come and give her a shot once a week and leave morphine for her, and it was a, as you well know, a long drawn-out 18 months shall we say, from the time she had surgery until she passed away. But Dr. Bailey would come and give her her shots. He was a great hunter. He and Bud Wade used to hunt quail and pheasant so much, you know, they had their dogs trained and so forth, they were great hunters. In fact, it was told about they were hunting on the other side of Rockbridge Baths, and an old fellow over there, that he would -- he always had more horses, he never did work them, but he always kind of had a bunch of horses for companions. And they were hunting birds over there, or went over there to hunt birds, quail. And Bud knew the old fellow, so he said "Well, I'll go in and ask him if we can hunt here." And of course, he and Dr. Bailey and Emerson Huffman -- there were four or five of the men that hunted together. So Bud went in and he came back out and the old fellow had told Bud, he said, "Yeah, but will you do something for me?" He said, "That old horse standing at the side of the yard there," said "he's so old and he should have been dead but he isn't." He said, "I'll let you hunt if you'll shoot him, because," he said, "I just can't do it." Anyway, Bud came out and he said, "That old 'blankety-blank' man won't let us hunt, so I'll just shoot his horse!" [Laugh] So he shot the horse, and the rest of them were back in the car with the motor running before Bud got back. [Laugh] They were ready to leave. So they were quite a bunch of people who worked hard and played hard, too, shall we say?

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] And practical jokers?

Wallace Beckner: Oh, yeah, well, that was, as I said, the center of attraction and amusement in Brownsburg, was the stores and so forth. They pulled one on -- did I tell you the one about Charlie Sandridge and the box?

Isabelle Chewning: No.

Wallace Beckner: Well, Charlie would come in and then he was always kind of reared back and kind of spoke with almost false authority. But you know -- and they saw him coming in, and so that was the farm store where Mr. [Dick] Barnes lives [8 Hays Creek Road]. They had a building back there that was part of it. But anyway, they saw him coming and Bruce Slusser, when he came in, he said, "Charlie", said, "Ocie's [Supinger, the phone operator] been trying to get a hold of you all day, all morning." And he said, "What'd she want?" He said, "Well, she wants you to call this number in Lexington. Said they had a box for you." This was the week before Christmas. So he goes to the back of the store and cranks up the old phone and says, "Ocie, get me--" and gave her the number in Lexington. Well, she rang it in Lexington, and he said, "This is C.W. Sandridge." When they said "Hello," he said, "This is C.W. Sandridge. I understand you've got a box for me." "This is Harrison's Mortuary."

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh]

Wallace Beckner: Charlie turned around and walked out and he didn't come back to Brownsburg for two days. [Laugh] You know, it was things like that that went on. Fred Whipple and Bruce [Slusser] was still living here then, and Sam McLaughlin, he would come in from camp, you know, over at Camp Briar Hills [formerly located at 2508 Sterrett Road], which was up on the hill next to y'all. And one day they saw Dr. Moore come in. And you know, he lived, adjoined y'all's farm on the back side on Goose Creek [955 Goose Creek Road]. And he was a biologist, I think, I'm not sure. Anyway he taught, I think, in college somewhere. They saw him coming one time and they started talking about their work in labs, Fred and Sam. And they said, "Well--" and when he came in, they said, "Yeah, we did a lot of study on reproduction of mice." And they said, they kept talking about it and Dr. Moore kept getting closer and closer and listening and so forth, and Sam said, "but we had trouble." He said, "We had to put a little window in the side of a mouse to watch the reproduction process, but," he said, "we had trouble with it." He said, "with the body heat, it would fog up inside." [Laugh] And Dr. Moore said, "Well, what did you do?" He said, "We made a little windshield wiper that worked back and forth in there." [Laugh] Dr. Moore believed them. So you could figure on, as I said, somebody's going to get a joke pulled on them or a prank of some sort, just about every day. But that was entertainment. And it's like Lorene and I talk about. You know my friend, Lorene Steele, she grew up on the next farm down here [address?]. And we say so many times-- her father was a sharecropper and as she said, we didn't have anything, but we had food to eat. And she said mom made our dresses, for the three girls, out of feed sacks, because you could buy feed in sacks then that had prints printed on it, you know, you could use it just like you go to the store and buy bolts of it. But we laugh and say we were poor but everybody else was poor, too, so we didn't think anything about it.

