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IRON HILL SCHOOL

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Lena Satchell Todd Dyer
and
Alice A. Presbury
(Second Interview)

Iron Hill School Oral History Project

Interview with: Lena Satchell Todd Dyer and Alice A. Presbury
Date of Interview: April 15, 2005
Interviewer: Roberta Perkins
Transcriber: Marcia Adams

Roberta: This is Roberta Perkins. Today's date is April 15th, 2005 and I am returning to Mrs. Lena Dyer to continue the interview about her experiences at Iron Hill as a student and as a resident and also with me today is her mother, Mrs. Alice Presbury so we are going to continue this and start today. We are at Mrs. Dyer's home in Newark. Thank you ladies for letting us get back to you on this. I want to pick this up and go from where we were and get some more interesting information as much as possible. The last time I spoke with you we spoke a little bit about the parents and the Transportation Committee and the need for that and who were the people who made sure that that pulled together and got the students to school and we also talked about when Mrs. Dyer remembered the only time that a superintendent came out to the school.

Lena: That was very traumatic. Because technically we had to lie because there was no way we were going to go – because we had to face our parents because and if we told the truth of who really did the hitting so we became very – what's the word for it – creative - without lying.

Roberta: Some times that has to happen. So it turned out ok?

Lena: It turned out fine because they had no evidence. Getting back with me I've always been very petite and very small and one particular person, the parent of the white family – she was a very big girl and without saying I hit her I went to, well look at me and look at this person you are talking about, do you think I can hit that? So that solved that problem and it turned out fine.

Roberta: That's good.

Lena: None of the parents had to pay a fine and we didn't get kicked out of school.

Roberta: Did this event happen during the school day?

Lena: It was in the morning.

Roberta: It was in the morning?

Lena: It was in the morning on our way to school and this is something that they had done repeatedly but this was like the last straw because they were

throwing snowballs at us. The verbal abuse was always there but then they started throwing the snowballs and bottles and we weren't going to take it any more.

Roberta: Why do you think they were doing that? Just because they could or?

Lena: Basically because they could and secondly because we allowed them to do that and get away with it and they figured out they are not going to do anything, they will just put their tail between their legs and they are not going to retaliate.

Roberta: Did you have any problems after that?

Lena: Verbally but not physically. No more throwing stones or snowballs.

Roberta: So after that incident happened in the morning you just went on to school and finished out the school day?

Lena: Yes.

Roberta: Ok. So it didn't interrupt the school day?

Lena: No, not that day.

Roberta: Not really. That brings me to asking you some questions about your school day. How did it start for you?

Lena: A typical school day would be we would go in and whoever was on a committee to cook the food was there earlier, we always tried to get there an half an hour or 40 minutes early whoever was on duty to do that food and then after that when the big bulk of the students got there we had to come to attention and say the Pledge of Allegiance and then Miss Ryder would go check your nails, it was a personal hygiene, check your nails to see that they were clean, check your teeth to see if you brushed your teeth and then you started your lesson.

Mrs. Presbury: You left out something. Prayer.

Lena: Oh, yes I forgot the prayer. We had to do that prayer.

Roberta: Did anybody have to read a Bible verse?

Lena: Yes, we took changes doing that?

Roberta: Did you choose that or did the teacher choose the verse?

Lena: Mostly the students, oh don't let me forget we always had to sing this song: "Good morning to you, good morning to you." (I just hated it.) "Good morning dear teacher, good morning to you." And then we had to stand and stretch your arms and sit down and stand and stretch your arms. We hated it. Now I know what they were doing. They were getting your blood to flow so you could think. I used that on my kids and have them sing that same song when they have been out or don't want to do anything but stay in bed I sing that same song and I can not sing it and they say, oh, Grandmom, we are getting up.

Roberta: That's a good motivator.

Lena: So that was another part of our routine. Then after that the older ones would kinda like be an assistant to Miss Ryder and I can remember going and like reading to the first or second graders while she was working with another group and then we would alternate and that would go on between being an assistant to her, because there was only one teacher and she would go on to the regular teaching of the lesson and after that would be lunch time and again, the same group that was doing the cooking would get things set up and you got to go and wash your hands in this little basin and get in line and get your lunch. After lunch you could go outside and play or get into trouble with my friends.

Roberta: I think we covered a few of those things.

Lena: It was a fun time.

Roberta: So was it generally the older students who took care of the?

Lena: The older ones and also if your lessons were up. They had to be up. You had to be ahead of what you were doing. She never – if you had something to work on she would never ask you to help the other students.

Roberta: Did the school have a library do you remember or a collection of books that could be called a library?

Lena: No. They were pulled from home. The books that we had were used books.

Roberta: When you said they were pulled from home

- Lena: Means that our parents would have a bunch of books that they would donate to the school. The only books that we got from the state were our so-called lesson books and they were well used. Some of the stuff they would take something that would make an indentation because they were supposed to be erasing and there would be “nigger” in there but it would be so indented that you couldn’t easily erase it.
- Roberta: Because they knew that the books were going to be going...
- Lena: Or a couple pages would be pulled out of the books so you might have 1 through 20 and then 25 on and in between that you would have to go around and try to find somebody that had those pages.
- Roberta: Let me explore that a little bit if you don’t mind. That whole discrimination because when people think about discrimination they think about the physical you know like you were talking about the students when you passed them, what other things like that do either one of you, do you remember during those school years you know that you, as a parent Mrs. Presbury, and you a student.
- Lena: Like I said the book thing would be there. The very fact that we knew that the white kids had fresh water. We had to go to my grandmom’s which was through the woods, to carry fresh water.
- Roberta: To the school?
- Lena: To the school.
- Roberta: Now that water was used for?
- Lena: For drinking and cooking and cleaning because she had a well. The services that the children at the white school on the corner of Pleasant Valley Road, they received dental assistance and all that. We had a Black dentist and I can’t remember his name, who came once a year.
- Roberta: Now was he paid by the state or was it something he did...
- Lena: I don’t know, my Mom might know.
- Mrs. Presbury: I never really knew that. Whether he did it on his own or whether he was paid. I have a feeling that he probably did it on his own as a volunteer for.
- Roberta: There must be some way to find out. We will have to explore that...

Lena: There were subtle differences. I mean we were given the building and we were given used books and that was the extent of the State. Everything else had to come from the parents or we didn't get it.

