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Iron Hill School Oral History Project

Interview with Donald Lewis

Date of Interview: December 8, 2004

Interviewer: Roberta Perkins

Transcriber: Marcia Adams

Also present: Laura Mackie Lee, Museum Director, Iron Hill Museum of Natural History

Roberta: This is Roberta Perkins. Today's date is Wednesday, December the 8th 2004, and I am here at the Iron Hill History Museum to interview Gail Grinnage for the restoration project. Gail, thank you for stopping by and helping us out. Let me first get you to state your date of birth and full name.

Gail: 2-10-54. Gail Elizabeth Grinnage.

Roberta: Where were you born?

Gail: Memorial Hospital, Wilmington, Delaware.

Roberta: Then did you live here in Iron Hill? Is that where your family lived at the time?

Gail: Yes.

Roberta: Who are your parents?

Gail: Donald and Dorothy Grinnage.

Roberta: What was Dorothy's maiden name?

Gail: Earl.

Roberta: Dorothy Earl. Ok. Was there any remembrance of when they came to Iron Hill?

Gail: They have been here all their life. Her parents, their parents.

Roberta: Do you know or have you heard of any history of when they first came to Iron Hill?

Gail: As far as I know from way back when they came up the underground railroad is what they say and then the Grinnage side, some of them went to Philadelphia and then here and they lived down on Route 40. As far as I know it was the Earl Webster side. I guess they just came here, I don't know exactly. That's as far as I know.

Roberta: You don't know any dates is that right?

Gail: No. I know people, not dates.

Roberta: Ok. What about brothers and sisters?

Gail: I have 4 sisters and 3 brothers.

Roberta: Do you want to give us their names?

Gail: Donald, Mildred, Evelyn, Delores, Melvin, Gladys and David.

Roberta: Are they still living in the area?

Gail: Mildred lives in Florida. All the other ones are here.

Roberta: Here meaning Iron Hill or Delaware.

Gail: Delaware. Newark.

Roberta: Growing up in the Iron Hill community what are some of your first memories of growing up here? Activities, who you lived with, who was around you.

Gail: My parents, my grandparents, my great-grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins. Mostly like church functions usually. I can remember like having square dances here.

Roberta: Here at Iron Hill?

Gail: Here at this school. We used to have them on Saturdays and bonfires and that type of thing but usually it was just mainly church functions.

Roberta: Where in Iron Hill did you live?

Gail: We lived on Route 40.

Roberta: So most of the children that you played with were family?

Gail: Yes.

Roberta: So family for you was Grinnage, Earls...

Gail: Grinnage, Earls, Smith, Webster, and Chandler.

Laura: Do you remember a Betty Chandler?

Gail: Yes, first cousins and Roy and Money.

Laura: Ethel Roy was a substitute sometimes wasn't she?

Gail: Yes, Aunt Ethel and Nancy married into the Grinnage family.

Laura: That's one I have never heard of.

Roberta: Right, that's a new one. Did your family rent their home or own their home?

Gail: They owned it.

Roberta: Did they do any farming?

Gail: My grandfather. He lived right down the road from Old Baltimore Pike and I was told they had a farm. It was called "the old dirt road" and years ago and then when they moved its like almost directly across the road they till had chickens and I remember a pig and goats and ducks.

Roberta: What was your grandfather's name?

Gail: Maynard Earl.

Roberta: So when you came to school you walked?

Gail: Yes, my parents used to bring us up to my grandparents and then we walked, for a while, but then they had a bus. I remember Mr. Moody was the bus driver.

Laura: Mr. Moody you said?

Gail: Yes.

Roberta: What was the name that we heard?

Laura: That was much earlier I think, that was Rudy Valentine.

Roberta: That's right. I wonder what the connection was there that it's now Mr. Moody. How the transition happened.

Gail: I remember a Willard Valentine. We lived on 40 and they lived on Pleasant Valley. It's right around the corner.

Roberta: Other than the square dances and the bonfires what other recreational activities do you remember people doing for fun?

Gail: They would have barbecues and that type of thing but anything else that I remember was just church functions. That's about it. They had, on Pleasant Valley Road, there was a place they used to call the Zupper's Farm although it wasn't a farm and they used to have bands.

Roberta: Zupper's? Could you spell that?

Gail: Z-u-p-p-e-r. They would have big cookouts I guess people from here to Middletown because like when they left this school they went to Louis L. Redding so they would all come and it was just like a big party. That was usually like Saturday or Sunday afternoon.

Roberta: Was Zupper the family name?

Gail: No, I don't know where that came from but the family that I knew lived there was, I think there was one guy there – a Lewis and Gray.

Roberta: What were some of the celebrations that were important to the community or even just your family, one over another?

Gail: No, I don't think so.

Roberta: What about birthday celebrations? Was there much of that?

Gail: Yes, well everything was family. You did that. I think more so it wasn't like today when kids do birthday party things. Most of the families – there were so many kids and everybody is family so you did it at home. Sometimes my grandparents would come down or an aunt or an uncle. Everybody lived right in that little circle and you were always together all the time. You know, holidays and everything like that.

Roberta: So birthdays were a main event kind of thing because everybody was there. How late were you allowed to stay out at night you know as you got older I guess it's more of a as you got to be older type of an issue.

Gail: Not late. Not as late as my cousins did. They used to always say, "the Grinnages have to be home, the Grinnages have to be home." But I remember especially like in wintertime my grandparents had a front yard that used to freeze up and we would ice skate and they would have bonfires and stuff and my grandfather had like these two big spotlights, one on either side of the house, and we would be outside playing at 10 or 11 o'clock at night. That's when I was a little kid but as you grew older like in your teens and stuff it was like you know you weren't. In the summertime they were more lenient like you may be outside playing at 9 or 10 o'clock but there was maybe 10 or 15 grownups there. We weren't allowed to really go anywhere. We only went like with our parents or something like that.

Roberta: Did you go, I guess the closest town, Newark or Elkton?

Gail: Elkton. We used to go to Elkton all the time. We only lived a mile from the Elkton line.

Roberta: Now was that for shopping or recreation? What was that like for you?

Gail: All right I guess. I had an Aunt Tate that lived in Elkton and we would like go to her house and play with other kids and stuff there. Sometimes my one Aunt Ethelyn and Uncle Buddy always used to go the rounds like on Saturday afternoons like just go to my aunts for ice cream. She would say c'mon we are going to go Brown's and get like a triple ice cream and I loved that.

Roberta: Her name was Evelyn?

Gail: E-t-h-e-l-y-n. She was a Grinnage. Brother and sister married brother and sister like that. My Mom and my Uncle Buddy and then my Dad and my Aunt Ethelyn were brother, sister, brother, sister. Got together like that. We used to shop in Elkton, very seldom did we come into Newark like to the Farmers Market or Shoppers Fair you know then Wilmington Dry Goods, the old creaky wooden floors. I hated that. The Kirkwood Highway store, I didn't mind that one, I hated going into Wilmington. I hated it.

Laura: Wilmington Dry?

Gail: Yes, I hated those creaky wood floors.

Roberta: Did you really? I loved it.

Gail: It was like 2,000 people in there. I remember I used to hold on to my Mom's hand. We had a W. T. Grant's in Newark and that was all the stores.

Roberta: Did you produce anything that you used at home? Since you spent a lot of time close to the community at home did you, did your family, meaning your immediate family in the general community, did you produce anything at home for your own consumption?

Gail: Gardens they had. My Dad, they all had humongous gardens and my I called him Uncle Perce, my Uncle Percey and Ethelyn, they used to raise turkeys and they had chickens and we grandkids had ducks. I used to hate chickens (so ?)

Roberta: Did you have a special chore with any of them that you were responsible for?

Gail: Not like that but I used to make money by plucking chickens, cleaning fish, washing windows. I used to plant seeds and stuff and help my aunts and stuff with the gardens and pick apples. We used to pick cherries and make wine and we used to sell it. I think I was one of the only ones in our family that actually was around older people because nobody else wanted to do it like I would go up to my Aunt Ethelyn's sometimes on a Saturday and make money and they would give me money and stuff. I was always gone. There was a lady, Miss Alma, she had both her legs removed from diabetes and then she couldn't do and I used to go sit with her and help her around the house and stuff like that.

Roberta: What was her name again?

Gail: Miss Emma Cale

Roberta: M as in em or just m?

Roberta: C-a-l-e?

Gail: Yes. They had Miss Brown's. There was a – she had a trailer court and Brown's Restaurant right up the road from us and I used to live there.

Roberta: Was it because it was fun or you made money?

Gail: No I think it was fun. That was just I mean you could up there and it was like just a little store you know she had homemade cakes and stuff and she sold sandwiches and stuff, she had chips. We were allowed to go over there when you weren't allowed to go to the store on Route 40.

Laura: I think that bar was here, I know it was still here when I lived I lived in Newark.

Gail: I don't know.

Laura: It was called Pencader Inn.

Gail: Yes.

Laura: I think the trailers are still there.