Isabelle Chewning: That's just the way life was.

Wallace Beckner: We were poor, everybody else was poor, so everybody did the same and enjoyed the best they could.

Isabelle Chewning: You mentioned your aunt dying of cancer and your father having polio. How about other diseases? Was your family pretty healthy? Other than normal childhood--

Wallace Beckner: Yeah, um-hmm, yeah.

Isabelle Chewning: Do you remember your small pox vaccinations?

Wallace Beckner: Yeah, I remember that. I had a scab on my arm, you know, like they would come up? And we went chestnut hunting and I climbed up a little old chestnut tree and it leaned over for me and I knocked it off, and mother give me the dickens when I got home. In the fall of the year we'd go chestnut hunting and chincapin hunting and so forth. And that's when chestnut trees, before the blight killed them all, you know. They were a smaller chestnut but they were very rich, they were more tasty than the present, large Chinese chestnuts.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you just eat them?

Wallace Beckner: Um-hmm.

Isabelle Chewning: Eat them raw or roast them or?

Wallace Beckner: Either way. We ate them until we got home and then we'd roast them. But when I was a child, you know, like Lorene said, we always had food to eat. You had your own meat, you know, from hogs and so forth that you'd butcher, and a cow. Beef was not -- it was kind of a luxury. Or if somebody had an old cow that was too old to produce, they'd shut her up and feed her corn for a couple of months and then slaughter her and generally divide her out in the community, you know. One family'd take one quarter and then another'd take another quarter, and then maybe next year they'd have a cow, and they'd, you know, pay them back. Of course you didn't have choice cuts like you have today. You had soup bones, and so forth. [Laugh] And hang it up in the smoke houses and it was cold enough in those days that it would, you know, keep for--

Isabelle Chewning: You smoked beef, too?

Wallace Beckner: Um-hmm. So you had soup. You didn't have steak, but you had soup bones and things like that. And those were the luxuries when you did that.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you have a big meal for Thanksgiving and Christmas?

Wallace Beckner: Yeah. Those were special days. We used to, as kids growing up here in the community, it was -- of course, you had to go to bed, you didn't stay up Christmas Eve and so forth, you had to go to bed. Of course, when we were younger, we were told that Santa Claus wouldn't come if we didn't. But next morning it was seeing who could put off the first firecracker in the morning.

Isabelle Chewning: Oh, firecrackers for Christmas.

Wallace Beckner: Yeah. And so of course if you had money you could buy firecrackers that were about that long, and they really gave a bang, but they could take off your fingers, too, if they got bit. And then you could buy the squibs, those were the smaller ones, and of course if you could afford them -- it didn't cost very much -- and they would come tied together, a string about like that, and if you got rich and you'd strike a match and light it at the front, and as the fuses would light up, it really sounded like a machine gun. Pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop. In fact, when Bruce Slusser got married, we went out to serenade him and somebody laid a package of squibs in his window, in his bedroom window and lit it up. That was about ten o'clock at night, you know, after they'd gone to sleep, and so forth. Of course, house was surrounded with people with guns to shoot and cut-off saws, those round saws with a hammer, you'd carry that with a wire and hit on that and that really would wake you up.

Isabelle Chewning: Made a big noise?

Wallace Beckner: Oh, gosh, make your ears tingle. Anyway, they did that, and Bruce and Mary Belle finally came to the door and we'd made it up. He didn't have his shoes on because he was prone to run around without his shoes on. Anyway, we grabbed him and put him in a car and we took him up around Collierstown and let him out barefooted. [Laugh] We didn't know it, we knew about where we let him out, but, you know, Bruce knew so many people, and he went to a house up there close by where we let him out and they brought him home and he got home before we did. [Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: [Laugh] Was his family all a big Democratic family?