Roberta: Do you have any thoughts on that Mrs. Presbury?

Mrs. Presbury: The only thing I have on that is they never would really come out and would say but they would write little things you know like you would find little signs somewheres on a post or something where it would be calling names or they would let you know that you were Black and they wanted to torment you. That's what I'd call it.

Roberta: This was residents of the community?

Mrs. Presbury: Well we never knew who did it.

Roberta: It was just done.

Lena: I can think about one particular incident. There was this one young man named Terry McCoy. He is a millionaire now.

Roberta: I was going to ask you.

Lena: Terry McCoy. Now he had to go to the white school but he really loved playing with us and he had a crush on some of us Black ladies. So he was always caught between – it was horrible for him because when he would come visit us we were frustrated so we would take out our frustrations on him and treat him bad. The worse we treated him the more he liked to be with us so now he is a millionaire. He has all these properties in Brookmont Farms and he grew up with my cousin and with us and he would cry when he would have to go to school.

Roberta: So he would prefer to go to school with you?

Mrs. Presbury: He wasn't allowed. He got named. He was a lover of Negroes. Well they didn't say that but I felt so sorry for him because he was a sweet young white boy and he didn't have that in his heart. They were human beings to him.

Roberta: What were his parents like? Do you know?

Lena: They were nice. In fact they used to live in the trailer on Otts Chapel.

- Roberta: Is he still around the area? Is he in the phone book or anything, do you know?
- Lena: He iss living in Maryland but if you could contact anyone in Brookmont Farms because he has lots of houses down in that area and ask for Terry McCoy. We know now that it is called dyslexia. He had a problem reading and they considered him to be dumb and stupid so he caught a lot of teasing from the blacks and the whites. But I understand now he had dyslexia and I am not sure if he can read or write to this day because it wasn't ever treated properly. So again it wasn't just the blacks that suffered, the whites suffered too.
- Roberta: Did he have siblings?
- Lena: I think he had a couple, I'm not sure.
- Roberta: I think he would be a really interesting person to talk to.
- Lena: He could give you more perspective as a white kid what they went through.
- Roberta: What they went through and especially it sounds like he had special issues.
- Mrs. Presbury: At that time we didn't know what that was
- Roberta: What about the care of the building? I am going to be switching back and forth as I think of things so bear with me.
- Lena: The care of the building was taking care of the students and Miss Ryder. The major, major problem like cleaning of the school – that was done by Uncle Maynard and Mr. Congo and them. The painting and the esthetics and the maintenance and the cleaning was all done by Miss Ryder and the kids. It was very esthetic and beautiful because we did a lot of painting. The function of the place, when they broke down – it was a little crude – because we didn't know, we didn't have the conveniences like we do now.
- Roberta: You kind of go with what you have. When you were talking about painting, do you remember what the outside of the building looked like?
- Lena: Red, a nasty red.
- Roberta: It was red?

Lena: Yes.

Roberta: When you say nasty red, it's like what? Light or dark?

Mrs. Presbury: Dirty like muddy red.

Lena: Muddy red.

Mrs. Presbury: I don't know what color that is.

Roberta: We've asked several people and most people don't remember.

Lena: I do because I used to help paint it.

Roberta: So you helped paint the outside as well as the inside? Where did the paint come from? Was it donated?

Lena: I don't know where it came from. Uncle Maynard always provided. Now I know why because that red paint – he worked for the railroad and it was the same color red. All these years and it just clicked. Railroad paint. Uncle Maynard always supplied us with the railroad paint and he worked for the railroad and come to think of it it was that same nasty red. Now how he got it I don't know.

Roberta: Laura is going to be glad to hear that.

Mrs. Presbury: It never dawned on me either – that railroad color but that is the railroad color.

Roberta: Now that you are saying railroad and you described it as dirty.

Mrs. Presbury: That's what I always called it.

Roberta: When things were done like that – maintenance – was this by a crew of people who were already picked or did people just volunteer to do certain things?

Lena: Volunteer. Basically students volunteered to get out of doing homework.

Roberta: Did it become a social activity like things are now like if you get a group of people together and you are doing work you provide food and music and all that kind of stuff or did you just do the job?

Lena: Just did the job and socialized among yourselves just to get out of school.

Roberta: Was there was a required – well I guess it goes back to Miss Ryder checking for hygiene and stuff – was there a required way that students were expected to dress for school?

Lena: Just in the wintertime you had to have your typical winter clothes, undershirt and all that. What I liked about that was if there was some one of us who didn't have, my Mom or Aunt Bert was always around to donate so no kids came to school improperly dressed. None of us came to school improperly dressed.

Mrs. Presbury: It might not match but at least it was

Lena: There were no holes or nothing.

Roberta: So everybody took care of as much as possible.

Mrs. Presbury: It was like a family used to be not like it is now. If I didn't have then Maynard or Congos or somebody all I had to do was say I need this for Lena because I don't have the money to get it and we don't have it and it would be there before she needed it. It was like you stuck together. It's bad now, they don't.

Lena: It's the same way when we go back to the transportation. Mr. Rudy volunteered his vehicle and his time but he couldn't provide the gas. Mr. Congo sold pigs, Uncle Maynard would sell corn, chickens. The money was there to get that gas when he needed it.

Roberta: If you would explain to me again who Uncle Maynard was. I think you mentioned it before. Was he your uncle?

Lena: By marriage. He was my mother's husband's uncle.

Roberta: What was his last name?

Mrs. Presbury: Earl, Maynard Earl. He would be Gail's grandfather.

Roberta: It would make a very interesting family tree. How all the people are connected. That's why I think it would be interesting to do this culture map. Draw the roads where people lived, maybe who lived there and how they were related. At least just get the basics.

Mrs. Presbury: Talking about the water carrying now that was...

Lena: Grandma Smith.

Mrs. Presbury: That was my husband's grandmother. Everybody respected older folks so

Lena: They called her Granny.

Mrs. Presbury: Even tho' there was no blood she was still her Grandmom and she had to respect her.

Lena: We called her Granny Smith.

Roberta: I'm going to jump around a little bit.

Lena: That's all right.

Roberta: I am going to ask Mrs. Presbury because that reminded me when did your parents come to Iron Hill? Do you remember that? Do you know?