Gail: The trailers are still there. There was another store, we called it Miss Yule's. Like we lived on this side of the road and they were on the other, one on the left and one on the right. A little convenience store and then they had a gas station at the corner.

Laura: Was the gas station where the Glasgow Auto Body is now?

Gail: No it's where Lewandowski is. I know Billy and Sue. I can't think of their last name but they worked on cars and they had a little store. They used to have these giant cookies in this thing.. I used to play with their daughter and we used to always go in, lift (?) carefully so they wouldn't hear us steal the cookies. She would always see us.

Roberta: Now this was on which road again?

Gail: That was right on Route 40 where Lewandowski's was.

Laura: You have a great memory.

Gail: My childhood was like great.

Roberta: It sounds like it. You just keep going. What about church? Did that play a big part in your life?

Gail: Yes. Sometimes we went to church. When we used to go with Aunt Ethelyn and Uncle Perce sometimes we would go every night. Me and my one sister. Ethelyn called her Bunny. I lived at their house. They were real old. They were like by great aunt and uncle and they went to St. Thomas out on Frenchtown Road and

we used to always, that's my Dad's church. St. Daniel's is my mom's. Because they lived like next door and whenever they had anything even like, they didn't have too many kids at their church so we always went when they had special days and stuff and at Christmas time they always had special programs you know you had to learn something and recite it all the holidays when they had things but they like church was their life they lived there and usually we pretty much went with them.

Roberta: How did you get there?

Gail: My uncle drove.

Roberta: So as far as transportation is that what all you always remember is a car?

Gail: Yes.

Roberta: So being involved in church to that extent it was just a part of your life, like going to school how did it influence you? How did you feel like it molded you or influenced you?

Gail: Great. Its now like and then in term of like as I started getting older I taught Sunday School and then I had my son and taught and then now my grandson. He's in Sunday School and he is like unbelievable. He like wakes worshipping the Lord every morning. He sings, every morning he sings, I don't care where you take him at any one time he starts blurting it out. It was like I mean everybody did that and I think it was a good thing and helped us. I don't know, when I look at a lot of kids today even like families that don't go to church, their kids don't go to church or anything and a lot of them are street kids and I think that plays a big part in it you know its like I look at them and its like they have no home training. I think that if you have that church going and everything and not only learning the Bible and everything but the respect for not only your elders but for every person in general you know. I spent a lot - like Sunday School I always stressed to my son like that's where you get all of your fundamentals you know. I have friends that well they take their grandkids to church and stuff but they are

too little and they don't understand and like – why don't you go to Sunday School? Well Sunday School is so early. Well Sunday School is like 10 o'clock in the morning. You know when you go to work you go to work at 8 o'clock and you are telling me it's too early because it's like you are letting them skip first grade, like elementary, and they are going right to junior high school. They need it. That's where they learn you know. I've always stressed that like with my son. He only goes once in a while. He does take my grandson on Sundays.

Laura: But you gave him that foundation.

Gail: Pretty much we all – so it's me and my two older sisters that are in the church. My brothers don't go and my two younger sisters, they don't let their kids...

Laura: Now are you at St. Thomas?

Gail: Now, St. Daniel's.

Laura: You are at St. Daniel's, ok.

Gail: Because my one niece, her son she takes him to Sunday School. She will come if you ask her to come for a special day or something like that but other than that they don't.

Laura: They've done a lot of sprucing up at St. Daniel's.

Gail: Yes, and they've got a lot more to do.

Laura: They've got a wonderful pastor. I met her at Pencader Heritage Day.

Gail: Oh, Reverend Ross, she is wonderful.

Laura: She is really neat.

Gail: And it's like we have had a lot of different pastors and she is young. She is like 38 that wants to do - to make people do the job they are supposed to do. We are trying to raise money to build another church. It's like at one point I would go to

church and there would be like 10 other people and now with – we used to have in our, we are in a U.A.M.E. conference we always had one of the biggest Sunday Schools and then went down to nothing and now the church is so packed with kids.

Laura: That's great.

Gail: It's like this kid met like a cousin and then they brought somebody. They are so eager. Sunday we had 6 girls got confirmed so the older kids do communion you know and its been years since we had anything like that or had that many.

Laura: That's wonderful.

Gail: It was just great.

Roberta: So do you credit this new pastor with that?

Gail: Yes. Just with her preaching and her teaching.

Laura: She is just so enthusiastic.

Gail: She is.

Laura: You have to meet her.

Gail: She is unbelievable. Some people came in and heard her and you know they brought somebody back and then people that hadn't been there for years. To me its everybody goes to church and they are like well they want to go to these great big churches and they are shouting and a hootin' and a hollerin' and I said well maybe if you did something, if you put something in it – you can't go and expect somebody to do it for you, you have to. In a big church you are just another person. You don't get involved.

Laura: That's so great to hear this.

- Gail:** We could have a big church too. That's my thing because we have had a lot of families - well I'll go to this big church now and you know. I think its like I think like a form of fashion is what they go for.
- Laura: How much history does St. Daniel's have. Now I know we are getting off the tangent a little bit.
- Roberta: That's fine.
- Laura: Do you know how long that building has been there? Was there a church that pre-dated that?
- Gail:** No. That's the original church. We are having our church anniversary this Sunday. If I say 165 (years) – it's up there. I can remember my great-grandmother when I was a little kid when she went there.
- Roberta: I went by there the last time I was here with Marcia and she took me through the general area to show me what it looks like.
- Laura: I was at the state archives a couple of weeks ago and I went through the church pictures and there are pictures of St. Daniel's and I ordered copies so when I get them I will let you know because I am hoping – I couldn't see the pictures I just saw St. Daniel's listed and I have no idea whether they are 10 years old or a hundred years old. If they are old I will let you know.
- Gail:** It's like my great-great grandmother used to live right back here in these woods.
- Laura: Your great-great-grandmother?
- Gail:** Great-great-grandmother. I know my grandmother on my mom's side she lived right here on Old Baltimore Pike and then my great-grandmother, we called her Grandmom Webster, lived on Otts Chapel and then we called her Granny, lived right back here and I think my uncle said she was like 94 when she died.
- Laura: Do you just remember her as Granny?

Gail: Yes, when she got older I used to go and sit with her like when my mom and my aunt. When I got out of school I went there. When I was in high school I used to sit with her until mom and them could come. She came up from slavery days because she had like blonde hair, her father was white.

Laura: If she was 94 when you were in high school and that was like in the '60's.

Gail: '72 I graduated and Grandmom Webster, my great-grandmother – I don't know how old she was I just remember like she was just old. We used to go to her house. They always had we used to call them socials like on Friday or Saturday nights and it was just great. I mean you played games and stuff. She always had peanuts in the shell and oranges. She always had peanuts and oranges. We used to say she had an orange tree somewhere. I remember they used to have noise in their house you know people passed away. I used to be scared to go in the living room. If I had to I would just hurry up and run and go right back you know because you think of somebody laying in a casket.

Roberta: Would you be able to if, from your memory, would you be able to sketch like how the Iron Hill and/or the church sort of like the cornerstone to the nucleus, what it looked like. You know if you took some time and you thought about it. I mean it could just be square boxes.

Gail: Yes.

Roberta: Would you be able to do that?

Gail: Yes

Laura: Where everybody lived where.

Gail: Yes I can do that because there wasn't that many people. People that lived right over here – I'll have to ask my Dad, and I know them, they had an egg farm. We used to get eggs from them –

Laura: Salminen?

Gail: Yes and then there was just – there wasn't any houses. It was just a soybean field. Then we had the Bullocks right next to the Church of God. They lived there. That's their family. That's another name – I don't know if you have that and then my grandparents lived right on the other side. As a matter of fact my aunt sold some of the property to the church and then the developers bought it. Across the road was the Davises. They still live there I think.

Laura: Earnie Davis?

Gail: Yes. There was a couple of other houses down that road. Down on Old Baltimore Pike before the light there is 2 or 3 house just built there. When you make the right there wasn't anything like for a quarter mile then you had the Earls and the Smiths and straight on down the Websters right there. That was about it. Then Pleasant Valley and then you went that way you had the Lewises and the Hardings and the Kamethers were on the other side, they had a big old farm. We used to ride their horses.

Laura: Kamethers?

Gail: I think Carol, the daughter, has that and the Jones, there was a black family on the other side. Thorps where the...

End of Side A Tape 1.
Begin Side B Tape 1.

Roberta: We are here with Gail Grinnage. Do you know how to spell the name of that family, the Kamethers?

Laura: I've never heard of it.

Gail: C-o-m-i-t-h-i-s or something. (In an interview with former student Don Lewis this name was spelled as Kamether.) I remember her having these 2 daughters but all I can remember is Carol and she still lives in Pleasant Valley Estates or something like that but they owned all of that. Old man Kamether used to - we went up through the woods it would take you all the way to Old Baltimore Pike and we

used to walk it every day and get on the back of that hay wagon and ride on that. That used to make me itch all the time.