Wallace Beckner: I reckon. His father was a timber man. He had a sawmill, he had people that worked for him, you know, to saw logs and drag them in with horses and stuff like that, and he sold lumber. But he also had the first, I think, automotive dealership in Lexington or the county. He had the Ford dealership in Lexington, and Dad bought our first car from him, which was a 1926 Model T Ford. And then later he

traded that in on a 1933 closed car. And that was the year they came out with the airplane doors, the suicide doors, that unhinged at the back and they opened out this way. Which were great for getting in, but if they ever came unlatched or something, it either cleaned the car or whatever you hit, one of the two. But Mr. Slusser was a man -- he was a good man in one sense of the word, but he was strictly business. He'd help anybody, but he was very demanding and he had a temper that was uncontrollable. I've heard Claude Bare talk about Harry Slusser, you remember Harry? Come to school when he was in high school all bruised up and so forth where his dad had tromped him in the stable at the barn because he didn't do something. I mean, he had a terrific temper. Later years, you know, he fell out with Dr. Walthall at New Providence, and they came to Bethesda. And a year or two later he was elected an elder. But anyway, we were having evangelistic services and Mr. Walthall was there, which was customary, you know, for local ministers to come in. And they asked him, Dr. Walthall, to lead in prayer. And when he did that, Mr. Slusser went up and got Mrs. Slusser off of the organ stool and took her home and -- 'cause he didn't want any part of it and so forth. And later on, he apologized to the Session and they later went back to New Providence, but he had a, just an uncontrollable temper. But Bruce was the second marriage. His first wife, Harry's mother, died, and he remarried and Hugh and Bruce were to the second wife. By that time, the old man had gotten over some of his frenzies, dangerous things and so forth.

Isabelle Chewning: How about George Slusser, was he part of that family?

Wallace Beckner: He was Bruce's older brother. There were three to the second wife. And of course he was killed overseas during World War II. He was a year ahead of me in school.

Isabelle Chewning: Was your family partisan? Did they typically vote Republican or Democratic or were they independents?

Wallace Beckner: Dad served as the Democratic judge at the electoral polls for years, and then I did when he stopped. I did for a number of years. But I remember one time when they had the primary election in the summer, it was somebody from Staunton who was running for Lieutenant Governor. I don't know whether he was a Timberlake, I think he was a Timberlake, I'm not sure. But a real nice man, everybody either knew him or knew of him. He had a great reputation and so forth. So when the votes were counted that year at the polls, everybody had voted Republican, even the Democratic judges and so forth and all. [Laugh] So I think -- like myself, I've served on the Democratic Committee. When the Clerk of the Court died, Mac Gilliam and his daughter [Catharine] that lives there in Brownsburg, came to me and said that the Democratic Committee would, if I was interested, they would support me to be appointed Clerk until the election, you know, regular election time came up, and then they would support me as a candidate. And I said, "No, I can't do it." I said, "I've got a good job at the plant now, I know what I'm doing there, this I wouldn't know." So I said no, and of course that's when, the year that Bruce [Patterson] came back for Richmond and decided to run for it. And I never told him that until when [Mr. Beckner's late wife] Lula passed away, he was doing some things that had to be done in settling the estate. And he was such a gentleman, he didn't sit behind his desk to me, he sat in the chair out in the office, you know, and

discussed it. And I told him about that time. He laughed, and he said, "There's been plenty of times I would have given it to you!" But I got real upset at the Democratic Party after that when the County Chairman's wife was running for an office. And Wilma [Mast] and Lula [Beckner] and a number of women in the women's clubs would take her to sales, to any, you know, public gathering or anything to promote -- she wouldn't -- she wasn't aggressive, you'd introduce her and she wouldn't say anything about what she was doing. She lost. And he [the candidate's husband] lectured the Democratic Committee group for about an hour on our failure to do so forth and so on. And then there was so much mud slinging. Like in the past election [for Walker's Creek District County Supervisor], I told Pat [Patterson] and I told Buster [Lewis], I said, "I am out of politics, at my age." I said -- and I feel both -- well, all three candidates -- are good friends of mine. And I said, "I'm not going to support openly anyone, and when I go to the polls to vote, to me that's as private as my prayer is tonight." And so -- and both of them asked me if they could put a sign out front and I said, "No, Wally will let you put one out, maybe, but I won't." And so that's just the way it is, because I said -- Buster [Lewis], when I was on the School Board, worked so hard for me and we've always been friends and so forth. And [Pat Patterson's parents] Mary and Frank [Patterson] supported me when I was on the School Board and worked for me. And well, I told Pat when he came -- because he started out early -- and I told him this, and he said, "I understand you, I see your laboring with it, I'm not going to try to push either way because I understand where you're coming from."

