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Iron Hill School Oral History Project

Interview with Dorothy Earl Grinnage and Evelyn Earl Walley

Date of Interview: September 29, 2006

Interviewer: Roberta Perkins

Roberta: Today's date is September 29th , 2006, this is Roberta Perkins and I am here at the Iron Hill School Museum interviewing Mrs. Evelyn Earl Walley and her sister Mrs. Dorothy Earl Grinnage and they were former students here and I want to thank both of you for taking the time to come and give us your stories of what it was like, you going to school here. Let me start with Mrs. Walley if you would tell me what years you attended Iron Hill School?

Evelyn: I attended the years was 1944 through 1950.

Roberta: And Mrs. Grinnage, what years did you attend?

Dorothy: 1937 to 1943.

Roberta: Did either one of you have a preference as to who goes first? What I am going to do is let's see, give me a little bit of information on who your parents were and what it was like for you going to Iron Hill, we'll start there.

Evelyn: My parents were Maynard and Alberta Earl and we lived right down the road here maybe about a quarter of a mile here on Old Baltimore Pike and it was quite an experience going to school here. I loved it. There was a lot that we did that you didn't need a lot of the things that the kids have today. It was like creating your own activities and things like that. We had to walk to school, there was no bus, we had to walk, rain, shine, snow

or blow. We had to walk to school, every day you had to come to school. Going to school here – it was a lot of fun. It was a lot of learning.

Roberta: Who was the teacher?

Evelyn: At the time I started the teacher's name was Miss Minnie Ryder and there were 6 grades. She had 6 grades to teach. I think the largest number in each grade must have been about, the largest number I know in our grade was like 8 and maybe the lowest numbers from there down was about 5 to 6 so she had a large group to teach. She had a large group to teach. All those grades were on a different level, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th. Grading all the papers and doing all the report cards and planning all the activities. It was quite a challenge for her. I guess for us you could say it was more fun because it was like family oriented, it was like one big happy family. Everybody played together in school. We played together after school, we ate at each others houses, we slept at each others houses. It was like one big happy family. There was a lot of things that the parents were really involved in the activities that were planned here for the children. Like we would have fund raisers like Harvest Home.

Roberta: What was that?

Evelyn: It was like, the parents would do like home like canning, the fruit and the vegetables that were you know from the garden and then they would auction it off to raise money and then they would have like corn stalks and pumpkins that were raised and all kinds of fruit and baskets of tomatoes, cucumbers and onions and beans and mostly anything that you could name that would come out of the garden. It was an auction and we would have an auction you know, maybe a quart jar of string beans might go for 25 or 30 cents. Then during the like the special days activities we would always have plays and things like that. Like Christmas we would always have a Christmas Play and the recital with the poems and the songs. We sang songs and it was always a crowd. I mean the parents were really involved.

I think there was 100% involvement with the parents. They were always here like PTA meetings and play and things like that. They would take that money and help to do things around the school. Keep things up.

Roberta: So money...

Evelyn: From the activities...

Roberta: Went to maintaining the school?

Evelyn: Right, along with whatever the State pitched in.

Roberta: Who helped to maintain the school like the maintenance?

Evelyn: My Dad, Maynard Earl.

Roberta: Do you want to tell me about that?

Evelyn: Yes. Well he kept the fire going because it was like a big coal stove so he had to come in and he had to build the fire and bank it all so it would be warm in the morning when the kids came and he would do all like the grass cutting and keeping things up and stuff. Just keeping things normal. Then when my brother and I when we got to well high school, well we weren't even really in high school, I think I was in 7th grade, he must have been in 9th grade and we had to take over the cleaning part of the school. We would get off the bus from Louis L. Redding in Middletown, because that's where we went and we would get off the bus here and come here and come in and clean. We would have the big 5 gallon buckets of oil and once a month you had to oil the floors because they were the same hardwood floors. You had to oil the floors and make sure the paper towels and toilet paper were in and wash the blackboards and beat the erasers out and make sure things were in order like they were, the kids mostly kept their desks straightened up but if there was anything on top of the desks and stuff you had to like put them inside the desks so it was really neat and orderly for the next morning when you started. You had to either wash

windows or as far as you could reach. If you could reach up to wash the windows you had to wash the windows. It didn't take too long to do it but it was fun. I mean you had to do that regardless of what the weather was. After we finished we had to walk home. We would get off the bus here but we had to walk home and sometimes it would be dark when we walked home but back then nobody bothered you. It was fun doing it. It was a lot of work because you had to move all the chairs, put the chairs up on the desks and taking them back down after they got dry early in the morning but it was rewarding.

Roberta: So the chairs were up on the desks and you cleaned the night...so when the teacher and the students came in the next day they put the chairs...

Evelyn: They put the chairs down.

Roberta: Okay.

Evelyn: Or we would come in early ourselves and put the chairs down so everything was orderly when it was time for school to start. I will never forget the dentist. The dentist would come to the school.

Roberta: Tell me about that.

Evelyn: He would set up right back in that corner, in the corner near where, on the other side of the blue...

Roberta: So we are talking about the corner near the bathroom, the girl's bathroom?

Evelyn: That was the boy's bathroom. He would set up there and he would come in and he would, I think his name was Mr. Wilson, the dentist. And he would clean all the kid's teeth.

Roberta: How often did he come?

- Evelyn:** He would come about twice a year until he got around to everybody. Sometimes he might have had to come a week at a time until he got to all the kids because it was like about maybe 40 kids.
- Roberta:** So he was employed by the State to do this?
- Evelyn:** Yes.
- Roberta:** Was he African-American or white?
- Evelyn:** Yes, he was African-American. Let me see, what else? We had a nature trail and we would take the nature trail from the school here to our great-grandmother's house through the woods. Like over the river and through the woods to Grandmom's house we go. On the way there was a spring that had spring water and it had a little cement foundation around it and we went there and we would get spring water. We would put it in bottles or jars and then we would bring it back to the school. We had spring water to drink instead of water from the cooler.
- Roberta:** Was this a daily thing?
- Evelyn:** No it wasn't daily. While we were out there sometimes whatever fruits and things were growing we were picking berries and apples off trees and persimmons and crab apples and pears and everything and we would bring the apples back and Miss Ryder would set up an activity where we would have to pare the apples and cook them on the stove and make applesauce. The same thing with the blackberries or the blueberries.
- Dorothy:** We would make blueberry or blackberry mush.
- Evelyn:** We would sweeten it, make it like mush and then bring in bread or something. There was a lot of things we did.
- Roberta:** That sounds like it was a fun.