Mrs. Presbury: My parents did not come to Iron Hill. I was the one that came to Iron Hill. My parents at that time my mother lived in Pennsylvania and I left Pennsylvania and came to Delaware and I met Frank Webster, Francis Webster and we eventually married and that's when all this took place in this time after we had gotten married and that's when we all fell in line. I met all these different people through this situation.

Roberta: When was that when you came to Iron Hill?

Mrs. Presbury: That's a good question and I can't answer that right off hand because. How old were you? Do you remember when you came?

Lena: Oh my goodness I had to be 8 or 9. You came in the '40's? I was born in '38; around 1944 or 1945.

Mrs. Presbury: About that time I would say.

Roberta: Delaware in 1945? Ok. Say no more.

Mrs. Presbury: See I came from Pennsylvania believe me Pennsylvania was not like Delaware.

Roberta: What part of Pennsylvania?

Mrs. Presbury: Avondale, Pennsylvania and Lincoln University. I lived in both those places and when I came down here did I get a culture shock. Most of my friends in Pennsylvania were white, I mean I had you know but it was a real shock when I got here. I just couldn't believe it because when I lived in Maryland – Calvert, Maryland, I was born and raised in Calvert, Maryland and my friends that I played with were white. I didn't have any colored families within 5 miles of me so I played with t em. I didn't know segregation there until I got to be 10 years old and went to school.

Lena: Delaware is a unique state. Delaware doesn't want to admit it but Delaware was a state that when the slaves came they had the option to capture them and send them back South. That was the bottom line. They had to return them so the slaves were not safe in Delaware.

Roberta: Nor, from what I am reading, welcomed.

Mrs. Presbury: No they weren't.

Roberta: Lot of laws were put in place to either inhibit mobility within the state or in and out of the state. It was crazy.

Mrs. Presbury: I was really shocked. That's why I worked so hard. I did what I could do for that school in that area and the transportation because I didn't want my child to go through what some of them had told me that had happened to their children in Delaware.

Lena: Dorothy – that age group – I mean the things that happened to them

Roberta: Dorothy?

Lena: Dorothy Grinnage. That's why and I will never forget I had this little barbecue over at Aunt Bert's – not the boys

Roberta: What was her name again?

Lena: Alberta. Anyway it was a little picnic we had, this little supper that we were having for the church well Aunt Bert, my Mom, my Mom Webster called the girls together and literally told us what was going on what the state was doing without telling us the real fine details, that they weren't giving us any money because we would get pregnant so they put the put the stone and the fear of God in our hearts. We got the money for it and you could get pregnant if you wanted to but bottom line is you might not live. Because they had already gotten the money to buy the gas, from the state so they had a little meeting with the girls so we had the fear of God put in us and believe it or not there was only – Elsie never did go because she got pregnant before – none of us got pregnant. Not one of us.

Mrs. Presbury: Afterwards but not then. What I liked about it was these women stood one with the other and what ever one said the other one sanctioned to it and it

was no “oh, I think they are too hard on them.” It wasn’t that, we stuck together. Every one and even the men.

Lena: They had it rough. I can appreciate it now, not then because we thought they were crazy.

Roberta: As a child sure. You don’t have those same life experiences.

Lena: Right. But I understand how important it was that they proved the State wrong.

Mrs. Presbury: There was one time that the blacks showed them that you are wrong and we are right. It was a rough road and believe me I hope I never have to go well I probably won’t see that again but I don’t want any of my great-grandchildren because those are the ones, the great-great-grandchildren to see it. That’s no picnic

Roberta: You talked about this before and I think you talked about it at length was there anything about that time and getting the bus that you would like to elaborate on, add more to it?

Mrs. Presbury: Not really. The only thing that I would like to say would be that it shows you that if you are determined to do what is right you will get it done and stick together but you have to all stick together. Because if we hadn’t of all – the Congos, the Earls and myself and the Websters, if we hadn’t of all stuck together and did what we had to do. If we had to sell a turkey or a chicken or a duck or a pig or whatever, we did it because we knew that we had to get our children to school because we didn’t want them going to Wilmington. How were we going to get them to Wilmington if we couldn’t you know so we decided we – if he would give us the bus and his time and only charge us gas then we had to get out and do what had to be done to get the money for it.

End of Tape 1, side 1.

Begin Tape 1, side 2.

Roberta: Mrs. Presbury if you could explain to me the support that having a group of people in the Transportation Committee you know what that meant and how that helped you all to get the bus and the things that you needed to do.

Mrs. Presbury: Well it was a wonderful thing because we knew that for our children to get where they had to be and for this man to get the bus and to take our children that we had to get together and stick together and get the money for it and that's what we did and when I stop now and think about it I think about what could have happened but I believe that most of us had religion. Not real religion but we believed that God would take care of us and I think that is the only way that we got through that because we didn't have the fear that we should have had of what the people could have done to us unbeknown and nobody would have done anything about it.

Roberta: Do you think that the much used term "strength in numbers" made a difference also?

Mrs. Presbury: Yes.

Roberta: You had each others support.

Mrs. Presbury: When one got weak the other would say, we have this to do and that was it. You just went on and you did it because you knew you had to do it.

Roberta: Did you all suffer any kind of repercussions for taking that initiative and doing?

Mrs. Presbury: No we didn't and that's why I said I think we had the belief in the Bible because we all read the Bible and all and we had that belief that we were being taken care of. At that time it didn't dawn on us but it had to be now that I get older that that was why we just believed that we had it to do and we could do it and we did it. For to stand up for a group and that wasn't such a big group.

Roberta: How many were in the group?

Mrs. Presbury: It was about 15 people and they were scattered, not all of them in the same area but when we got together we all came together as one.

Roberta: Where did you meet? Did you meet at different houses, the school or?

Mrs. Presbury: Mostly we would meet at the school. That was mostly and a lot of times it was on a corner on a road or someplace. We didn't go in the city but one person would meet somebody else, tell them and they would bring it back

to the rest of us. It was almost like telephone now but it was word of mouth.

Roberta: In the wilds of Delaware.

Mrs. Presbury: Oh yes, believe me.

Roberta: What were some of your experiences if you don't mind sharing it when you first came to Delaware from Maryland, from Pennsylvania, if it's something that you don't want to relive that's fine.

Mrs. Presbury: No, I'm fine, it's good to relive it. When I first came here, well I guess I was here about a month when I was told (and I couldn't believe it) you can't go into a – it was a store in Newark – well you can't go in there and eat. They had a counter. See I was from Pennsylvania so I wasn't used to that so

Roberta: And where in Pennsylvania were you from?