Roberta: So that was a dead giveaway even if you said you didn't do it.

Gail: Every day we did it because we could go through the woods to my grandparents from Route 40 you know you just went straight through and we would go on up there like that. Just the hayrides and the horse rides. We used to ride the horses like bareback. You just get on them and ride.

Roberta: What about employment for African-Americans in this area. Do you know or do you remember what people did?

Gail: I remember my grandfather, Maynard Earl, he worked for the railroad. My dad retired from National Vulcanized Fiber. He worked here in Newark which I think the majority – I can remember my uncles and stuff all worked there. My mom only worked in the summer like when we didn't have school and she used to clean people's houses...

The tape is blank for about 3 minutes

Gail: not Glasgow, down almost to Elkton, maybe just right before Elkton, it would be on the left side. Swiss Inn, I didn't remember her working there but I remember my dad saying...I used to cook, I've always cooked in restaurants and he says well she doesn't get it from Aunt Ada and I was like...we used to go to her house. They lived on 896, you know where the Presbyterian Church is on the corner and as you come back it is like a – almost like across from that church. They lived in that house there.

Laura: Like the old 896?

Gail: Yes the old 896.

Laura: Across from the Presbyterian Church?

Gail: Yes it's like a shingled house, gray. They used to live there. He used to always say she used to get it from Aunt Ada. I said what do you mean? He said the cooking because she cooked at Swiss Inn, well I never knew the woman to want to do anything, her husband. It's weird because we called her Aunt Ada and we called him Mr. Steeney. Their last name was Black. He was just amazing. The man used to smoke and he would put a cigarette in his mouth and he smoked it he never plucked his ashes. He smoked it until they fell. I just remember that with him. They all went to St. Thomas Church. We used to go to their house. You did basically the same things you know. You played, you looked after the younger ones. We went off. I was bad as a kid.

Tape is blank for about 3 minutes.

Gail: Oh this new Lemon Joy. Smell this. Smell. She went, just smell, take a big whiff, well I'll tell you what happened after that one. She never forgot it. She's like 2 years younger than me. My mom would like to kill me.

Laura: Which sister is that?

Gail: Delores. Her name is Delores Aikens. She lives right down on 4 Seasons and 896. We are all pretty much between here and Route 40. My parents just moved. They are up in Liberty Terrace it's off 7 and 40. It's a new senior citizens place. You know Smalley's Dam Road? I got them in there like a couple of months ago.

Roberta: There is a waiting list?

Gail: Yes but they had said 3 to 6 months but it didn't take that long for everybody else its like years, because that house, it's just going to fall down.

Laura: They were out on 40?

Gail: Yes.

Laura: Like near the corner kind of?

Gail: Yes. You couldn't tell them its like my grandparents lived here when we lived here and my aunt lived here and I mean they didn't have running water.

Laura: Still didn't have it?

Gail: Still didn't have it. I can remember as a kid having oil lamps and then finally they did get electricity in but he wasn't going anywhere and I guess its been almost 2 years he had a slight heart attack but he's still – everybody's hollerin' at my brother – they've got to get out I said now you are going to kill him – whenever he's ready – if he wants to live like this, he's lived like this all his life then that's his choice. He just turned 74.

Laura: Is that property for sale now?

Gail: Somebody bought it. It had never been their property. They only owned property where the house was it wasn't theirs. My brother owns some property there now which he bought. It has a shed on it for his landscaping.

Laura: That's David?

Gail: David, yes and then right down from that my cousin, now they told me she sold it – Patricia Webster – she's not my cousin but my aunt and uncle raised her. It was my cousin's kid and they just raised her. Then of course when they passed my aunt died and left everything to her so.

Tape is blank for about 5 minutes

Gail: Her mother wasn't like that but her dad seemed to be. We could be outside playing like in the middle of the summer and all of a sudden you would hear "oh we have to go home because your dad's going to be home" – we just knew because it was almost 4 o'clock you know. You went home, you didn't go in their house or anything but still everybody knew everybody and everybody sort of got along you know, like that.

Laura: That trailer park, was there a lot of white kids that lived there?

Gail: Yes.

Laura: Ok

Gail: It was mainly the majority of them were white. Everybody knew, the whites, the blacks – everybody knew each other. Well the Marcus' that's the family that owned the gas station. He got along with dad and I think it was more so because like they worked on his cars and later I remember my brother working there. We knew the Brown's up the road, the white family. You knew them you know and like they all knew you and like run up to Mr. Browns. Mrs. Brown's got something for me and you know and stuff like that but you dared not do nothing wrong.

Roberta: Marcus is that right?

Gail: Yes Marcus.

Roberta: What about you – it sounds like in the general community everybody got along there was just very social understandings do you remember if and when you experienced discrimination? Like the first time?

Gail: Fifth grade. I went here from first to fourth grade and before integration once you were going to 5th grade you automatically went to Louis L. Redding. I must have been in 2nd grade because the Hardings, from 3rd grade they sent their kids I want to say to the white school and then I went in 5th grade, it was called Eden which is maybe then it changed to Leasure. I was the first one in my family to go, you know in my immediate family. When I went to Eden my brother and 2 older sisters still – now they went to Christiana Junior High. It was pretty rough for a while I think. But it was like I wasn't used to white kids and they wasn't used to me. The name calling – I fought 24/7. I remember my mom coming there and beating me in school you know. I remember my first day of school with getting on the bus. I went to sit down, I was scared it's like oh my God, this girl, Sharon Bonner, Bonners lived on Frenchtown Road, the corner. She went like "I don't want a nigger sitting next to me." I started beating her head against the window thing so I was in the office like on day 1.

Laura: She picked the wrong person to mess with.

Gail: We fought constantly up until I like guess until I think by the time we got to like...

Tape is blank for about 1 minute.

Roberta: The school here at 4th grade was that because the school closed down? Why did you not go through to 6th grade?

Gail: The school closed.

Laura: According to what I have from the Archives because we just found a list of all the teachers and the grades and it said that in 1953 was the last year that they had 1 through 6th here and after that they only went up to 4th grade. So it was only 4th grade from then on.

Roberta: So did they kind of gradually reduce the attendance in preparation.

Gail: I don't think they had anybody.

Laura: It kind of dwindled down to nothing.

Gail: It's like my mom said she went to 6th grade here. Now my dad didn't go here. It's weird because I wondered why Uncle Bob went here. My dad said they went to some school down 896 before Lum's Pond. There was a little black school down there somewhere.

Laura: Bethesda?

Laura: There was a Pleasantville I think.

Gail: Where was Bethesda?

Laura: I'm not sure but I can find out.

Gail: I'm thinking that name – because he always tells the story about how he used to walk his bicycle and I said why and it was like in the snow and why would you walk it and it didn't have a chain. Why if you had to walk why would you walk a bicycle? And he said when you got to a place you could coast downhill.

Laura: I'll have to find out what school that was.

Roberta: I might not be really aware of the geography but this might be further down but there is a road called Schoolhouse Road. Are you familiar with that road?

Gail: No.

Roberta: I'm trying to remember where it is because on the new maps it says Schoolhouse Road. I have an old map that says Colored Schoolhouse Road.

Gail: I guess that's where it's got to be because my dad always said it was down that way.

Laura: You think it is down near Lum's Pond?

Roberta: It's down that way. I'm trying to remember where it comes out on because I had to do a project and I remember seeing it. It would be in the general Lum's Pond or greater Lum's Pond area. I want to say 301 but I don't think that's right, near Armstrong or something.

Gail: He said that. I think David was the last class here. He had 1st grade here and he went 4 years. There were so many schools because I went to Eden in 5th, then went to Joseph McVey then and 6th and then Christiana Junior High 7th, 8th and then Delcastle used to be 9 through 12 instead of 10 through 12. I was their first graduating class at Delcastle. Junior High was on the one side the farthest side if you go down Salem Church Road they had a walkway going across to the senior high.

Roberta: When you said 4th grade that was 195?

Gail: I was born in '54 so 1960 when I started here because I was six.

Roberta: That was 1964?

Laura: '64 to '65 was the last year that they had a teacher listed.

Gail: Minnie Ryder?

Laura: Yes. They had a school board of trustees and their last names were Edgar Grinnage, Jr.,

Gail: Uncle Bush.

Laura: Uncle Bush? There was a Williams and an Earl.

Gail: Williams. Was it a man or a woman?

Laura: I didn't write down the first names. They were all men.

Gail: It may have been – some people you just know as Mr. Williams they used to live right there at Cooch’s Bridge. It was a farm because Miss Marion Williams lived right before Glasgow High. She owned property.

Laura: It must have been that big farm

Gail: Yes, the Williams family had that. She used to drive a school bus and Earl – if it was an Earl it would have to be Maynard my grandfather.

Laura: You said Edgar Grinnage you called him Uncle Bush?

Gail: Uncle Bush Grinnage. My dad said this wasn’t the original school. That my Uncle Bush – I think it was Uncle Bush and Aunt Dot lived in the original school – it was given to them.