- Evelyn:** It was so much fun.
- Roberta: The product that you made, you cooked. Did the students eat them? Did you take them home?
- Dorothy:** Yes. We ate them it was like some kind of a snack in the afternoon after we had cooked our lunch like the potato soup or the chicken and dumplings or bean soup...
- Evelyn:** Vegetable soup.
- Roberta: Tell me about the chicken and dumplings. That's an involved dish.
- Evelyn:** Well one would bring the chicken, somebody would bring the flour.
- Dorothy:** Each child would bring something to go in the pot. It cooked on top of the stove.
- Roberta: So were these dropped dumplings or rolled dumplings?
- Evelyn:** Rolled.
- Roberta: That's an involved dish. So that was an all day event?
- Evelyn:** Not really I guess we were so used to doing it.
- Dorothy:** One would cut up the chicken, one would roll the dumplings, one would make them then we would roll them and roll them and dump them in the pot. Everybody was involved in it.
- Roberta: Did the boys help?
- Evelyn:** Yes.
- Roberta: So was this something you had for lunch or was it closer to dinner time?
- Dorothy:** Lunch.

- Evelyn:** Because we was going home like at 3 o'clock.
- Dorothy:** These were lunch projects. They would tell you don't bring lunches because we will have this for lunch.
- Evelyn:** It wasn't every day. Twice a week.
- Roberta: So what else did this nature trail involve?
- Evelyn:** It involved snakes, a lot of them. All kinds of animals – squirrels and rabbits, skunks and picking up different leaves and pressing them and drying them out, put them in a book like, press them and put them between wax paper and let them dry out and make a book. We were to do a report on what kind they were.
- Dorothy:** Different flowers.
- Roberta: So did everybody have a book or was this a big book for the class.
- Dorothy:** It was like everybody had to do their own.
- Evelyn:** So she would say like today I want you to go out and get a certain kind of leaf so you would get it and do a report on it.
- Roberta: Which direction was this nature trail? Say we are in the school now and you are going out the door.
- Evelyn:** It's behind the school.
- Roberta: You go out to the right and behind the school?
- Evelyn:** Yes. Directly behind the school. All the way through to Grandmom's house and then through to the Iron Hill Park.
- Roberta: Who was Grandmother?
- Evelyn:** Mary Williams, that was great-grandmother.

- Roberta: But you called her grandmother?
- Evelyn:** Yes. That was a supply closet.
- Roberta: We are in a little alcove here right?
- Evelyn:** There was a back door.
- Roberta: There is still there, it's a little landing there so facing that back door there were 2 closets on the right?
- Dorothy:** You had the back door there with the swings.
- Evelyn:** There was a sand pit. We called it a sand pit but it was really a big hole. I am talking about the hill.
- Dorothy:** You got all dusty and dirty. You would slide back down. It was a big old hill and we'd go up there and Miss Body would yell, "don't you children go up that hill today and come back here all dirty." We'd come back just as dirty as we wanted to be and she would set us on fire. We didn't know which way we were going. When we went home we got another one from going up the hill.
- Roberta: Tell me a little bit about Miss Body. What was she like?
- Dorothy:** She was a nice teacher but she was strict. You didn't play in her class. If she told you to do something, she meant it. That's what you do. You don't carry on in her class. She would take that ruler and tear you up right in front of everybody. She didn't take you in the bathroom or anywhere else. Wherever you were sitting you stood up and she would beat you with the ruler or with that chalk thing...pointer.
- Evelyn:** Miss Ryder wasn't that strict.
- Dorothy:** No, she wasn't.

Evelyn: We had different officers to come visit the school, truant officers, to make sure the kids were in school and I mean they came on a weekly basis.

Dorothy: You didn't know when they were coming.

Evelyn: And you had to be in school. If you weren't you were hauled up to the reformatory. You either went to school or you went there and then you came to school.

Roberta: So did they give you like a number of times?

Evelyn: Yes but I forgot.

Roberta: If you were out...so it wasn't like if they came and you were out just once.

Evelyn: No you had to be really an absentee problem.

Roberta: And so what happened when the children would go...

Dorothy: They would send a note home to your parents and if they didn't take the note then they would go see the parents. A lot of times the notes didn't get there. Like they always found a way to get to you because they were always cooperative.

Evelyn: The parents were always cooperative with the officials. That's the way it was.

Roberta: So education was very important to the parents?

Dorothy: Oh yes.

[Inaudible - crosstalk]

Dorothy: We used to play outdoors when we had PTA meetings - it was so full.

Evelyn: When we came along with the parents. We would stay outside and play. It's not like it is today. It's just so much different than it is today. There

was so much parental support and official support where they pulled together.

Roberta: What were some of the concerns that you remember that came out of PTA meetings that parents involved themselves in, do you remember?

Dorothy: Maybe money, you know financial, trying to raise money to do things around the school.

Evelyn: Other than that there was things like, everybody just sort of agreed with each other.

Dorothy: They would get together and brainstorm and come up with ideas about how to raise money to do different things. In the summertime they would have barbeques and play days. There weren't too many concerns unless maybe it was about the heater or something. You know if the heater was acting up or something like that.

Roberta: Was the school used much during the summer?

Dorothy: Not too much during the summer.

Roberta: Mrs. Walley tell me a little bit about Miss Ryder?

Evelyn: Miss Ryder? Miss Ryder was an excellent teacher. She was patient, she was caring. She knew how to schedule her lesson plans and different activities so that they did not run together. Like she would have like maybe someone from the older group like would be maybe a tutor to the younger ones whereas is she was having a reading session with one group maybe you could do that with the 1st or the 2nd grade you know and then she would come behind you and make sure everything was covered or she was just there when we needed her. She wasn't a pushover now because she would keep you on your toes.

Dorothy: She was just a caring person.