Isabelle Chewning: When were you on the School Board?

Wallace Beckner: Oh, gosh, it's been a good many years ago, a long time ago. It was when, it was about the time that Floyd Kaye left, and who was the next Superintendent? Anyway, I was on the School Board and that's when they were appointed by an electoral board. And [Bruce Alexander] Alec Lipscomb [Sr.] was on the Board from our area. And Halstead Dunlap, Billy Whitmore from Natural Bridge, and I forgotten who they all were. Anyway--

Isabelle Chewning: What were the big issues you were facing then?

Wallace Beckner: Well, during the time that I was on the School Board, and not that I had that much to do with it, but we started kindergarten. We put in the eighth grade, and we started building the Vocational Tech School. That was when the first go-around to build the consolidated school up there, and then prices went up, bids came in higher and the Supervisors wouldn't support it. But the federal government mandated the technical school, so they went ahead and built that, you know, and it operated for a number of years before they built the consolidated school.

Isabelle Chewning: I'm going to stop the tape and let you look through your notes and let you see what you haven't--

[End of Tape 2, Side B]

Isabelle Chewning: You had mentioned Mr. Whipple's equipment dealership in Brownsburg?

Wallace Beckner: Yes I'm not sure exactly where it was located; it may have been where the antique shop [Old South Antiques] is today. I remember Mr. Supinger having that first and then later Carl Swope had it. But my father bought a double row corn planter with the fertilizer boxes on it, which was a real step because most of the farmers were still furrowing out a row for the planter, and had one-row horse planter that planted the corn and you covered it. So -- in fact he had plenty inquiries of people wanting to borrow it when he got through with the planting his corn each year.

Isabelle Chewning: And who did he buy it from?

Wallace Beckner: From Mr. Whipple in Brownsburg.

Isabelle Chewning: And that was Fred's father who had the equipment dealership?

Wallace Beckner: Right yeah and I think he sold maybe grain binders then too, to cut your wheat and barley and rye and so forth, oats, and which would cut it and kick out sheaves and then you stacked them. Shooked them together and then spread one out and put it on top and that protected it from the rain, the rain would shed off it. Of course where John Layton Whitesell lives, Mr. Whitesell had an undertaking business there, which later was where the Post Office was. And of course they were related to the Mileys, which had a undertaking business over at Decatur. And to my knowledge would be that's when it moved from there to where John Layton and Virginia [Whitesell] live now [2664 Brownsburg Turnpike]. But my aunt that I mentioned earlier, I remember they took care of the burial there, the funeral and so forth. Which reminds me of another story of not in Brownsburg but in the community. A Mr. W.A. McCurdy lived at Rockbridge Baths and he was the I guess you would say unassigned funeral director. He would record in his diary which we read, "So-and-so passed away today and I went up and helped lay him out." Then he would record "Went to Lexington with a team of horses to get a casket." and the next day he'd say, "Buried Mr. So-and-so or Miss So-and-so." A lot of children died in infancy then, and in 1928 he recorded, "Used automobile hearse today." That was the first time that they'd used a motor vehicle for a burial. They'd always been done by horse and wagon in those days. Of course the Bosworth's had a store. Dr. [Tom] Bosworth's family had the store up there, which was the Post Office, too. Where [Catharine] Gilliam lives now, you know, the white building [2707 Brownsburg Turnpike]. Later that was the barber shop and pool hall. That was another place to talk about your neighbors and play tricks on them and so forth.

Isabelle Chewning: Did you ever shoot pool in the pool hall?

Wallace Beckner: No, I never had time.

Isabelle Chewning: Well two jobs, I guess you didn't have much time, did you! Not much loafing you were doing.

Wallace Beckner: No, I pretty much stayed busy. Of course the Huffman's store -- filling station which is still there, that was great to be able to on a rainy day to pull up there and pump your gas without standing out in the rain.