Mrs. Presbury: I was from Oxford and Lincoln and Avondale, Pennsylvania.

Roberta: And you didn't experience that?

Mrs. Presbury: I didn't experience that. I worked in Oxford at the bus station. They used to have a bus station in Oxford and I worked there. I did dishes when they were busy they called me out of the kitchen and I would wait on the people coming off the bus so I mean I had no idea. If I wanted something from the counter I would go out there and fix my own so when I came here and they told me that I couldn't go to this – I don't know if it was the National 5 and 10 then, I think it was, but anyway I couldn't go in there and eat. "You're crazy." Those are the very words I said. I said what do you mean and they said it's segregated and I looked at them like you know, I mean and they said you better wake up you are in Delaware. That's the very words the woman said and I found out very shortly, I hadn't been here 2 months when I found out that segregation was strong, prejudice was strong and you couldn't do what I was used to doing – going freely, going anywhere and doing anything I wanted to do because you couldn't do it here which was a shock.

Roberta: How much of an adjustment was that for you and what did it – it had to change you.

Mrs. Presbury: Oh yes.

Roberta: It had to change you – how you interacted.

Mrs. Presbury: I wasn't as friendly because I was always friendly like I am now. I've gotten it back. I was always a friendly person. I would talk to anybody. I would start a conversation and you know. I had friends. I would invite them into my house but I learned very quickly you didn't do that here. You were very particular with who you talked to and what you said because it would be interpreted the wrong way. It was a hard adjustment to come from one state to another one and run into that but I adjusted real quickly. I was younger then, I don't think I could have done it now. But it was a hard adjustment and it hurt because I always thought that Delaware was a state that was an open state. You know I mean had an open mind and everything but then to find out that it wasn't it was quite a shock but I got over it.

Lena: It wasn't just the National 5 and 10 but the theater, I think I told you parts of that.

Roberta: Yes you did.

Mrs. Presbury: That was a real shock to me that you could spend your money in the store but you couldn't eat in there.

Lena: And you couldn't work in there because I was the one started working there.

Roberta: You integrated it for them. You told us that before.

Lena: The one who really knows his stuff and fought hard was Bob Anderson. He lives on Grays Avenue. He's a white minister. Bob Anderson. He was with the University of Delaware. He worked with Nicky Wilson and all the politicians to try and get the prejudice.

Roberta: Was he primarily doing this in Newark or up and down Delaware?

Lena: Newark.

- Roberta: Could you tell me a little bit about your teacher, like where she lived and did she have her own transportation?
- Lena: Yes, Miss Ryder had her own car and she lived in Newark on New London Road and she was a relative of the Websters and my Mom. She was a cousin so again it was a family oriented type of thing. Family oriented meant that if you screw up in school Mom knew it before you got home. She was more like, because she was a teacher she had more resources. She would introduce to culture that we wouldn't have. It was called tempera paints and we never knew about anything like that and she would bring it to school and show us how we would paint the windows and use it to paint things so she introduced culture to us. She introduced music to us because she had the resources to do that so we respected her and looked at her highly.
- Roberta: Did that make a difference in how you operated or how you approached life?
- Lena: Yes and I follow her philosophy to this day. You don't have to have all the answers and you don't have to know all the answers you just have to know where to get the answers because if we asked her she would say, "I don't know but you know what – I'll find it out." That's her philosophy, you don't have to know all the answers just know where to find them and I use that today.
- Roberta: So is that when you developed your artistic skill?
- Lena: Yes.
- Roberta: Then you knew that you had this interest and this ability from her, just exposing you to that?
- Lena: Exposing me to that. Exposing me to that and exposing me to just teaching just going in the community and helping out. So I followed her pattern basically of life. How to go out and take a community that is fragmented and pull it together.
- Roberta: What did she do? You said she went out into the community?

Lena: She would go out into the community and she would help Mom and them organize different things or tell Mom and them about different programs that were there or make sure that this one does this because as far as education because she has the talent, she has the knowledge. All those things she would go out and do. Basically she worked mostly with the children and her philosophy was the community was ok to help but it was the children, by reaching them, then they can go and spread it. It was like teaching a kid how to fish, they will always know how to fish and teach someone else how to fish.

Roberta: And they will always be able to eat.

Lena: And they will always be able to eat.

Mrs. Presbury: She was a beautiful woman.

Roberta: What was your experience with her Mrs. Presbury?

Mrs. Presbury: When it was school time she was Iron Hill's teacher but when she was at home she was my cousin. We were friends – very close. I would bring an idea to her and tell her do you think we can pull this off? She would say yes and if she said yes we knew that we could pull it off. She was just that type of person. She was a teacher when she was in the school and their friend but when she was on her own she was everybody's family and friend. She was that type of person. Beautiful, beautiful person. She had her faults you know but we all have. She was a beautiful person as far as I was concerned and what I liked about her she learned every child the same way. She didn't have her picks of children. She made them all the same – little ones on up. And she had them all from the little ones on up because she taught them all.

Lena: She didn't have any picks. These are the rules – I don't care – it could be Jesus – if you break it...

Roberta: Now I get the picture.

Mrs. Presbury: You broke the rules...

Lena: You got the consequences.

Mrs. Presbury: I was sorry that when she passed that they didn't do more than they did to honor, to let people know in the paper who she was and what she had done. She was a brilliant.

Roberta: I was going to ask because to be able to handle all 6 grades and then be out in the community. One room school teachers were exceptional people.

Lena: In fact when the school closed and she retired she took a couple of courses at the University of Delaware and passed them. She was brilliant. She was a genius.

Mrs. Presbury: And we don't have any more like her. Not that I know of.

Roberta: I can remember even when I was in elementary and it wasn't a one room school situation I remember teachers taking that extra time and you really felt like they cared about whether you succeeded or not.

Mrs. Presbury: And you know when they do.

Lena: She was that type of teacher.

Roberta: What about special events in school, activities?

Lena: May Day and Field Day, that's when we had fun, fun, fun. Leading up to that you had time to get out of that room to get outside and practice with dances you know how they go around that pole. I wonder if that pole is still there.

Roberta: There is a pole still there.

Lena: Is there? That was the May Pole.