- Evelyn:** She really was, she loved her job. She loved teaching the kids, making sure that they learned from any experience that was out there that they could grasp you know.
- Dorothy:** That they would benefit later on.
- Roberta:** So what was the day like if you can kinda go back and think about as you approached the day, you are approaching the school, you start your day. What was the school day like?
- Evelyn:** We would start in the morning with prayer and Pledge of Allegiance to the flag and she would have on the board, when we got here, she would have it was like the news, the daily news, it would all be on the board. The daily news and the weather report. We would have to copy that once we finished our daily prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag we would copy down and then she would have the lesson plan for each group and you copied down your lesson plan or whatever activity or whatever lessons you had to do while you were in class, your classroom work. During the morning you would take like a 15 minute break and you would go on the playground if the weather permitted. If not then we would do like fun activities inside like games or something like that or reading activities or games or something like that and then it would be lunch time. After lunch you was back to your work and then there was another 15 minute break about 2 or 2:15. That was your day.
- Roberta:** From 2:15 on what was kinda like wrapping up the end of the day like, from 2:15 on?
- Evelyn:** You worked up until just about 3 o'clock.
- Dorothy:** Until it was time to clean up maybe till about 2:45 then it was time to clean up and put all your things away. Make sure your desk was cleared off at the top and everything in place. Of course you would find a few who would take things and shove them back (inside the desk) and once

she found out it was like that you had to clean that desk out and get rid of that stuff. Then it was clean up time – about 10 or 15 minutes of cleanup time before the end of the day then you started winding down you know.

Roberta: Did everybody walk home?

Evelyn: I think all but Janice did, I think their parents picked them up. They lived in Glasgow.

Roberta: Who was this now?

Evelyn: Janice Grinnage and then Mrs. Grinnage had 2, she took in foster kids, this was her granddaughter, Janice was but then she had a foster child named Janice Johnson and [inaudible] Hill. Then there was Evelyn Smoot and Irene Gray I think they lived in Glasgow down (Route) 896 but the rest of us walked.

Dorothy: Look how many of us there was.

Evelyn: We would get up in the morning, and get up early enough to be bathed and dressed and breakfast eaten to go meet our cousins, we lived on Old Baltimore Pike and they was on Otts Chapel Road and we would meet at the halfway mark.

Roberta: What was that like?

Evelyn: It was so much fun coming to school. Every year until I got out of here I cried when school was out. Every year I cried, they would say there she goes again.

Dorothy: You was as bad as [inaudible] she would take off her boots and walk home with no boots on.

Evelyn: It was so much fun and it was such a learning experience I'll never forget. We would stop on the way to school – there was an old lady down the

road, her name was, what was her name, they had the cherry trees in front of her house – Miss Morgan. She had a son named Richard and she had 2 huge cherry trees in front of her house with the big, black cherries. Early in the morning we would climb the trees getting cherries instead of coming straight to school and be late for school, get in trouble, and I would do it again the next morning. Picking cherries.

Dorothy: Before you went to school.

Evelyn: And she was a sweetheart. She was such a sweetheart.

Roberta: She didn't mind?

Evelyn: No not at all. She just said make sure you don't fall. If you have to climb up make sure you don't fall and hurt yourself. Her son Richard, he would come out too. They were a white couple, but her son Richard it was just like he was one of us. It was just Mrs. Morgan and her son Richard.

Roberta: So what was it like for you all inter-acting with the white children or the white community? What was that like?

Evelyn: It was okay some times but then trouble would brew because we came here and they went to school right down on the corner and there was always trouble with the Weatherly's.

Roberta: The who?

Evelyn: The Weatherlys. It was a family that lived right down the road from here. They lived on a big farm. As a matter of fact you babysat those kids.

Dorothy: I babysat them and I tore them up.

Evelyn: It was only trouble with one kid.

Dorothy: They always wanted to fight.

- Evelyn:** We never really mingled too much with them but all the other kids – the McCormicks, and everybody else’s.
- Dorothy:** They all played together.
- Evelyn:** All played together, all ate together, all slept together.
- Dorothy:** It just seemed like it was that one family that didn’t get along. They didn’t get along with anybody.
- Roberta:** So did people come together and do things as a community or did like children play, you are out and playing with the white children
- Evelyn:** The parents, they were always, I mean like especially my father, he was always at somebody’s house.
- Dorothy:** Helping him do something.
- Evelyn:** Helping to do something or just there talking.
- Dorothy:** Talking or socializing until they both fell asleep and the wives would have to make them get up and go home.
- Evelyn:** It was like that community wide with the people around. Daddy even went up to **[inaudible]** he got along with the parents but with the kids, humph!
- Dorothy:** We couldn’t get along with the kids. The kids didn’t want to...
- Evelyn:** She babysat for them in the evening but when it was time to come to school they went their way and we came our way but there was no togetherness, no coming together. They were ornery too.
- Dorothy:** Socializing and playing together but all the rest of them, the McCormicks, the Stewarts, the Howells, the Burkes, there was a lot of them **[inaudible]**
- Roberta:** This is going to end side 1 of tape 1.

Roberta: This begins side 2, tape 1. Mrs. Walley you and your sister Mrs. Grinnage were telling us about getting along with the various white children and white families in the community and that kind of takes out to what it was like in the general community how the black community inter-acted with the white community, what it was like?

Evelyn: Mr. McCormick, they had a store, they had a little store and there was also a skating rink right down the road before you get to Otts Chapel. It was a big building that sat on the right hand side just before you get there on the same side McCormicks was on. That was the skating rink where we went skating. Then the McCormicks had a little store it was just a small building but little things like milk and bread and canned goods and butter and ice cream and cookies and sodas and things like that. We all played together, had a ball field, played ball, went swimming together. We didn't have a pool but we went swimming in the creek.

Roberta: Did you learn how to swim in that creek?

Dorothy: Yes you either had to learn or you drowned. I didn't swim, the older kids, I watched.

Evelyn: Charlie learned how to swim by himself. They jumped [inaudible] somebody's gonna get drowned.

[Inaudible - crosstalk]

Dorothy: The snakes was scared of them. The snakes would start swimming, they would be swimming and then the snakes would go...going every which way.

Evelyn: It was fun.