Isabelle Chewning: Oh because they had a covered area.

Wallace Beckner: They had a covered area. And of course, in those days when you said pump the gas, you stood there with a long handle and you pumped it until you got however many gallon up in the glass tank up above it. And it would read 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and I think it went up to 10 gallons. And so you pumped out how much gallons you wanted and then it flowed into your car by gravity then.

Isabelle Chewning: Do you remember what the price of gas was?

Wallace Beckner: I can remember when it was 21 cents and that was in the mid '30s that I remember that was the price of gas. So of course during the war you had -- gas was rationed and you'd get three gallons, I think it was three gallons a month for your car, and you'd get a gallon if you had a washing machine that had a gas motor on it, because there wasn't any electricity in the area, in our area then. We'd just take a few old chickens to the store and buy a gallon of gas and so that's the way you paid for it, your merchandise. Either that, or local stores would handle cured meat, particularly hams or side meat -- well we'd call it bacon today but it was side meat that was cured. The stores would buy it and then people would come in and buy it from them to pay for your sugar and your salt. On a rare occasion you'd get 10 cents worth of cheese which was a slice of cheese cut off of a, what they call cracker barrel cheese now, which was a round. It was round with a hole down in the center of it and you'd put it down over the knife which was in the center with a handle on it. And you'd pull that knife down and slice off 10 cents or so forth. In those days then either you'd use what you'd made so-called macaroni or would buy some macaroni and have macaroni and cheese. But that was a rare occasion; that was luxury time. Of course the farm store was where Mr. Barnes's house is now [8 Hays Creek Road] and there was a building back of it that you came out through a door into that, and that's where they stored a lot of feed, fertilizer and so forth. And the other merchandise was in the what was the basement there then. Of course that later became another doctor's office. Of course where Ag Patterson lives [2744 Brownsburg Turnpike] was built by the community for a doctor's office. That was a community project. In those days communities did their own thing, they didn't have to get permission from county commissioners or committees and so forth, to do anything. If you could afford it then everybody jumped in and did what was best for the community. Of course Mr. [Harvey] Matheney lived there in a kind of, I guess you'd say it looked like an old-time prairie schooner as they called it, except it was almost a little house, a real small little house with wagon wheels underneath it and that's where he lived and he repaired shoes and so forth for people, children and so forth. And of course Buck Potter had his blacksmith shop up the end [2610 Brownsburg Turnpike]. It was

always fascinating to go up there and watch him, what he could do by heating iron. The iron rim would get loose on a buggy or a wagon and so forth and he would shrink it and then get it real hot and put it back on the wooden spokes and so forth because then when it cooled it would draw in, shrink up enough and that would keep it tight on there. Now John Runkle lives out here [1054 Dry Hollow Road], has the local -- well he's kind of semi-retired now -- automobile shop. When he was a teenager he lived where the Reid's live now [Sleepy Hollow at 2645 Sterrett Road] and all day long he would run between Carwell's Garage up to Buck Potter's and stop and shoot the breeze a little bit with each one of them. And everybody would say "Grasshopper's [John Runkle] wore out three cars and he hadn't got out of sight of Brownsburg!" But I guess that's how he learned to be a mechanic and to fix things.

Isabelle Chewning: I wonder how he got the name "Grasshopper".

Wallace Beckner: I don't know how he got that name, I don't know. But he had it in school and then when he opened up a garage up there, it may still be on a shield on the front of his pickup truck, that had grasshopper. It's sort of like "Weasel" [Ralph Wayne] Reese has his name on his.

Isabelle Chewning: Right.

Wallace Beckner: We used to say during the war when you traveled by Greyhound bus and you'd go in a bus station, in the rest rooms were all these signs, written on the walls, "Kilroy was here" and so forth. And that's when the slogan started, "Fools name are like their faces, always seen in public places." We kidded Weasel about that when he put it on his.

Isabelle Chewning: Anything else we haven't covered yet that you have in your notes?