Roberta: I think it's a flag pole now. I don't know but there is a pole there I think it's where the flag is. I don't know for sure.

Lena: It used to be in that general area. A pole.

Roberta: What did they call it?

Lena: A May Dance.

Mrs. Presbury: May Pole Dance.

Lena: We did that and then of course we had our little Field Day which meant we had little sports, running and different little games that we would play and we did that and of course the dance to make money for the different

activities for the school. We did all those things. Fun things. For me it was May Day and Field Day.

Roberta: So for you what was special about them that you really enjoyed? Like you said it gave you a chance to get out of the classroom.

Lena: To get out of the classroom, out of the building and just the freeness of holding a piece of paper and then going in and out and you are coming up with this beautiful wrapped pole and as for the Field Day it was the competition of the – for me it was the running and taking a stick and hitting an old piece of ball or something and that was field hockey. Those kind of things. The competition. I kinda liked that.

Mrs. Presbury: She liked to run.

Lena: Well I'm older now – my body says hah.

Mrs. Presbury: She still like competition though. It keeps you alive though. It's good to talk this out because this is stuff that has been back in my mind for so long and you wonder when are they going to get to something like this and I never thought that I would live to see it.

Lena: For me its teaching the young kids to take advantage of what my Mom worked for. Do you realize that the significance of that transportation group? They really started the busing system. You think about it. When you think about it my Mom and them really started the busing system. There were no buses until Mr. Rudy took

Roberta: When you say the busing system, for school?

Mrs. Presbury: For the black schools in the area.

Lena: None.

Roberta: That is pretty significant.

Lena: There were none.

Mrs. Presbury: Wilmington I am sure had, I don't know about Wilmington.

Roberta: I don't remember because when I started school there was always a bus but we always lived close enough to walk. Do you know whether or not after Mr. Valentine started and the committee and after Mr. Valentine got the bus going did the State, to your knowledge, kind of pick it up later on?

Mrs.Presbury: No.

Roberta: Not any time soon, right?

Lena: No, it was a good 5 years maybe.

Mrs. Presbury: Five or six years.

Lena: Then they paid him and they got him a big bus and the gas and he became a state employee but it wasn't immediate. It was a good 5 years. Because he went from the little one, a little van, till he got a little bus.

Mrs. Presbury: A little yellow bus.

Lena: We rode on that. We were riding that bus when I graduated. It wasn't until Doris started school that they started with the big bus.

Roberta: So he provided the bus but he needed help with the gas and stuff like that. What about maintenance like tires and whatever?

Mrs. Presbury: He took care of all that, everything but he just needed the gas.

Roberta: What was he like?

Mrs. Presbury: A very sweet man.

Lena: He was soft spoken.

Roberta: Did he always live in the community? Was he a generational – what I mean by that is was his family here before him?

Lena: No he was the only one.

Roberta: He was the first?

Lena: He was the only one that I knew.

Mrs. Presbury: I think his family lived somewhere south. I am not sure. but he had been here for quite a while down on Pleasant Valley Road.

Roberta: Do you remember during that time period, that 5 or 6 year time period, you had this transportation that the community provided that pulled together and fought hard for, were there any stories or anythings that you remember that were special, unusual, funny or was it just a day-to-day event?

Lena: It was just a day-to-day event. I can only speculate that the State was really still had the attitude that we were really going to fail.

Mrs. Presbury: They did.

Lena: Before they kicked in.

Mrs. Presbury: They were sure. They were so sure because I think we were the first group that ever got together and stuck together because most of us will start something and then we drop it but we stuck with it.

Lena: Not only that they kept up on the students because like I said of all of us and it was a big group each year going down there and I think only 3 got pregnant.

Roberta: And this bus took you to Wilmington?

Lena: No to Middletown. And of the boys, Howie, Ernie, Billy, no Billy Smoot graduated I think maybe 4 or 5 boys just dropped out and went to work which is a small percentage compared to kids that were in there.

Mrs. Presbury: You see it goes back to the parents deciding that these children are going to have to do what we say. The girls were not to get pregnant and the boys had to go to school. If they didn't go to school they had to go to work and each parent picked that up and carried that through. Had they stopped it it would have been a disaster and they and they probably wouldn't have buses yet.

Roberta: So you parents realized the importance and the significance of making sure this worked because of the attitude of the State.

Mrs. Presbury: We knew if we didn't carry this through that was it. It would never get done and we were determined. Sweat, tears and everything else and we were going to keep it together and we did. It was hard and we did it.

Lena: I think they added stress on the parents monitoring a bunch of horny teenagers. One thing you did add Mom was Uncle Ernie, he used to sit by the door and in that time period I remember he sat by the door and once you were in you could not go back out.

Roberta: Which door?

Lena: The school door -.for our teenage dances.

Mrs. Presbury: You could come in but you couldn't go back out. When we decided we were going to have the dances for them because we knew we had to do something to keep them going because they were teenagers and young

folks so then we decided how are we going to do this? Are we going to have it chaperoned? We didn't know what it was then but we said well we have got to have somebody at that door so he was the one that said he would do it.

Roberta: What was his full name?

Lena: Ernest Smith. That was Granny's son he was hard of hearing, he was deaf. He could squeal on you too.

Mrs. Presbury: I am surprised that Grandmom and [inaudible] that was his uncle. He probably forgot.

Roberta: Either that or

Lena: He used to be on that door. I just thought about that. You could come in but you better not go back out. He'd write you up in a minute, there would be hand signals.

Mrs. Presbury: Somebody would go find you and why you were outside the door because you weren't supposed to go out. That was the known thing. That was the first thing – if you are coming to the dance you are going to stay in, you don't have any reason to out until you go home. If you went out you were checked.

Roberta: One of the things, something I thought about is over time the changes in Iron Hill. As these changes were happening what did they mean to you because families were leaving, Iron Hill was changing.

Mrs. Presbury: That's a sad note for me, I'll let her answer that one.

Lena: As an adult and as you say the families were leaving, those that stayed became a statistic, not all of them, three fourths of them, became statistics of society in drugs, alcoholism, didn't pay taxes. Uncle Maynard's property left. If you go down Old Baltimore Pike that big development where they have the two and three hundred thousand dollar homes on the right hand side all the way back, was Uncle Maynard's property. The Smiths, all except Ollie, I think Ollie's property is there and Aunt Bert's property so on Smith Lane there are only two original properties left, everything else is gone. The place I grew up which is Grandmom

Webster's, last year it was sold. Gone. All that when I am saying property, we're talking - Grandmom had 8 acres?