Dorothy: We used to have hayrides. My grandfather he used to do that. The hayrides, he had a sled. He hooked the horses up to the sled like in the winter and take us for a ride in the sled. I think he had 4 horses. It would

be like a community thing you know. He would take all the grandkids. It would be snowing outside and the roads would be covered with snow. We would go for sleigh rides and hay rides.

Evelyn: We would go all the way from here to Avondale all up in Cherry Hill, everywhere on the hay rides and then you would get there and they would have a thing like they called it a social is where they would have all this food where they would be raising money for their church or something or sometimes you would see like a big picnic thing once you got there on the hay ride. Straw was blowing all over.

Evelyn: A community thing. Lots of community things going on, the ballgames. No real bats, no real balls. You made your own balls. You took a sock and stuffed it with other socks and you twisted it and you rolled it and then you clamped it and that was your ball. Then you had a stick or a board for your bat.

Roberta: What did you clamp it with?

Dorothy: We tied it like a knot.

Evelyn: Or you could take a needle and sew it or take a piece of thread and tie it around the top so it wouldn't come loose because if it came loose it was okay, time out. Time out to fix the ball. We would be out there for hours and hours playing ball.

Roberta: So the girls and boys played together?

Evelyn: Yes, everybody played together. The team would be mixed – the girls and the boys. Those were the community activities there was nothing else much to do so you created your own activities. We had games like dominoes, checkers or hopscotch. You would get a piece of glass and you would draw your hopscotch on the ground and play hopscotch. Go berry picking. Dodge ball. Apple picking. We had fruit trees in our yard but

we liked to go back in the woods on the trail. We had scratches and got scarred up from the briars and the jiggers would get in **[inaudible]**

Roberta: What kind of berries?

Evelyn: Blackberries, blueberries, dewberries. **[inaudible]** Crab apples, we'd get them and Mom would make crab apple jelly. Of course we had applesauce, baked apple dumplings all sorts of goodies. Peach cobblers, apple pies **[inaudible]** making our own rag balls

[Inaudible - crosstalk]

Dorothy: They would get mad – you broke the bat then we would have to hunt around and find another one. We'd go look for another stick.

Evelyn: Another stick or another board.

Roberta: So would the game start over again or would it start from where

Evelyn: From where we left off. We would do our 9 innings, we would be out there until dark.

Dorothy: **[inaudible]**

Evelyn: We weren't hungry not until we got in the house then we were starved.

Dorothy: While we were out there playing we weren't hungry. Daddy would say the Lord gave us enough to eat you should have come over.

Evelyn: Those really were the good old days.

Dorothy: We used to go sledding too. Walk home and carry the sled.

Evelyn: It was about, where was that (inaudible) house probably about a mile or two miles.

Roberta: Where did you sled?

Evelyn: Mostly go up to Grandmom's house and go out back where they had, gosh it's a wonder we didn't kill ourselves. They had trees, it was trees but it was like a path, trail – cars could drive up but we would come down the hill going in and out of the trees. We'd leave on Otts Chapel road and end up on Smith's Way. The path went all the way through to the next road. We did it at home sometimes because we had a long driveway that was sort of

Dorothy: down hill.

Evelyn: If you went too far you fell in the creek.

Roberta: Now which creek was that?

Dorothy: Where we lived at there was a creek, a little creek.

Evelyn: We lived right down the road next to Ironside Road, right across from Ironside Road.

Evelyn: Ice skating. How do you ice skate with no ice skates?

Dorothy: Put cans on your feet.

Roberta: Give me a picture of that.

Dorothy: Take like soda cans and stomp them to make them fit on your feet and go ice skating.

Roberta: How did you tie them on your feet?

Dorothy: You didn't tie them.

Roberta: Oh you bent them so they would create a little

Evelyn: Or you'd use your shoes. Slide with your shoes on.

Dorothy: If Mom caught you with them cans on your feet...you took them off your feet...tearing up your shoes.

Roberta: When you went on sleigh rides, how did you guys keep warm?

Evelyn: Oh you were bundled up. You had your gloves, your boots, your coats, your hats, your mittens, your quilt.

Dorothy: Your blanket. Great big old quilt. Flannel blanket that you got bundled up with...you stayed plenty warm.

Evelyn: Then our bodies would keep each other warm. You'd be jumping around and jammed up in there.

Dorothy: We didn't think about being cold.

Evelyn: Then we had to go home and we had to do chores at home, you had to chop wood, you had to fetch water, you had to bed down the cows and horses and gather the eggs

Roberta: What did you guys do for lights?

Evelyn: Lamps.

Roberta: And the school at that time, what kind of lighting did they have in the school, do you remember?

Dorothy: They had poles that like stick onto the wall and it came out and the lamp would fit down inside it.

Roberta: Kerosene?

Evelyn: Yes.

Roberta: So did they get electricity when you were still there?

[Inaudible - crosstalk]

- Roberta: Okay but not when Mrs. Grinnage.
- Evelyn:** No.
- Roberta: So between that time frame.
- Evelyn:** Telephones **[inaudible]** They always sent a note home to your mother cause you didn't have no phones. They would either write a note home or they would get in their car and drive there.
- Dorothy:** And take you with them too.
- Evelyn:** The area wasn't that wide.
- Dorothy:** Spread out that it took them out of the way. If it was something real important they would drive you there.
- Roberta: What was discipline like in the classroom? Was there a problem with that?
- Dorothy:** No, not when my teacher it wasn't. All she had to do was look. If you were talking she wouldn't say a word, she would look at you.
- Roberta: That was Miss Body?
- Dorothy:** Yes and she wouldn't say a word because she believed in that stick.
- Evelyn:** She would sort of take you from the area where you were, pull you from the class and have you sit in the corner, not sit in the corner, stand in the corner on one foot.
- Dorothy:** You didn't stand in no corner.
- Evelyn:** Stand there on one foot with your face to the wall.
- Roberta: How long?

Evelyn: Maybe about 10 minutes.

Dorothy: Miss Body didn't stand you in the corner. She would come down there and she would tear you up in front of the class.

Evelyn: Or she would make you sit in your seat with your head down and you thought you was having so much fun. She would isolate you from the rest of the class. Sit there with your head down until you were told to get up and maybe by that time until you get yourself together. Some of those kids lived in that corner. Every day is was the same person sometimes. One boy, oh my God, Carl, God rest his soul,

Dorothy: He was in the corner everyday wasn't he?