Wallace Beckner: I think we've about covered it. I see it now, being an older person, the lack of concern in helping one another in the community. You know, if someone got sick the community would take care of them. If somebody's house burned down, the community took care of it. And now you really don't know half of your neighbors, with the transient world that we live in. And this goes even beyond just a normal living. When I grew up, the families in the churches which was just predominantly at that time time Presbyterian, you could look back in the history and Grandfather did this and so forth and so on and they were families, generation after generation. Now you can go into any of these local churches and probably 80% of them originated in a different denomination and in a different community and so forth. In many cases a different state, and so forth. And this has been some good advantages and disadvantages. But the churches and the schools were the total center of life. Like we used to have at the ball park at Bustleburg in the summer, you'd have softball leagues, and everybody -- the bank would have a team, Ed Patterson's machinery place would have a team. Everybody would have a team, and you'd have 8 or 10 teams all the young people were playing, and it was a good community sport. And now that particular thing is dead because you couldn't get a softball team. First of all the young people don't have time for it,

and secondly they're not interested. So life has changed, and you've got to throw out as best you can the bad parts, the weakness parts, and try to build on the other parts. But we hear so much about in Rockbridge County our young people have to go elsewhere to get jobs. But if you look back at the history, and I've done a lot of historical research within our own church and so forth. Like my dad, he had two brothers, there were the three of them, and he stayed on the farm. The other two brothers had to leave Rockbridge County to get work then, too. That was back in the early '20s, so it really hasn't changed that much.

Isabelle Chewning: History does repeat itself.

Wallace Beckner: And as I said I go around the community, young people my age and that were older and so forth and they -- very few of them stayed here in the community, because there weren't that many farms and the farms couldn't support but one family or two. So they went elsewhere. History really does repeat itself. It's almost amusing. When we get in these discussions in the county today and they say "We don't have industry to hold our young people here." Which is true, but we never did. You're an example.

Isabelle Chewning: I'm an example, right.

Wallace Beckner: And so if everybody stayed here it, then it would be a commune instead of a rural community. Because the houses would be on top of each other if everybody stayed here in the county that grew up here. I guess that's enough of my sounding off for one day.

Isabelle Chewning: Well, Mr. Beckner -- Wallace --

Wallace Beckner: Yeah, thank you!

Isabelle Chewning: I've appreciated your time so much. You had a lot of great memories, and some good stories.

Wallace Beckner: As time has gone on, well this is probably typical as you get older. You start thinking -- they say you can always remember what you did as a child, but you can't remember what you did five minutes ago. So we like to go back as we get older, and reminisce in various ways, whether it be reading history or digging or telling stories and sharing stories. But you think of them as the good old days. At that time you thought they weren't good days. It's sort of like when you were 12 years old you couldn't wait to be a teenager which was 13, or you got old enough to vote or to drive a car and so forth. So we go back to history now and we look at the enjoyable things and the fun things and we forget about the unpleasant things, so that's what keeps life lively. My philosophy is if you can't tease and laugh, then you can't live.
[Laugh]

Isabelle Chewning: That's a good philosophy I think, a good philosophy. Thank you so much!

[End of Tape 3, Side A]

Wallace Beckner Index

A

Alfalfa · 19
Allen, Bill · 24, 53
Armentrout, Frank
 Fertilizer Agent · 29
Armentrout, William · 4
Automobiles
 1926 Model T Ford · 57
 Model A · 11
 Model T · 32
Ayres, Janis Wade · 6

B

Bailey, Dr.
 Brownsburg Doctor · 2, 54
Baker Brothers Equipment · 46
Bare, Ada · 33
Bare, Claude · 33, 58
Bare, Tom · 45
Barter System · 61
Beard, Ruth Wade · 34
Beckner, Bernice · 5, 18
Beckner, Frances Hart
 Death in 1985 · 47
 Mother · 3
Beckner, Jimmy · 10, 42
Beckner, Lula Shaver · 39
 Dunsmore Business College · 41
 Engagement · 41
 Flora McDonald · 41
 Music Teacher · 42
 Teacher at Beverly Manor · 41
Beckner, Mary Frances · 5, 18
Beckner, Wallace Hart
 "Bunny" · 1
 Army · 21
 Bethesda Presbyterian Church · 13
 Birth · 1
 Brownsburg School 3rd Grade · 8
 Democratic Judge at Polls · 58
 Deployment in WWII · 40
 Farm Bureau · 44
 Farm Chores · 25
 Farming · 43
 Hampden-Sydney College · 35
 High School Graduation in 1943 · 17
 Lee's Carpets · 36
 Marriage in 1951 · 42
 School · 8
 School Board Member · 59