Mrs. Presbury: I think it was 8 acres.

Lena: This was the hub.

Mrs. Presbury: When we didn't go to school to meet this was where we met was this place she was talking about now.

Lena: Sold.

Roberta: That has to be difficult.

Mrs. Presbury: Oh it is, very.

Roberta: What was the migration? What was it that people started leaving Iron Hill?

Lena: They didn't grow. I'm going back to Miss Ryder. You didn't take what you have, you take what you have and you expand on it and change it but you keep what you have. They were stuck in a time period of – you have the basics of electricity but you don't fix up your house so they wanted instant gratification so I'm going to say get out of this old place, the roof leaks, it need paint it needs to be remodeled and renovated. Eight acres of property and go to an apartment that has all these conveniences.

Mrs. Presbury: I have to add on to that. Once we got the buses, the children, the committee, once that committee left off and died out and went different ways the younger ones did not pick it up and become

Lena: The leaders.

Mrs. Presbury: The leaders. That's what I feel because it just went downhill just all of a sudden.

Roberta: Do you think having the students go to school outside of the community made a difference which was part of that?

Mrs. Presbury: It could have for some.

Lena: Because we were exposed, it was again when I left the Iron Hill community, the Iron Hill School and went to Middletown there were things that I was exposed to that I didn't have or I didn't see or opportunities so it was just opportunities there that I didn't have when I was at Iron Hill and I am sure it happened to everyone else.

Mrs. Presbury: And they couldn't take it.

Roberta: This ends side 2 of tape 1.

End of Tape 1, Side 2.

Begin Tape 2, Side 1.

Roberta: This is tape 2, side 1 this is Roberta Perkins, April 15th, 2005 and I am here with Mrs. Lena Dyer and her mother Mrs. Alice Presbury.

Lena: Like I was saying we were exposed to other things and we lost sight of what the valuable things were, was our own community and we let it go and we lost something very precious, very, very precious. Sadly from what I see because I work with a lot of other communities it's not just Iron Hill its all the little communities that started out like our community did and the young ones aren't picking up and the older ones are dying out. Children that are my age when were growing up – we are 67, 66 and we are starting to die out and our bodies can't take it but our younger kids some how or another I wasn't able to instill with my children what Miss Ryder did to me as far as keeping what you have and grow with it.

Roberta: Was that difficult for you?

Lena: It is now. Yes. Its called hindsight.

Roberta: How do you feel about the role of the museum and what the director and the board are trying to do with the museum and history of Iron Hill?

Lena: It's a Godsend. In fact I feel like Miss Ryder is there directing all this.

Mrs. Presbury: I'm sure she is.

Lena: Because she is seeing that I got them to a point but they are still not doing what they are supposed to do. They are supposed to keep this going and when all this is combined we can sit our children down and go the opening and see all this and we come back as a family and we say, look, why aren't you going to college? Why aren't you going to Del Tech? Why aren't you doing this? What's going for us once the property is gone? There is nothing we can do about that. It's gone but you can do with what you can do with which is our kids have to go get a piece of paper. May it be

college, may it be a vocational, a piece of paper at least out there doing something because they are our future and that's the way it goes.

Mrs. Presbury: At the rate they are going now.

Lena: We are still going to be losing a whole...

Mrs. Presbury: Everything.

Lena: Two generations.

Mrs. Presbury: Until somebody can get through to them and it doesn't seem like you can get through to them. I was reading about the young 17 year old boy in Wilmington that they are looking for killing this boy on Easter. This is ridiculous, he started out at 7 years old. It just seems like you just can't get through to them and it's a shame. But what you all are doing is a blessing because otherwise nobody would know what went on back then. They figured, hey, oh the state brought the buses in and took them to Middletown but they didn't. I wouldn't be afraid to bet that most of the young folks, I'll say Lillian, my granddaughter's age, thinks today that the State came in and bused them – her mother and them. But if they see this they will know oh how wrong I am and this is wonderful.

Roberta: So this is a legacy?

Lena: Yes.

Mrs. Presbury: Yes. Because what you all are doing you are going to the people that have lived it and know about it and that is where you get their lesson to teach them.

Roberta: As far as I know Laura Lee has been really tenacious about this. This is her baby. From what little I know from coming in on this when I did that she has been really pushing so it has been interesting to see how this develops because I think once this kiosk gets done she feels that you know it will be easier to get more money to help keep it going.

Lena: I feel it's Minnie's spirit. It's Miss Ryder's spirit.

Mrs. Presbury: The way I feel about it because Miss Minnie Ryder was a woman that she was very sophisticated woman. She liked everything stylish. I don't know whether I learned from her or not – if you are going to do something

do it right or don't do it at all. I'm serious and I feel that her spirit maybe is in this because they did not do right when they did not recognize down the line what she did. There should have been a piece in the paper that took up the whole page of what she had done.

Roberta: Now when you say "they" do you mean the Board of Education or

Mrs. Presbury: I don't know who to blame it on because I don't know who had charge of the funeral and all. Somebody should have done something – should have opened their mouths and done something. When I saw the write-up I just could not believe it. It was nothing.

Roberta: Do you think part of it was might have been there was just not an appreciation for what teachers who taught in one room schools did.

Mrs. Presbury: Yes, that is my feeling. I hate to say it but that is my feeling because I read the paper a lot and I see them where they are honoring teachers that have done this and done that but I haven't seen the black ones yet. Maybe I'm wrong. If I'm wrong I hope somebody will tell me.

Roberta: If you are a reader of the newspaper you haven't missed much.

Mrs. Presbury: I watch closely to that. Give honor where honor is due but they didn't give her her dues and I'm sorry but they didn't and I think this is kind of a way that is going to really honor her.

Roberta: Do you remember the year that she died?

Mrs. Presbury: No I don't.

Roberta: Because there was a time and I even remember it when the newspaper, the *News Journal* did show black folks.

Mrs. Presbury: And when they showed them they were so dark you didn't know who they were.

Roberta: Or if they got in the paper it was for some wrong doing.

Mrs. Presbury: And they loved that.

Roberta: Even as a child I recognized that.