Evelyn: He would tell the teacher – I'm not doing what you're telling me to do – and she would say, oh yes you are. He would go in the bathroom, put the window up, jump out the window and go on down the road and go home.

Roberta: Now this was who?

Evelyn: Carl Bullock.

Dorothy: He came back too didn't he?

Evelyn: His mom was embarrassed because of his behavior. [inaudible] he was ornery. I'm not doing that work. I'm not doing what you tell me to do. His Mama would tear him up too. Miss Ryder, Carl jumped out the window, he's going home. Okay, I'll catch him later on I bet she was saying to herself, goodbye. Good riddance.

Roberta: But he did finish school?

Evelyn: Yes he finished Iron Hill.

Roberta: Do you all remember if there was a library in the school? Were there extra books other than the text books that you used?

- Dorothy:** We had different books.
- Evelyn:** Not really.
- Dorothy:** It wasn't a library. I don't really remember a library.
- Evelyn:** Not when I went to school there wasn't a library.
- Dorothy:** There was a book rack.
- Evelyn:** Different books that you could read like if you finished your work before the rest of the class.
- Roberta: Where was that book shelf?
- Dorothy:** Mostly everything was in the back.
- Roberta: So when you are coming into the front it's to your left.
- Evelyn:** Right. Yes.
- Roberta: What kind of books were they?
- Dorothy:** Fiction and non-fiction. When we went to school they had puzzles. They were made out of blocks like different pieces of wood and you slide them together.
- Roberta: Really? That's the first I have heard of those. You said they were in block form?
- Dorothy:** Yes they were made out of wood in different shapes.
- Evelyn:** And they had different pictures on each side. Like you had to match the pictures up to make the whole puzzle. Almost like what is that game they call...oh we had music, the flutes, the xylophones, piano and we would do those things during music class and at special activities like for Christmas and at the end of the school we would always have big programs with

music and recitations and plays. **[inaudible]** And they afterwards, we would have like a repass.

Roberta: How did you prepare for those? Were the students involved in the preparations as well as the teacher?

Dorothy: Right.

Evelyn: She would like maybe have a book or maybe a few books and you would take turns. You would have plays in different corners and you would pass it around and pick out the one that you wanted to perform then you had to have practice like every day until we learned it.

Roberta: Did you have favorites? Favorite poems?

Evelyn: Not really I just liked to participate.

Dorothy: Those 2 holidays were really special.

Roberta: That was Christmas?

Evelyn: That was Christmas and graduation.

Evelyn: We decorated the room, the windows like. Like in the Fall you would have your cornstalks, the farmers always had... they would bring us the cornstalks you would have them setting back with a pumpkin. Cut out the faces on the pumpkins and you would decorate the room. **[inaudible]** it washed off. We used to get colored paper and write different things on it.

Roberta: What were some of the outside games and activities that you would play at recess?

Dorothy: Mostly baseball, dodge ball.

Evelyn: Hopscotch, jump rope.

Roberta: Double Dutch?

- Dorothy:** One would get on one end and one would get on the other end and we would keep raising the rope higher and higher.
- Evelyn:** Oh, high jump.
- Dorothy:** See how high you could jump.
- Roberta: They had swings when you were here?
- Dorothy:** They would make swings and put them on trees. The ropes on the branches.
- Roberta: And put the rope across?
- Dorothy:** Yes.
- Roberta: Is that tree still out here? Do you know?
- Evelyn:** No.
- Roberta: Was it a tree closer to the school?
- Evelyn:** No, it was kinda back over there. Back to where the birch trees are.
- Dorothy:** That big old tree, we used that.
- Evelyn:** Poppa would have a hammock.
- Dorothy:** That's what we used for swings too. We didn't have regular gym sets. The rope around a tree branch, one strong enough to really hold it.
- Evelyn:** Daddy would cut a board, maybe the size of a swing seat and put like a little hole, a little thing where the rope could fit into so the board wouldn't slide off.
- Roberta: What was health care like, I know you mentioned the dentist that came?
- Dorothy:** A nurse came.

Evelyn: I can't think of her name

Dorothy: But I know she came.

Evelyn: I think her name was Howell. She would come and examine you and give you almost like a physical.

Dorothy: You would go in that bathroom one at a time.

Roberta: How often did she come?

Evelyn: She came pretty often. At least once or twice a month.

Roberta: That's pretty frequent.

[Inaudible - crosstalk]

Dorothy: I don't know how those teachers did it. All them kids and all them different grades.

Roberta: They were to be admired weren't they?

Dorothy: They were. Marking all those papers and report cards

Evelyn: All those reports they had to turn into the State. It was like never ending. Grade papers and doing reports. Then when the special days would come she would like plan for those but it would all come together.

Roberta: Where did she live? That's Miss Ryder.

Evelyn: She lived in Newark on New London Avenue.

Roberta: And Miss Body?

Evelyn: She lived in Wilmington **[inaudible]** every day.

Roberta: Did they drive?

Evelyn: Miss Ryder did. Miss Body did too.

Roberta: So do you know whether or not, I am thinking about what you just said all the work that they constantly seemed to do, when summer vacation came around do you know whether they stayed like in Newark or Wilmington or they just kinda took a vacation?

Evelyn: No. I never remember Miss Ryder taking a vacation. I don't remember Miss Body taking one either. She lived with her Mama and she helped take care of her mother and her brother. As far as them taking a vacation I don't remember them taking a vacation. If she did, she did it awful quiet, like I'm getting out of Dodge and nobody is going to know where I am.

Roberta: When you all left Iron Hill, the school, what was it like? Where did you go to school and what was that change like for you?

Evelyn: I went to Middletown to Redding. You went to Howard because you had to catch the train.

Dorothy: I went to Howard. We would catch the train. I would go to the Pennsylvania Train Station and we walked from the Pennsylvania Train Station to Howard High.

Roberta: Now that was in Wilmington, the Pennsylvania Train Station?

Dorothy: Yes.

Roberta: So that was where?

Dorothy: On Front Street.

Roberta: On Front Street?