Beckner, Wally · 42
Beckner, William
 Grandfather · 3
Beckner, William III · 5, 40
 82nd Airborne · 23
 DuPont · 22
 Hampden-Sydney College · 22
 Valedictorian · 18
Beckner, William Walter
 Brownsburg Academy · 16
 Death in 1956 · 47
 Democratic Judge at Polls · 58
 Father · 3
 Handicap · 16
 Polio · 3
 Teacher · 4, 16
Bethesda Presbyterian Church
 Bible School · 13
 Electricity · 24
Blacksmithing
 Taught in School · 19
Blackwell Family · 3
Borden Grant · 4
Bosworth, Tom
 Brownsburg Doctor · 47
Bosworth's Store · 60
Brown, Jim · 51
Brownsburg
 Barber Shop · 6
 Cannery · 11
 Doctors · 2
 Doctor's House · 2, 61
 Farm Store · 61
 Pool Hall · 60
 Saturday Night · 6
 Shoe Repair Shop · 15
 Stores · 51
 Undertaker · 60
Brownsburg School
 Animal Science Class · 19
 Bus · 11
 Football Team · 17
 Home Economics · 15
 Shop Class · 19
 Vocational Agriculture and Shop · 8
Building Practices
 Circa 1800 · 5
Bustleburg Ball Park · 62

C

Camp Briar Hills · 55
Campbell, Dr.
 Brownsburg Doctor · 2

Cannery · 11, 32
Carr, Ed
 Bethesda Caretaker · 14
Carwell's Garage · 62
Chestnut Blight · 56
Chickens · 27
 The Gaps · 27
Chittum Family · 44
Christmas · 57
Church of the Nazarene · 54
Cisterns · 25
Conner Family · 3
County Fair · 20

D

Decatur · 28
Depression Era · 14
Dry Hollow Road · 3
Dunlap, Halsted
 School Board · 59

F

Farm Store · 61
Farming
 Alfalfa · 19
 Butchering · 33
 Cattle Drives to Highland County · 32
 Chickens · 27
 Combine purchase in 1954 · 44
 Combining Grain · 45
 Corn Planter · 60
 Crops · 29
 Fertilizer · 29
 First tractor in 1946 · 44
 Grain Sales · 31
 Granaries · 31
 Veal Calves · 31
Fauber, Bennie · 26
Fulwider, Mr.
 Mail Carrier · 12
Future Farmers of America · 20

G

Gardening · 32
Glover, Dr.
 Veterinarian · 28
Grandview · 13

H

Harness, Mr.
 Bethesda Minister · 20
Hays Creek Mill · 30
Heffelfinger, Jen · 15
 School Music Advocate · 42

Horses
 Charlie · 26
 Farm Work · 30
 Horse Trading on Court Day · 31
Huffman, Emerson · 54
Huffman's Filling Station · 61
Hunting · 54
Hurricane Camille · 53
Hutcheson Family · 34
Hutcheson, Robert Steele · 34

I

Irby, Mr.
 Superintendent of Schools · 8

K

Kaye, Floyd
 Superintendent of Schools · 42, 59
Kennan, Dr.
 Raphine Doctor · 2
Kirkpatrick, Robert
 Borden Grant Deed · 4

L

Layman, Mr. · 20
 Agriculture Teacher · 15, 19
Leach, Dr. · 54
Lee's Carpets · 36
Lipscomb, Bruce Alexander, Sr.. · 59
Lunsford, Al
 Teacher · 49