Mrs. Presbury: It's not a whole lot better in some cases because but I do notice that they are putting more blacks in there. I am trying to think what it was I saw on the front page this week but I can't remember what that was which I was

surprised. It was a long journey, it wasn't an easy one and I'm not going to say it was an easy one and I'm not going to say it was a pleasant one but we knew what we had to do and we knew that none of us could fall down on the job because if one fell down or one was sick the other one would pick it up, pick up whatever they were supposed to do.

Lena: I'm still in the dilemma of the generations – my daughter's generation up until my granddaughter's generation and I've been trying to figure what is missing. Why are we just not taking that pride and going forward. I think they've lost hope about things really, really changing. We've lost hope and determination to make a change. I've asked my daughter and she says, "oh Mama I don't know what you are talking about." So I say ok. My granddaughters – they look at me like "huh?" Their generation has no hope.

Roberta: Do you think that the desegregation while on the one hand it gave more but it took away a lot more?

Mrs. Presbury: Yes.

Lena: Yes.

Mrs. Presbury: We were a lot better off. We were fighting but we were a lot better off family-wise because you knew you had to stick together where now you are out – I had better rephrase that one again – you can marry, I didn't marry a white man if I wanted to and it might not be all right with everybody but one time that was a no-no. You didn't do it so therefor it wasn't right. So I think that the segregation it helped but it took away our culture and our dignity. Because my great grandchildren can go out and do anything they want to do and go anywhere they want to do. That's fine.

Lena: But someone paid that cost to do that.

Mrs. Presbury: But they don't see that.

Lena: That's the part I can't seem to instill in them. What you are doing, someone had to pay the price for you to do that.

Roberta: So do you that not living life with this urgency every day of segregation that it took away a certain edge as far as being proud of who you are and knowing who you are?

Lena: Yes.

Roberta: Did it relax things too much?

Lena: Too relaxed. Complacent. That's where children become complacent with no hope that they can make a difference...

Mrs. Presbury: And don't care. It's just oh well tomorrow is another day and that's bad. I told my great grandchildren and they looked at me like I had really lost my mind. I don't know what it was because I used to baby-sit them and I don't know what they said to me – I turned around and look at them and I said you know what I wish I could take you back to the no bathroom, no lights, no running water and just see how long you would survive and they looked at me like well Mom-Mom you are nuts. Whatever it was that they said, it bothered me because hey, they've got it made. Hit a switch you've got lights. Turn the spigot on you got water. We had to draw water from a well.

Lena: And then heat it up.

Mrs. Presbury: And then heat it up.

Lena: My granddaughters right now – if something happened to the electrical heater dishes would be piled up from here to here. They wouldn't know to take water – they got cold water, they got running water, they got a stove that's working

Mrs. Presbury: But they wouldn't survive. They wouldn't. I know they wouldn't. They'd cry the blues.

Lena: If they couldn't take one of these complete meals out of the freezer.

Mrs. Presbury: That's another thing. Oh my goodness.

Lena: And put it in the oven.

Mrs. Presbury: Well now they have it in the microwave.

Lena: Lewis bought one. My granddaughter says you put it in the microwave. They'd starve.

Mrs. Presbury: They would. They don't know how to cook from scratch.

Lena: So again it goes back to it well like Minnie saying well whose fault is that?

Roberta: So is that the kind of thing she would do?

Lena: Yes. Whatever problem

Mrs. Presbury: She would bring it back to you. She would make you solve it.

Lena: And you solved it. That's the kind of thing she would do.

Roberta: And you know I don't think that's the kind of thing that that is not how teaching is done anymore.

Mrs. Presbury: No.

Roberta: And that does make a difference.

Lena: It does.

Mrs. Presbury: Because if you bring that back to me just like about the paint that we just – it came back. All of a sudden it came back to her because we were talking about it and eventually it will hit you and you will solve it. I'm scared for them. I'm serious because we are all going to off this earth one of these days and I don't know what they are going to do.

Lena: They are going to work it out. I have faith in them. They are going to work it out.

Mrs. Presbury: I hope they do but they are not doing a good job of it.

Lena: There is quite a few we are going to lose but somewhere somehow they are going to work it out because I have faith in human beings and I just refuse to think that God is going to let all of them – somebody is going to get it.

Roberta: You don't think one of these days they will say, look at this mess. Let me start over.

Mrs. Presbury: All over again.

Lena: They are going to get it.

Mrs. Presbury: It's hard when you stop and think what I went through to get her where she is at and now I am looking at the other generation, and some of her

generation that didn't get it. She got it. She was fortunate, she got it and a few others got it but there is a few of her generation that didn't get it.

Lena: That's the same thing that gives me hope that these other generations same thing. You are just worn out which means we are going to lose more but we are also going to gain more. And another thing, the radio, the media. The media is letting me be more aware of the ones that aren't getting it and the little I hear of that's getting it so that's affecting my feelings too. We didn't have the media like we do. It makes a big difference.

Mrs. Presbury: We didn't have television or radio and if we did anybody that had whatever it was they only got to hear it or listen to it at a certain time.

Lena: Now it is constant and unfortunately the media is unbalanced. Sensationalism is really – I think I'll blow up this building and I don't think about Suzy or John who did all this work for people for whatever you know and if it is it is like this well here's this. So you know I really thought about this like why? What is it? Some of them have to get it but the ones that are getting it I don't hear about.

Roberta: That's what I was getting ready to ask, do you think it is possible because everybody recognizes how the media operates now and its all about ratings and popularity and the young people who do get it you don't hear about. You have to search for that information. I understand.

Mrs. Presbury: You are talking about you don't hear about them. The Congos, going back to the Congos. The undertaker's son and I can never think

Lena: Tippy.

Mrs. Presbury: Tippy Congo. He has children that do good in school. Every week I think it is he takes them to McDonalds or somewhere and see this was, I knew it because he came on the television but nobody else knew it until finally the *Journal* decided to follow him one time and put it on the front page so now everybody knows that this is what they are doing. The other Sunday he had I think it was 3 that he had taken for that ride. These are good children that you don't hear about but you hear about this boy that was

Roberta: It's all over the front page.

Mrs. Presbury: The papers need to get themselves together too a little better. Television, I never look at channel 12. I look at 10 or 6 or something like that because they give me all the news that's going on but they need to do a better job because they are not helping our young folks, really.

Roberta: They have given I think, the wrong idea.