Dorothy: Yes. That was a ways. We had to walk that every day.

Roberta: What time did you have to catch the train?

- Dorothy:** 6:30 in the morning had to be at the train station.
- Evelyn:** We caught the bus.
- Dorothy:** You would catch the bus by 7 o'clock.
- Evelyn:** To Middletown. We went to Middletown, the white kids went to Newark.
- Roberta: And so Mrs. Grinnage when you went to Howard that was from grade 7 to...
- Dorothy:** 12.
- Roberta: And so what time did you get home?
- Dorothy:** It was dark. We walked from the Newark Train Station home.
- Evelyn:** Sometimes Daddy would pick them up depending on his work schedule because he worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad.
- Dorothy:** Yeah, he worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad and he'd tell you in a minute, "walking was good for you." We didn't mind walking, there was a whole lot of us. Like 6 of us.
- Evelyn:** He'd pick you up,
- Dorothy:** Yeah, if the weather was bad. If it was nice out we would walk home. If it was snowing or raining he would pick us up.
- Evelyn:** If he wasn't working.
- Dorothy:** But it was dark when we got home. We had nothing to do. Chores and stuff.
- Roberta: This ends side 2 tape 1.

Tape 2, Side 1

Roberta: This is Roberta Perkins, this is tape 2, side 1 and Mrs. Walley you were going to tell us what it was like for you traveling to and from school, we heard from your sister, once you went to...

Evelyn: Louis L. Redding in Middletown on East Lake Street.

Roberta: Right.

Evelyn: Our bus driver's name was Mr. Rudolph Valentine and he lived there on Pleasant Valley Road and he picked us up in the morning about 7 o'clock and I don't know, from here from 6th grade to 7th grade it was, at first it was kinda difficult, transportation, I guess its because you're going in the same place for like 6 years right at home and then all of a sudden you have to travel 13 or 14 miles one way to get to school you know on a school bus. When you would get to school it was like it was different you weren't in a one room building you were in a big like a high school or you know a junior high school where you had to change classes and make new friends and new teachers and different work and it was quite a transition for me but once you got used to it, it wasn't.

Roberta: You were able to adjust after a while?

Evelyn: It took a while, once you got adjusted and got used to your teachers.

Roberta: So did some of the students that you had at Iron Hill follow?

Evelyn: Yes followed but we weren't in the same class like we were. We were split up. I might have been in Mr. Herman Moody's class and maybe a couple of them might have been in his brother's class or another classroom so you weren't all together like you were here, like sitting right behind

each other or right across from each other and being with each other all day long. It was different.

Roberta: How did you find the care and the attention that the teachers gave?

Evelyn: At Redding?

Roberta: Yes.

Evelyn: I got along with my teachers.

Roberta: Compared to

Evelyn: here?

Roberta: Yes, did you feel that the teachers gave you the same

Evelyn: Yes.

Roberta: the same kind of attention and care and concern to your learning?

Evelyn: I had a nice class with the teachers all through middle school and high school.

Roberta: Mrs. Grinnage how did you find the transition going into Howard?

Dorothy: Some of the teachers were fine but others, some of them weren't. I had one, Miss Coles, oh man she was terrible. You could do anything and she'd...

Roberta: Really?

Dorothy: Yes one girl came in twice she was late, she told her to sit down. She sat down, she said something to the teacher and she threw an ink well at her. If she had hadn't ducked it would have tore her up. She would throw at you in a minute.

Roberta: What did she teach?

Dorothy: English. She was an English teacher. She would come down that aisle, have these big old dinner rings on and she would punch you along side of the ear. I know she went to hit me one day and I told her don't even think about it. I was as big as I am now.

Roberta: You were a pretty big kid.

Dorothy: I said, don't you look at me with them rings on. I said my Mom don't do it and you're not doing it. My mother does not hit me along side the head with no ring. She was terrible.

Roberta: Now she was English, what grade was this?

Dorothy: That was 7th grade. **[inaudible]** I guess 7th grade was when we started changing classes but I got along with all the rest of them. **[inaudible]** once we would calm down. Just one time when it was time to go out and play that's when you had your different exploratories. Wood shop and sewing class and cooking class. I had sewing. I wanted to take wood shop but they said oh no you can't take wood shop we are full. They said what are you going to do in wood shop? I said I am going to make something and she said, what?

Evelyn: We had sewing and wood shop. Sewing and cooking. At that time the girls couldn't really take wood shop. It was all cut out just for the boys and the sewing and the cooking was for the girls. That's the way it was back then.

Dorothy: The boy's room had cooking. When I went to school the boys' room had cooking.

Roberta: Different school?

Dorothy: Different schools. We had sewing, that's the first time I used a sewing machine, she said go right straight down, I started the top up way over this a-way. She said you've got to take it out and do it right. I couldn't sew straight to save me.

Roberta: Who was the sewing teacher, do you remember?

Dorothy: Mrs. Parker. Then we had a cooking teacher. One boy he could really cook. Did he become a chef? I don't know but he could cook. He would bring some recipes in there and we have to try to cook them. I couldn't cook that stuff he was cooking. I never did get it.

Evelyn: It was a big difference working with the kids because I worked with the school kids for 20 years. It was a big difference from the one room schools, the things that they were allowed to do. It was fun going to wood shop with them. Wood shop, metal shop, photography class, all that. It was fine because I had a lot of things at home that I still made with them like cutting boards and things like that, sleighs, it was nice and the girls were in there as well as the boys, it was like co-ed but when we were going to Middletown we couldn't do it. It was just boys in shop and girls in cooking and clothing. Now the girls are in everything

Roberta: What was the political climate like; do you remember growing up here in the Iron Hill community? Election time, any memories of voting, going to the polls, you, the parents?

Dorothy: They used to go and get them and take them to the polls.

Evelyn: Right. The politicians, there was a man who lived up there on...he used to also be a tax preparer, what's his name? He used to do all the taxes. I can't think of his name. He was a politician. He and Daddy were pretty close because Daddy was close with everybody because he did so much work and so much socializing with everybody that...I can't think of his

name. But they did, they came and got you and they paid you to vote back then.

Dorothy: Ten dollars or something they paid you.