Laura: It was moved down to Route 40 across from Merryland, the old roller rink.

Gail: Yes, well that would have been my grandparents.

Laura: Were they Moneys?

Gail: Yes. Now Uncle Bush and Aunt Dot were Grinnages, Money – my grandfather, John Francis and his wife’s name was – I know it but I get it backwards Mabel Mildred Millar Money Grinnage.

Roberta: That’s wonderful. That is just too much.

Gail: I remember her mother used to live with them. We called her Grandmom...

The rest of the tape is blank until the end.

Roberta: This is Roberta Perkins, this is tape 2, side 1.

Laura: We were talking about Ethel Roy and the ear pulling.

Gail: Oh yes she was very good at that. She would kick you I don't know it always seemed like the seats were you know they were smaller for kids and my legs were always so long and you weren't allowed to have your feet in the aisle like in 4th grade you might have had 2 groups of 2nd grade like that and you weren't allowed to have your feet out and she would come out with her heavy black shoes and kick you, you know, get your feet out of the aisle. We used to have lockers, like bin things that you would put your lunch.

Roberta: This area here that's open?

Gail: There was one room that you put your coats and lunch and stuff in and there was another room that had just a heater.

Laura: If you go out here these doors on either side, that said Girls and that said

Gail: Yes you had 2 bathrooms. Ok here must have been the heater and it had the bathrooms on either side.

Laura: This area here by the back door that you are referring to before you were here years ago was a pot-bellied stove but if that pot-bellied stove was gone then they probably made use of it in a different way.

Gail: My mom said that they had a pot-bellied stove. I read a thing in the paper once that said they used to eat their meals here. I said we never ate a meal here we had to bring them. If you got out – like if you had a half day or part day or whatever we used to go to my Grandmom's. We used to walk right down the road you know but everybody but my mom said they cooked here.

Roberta: Wasn't that Lena Dyer?

Laura: Lena.

Roberta: She kind of gave more details on that.

Laura: She remembers cooking here. It was almost like a home after school.

Gail: Lena's up in her 60's. Late 60's.

Roberta: Her mother really doesn't look her age at all.

Gail: Oh, Aunt Alice is she in her 80's?

Laura: She takes a walk every day.

Roberta: This is Mrs. Prestbury I was thinking about.

Gail: Yes, Alice Prestbury – Lena's mom.

Laura: Because when we sent to see Lena, Alice was just back from her walk and she had sneakers on. She does some serious walking. She looks good.

Roberta: She wasn't out of breath either.

Laura: No. So you brought your lunch?

Roberta: That's just a different time.

Laura: Yes.

Gail: Yes, nobody cooked. I could ask my mom I know some things she remembers.

Laura: Your mom remembered that she cooked

Gail: She said yes they had an old pot-bellied stove.

Laura: Lena was pretty bitter about it because she said the girls did all the cooking and the boys did the eating.

Roberta: The difference was the 1 guy, Don Lewis, all he remembered was that he ate. He didn't remember that he had to cook it. So do you think your mom would be interested in talking with us?

Gail: I don't know. I can remember climbing out that window.

Laura: Out the bathroom window?

Gail: See its like certain times like 1st and 2nd grades may have their recess so the 4th grade is doing something else. If you need to go to the bathroom you would climb out the window. I see the swing thing is still there and that big pole thing? We called it a genustride and it had these things you (?) and that was great. You could go so high and I can remember we used to like to always kick my cousin because I had long legs and we could just and you could just kick them far. I've never seen the swings they were like the old wooden swings. I remember after Easter I had to wear a dress to school and the socks with the lace. Everyday I would get beat because I used to take all that stuff out of my hair and I would pull the tops off of my stockings and I was a tomboy. Why do I have to wear dresses? My mom said you better not bail out of that swing today, you better not rip that dress or scuff those shoes, well why put it on me? Well I was on the swing and I bailed out and it had a tie, you know those fluffy little dresses and it hooked on the swing and it ripped the whole bottom of the dress out. Well Bunny got a safety pin from Miss Ryder and wrapped it around and pinned it so when we were going home and we were at our bus stop we got there at the house and my mom was standing out there with a stick. I'm not getting off. She drugged me off that bus. I was holding onto the seat. She drugged me like she knew that there was nothing. I don't know where the ribbons like she put pony tail pins and ribbons and barrettes. Why do we have to have all that mess in our hair? I don't know where that stuff went probably on the bus and I threw it away, which she knew automatic, not only that she knew there was no lace on my stockings and my dress is torn up. My dad saved me. He saved me a lot. You should never send her to school like that. I remember her pulling me off that bus.

Laura: So you remember that playground pretty well.

Gail: Oh yes.

Laura: They had the wooden swings. Do you remember the seesaw?

Gail: Yes.

Laura: When we went up in the attic a couple of months ago we found a red and yellow seesaw.

Gail: It was the best seesaw and you could get on it and before somebody could go down you would jump off. That was so much fun.

Laura: People used to do that to me. That seesaw was in excellent shape. It's still up there.

Gail: We used to play baseball. We had the best dodgeball. They don't make balls like that. You can't get the same texture of anything but you could whale that thing. You could throw that thing you could kick that thing, oh God it was just great. I was surprised when I came in. The sidewalk – because we used to play hopscotch on the sidewalk. We drew and we used to do marbles you know, make a circle.

Roberta: What else do you remember about the activities out there? Is it pretty much the same because we were talking, you know the early '60's. Is the outside pretty much the same?

Gail: Yes.

Laura: You don't remember the color of it do you?

Gail: The school? I don't think it had a color.

Laura: I'm pretty sure you are right.

Roberta: I think that's why nobody remembers.

Laura: It was a nondescript color.

Gail: It wasn't a color.

Roberta: Let me ask you 1 or 2 more things about the community in general. What do you remember about politics in the general area like one thing in particular when it came to voting, do you remember just anything? Like any irregularities?

Gail: The only thing I remember about voting – there was this man that used to come down our house he used to get my Mom and Dad and my aunt and uncle and they would all go and vote. Well he used to give my dad and my uncle a half a pint of liquor and give my mom and aunt five dollars. I'll never forget that. See I've worked the elections and it makes me so mad and I see a lot of older people that went like my parents my dad said well I remember the times when they used to pay me and I said well they shouldn't have to pay you and you know, like that. They got all dressed up, that's about the only thing that I remember. No one talked about it. You never heard anything about politics or like well when Kennedy got shot of course you heard that. I remember we got out of school.

Laura: That's interesting and then you work in the polls now.

Gail: I've been working them since I was 18.

Laura: That's great.

Roberta: That's good.

Laura: What you have described is exactly what we have heard from everybody.

Gail: That's the only thing. You know nobody ever said anything even about, oh I know one of my parents was democrat and the one was republican. I'd say c'mon now you just cancel each other out. They never talked about candidates or you know or anything.

Roberta: So how did they make a decision on who to vote for?

Gail: They just voted for whoever the republican was or who the democratic was. They just did the party.

Roberta: Do you remember the man who came?

Gail: No.

Laura: Do you think your Dad knows?

Gail: Oh yeah, all that liquor he gave him, I am sure he'd remember it.

Laura: That just shocked us when we heard that.

Roberta: I've heard about it but its been like in stories you know all the way on the other side of the United States kind of thing.

Laura: Do you have carpal tunnel?

Gail: No I have a like this is all swollen. I have a ganglion cyst and they put a needle in there. The other one they gave me had the metal on the top.

Laura: Do you remember the schoolhouse being used at all at polling time?

Gail: No. I don't know where they went. Nothing was ever said. They would just say we are going to vote you know and there was my dad with a half pint stuck in the back of his pocket.

Roberta: Did they drive or did they walk?

Gail: The guy drove them. He came and he took them.

Laura: In a pretty nice car?

Gail: They all had nice cars. They had shacks to live in but the all had nice cars.

Roberta: Let me start and ask you about the school day. We've already weaved into that a little bit so that's good. What do you remember at the beginning of the day. Your coming here – what was the first thing that you did?

Gail: When you came in you put your stuff away and then like when she opened up you did the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag and then you had prayer and then she would like ok I want you 4th graders to turn to such and such, you start doing this and then she went right on down because the older ones automatically knew and she spent more time with like the 1st and 2nd grade you know like that. It was amazing that she could do that. There was a lady that used to come out here I can't think of her name I want to say Henneker but I don't think that's it. She was from the school district and she used to always come and she used to bring some kind of diet wafers – she was a big lady and Miss Ryder used to always say she's coming out here and giving us this diet stuff. She would throw it away. I can't remember that lady's name. It was a little white lady that came.

Laura: You said Miss Ryder wasn't big on that?

Gail: Yes.

Roberta: I think that's the first time we have gotten a description. Height – tall, medium?

Gail: I'll say she was about maybe 5'8". She was a pretty healthy lady.