M

Mast, Wilma · 42
Mast's Mill
 Rockridge Baths · 30
Matheney, Harvey · 61
 Shoe Repair · 15
McClung, Mote · 7
McClung, Sally Reid · 7
McClung's Mill · 30
McCurdy, Fred · 31
McCurdy, Mr.
 Fertilizer Agent · 29
McCurdy, W. A. · 28
 Rockbridge Baths Funeral Director · 60
McElwee Chapel · 9, 13
 Evangelistic Services · 24
McLaughlin, Sam · 55
Miley Family
 Decatur Undertakers · 60
Mills · 30
Mohler, Betty Jean · 11
Mohler, Henry · 11

Mohler, Jake · 44
Mohler, Nell Wade · 11
Montgomery, Miss
Teacher · 49
Morris, Mamie · 53

N

New Providence Presbyterian Church
Bible School · 13
Youth Group · 13
Nye, Bernice Wade · 34

O

Oak Hill School · 8

P

Patterson, Bruce · 12
Clerk of Court · 58
Patterson, Ed · 12, 27, 44
Patterson, Frank · 20, 51
School Bus Driver · 12
Patterson, Mrs. J.K.
Math Teacher · 48
Uncle Remus · 49
Peters, Carrie · 50
Polio
"White Swelling" · 3
Poole, Mary Frances Wade · 35
Poole, Roscoe · 35
Potter, Buck
Blacksmith · 61
Practical Jokes · 54

R

Railroad Depot · 28
Ralston, Dr.
Bethesda Pastor · 14
Raphine
Train Depot · 31
Rees, Frank
Fertilizer Agent · 29
Reese, Carl "Big Eye" · 45
Combine operator · 44
Reese, Ralph Wayne "Weasel" · 62
Roads, Paved
Raphine · 31
Runkle Family · 3, 5, 33
Runkle, Bobby · 5
Runkle, John · 5, 62
"Grasshopper" · 62
Runkle, Russ · 5
Rural Electrification Act · 24

S

Samples, Mr.
Superintendent of Lexington Schools · 42
Sandridge, Charlie · 55
School Bus · 12
Serenading · 57
Shorter Catechism · 10
Slusser, Bruce · 45, 55, 57
Slusser, George · 58
Killed in WWII · 58
Slusser, Harry · 58
Slusser, Hugh · 58
Slusser, Mary Belle · 67
Softball · 62
Springs (Water) · 25
Steele, Lorene McCurdy · 27, 55
Sterrett, Madison McClung Sr. · 43, 48
Sterrett, Mc · 8, 26, 48
Dairy Farming · 26
Stuart, Bob · 8
Stuart, Boyd · 8
Supinger, Ocie
Telephone Operator · 55
Supinger's Store · 6, 51
Swisher Family · 3
Swisher, Henry · 11
Swisher, John · 11
Swope, Carl · 51
Swope's Store · 51

T

Tannery
Tanning Bark · 28
Tolley, Clarence · 23
Tolley, Fred · 23
Tractor
John Deere B · 46
Trimmer, Osie · 18, 50
Principal · 17
Troxell, Clint · 7

U

Uncle Remus · 49

V

Veterinary Work · 28

W

Wade Family · 3, 34
Wade, Bud · 6, 27, 34, 54

Barber · 6
School Bus · 13
Wade, Harold
Miller at McClung's Mill · 30
Wade, John · 12
Wade, Kite · 12, 27, 34
Horse Trader · 34
School Bus · 13
Wade, Ott · 12
Wade's Mill · 30
Wade's Store (Bustleburg) · 27
Walthall, Dr.
New Providence Minister · 58
Ward, Elizabeth
First Grade Teacher · 9
Watson, Miss
Home Economics Teacher · 15
Whipple, Fred · 6, 51, 55
Whipple, Mollie Sue Hull · 49
Whipple's Farm Equipment Dealership · 60
Whipple's Store · 51
White, Mr. · 52
Whitesell, Virginia Wade · 34

Whitmore, Billy
School Board · 59
Williams, Dr.
Brownsburg Doctor · 2
Williams, Mrs.
3rd Grade Teacher · 10
Wiseman, Carl · 27
Woody, Lynn
Agriculture Teacher · 19
World War II · 2, 17
Deferments · 21
Hiroshima and Nagasaki · 21
Occupation of Japan · 22
Radio · 23
Rationing · 17, 61

Z

Zigler, Mr.
Agriculture Teacher · 19