Evelyn: To vote for a certain party or tell you to vote for a certain party and they gave you ten dollars. [inaudible] but it wasn't like that when I started voting back then when my mother, much younger when my Mom and them were voting it was like that. They came and got them and they took them to the polls and practically told them who to vote for and once they got with one party it was like that one party all their life, regardless of who was coming in or who was going out they had to stay with that particular party that they started out voting for. It was a psychological thing I guess. Not realizing that this party you are voting for might not be the best party to do the job but it's because I guess that's the way they were brought up. Once you were a republican or once you were a democrat you were always a republican or a democrat and that was it. Elections were a big thing. They always voted.

Roberta: Did they encourage you to make sure you registered and voted?

Evelyn: Yes.

Roberta: You said your Dad worked for the railroad?

Evelyn: For 49 years.

Roberta: What did he do?

Evelyn: He was a foreman. He made sure the switches were kept clear and the tracks were clear you know like especially during the winter months. I mean they were out like sometimes 2 or 3 days with out even having to come home.

Dorothy: Keeping the snow off.

- Evelyn:** Keeping the switches and tracks and things clear. Especially the switches because that caused accidents. The trains would...
- Dorothy:** Collide.
- Evelyn:** If the switches were messed up they would be getting on the wrong track and everything else [inaudible]. He enjoyed himself he would rather be on that railroad then he would be anywhere else [inaudible], 2 and 3 days with no sleep.
- Dorothy:** He slept. He slept in the toolhouse.
- Evelyn:** Catch a nap in the toolhouse. They would send him out to get food and stuff for the group back there then everything was segregated. You had to go in the back door, he would have like with the whole group or the whole company, things, a list of what the people wanted and he had to go and put the order in and pick it up but you had to go to the back door and get it. He would get a huge order at the Newark Diner. Huge order. The man said well you will have to go around back. He said, no I have to go back to work. [inaudible]
- Dorothy:** He said I'm not going around back.
- Evelyn:** He said if I have to go to your back door and pay you then we won't eat. I don't know where they got lunch that day. He said no, I won't do it. I've done it for too many years and this is getting like later up in the years you know and they still.
- Roberta:** Like do you remember the year? Roughly?
- Evelyn:** I guess I must have been about...I was a teenager. I must have been about 13 or 14 years old so that was in the '50s.
- Roberta:** Late 50s early 60s?

Evelyn: Yes.

Roberta: That's about right

Evelyn: And there was still a lot of segregation going on.

Roberta: What do you remember of things changing with that? During that time you can gradually see things start to change. What do you remember?

Evelyn: I guess the first thing I can remember is how the restaurants started opening up to blacks because I worked in a little restaurant, I was 17 and I worked in a little restaurant in Newark on Wilbur Street Rose (?) Pizza Shop and I worked there but I wasn't allowed to eat in the dining room or really to even to go out front. You know you stayed like in the back and I noticed when they started their transformation they were allowing kids to come in. I guess that's when deseg was starting to come in to play. I know it happened upstate in Newark and down state because in the '70s I was living in Dover and it was still going on. It had a big write up in the paper where they were not serving.

Dorothy: If you wanted to be served you went in the back door to the kitchen.

Evelyn: But them and the school system. They changed. It was coming in to play in the school system [inaudible] back in the '70s when deseg started somewhere around there, in the school system. They started busing kids to closer schools.

Roberta: So that leads me to another thought that I have back when you know the Supreme Court decision, Brown vs. the Board and do you remember what that was like? Where were you working then?

Evelyn: What year was that?

Roberta: This was 1954 you weren't working. You were a young kid, you were still a kid, that's right so that wouldn't have had any bearing on you so you didn't notice it until, you say in the school system.

Evelyn: In the school system when deseg started that was like in the '70s because I was at George Gray.

Roberta: In Wilmington?

Evelyn: Yes.

Roberta: Okay.

Evelyn: I was working down there and I remember we went on a strike for deseg.

Roberta: What was that like?

Evelyn: It was awful, I mean the strike and there was a lot of teachers, they were arrested. It caused a lot of hard feelings among the teachers who crossed that line to go in and teach the children you know. They didn't join like everybody else who was striking. They said they were teachers and they were going to teach so when they crossed that line and went in it was a lot of hard feelings and a lot of friction when the strike was over. I will never forget one teacher, Miss [inaudible] I saw her not too long ago and she would always faithfully go to teach, she would cross that line, she said my job is to teach and she would go in and she would teach those kids and a couple more teachers went in but it was awful. It was a lot of hard feelings.

Roberta: And the strike had to do with the desegregation of the school?

Evelyn: Yes, deseg and the contracts you know. Yeah I could see that time coming, a lot of them did, are we going on strike again, especially when it came to contract time was up and things weren't going the way they should have been going. It was a lot of hard feelings. It was like you

don't deserve to get the raise because you crossed the line. I was working 2 jobs and I was also at the DuPont Country Club and I remember I'll never forget when one of the members out there, he said you know what regardless of whether you cross that line or whether you don't cross it you are going to get the same as everybody else gets when it comes down to the bare wires so if you have to use your income to help support your family, he said, go back to work. I'll never forget him telling me that. The next thing I went on back to work but it was like some of them wouldn't speak to you after the strike was over. It was a lot of hard feelings.

Roberta: What did you do at George Gray?

Evelyn: I was a para-professional. Like a teacher's aide.

Roberta: It did seem like strikes were a lot more heated.

Evelyn: Yes they were.

Roberta: People were pretty intense.

Evelyn: Yes.

Roberta: From what I can remember.

Evelyn: I guess its still like that today. I don't know from what you see on TV about certain districts and certain schools. People getting physically hurt. Emotionally hurt.

Roberta: If schools weren't desegregated and the students that were from Iron Hill went to and they had the same quality of teachers you know, the same classroom interactions, segregation was throughout you're going to school do you think the quality of education would have been the same as what you had?