It's weird. Later on her and my grandfather to live together. My grandmother died when I was about 5 when she passed away and then I must have been about 13 when all of a sudden he moved to Newark and moved with her and he lived there until he died. He always used to holler all you young people living in sin, would you look at grandpop.

Laura: Well while you are on that subject have you ever heard of any one with the last name of Mayfield?

Gail: Yes that was Miss Ryder's husband/boyfriend/something. He was a crazy man.

Gail: He used to come, I remember when he came we would be here and he would be all drunked up and we had to lock the doors and stuff and she was trying to get the door locked and couldn't get it and he pulled it open and oh he was a mess.

Laura: Because I had never heard of her being married but when I went through the records I found she was listed as Minnie Ryder and then all of a sudden in 1956 she was listed as Minnie R. Mayfield, 2 Terry Manor Lane and then 2 years later she was Minnie Ryder again.

Gail: Ok they lived in Terry Manor because I remember her, she lived on New London.

Laura: Yes because she went back to that address. So he would show up here?

Gail: Yes he would come here all drunked up.

Laura: What would she do with him?

Gail: Well usually we would get the door and everything all locked up and we would peek at him out the window because he would be cursing and carrying on and then he would usually just leave. They said he would beat her and all kinds of stuff. I never saw him do that but

Laura: I guess she didn't put up with it for very long. Where is Terry Manor do you know?

Gail: It's right off of New London Road. When you turn onto Corbitt Street it's that development right there.

Roberta: Sometimes older students would help the younger students, did she ever ask you to do any of that?

Gail: No she would never ask me that. My sister Mildred, she probably helped. Mildred Walls she was supposed to be come out here too and Evelyn Hackett they may have helped the other students.

Roberta: Yeah, you were only in the 4th grade.

Gail: Yes they did. Some of them used to like you know I remember Lulu Jones she (?) its a shame I don't know if she had a mental problem? I see her every once in a while but we were in 1st and 2nd grade together and she repeated. When I went

to the 3rd grade she was still she failed like 2nd grade twice but she was in 2nd grade with my sister Delores and she might have been in 3rd grade with Melvin and Gladys, those 2 were only like 11 months apart so the same grade and then she ended up in 4th grade with my brother David. It's a shame we teased her and stuff you know but you do that as a kid but she was always left back. When I went to Delcastle she went to Christiana but its like when she got old enough to quit her parents just let her quit. You know it was just one of those kids of things and I think she really had problems, learning problems.

Laura: What was her name? Lulu?

Gail: Lulu well as a matter of fact it's still Lulu Jones. I think she lives in Odessa I think her sister, Fanny Earl and Jerry. Fanny is her sister, she told me she lives in Odessa.

Laura: She probably went here longer than anybody then. Lulu did.

Gail: No, Lulu's my age she went with me.

Laura: But if she failed.

Gail: But she still was only 1st to 4th grade or whenever because she ended up with my brother. There is like 12 of those Joneses. They were always here.

Laura: I've never even heard of them.

Roberta: So who else would be her siblings?

Gail: There's Bonsey, Phil, Harry, Georgie, Peter, Paul, Fanny, Maryann, Lulu, Daisy and Bonita and James. I get them mixed up one they called by a nickname. Their dad, Mr. Charlie, that man's got to be 80.

Laura: Their dad?

Gail: Yes.

Laura: He's still around.

Gail: Charlie James he lives on Pleasant Valley Road right before Don Lewis he lives at the beginning of matter of fact across from the Performance Shop. He lives on that other side.

Laura: I wonder if he would talk to us.

Gail: I think some of his kids live there with him.

Roberta: So they would be possible to get a hold of somebody and maybe several folks.

Gail: A lot of people still live out there like even when their parents died off because I know John L. Harding still lives in his parents house.

Roberta: It would be good to get a cross-section, as many different families.

Laura: You've mentioned a bunch of new families that we have never even heard of.

Roberta: Don Lewis didn't talk as much you know? He is a little more shy.

Gail: He has a lot of brothers.

Laura: A lot of Lewis's?

Gail: Yes. It's like 9 maybe. They still live - their parents used to have a house there it was original then he built a house and their mom had a trailer and then they bought a house so its still.

Roberta: What about as the school day got going – books and that kind of thing do you remember whether there was a library?

Gail: No we didn't have a library. Some books it was all according to what grade you were in whether you had books you know. One thing my dad used to holler about was the condition of the books you know. There was some really raggedy books and you know you taped them up and I don't think we were allowed to take them home.

Roberta: So you had homework?

Gail: Yes. You got paper books. You got a paper you would do it and a little tablet according to what grade you were in what kind of tablet you had. You may do like some math problems and she would give you like different things and you would have to write them down like when she got so far along in school you did it like that and you would have spelling words and you had the history. I don't remember how we did that.

Roberta: How involved were your parents in the school?

Gail: Pretty much because I remember my mom used to come for sometimes they used to have conferences because they saw each other that you knew how everybody was doing.

Roberta: Do you remember who took care of the building? Or how the building was taken care of?

Gail: I think my grandfather did. I think Maynard Earl did but I'm really not positive we never had to clean. It was always clean you know. We didn't do the bathrooms. We didn't do any of that. Only if you made a mess you know like that. Somebody had to clean it.

Roberta: Was there an expected way that you dressed?

Gail: Well you couldn't wear pants. I remember when you were like 1st and 2nd grade you wore those leggings and then when you got older, especially with me because I was so tall, I wore pants under my dress but you took them off when you got into school and even when you went out on the playground you did not put them back on.

Roberta: So you put them back on when you went home?

Laura: I bet you had some good cold recess.

Gail: You get used to it because you are running around. Nobody wore pants to school.

Roberta: When recess was over was there a formation?

Laura: How did she get you inside?

Gail: She came out. Sometimes she would be out there like she just didn't send you out to play. She would actually come out there. She would check on you all the time. She could have another group doing something then she would come out and yell at you and keep you straight. She had a bell and you automatically knew to line up. Like when you got ready for recess you lined up and then you went out single file and you came in the same way. You would go in and wash your hands and come in to get ready.

Roberta: Did the boys line up on one and the girls on another?

Gail: Yes.

Roberta: Pranks. You said she always kept an eye on you pretty much out in the yard, did pranks still occur?

Gail: My cousin Milton Chandler, of course you had mice, field mice and she was definitely scared of so you would hear this mouse or see it you know sometimes it would be like half dead because they set D-con and stuff for them and I remember her standing on top of the desk and she would say, "get it, get it" and he would say "Miss Ryder I got it, I got it" and he snatched his head off. Oh my gosh, she was just hysterical. When she calmed down there was no end to his butt.

Roberta: So how did you pay for it?

Gail: Oh yes she tore him up. Of course she told his parents and he got it again and again you know but we used to just do things. She hated the chalk dust. We did the chalkboard all the time. We did a lot of things on the board.

Laura: She hated squeaky chalk?

Gail: That was pretty much – sometimes we would eat the kids' snacks.

Laura: Did anybody ever try to get in the attic?

Gail: No and I don't know why.

Laura: Probably because Lena got in trouble for doing it.

Gail: I was going to say my older brother he was worse than me. He was so bad.

Laura: Which brother was that?

Gail: Donny. He wasn't here when I came here he was already at Louis L. Redding but I am sure he probably got tied up in the attic. But no I don't remember any of us.

Laura: But you did climb out the bathroom window?

Gail: Oh yes me and Beaver (?) did. Sometimes we could coax Pete and there was Pete Webster and Valerie Earl we could sometimes like threaten them if you don't we will throw you out. Once in a while they would come out. It was like an everyday thing. Sometimes when you got out she was standing there, she knew.

Roberta: It was her responsibility to have control.

Laura: Was discipline with the hands or a switch?

Gail: Yes. That was like almost all through school even not only here when I went to Eden.

Laura: What did she spank you with?

Gail: Oh she might just smack you with she had some kind of ruler thing. She wasn't as bad as my aunt. My aunt will tear you up. Sometimes she would say...

End of side A of Tape 2.
Side B of Tape 2 is blank.
Begin side A of Tape 3.

Roberta: This is tape 3, side 1 and we are here with Gail Grinnage and also Laura Lee from the Iron Hill Museum. We were talking about pranks. Were there any other questions, I mean any other comments about that?

Gail: I don't remember – you never got too much you know.

Laura: Did a lot of people skip school?

Gail: No.

Laura: That's what I figured.

Gail: If you didn't go to school you were sick.

Roberta: I know the other one I wanted to ask you. So parents didn't complain about the discipline that the teacher gave you?

Gail: No.

Roberta: They didn't think it was too excessive?

Gail: No. She was probably better than the parents.

Roberta: What about tests? Did you take them regularly?

Gail: Yes.

Roberta: How regular?

Gail: I'm not sure but you were tested like before the marking periods would end I know you had tests or let me see – if you finished a certain subject or area, you know, if you were just doing your letters or numbers or something you know you were tested quite often on that. Plus then you had the state tests because that's what that lady used to bring down because you had to see how the school was doing you know. Of course the older grades were tested a lot more than the younger ones because they went into more depth you know on what they were doing.