- Evelyn:** I don't know. I kinda think it might have been about the same.
- Roberta:** Let me put it another way. Do you think the students from Iron Hill that when deseg came about do you think, how do you think they benefited? Did they benefit? Did they lose something?
- Dorothy:** I think they lost a lot of pride.
- Evelyn:** Deseg was a difficult transition. It's hard for kids, I mean the name calling and the fights. All the aggression...it was hard. I guess it was for the teachers too. Like not wanting to teach a certain race of kids on both sides you know, black and white. I don't want to teach your kids because they are black. That was hard on the education system I think altogether. I mean not just for blacks but I still believe that the quality of education was I guess it would have been better or not because when you still go into some of the schools today its like well you take the movie which was supposed to be based on a true story called "Lean on Me" a Joe Clark movie, how he was saying you know like you don't get the same, pretend like they are books, you don't have the same quality of materials that some of the other kids had like out in the suburbs or the ones they had to have bused to the city. I know when I was at George Gray our books were years behind the kids who were out in the suburbs.
- Dorothy:** When I went to school we got the books they were tore up. The pages were tore out of them and everything else when we got them. I know Miss Body would take her book and she would make copies so we could do our lesson.
- Roberta:** So she would make copies of the missing pages?
- Dorothy:** Yes, the missing pages, so we could have them.

- Evelyn:** In certain areas it's still the same today where some materials are so outdated you know that the kids don't get as much as they should you know, they're qualified to do the work if they have to but..
- Dorothy:** They can't do it.
- Roberta: You feel some areas in Delaware, the New Castle County school system?
- Evelyn:** Yes because I just came out, what, 3 years ago and there was still you know talk you know from teachers and I mean what I had experienced myself, the difference in the materials, the difference in the materials that were taught to certain kids in certain areas some things never change and then maybe one of these days...
- Roberta: What would you like to share with everybody about you know, as a parting thought about your experience you know the Iron Hill School experience, what did it mean to you? I know you said in the beginning there is nothing like it and you were really glad you had that experience. What would you like to leave people with a thought of that experience?
- Evelyn:** I was proud to be a student here and I would not change that experience for nothing or anybody. I really wouldn't. It was like togetherness you know like one big happy family not like it is today kids being thinking about themselves. **[inaudible]** it wasn't like that. I will always cherish those days you know like one big happy family. Parents, administrators, students.
- Dorothy:** Everybody worked together.
- Evelyn:** Everybody worked together and everybody got along.
- Roberta: So you felt like you were supported and encouraged? Protected maybe?
- Evelyn:** Right, all 3 of those.

Roberta: Do you think that that gave you the strength to kind of go to these situations after school...

Evelyn: Right to be able to face them and endure them because you had that support and if you had a problem you could go to somebody you could talk to whether or not they might not give you the advice you wanted to hear but sometimes even listening helps. Sometimes you didn't get what you always wanted but no I don't want to hear that I want to hear something else. Later on in life, down through the years, you knew they were telling you what was right for you as a student, as student, as a person. That support was there. That stability was there. Like you said, that protection was there. You were protected. You didn't have to worry about someone coming in with a gun or a strange person walking the halls ready to do you bodily harm, whatever, you know. You had that protection you know. If a stranger came in they ended up being friends with you before they left. Most of the time it was someone looking for a meal, something to eat. Most of the time that was what it was, they were hungry and they wanted something to eat. There was a lot of problems back then with so-called fortune tellers or gypsies.

Roberta: Oh really?

Evelyn: And tramps, oh yes. Coming to your house and they would be talking to you and oh gosh, my Mom had so much money stolen from her from the gypsies and the fortune tellers. They would come in the summer, its almost like they hypnotized you or something.

Roberta: Really?

Evelyn: Yeah. I had one tell me, you give me some money I'll tell your fortune. I said I don't have no money. She said yes you do.

End of Tape 2, side 1.

Begin Tape 2, side 2.

Roberta: This is tape 2, side 2 and I am going to get some finishing comments from Mrs. Walley and Mrs. Grinnage to do this delightful interview.

Evelyn: If I had to do it over again I would do it over again. Wholeheartedly. I would do it again. It was an experience I will never forget. I loved it.

Roberta: Do you get an opportunity to share that experience sometimes with your kids?

Evelyn: Yes, with my grandkids.

Roberta: Do they enjoy it?

Evelyn: Yes they do. I always talk about that's where Mom-mom went to school. They have been here before they have been here and looked around and during, one special day they were having out there they have a big thing and they made, well they took the leaves and the flowers and stuff. I think they would have loved it. It was quite an experience, if I had to do it over again, I would.

Roberta: What about you Mrs. Grinnage?

Dorothy: I loved going to school here. I loved walking to school, that was the main thing, walking to school. Like 6 of us would walk every day to school, we might get muddy and dirty when we get to school.

Roberta: Do you share that time with your grandchildren?

Dorothy: Yes.

Roberta: Do they enjoy hearing it?

- Dorothy:** Sure, they really do. My grandchild says Mom-mom what was it like when you went to school? You had to walk? And I tell them yeah we had to walk, I don't think I would have went to that school if I had to walk, Oh yes you would to. You got Mom-mom that you could get to school.
- Roberta:** What was their reaction say like when if you tell them you couldn't just turn on a faucet for water, you know, you had to go get water.
- Dorothy:** I don't think I'd drink. I ain't walking to get no water. My grandson he would have loved that, the little one, he would jump out.
- Evelyn:** He would just venture out. He loved doing things like that. Like nature you know so he would have loved the bus. I can't say too much about the other ones **[inaudible]** You didn't have lights, you didn't have phones, what did you have?
- Dorothy:** He said well how did you talk to everybody? I said well you got a mouth. Well suppose you wanted to call somebody up, how are you going to call them? You had no phone, how are you going to call? We would go from house to house **[inaudible]** go all the way back home.
- Evelyn:** I think they can relate to it.
- Dorothy:** Yes.
- Evelyn:** It's kind of hard for them to perceive that in this day. **[inaudible]** I can't believe you lived where there was no electricity, no telephones, no water, walk to school.
- Dorothy:** They don't want to walk to the curb and catch the bus.
- Evelyn:** They'll ask you, did you have bicycles? Did you have skates because they do all those things. **[inaudible]** What did you do?

Roberta: Both of you, thank you so very much. This has been an education for me. Every time I talk to somebody I learn something more about life at Iron Hill. Thank you very much for your time.

**Evelyn &
Dorothy:** You are quite welcome.

Roberta: This ends our interview, tape 2, side 2.