Roberta: Everybody took the tests at the same time? I guess by that I mean everybody in the school took the tests at the same time? The 5th and 6th graders?

Gail: They could be doing something else, I mean they could be reading you know while you worked on a test or say if you were doing like spelling this one was doing math nobody was usually doing the same.

Roberta: I was just wondering if you were taking a test then the whole class was...

Gail: Pretty quiet.

Roberta: So you would be doing something but you had to be very quiet.

Gail: Yes.

Roberta: Do you know any of the children that attended the all white school?

Gail: I don't even know where the all white school was.

Roberta: It was right down the road here, Pleasant Valley. Right on the corner on the left hand side.

Gail: Well the Davis' must have gone there because they always lived there, all the white families on Old Baltimore Pike and I guess the Kamether's had to go there. All I remember is really when I went to 5th grade there was a white school because the boys lived across the road and they went there. They were in (?) with my brothers because they were still here when I went. That was because of 5th grade because they didn't go to Louis L. Redding. If they hadn't done the segregation thing I would have gone to Louis L. Redding. I still had 2 younger sisters and 2 younger brothers here.

Roberta: But at that time the school only went up to 4th grade.

Gail: When I was in 5th Delores was in 3rd, Melvin and Gladys was in 2nd and that's when David was in 1st. So it was David the last year. The other 3 went to Louis L. Redding.

Roberta: So we are talking about the early '60's then. One of the things I wanted to ask now, at that time was there running water?

Gail: Yes there used to be a water fountain in the hallway.

Roberta: So you didn't have to worry about the pump room or anything else.

Gail: No.

Roberta: I know we talked to some people and they had to go to the spring in the woods.

Gail: What I get from my great-grandmother, Granny – I can remember getting water from there. I can also remember when we used to get water out of a ditch. I said to my Mom, I said you know we used to drink that water out of that ditch. She said yeah, you took a bucket and you went down and you got – I don't know if it ran down like from a spring or what, all I know is it was a ditch. You took that water bucket and you carried two water buckets back to the house. They used to keep like these milk cans and stuff with water and you could either use it to bath and stuff.

Roberta: You know things just weren't so polluted at an earlier time.

Gail: No.

Roberta: And you didn't think about it

Gail: I remember the spring, the water was always so nice and clear and cold. It was good.

Roberta: Was there a piano in school?

Gail: No.

Roberta: They must have taken it out then.

Gail: No I don't remember.

Roberta: I know some of the folks remember a piano. Were you ever involved in music as a child?

Gail: Not till 5th grade.

Roberta: When you went to the other school, Louis L. Redding?

Gail: No, Eden, I never went to Louis L. Redding.

Roberta: I'm sorry and where is that?

Gail: Lasure. May B. Lasure? It's up on 40. I think they built a new school now but it was right across from Loewe's. The Super G. I don't know what that use it for now. They changed the name and named it after old lady Lasure. She was a mean, wicked lady – teacher.

Roberta: Was she there when you were at that school? That's how you knew her? Did you have her?

Gail: Yes I remember her slapping me in the face with a fly swatter. I went and I called my Mom and she got my grandfather up there. They called the cops because my Mom was beating this woman. She said, "if you ever hit my daughter in the face again (because I didn't do my homework) well I had a smart mouth too. It left a print on my face. My grandfather had to pull her off. Right in front of all the kids he's hollering. She said let me hit you in your face. I remember she was punching that woman – I will never forget that. My Mom used to beat us like something else.

Roberta: Was there any legal ramifications from that I mean you know.

Gail: No.

Roberta: It was settled within the school? The principal and everything?

Gail: Yes.

Roberta: You said you had Miss Ryder, that was the full time teacher. Where did she live at that time, do you know?

Gail: Right on New London Road.

Roberta: And she drove?

Gail: Yes.

Roberta: What about lunch? How did you have lunch?

Gail: We brought it.

Roberta: Yes, there was no more pot-bellied stove.

Gail: Like I said if you didn't have school all day then we went to my Grandmom's. I was sitting here thinking about the water fountain, we never had milk or juice or anything. You know you ate your lunch and then you got some water. Everybody just drank water.

Roberta: Times have changed.

Gail: Yes, my grandson takes 2 juices everyday. He's at Our Lady of Grace and you can get the milk program but he decided not to because you can buy milk you know that doesn't need to be refrigerated so he just gets him juice. No we didn't have any of that. Kool-Aid you had. Like we'd go to Grandmom's they always had one of those big old milk pans it's like when I remember they must have had stock in Kool-Aid because the can was never empty. I mean my aunt used to make it all the time. They always had that and they had homemade doughnuts and cookies. They had tons and tons of cans of cookies.

Roberta: I remember Kool-Aid a lot.

Gail: I used to make it all the time. My son always drank it and now I don't even buy it. They just drink instant tea, that nasty stuff.

Roberta: So you didn't have like individual drinking cups.

Gail: No, we used to go right to the water fountain if you wanted it.

Roberta: I wonder when that stopped?

Laura: That water fountain still works but it leaks.

Roberta: Other than recreation/recess so was that your physical education? You didn't have phys ed so to speak?

Gail: We didn't really have phys ed but I remember we used to do the games things. They used to have like the Field Day. We had to have had some kind of phys ed class. We used to do jumping jacks you know and we did exercise so it had to be a phys ed because we even played like baseball and stuff like that, she would have you do that outside.

Roberta: The Field Day – that was another school?

Gail: No, we did that here.

Laura: Do you remember any other schools coming here ever or was it just you?

Gail: No

Roberta: There used to be other schools that would participate.

Laura: Back before you probably. Do you remember what activities they did at Field Day?

Gail: I remember doing like a sack race. We did the relays. We did that.

Roberta: May Day. Did you all have May Day?

Gail: We had to because I can remember. It's (?) for me but I don't remember what it was.

Laura: It may have been one in the same.

Roberta: Was the school used for meetings other than classrooms?

Gail: That I don't know.

Laura: You remember the dances but that's it?

Gail: That's because it was stupid. You had no choice, you had to go. My parents came and square dances and they had a bonfire and you know and we roasted marshmallows and hotdogs.

Laura: Where did they do the bonfire?

Gail: Right outside.

Laura: Right on this side?

Gail: Yes like everybody came on Saturday evening with their kids. I don't remember if they had meetings or any of that kind of stuff. They had to at one time or another when like they had to decide not to close the school and all that stuff I guess.

Laura: Do you remember whether you could move the desks or were they nailed to the floor?

Gail: No, you could move them.

Laura: You mentioned some classmates. Do you remember names of other people that went to school here with you.

Gail: Oh I know everybody that went to school here. It was the same. The Lewis', the Jones', the Chandlers', the Websters', the Smith's, the Earls, the Grinnages, that's it. Nobody else. See the Chandler was an Earl but in my family you've got on my Mom's side it's the Earls, Websters, Smiths and then an Earl married into the Chandler.

Laura: You had Minnie Ryder and then Ethel Roy sometimes. Did they drive to school?

Gail: Yes.

Laura: You don't remember what car they drove or anything?

Gail: No.

Laura: I figured it was worth a try because you remember so much.

Gail: I do remember Uncle Perce had to drive because it had one of those things that looked like it had teeth on the front of it. My Dad had one. It had a piece that came over the hood, up at the front.

Laura: My husband will know what car that is if I ask him.

Gail: Studebaker. I may be wrong.

Laura: We talked about where Minnie Ryder lived, where did Ethel Roy live, do you know?

Gail: Yes she lived right next door to us. Right on Route 40.

Roberta: That's right because you said earlier sometimes when she substituted she drove you to school.

Gail: She lived like 2 houses over. Matter of fact she was directly across from what is now Kohl's. It used to be Merryland's Skating Rink.

Laura: You talked about the books and you were pretty sure you had to leave them here. Do you remember whether you had to provide pencils and paper or whether they gave them to you?

Gail: I think we provided them. She used to give us paper in the lower grades because we used to have the yellow paper with the

Roberta: Line on the side there?

Gail: Yes.

Roberta: Did you ever have those little composition books?

Gail: Yes.

Roberta: As you got older?

Gail: Yes.

Laura: Those black and white things?

Gail: They still use them.

Laura: Do you remember parents helping out in any way with the school?

Gail: No.

Laura: Did you ever have problems with the restroom?

Gail: No.

Laura: You don't remember it clogging up or anything like that?

Gail: They always worked.

Laura: I don't know if you already asked this – do you remember any special things you did at school for the holidays? Like a Christmas play?

Gail: They always had them. You always had Christmas, Easter you know you always did like you had to learn something – speech or a certain thing you know. You made different things to wear. You did all that.

Roberta: So Halloween, Thanksgiving.

Gail: Everybody was included so like if you were in 1st grade you did something and the 2nd like that. You may have had 6 kids in first grade.

Laura: Do you remember the driveway? Do you remember if it just came up to the building?

Gail: I don't remember the driveway. All I remember is the sidewalk. I do remember that because I was surprised that I saw that the sidewalk was still there. We only walked when we were right here at my grandmothers.

Laura: You mentioned that at the beginning of the day you did the Pledge of Allegiance and then there would be a prayer. Not everybody really remembered that prayer. You don't remember specifically what type of prayer it was?

Gail: No but I know you did have it.

Roberta: Was it a different one or was it always the same one?

Gail: Always the same one.

Laura: I wonder what that was?

Gail: I don't remember. I remember we did that up until we went to the white school and we didn't do prayer there.

Laura: Did Miss Ryder have a piano or anything like that?

Gail: I don't remember a piano.

Laura: You would have remembered that.

Gail: Yes.

Roberta: Wasn't there a piano at one time?

Laura: Yes. Robert Grinnage remembered that.

Gail: My Mom, she played a little so they had to have had one. My Aunt Ethelyn and them she played piano and she had a harp and they had an accordion. My uncle used to play that.

Laura: I'm afraid I am going to have to bow out.

There is a pause in the tape and then a lot of static.

Laura: Eden was pretty far for you.

Gail: Well it was right up on 40.

Laura: Pretty close then.

Gail: Well it's at 40 and 7.

Roberta: Well if they sent you to Eden and McVey at 6th grade why didn't you – you didn't move.

Gail: I think it was just too many kids for the school.

Roberta: It was May 17, 1954 so everybody knows, the Supreme Court made the decision to integrate schools, do you remember that event?

Gail: The only thing I remember is them saying that you will be going. I remember my Dad being mad because he didn't want his kids going to the white school. Some of the other families had already sent their kids before they made it a rule it was like optional. My Mom said well you might as well get over it.

Roberta: What was your Dad's reason for not wanting you to go to the white school?

Gail: His whole thing was I guess in his own way he was really prejudiced but a lot of them were its like oh you go there and the first time something happens they are automatically going to blame you. That was just his thing.

Roberta: So it might have been a protection thing.

- Gail:** Yes. He didn't really feel that you were going to get a better education which I think we got a better education because I remember my sister saying that they were farther along when they went to Louis L. Redding than when they went to Christiana. It was suprrising. I think that's why I never had a problem.
- Roberta: So you figure that the method that Miss Ryder used and the system of education was much better.
- Gail:** Yes. Well I know when you went to the other schools you took much larger classes you know like I'm used to being even though it was one room 5, 6 kids and then when you are talking about going to another school with 25 or 30 people in a room with 1 person trying to teach this.
- Roberta: Right so you are going from getting almost private education...
- Gail:** Yes.
- Roberta: to getting you are 1 of many so the consistent attention that you got...
- Gail:** Because if you had a problem Miss Ryder was right there even if you needed something she could stop here and come over and help you and over there because its so many people. Well me, I was very outspoken – hey, I need you now.
- Roberta: So that kind of answers that next question did that make a difference for you? Did you miss that sort of intimate type of education?
- Gail:** I think I missed it some what but I pretty much made them you know its like – oh excuse me did you hear me I need you? I need help, what's this? For a while I can remember them like putting you like in the back seating but I was so bad it was like – you have to sit up front which if you sit in the upper rows you catch on to more because they are right there looking at you. You're not over here whispering.
- Roberta: You are not distracted.

Gail: Yes so I think that helped a lot.

Roberta: Who was your teacher – you went 5th grade to Eden.

Gail: I just remember Mrs. Lasure. May B. Lasure. That wicked lady. It was weird because by Uncle Perce was friends with her brother-in-law. We called him old man Lasure. He and my uncle used to go around picking garbage. They had so much junk. They lived up there on 40 almost right up by where there is a hair place, a little shopping center across from like the Wawa and stuff. They lived up in there and I remember one time the State made him clean up his property. I mean if you threw out an old washer he would get it. He and my uncle were just junk collectors and it didn't matter what it was, they brought it home.

Roberta: Do you remember any other way that this change affected your life?

Gail: It took a little bit of getting used to but it wasn't months or anything like that. Recess was hard for awhile because you took a lot of abuse from kids and then I gave a lot because they didn't want to play with you. It was hard. They had to adjust too and for me I was the only Black in the 5th grade. Then the Cochran's moved out on Frenchtown Road and this guy, Billy Cochran – he was such a sissy. He had like 3 sisters and they babied him. I used to always stick up for him. He stuttered on top of everything else and they just picked on him and picked on him and picked on him and I used to fight all his little battles.

Roberta: Was there one 5th grade class in that school?

Gail: Yes.

Roberta: So it was a bigger school only in that there were more students in the same grade.

Gail: I had cousins that were like in 3rd and 4th grade that I didn't even know because I never knew them until I went there but I knew their parents but I didn't know we were related. You just pretty much knew like I guess her name was Nancy. Her dad worked with my dad but it's weird because I was I was grown before I knew that my one cousin, my Aunt Dot who had lived at their house a lot we always

went out there, it was their grandmother. Nobody ever said. I never went to their house. When I was in 5th grade that summer I remember walking down to their house (?) it was just so unreal.

Roberta: Did they know that they were related?

Gail: No not until later like we (?)

Roberta: The children didn't know but the parents knew.

Gail: But see the parents would get together sometimes with each other when we did like they used to have Family Day which you are talking so many people because it was family and friends and I didn't know who they were until they told me. I knew their grandmother, their great-grandmother. When I went to Aunt Bell's house it was just Aunt Bell and Uncle Fred there and maybe when my mom and dad went to visit them and they may have come over later or something you know. It's just amazing that whole thing.

Roberta: This ends tape 3, side 1.

Begin Side B, Tape 3

Roberta: This is tape 3, side 2. That would be really interesting. It's kind of like I can see this project making the next step as to try to find out how did all of these different families that are related, how did they choose here, way back when the first Blacks came here on the underground railroad, how did they start here?

Gail: I'm going to ask my Uncle Bill. I don't know if he knows but that's on my Mom's side.

Roberta: You might be able to find out from records when people first came if you go back to deeds and that kind of thing. Marriages, births.

Gail: I might call my brother because his mother-in-law has been doing that genealogy thing on our side of the family and she had gotten back so far and they couldn't

go any more and they were asking me questions and I told them like as far back as I know. They didn't keep records, a lot of them didn't.

Roberta: Not everybody had that family Bible. They always say you can go to the family Bible and even though my grandmother was religious

Gail: No, they didn't do that. That's why I told my Mom I want that Bible.

Roberta: Do you feel that going to the school, you know that the decision to have this desegregation and leaving schools like Iron Hill, do you think it improved? Your education?

Gail: Yes I do. I think it did. A lot. For one thing just being with other kids with a whole mixture of kids. I think everybody needed that. All of your life if you are with just one race and its like and if you look like now my grandson's mother is white and when I think back of my God my Dad would have shot me if I ever brought a white guy to the house you wasn't allowed. He didn't want you to date – period, let alone somebody out of your race and now like my Dad says there is a whole kind of “Heinz 57” because all of his kids are Black with 1 grandchild, my brother's child is White. His mom is white. But their great-grandkids – Jamaican, African, they are White, Spanish. I think that is more so why because you get going to school with the different races and stuff like that instead of just your own and you had a lot of people in my family that went with family. Aunts and uncles marrying each other and having kids and they wonder why – that's what wrong with your kids because your blood is too close.

Roberta: It's funny, we wondered about that but it's just such a delicate question.

Gail: I talk to my son all the time because he says Mom don't you have a girlfriend in any of your cousins? I said no. Well I had two of my sisters, my older sister married her cousin and then my other sister had a baby by her cousin – she didn't marry him but and she turned around and allowed her son to marry his cousin and they are divorced now and I am like c'mon now and like when I said something before it's like well you need to shutup you have nothing to do with them and all

this and I am like, no you don't do that and like neither side of their parents thought anything of it. But now their kids are starting to question it. My Uncle Bill married my Aunt Shirley and they are cousins and now their kids, like mom and dad are related. They wonder why the kids turn out the way they are and I think. I mean it's this whole area. Oh my God, they did. How could you do that? Aunts and uncles marrying each other. It's strange.

Roberta: Yes, I guess if you are a small community and you just kind of stay within the community it happens.

Gail: But see they didn't and that's my whole thing its because they went to school and see if a girl where she says well they were right there they didn't go any where else that's why and I am like they went to school with people in Middletown and some of them went with people in Middletown and Elkton and you know they went all over and it's like I can see if they didn't have vehicles but they all had vehicles and stuff and knew people. They would go to Wilmington and to Chester and partying and they went all these places so how come you ended up with your family?

Roberta: That's interesting. That's a whole nother field of study in itself. After going to Iron Hill you went to Eden and then you went to McVey and then from McVey you went to...

Gail: Christiana.

Roberta: All along the way what was that experience like for you? I guess what I should ask is did the benefits of going to those different schools continue to be increased?

Gail: I think so. I think they did and then especially when I applied for Delcastle because before you wouldn't have even known about it. While I applied it was still Brown Tech but they were building Delcastle it would be finished going there and it was a big thing because my sister Evelyn didn't want me to go because she wanted to go to Brown Tech and my dad said no they didn't have transportation and then when I came up two years later and they've got the transportation and its

going to be a newer school he didn't want the whole Wilmington thing you know all this and when I went there it was like oh my God I was wild. Wild.

Roberta: Because it was a bigger school?

Gail: It was a bigger school and actually when I was 16 I moved out and moved in with my sister because the bus didn't come down 40 and my dad used to drop us off at her house and she would take us to Cooch's Bridge and we caught the bus there. Then we walked from Cooch's Bridge at night down to my grandparents down there till my dad got off work then he took us home. So when my sister lived in Newark, yes the bus, the Delcastle bus comes to Newark so you can stay with me. Things like there was drugs, alcohol you know it was like free. I smoked cigarettes you know you had a smoking court. It was like oh my God so I ended up smoking. Just meeting different kids. Taking a bus. I had never taken a bus you know, the city bus – going everywhere you know. My mom said something to somebody a couple of weeks ago about me how she always knew what I was doing and all this and I am like Mom if you knew half the stuff that I did I would have been dead. For one thing I didn't live at home. I had cousins that took me to bars and stuff. I mean they wouldn't ever let me talk to guys but they let me drink and I wasn't allowed to do this.

Roberta: That was good that you had this protection that we talked about.

Gail: They said this is jail bait, get away from her now. I remember one time I went outside and was talking to a guy and my cousin came out and slapped me around and she is like you know you can't go out there again.

Roberta: How did the people in Wilmington seem to you compared to – what was that change like?

Gail: Some of them were the same it seemed but then you had some that they used to say we thought we were better you know, oh here they come. Especially with a lot of Blacks some of the girls like you know just with the clothes and a lot of them went like to hairdressers and stuff and you had a lot of kids their parents – I

know I never went to a hairdresser but my hair was always done and just with a lot of the clothes and stuff – oh where did you get that and a lot of them, girls I went to school with, stole just about everything they wore. It was like oh my God – you know their parents don't have that kind of money. It was amazing. It was like a few kids that I think their parents did actually have.

Roberta: This is Brown now that you are talking about.

Gail: Well it started, we were only at Brown from like September, just a couple of months.

Roberta: But you still had interaction with Wilmington residents?

Gail: Yes because you could walk from Delcastle to Prices Corner and catch a bus and go right into Wilmington.

Roberta: So what year was this now?

Gail: That was '69 – '70. I went in a lot of their homes and stuff you know and you went in there and that's where I saw alcohol, I mean I've seen alcohol but the drugs, the filth but the ones that did have, they had really nice places but a lot of them didn't you know. They used to always say well you guys live in the suburbs they always thought we were rich. It was like – no. I don't remember too many of them coming from like developments and stuff like that. It was mainly inner-city. A lot of the bad parts of Wilmington you know.

Roberta: So in general for the most part if I am remembering what you said correctly you felt like for you the change was good.

Gail: Yes. Just the whole learning experience and everything. I went into nursing. Just going into the hospital and working and meeting different people there and the whole thing was just great. I should have stayed in it. I went into x-ray too after that. I had my son when I was 19 and I stayed with my sister she let me go. She was married and they had 2 kids she said you are not taking that baby because you can go and do what you want just don't bring the cops to my house. I wasn't like

wild, wild running around with all these men and that kind of junk but I went out and partied with my cousins and I would get up in the morning and I partied with my cousins and I'd get up in the morning and I've got a physiology class I know nothing about, I've got 10 minutes you know.

Roberta: It's a tough subject.

Gail: It killed. Anatomy and physiology and pharmacology. I could have gone on with my 2nd year but I would have to had taken 1st and 2nd year classes and there was no way. Then I went to the University to get a job as a custodian and get my classes for free by working there and I said 2 years and I am out of here. Well 24 years later I am still there. I am a filter changer, I make more money but its still.

Roberta: What's a filter changer?

Gail: I change I work out of HV it's a heater and air conditioning so its the air conditioning in the dorms. People are like there's that many? Oh yes. Before I get done one area it's time for another one. You are talking thousands of filters. I had a bunch of medical problems and you are only allowed to miss like 6 classes or you are kicked out. Well I was going to be in the hospital for over a week and I might as well just stop and I never went back. I worked 2 jobs for 28 years. Summer before last I had an accident. I slipped. I was draining hot water and cleaning out a fire and while the water was spraying out and I went to close it and slipped and fell and I hurt my (?) They think this is what may have happened to my wrist. They didn't know. I was like in Crozier for 14 days and still have problems. They haven't paid a mere bill.

Roberta: This is the University?

Gail: No, it's called Iroquois Jack's. You know where Vince's Sporting Goods is at? I worked as a cook. I worked at a lot of different restaurants. I was just trying to get my bills paid.

Roberta: It takes time.

Gail: Well the lawsuit is really against Blue Cross and Blue Shield because they should have paid my bills and didn't. They said no matter where you have an accident I'm covered through the University because I have medical.

Roberta: That can get so messy.

Gail: It is. It's ridiculous. It took me almost 8 months before I finally found a lawyer that would take the case because the people didn't have workmen's comp. You are not required you just have to have so much and that's when I finally got somebody. That's another story.

Roberta: Let me ask you this one last question. If segregation had remained and you had the same teaching situation, the same teachers and you were to go through 12th grade do you think the quality of the education that you were getting would be the same? Does that make sense? If you had continued in this...

Gail: I think it could have if they had the same resources you know what I mean? If they had all that on the same level then yes it would have. The only thing that I think would have changed a lot would have been like where we lived. I can remember when we weren't allowed to go in certain places because you were Black. Blacks weren't allowed, like Glasgow Arms. I never went in there. I remember things like that. Even now. A cousin of mine, they bought a house I want to say in Newark somewhere and they had burned a cross on their lawn and this is like 10 years ago but even then. My son bought a house in Brookside, I live with him now and the neighbors are friendly and stuff but I remember another lady when she first bought a house in Brookside the things she went through with that. Because Brookside was basically a hillbilly, redneck section, that's what it was and then when you try to throw Blacks in there and we are saying hillbillies, I think that has a lot you know. Even with the education like I said if you had the same resources, yes, but with other things because there is a lot of places that they wouldn't even let you consider going. That wasn't opened up. If you went to a realtor they never showed you the nicer places – even if you could afford it. That's the whole thing with that but I don't think as far as I say with education if

you were given the same resources but probably down the road you wouldn't have been because just like when I think about some of the book we had like when I went to Eden we had raggedy books and stuff. Even now they have a problem with that but you know I don't really think it would have been a problem given you had the same resources.

Roberta: So how do you feel about this experience that you had, this educational experience?

Gail: I think it's great. It's something that nobody else will ever have that. When I told my son and I have told him stories it's hard to imagine. Even people I work with one of the guys said something about, I guess their school was coming here or something, his nephew or something, they were going on a tour and I said you know I used to go to school there and they look at me like – yeah, right. I'm like it was a one-room school and then Mark said he started asking around and he found out and he was like oh my God I found out and I said, yes, you are talking about back when whites and colored were not mixed. You had your white schools and your colored schools and he said yes, yes they did. I said yes I went from 1st to 4th grade there. They look at me like how old are you?

Roberta: You know for that reason it will be so wonderful when this changes.

Gail: Has she had many people talk to her because there are so many people that went here.

Roberta: Well she has, I think from the last Heritage Day she's had a lot of people.

Gail: Yes because we were all there.

Roberta: She has called people but not a lot of folks have gotten back.

Gail: I saw the sign about Heritage Day but didn't know anything about it.

Roberta: This is what she is hoping too by talking to Elsie

Gail: Yes Elsie Bullock, she's my cousin.

Roberta: Then you.

Gail: She's a first cousin. Her mother and my mother were sisters and her husband, Carl, his mother Miss Mary there used to be another house there where they lived. He grew up in that house and she owns next door.

Roberta: So this is what we are hoping that as we actually get people to respond to her request that when you folks come in and you talk with us and then go out

Gail: A lot of them are retired, they are not doing anything.

Roberta: We would really appreciate as many people as possible. I am not sure where she is going to cut off because what we are trying to do is now that we have all these family names it would be nice to have not only one but two or three people from these different family names so you get a different perspective as much as possible. There are a lot of things that are pretty much the same you know, the experiences.

Gail: Then when you get the other ones, the Bullocks and the Hardings. We knew that they lived right up the road from us but their dad worked with my dad and like that and you did things together. I can imagine Don not really knowing anything but he has a brother, Richard, who lives in Christiana and Richard should know a lot.

Roberta: Don strikes me as someone who is really industrious you can see he saved his money. He is very proud of his accomplishments.

Gail: Well I won't go into that, he's another story.

Roberta: Gail thank you so very much for your time.

End of interview with Gail Grinnage.