Mrs. Presbury: Yes. If you do drugs on the street and get caught that's a big thing in other words when your picture's on the paper that's a big thing. You are being honored in the paper where maybe this other boy went out and helped an elderly lady to carry her groceries or do something, he doesn't get mentioned.

Lena: Which means that the majority of the young people see this. Again, there is that hope. I guess the bottom line Miss Ryder is, what am I going to do now?

Roberta: You are going to be part of that committee, right?

Mrs. Presbury: Be glad to, both of us. I'm here for a reason. I've always said that.

Roberta: Yes you are.

Mrs. Presbury: I turned 83 Monday and I kept saying to different ones, I'm here for a reason – I don't know what because there has been my sister, she died, my friends, all of them are just you know but I guess He's got me here for a reason but I don't know so maybe this is the reason.

Roberta: It will be interesting because I know both of you will have ideas going forward once you kind of see what Laura's vision is. She's got some general ideas but now she wants input from people we have interviewed, people we are going to interview, you know.

Mrs. Presbury: Make sure you get a hold of Congo.

Roberta: Definitely.

Mrs. Presbury: I'm sure they could fill you in where maybe we have forgotten something.

Lena: I know Herman can because Herman – Mr. Congo sold those pigs, he sold pigs so his son could go to school.

Roberta: That's just what you did.

Lena: Yes

Roberta: That was your wealth.

Lena: Yes

Mrs. Presbury: He raised pigs, we raised chickens and ducks. It was a number of things.

I mean it could be potatoes, turnips, what else did we have? Cabbage.

You name it. Whatever it was the person had and you would give it to those people and they would take it and sell it and mostly it was Mr.

Congo that did the selling part for us because he was kind of like that type that could sell.

Roberta: Let me step back just a little bit before I turn you loose. Politics – the politics in the community. We just talked about a big part of it you know, the transportation and the attitude about getting a bus so the children could continue their education. What else did you experience about the politics in the community or around the community that affected Iron Hill?

Mrs. Presbury: If you are talking about how did the politicians react to our program they thought we were going to fall on our face also.

Roberta: Did you know that from what they said?

Mrs. Presbury: Just their actions. We never had spoken words to tell us you are going to fall flat, you could read the actions. If you look at a person you can almost tell what they are thinking and who was it that used to come here to the school? Mr. ?

Lena: I don't know his name is he used to be right there on that road where the Iron Hill Park is. A representative.

Mrs. Presbury: I can't think of his name.

Roberta: Is that the one down from the school?

Lena: Yes. He had a place right as you make that turn on Welsh Tract Road make that turn up to where those new houses are he had a little spot almost on that corner, Representative somebody. He used to be a little short, small featured person but he would be the state representative for Iron Hill in I want to say the '40's and the '50's. he did show his face when you all were making up your mind that they were going to go ahead and get that bus for Mr. Rudy and the gas.

Roberta: How?

Lena: He just showed up to a meeting.

Mrs. Presbury: I am pretty sure that that is what happened after he found out that we were determined as a group of people we were going to do it and that was it and I think it was our last or next to our last meeting that we had that he came and I don't remember whether he told someone he was coming or whether he just showed up but I remember he was there but I can't remember whether he said oh I will help you all to do this or whether he said you have gotten this set up and I hope it succeeds but at that point we were at the point where – where were you when we were selling all this stuff and you know really didn't know whether we were going to make it or not but I do remember him coming but I can't remember what he said. I probably wouldn't remember because I am sure that we were all thinking what are you doing here, you weren't here before.

Lena: He could have been very influential because he knew the language. We are taking country folks who don't know the lingo, don't know the politics of politics.

Mrs. Presbury: And none of well educated.

Lena: So he could have helped. He knew the terminology to use.

Mrs. Presbury: I don't know of anybody in the whole group

Lena: Uncle Maynard and Mr. Congo were the most

Mrs. Presbury: Educated.

Lena: Educated people.

Mrs. Presbury: But the rest of us

Lena: They weren't savvy politicians.

Mrs. Presbury: As far as politicians go I can't give them credit back then either but they sure did after everything was straightened around. They had their meeting at the school and promised you a gold bar and you got the brass ring but that politics.

Roberta: Politicians.

Mrs. Presbury: Get me in and you are going to have – and you didn't see them anymore to the next whatever was it 4 years or 2 years or whatever.

Lena: I can't remember that representative.

Mrs. Presbury: I am not bitter about it but it was a learning – I learned a lot you know by us sticking together like that and I saw that if you decide that you are going to do something you can do it. That was the main thing. I think we all felt good after we had accomplished that because to see that bus coming down that road and picking up in that van or whatever it was the first time it was wonderful. Then when we got the yellow bus, we called it the yellow bus it was worth it. We cried again. We would sit on the porch and watch it.

Lena: Families aren't doing that sticking together for that pride or anything.

Mrs. Presbury: You know they say it takes a village to raise a child and it does. See we were like a village because we were from all around and we come together so we got our children where they wanted to go. I mean there is Mary Louise, the Smith girls.

Lena: Evelyn.

Mrs. Presbury: Evelyn Smoot all those children, we got them to going. All of them didn't turn out the way we thought.

Lena: There was very few who didn't. I told you, you all put the fear of God in us.

Roberta: Let me ask you a question, you mentioned by going over to Brookmont Farms you could probably ask most anybody to find out about this guy?

Lena: Terry McCoy?

Roberta: Mrs. Thompson, I think that's her name – she was a Webster or do I have it the other way around, lives there. I forget what her first name is but we interviewed her.

Lena: She would tell you how to get in touch with Terry McCoy.

Mrs. Presbury: Anybody that is renting there or the rental, do they have a rental office?

Roberta: Do they?

Lena: No they don't.

Roberta: I don't know whether she is renting or that's her property or not.

Mrs. Presbury: If not she probably bought it from him.

Roberta: I wanted to get back and talk with her too

Lena: And if not there is a community center I started down there too which is on, what is that street down there? I can't remember the name of the street that it is on?

Roberta: There is a community center?

Lena: There is a community center there.

Mrs. Presbury: You go in and go straight down.

Lena: He is one of the key homeowners down there.

Roberta: Do you have anything else you want to talk about that I may not have covered? I don't remember if I ever asked you – what was the lighting like when you were in school? Was it like the light that they have there now? Those fluorescent lights?

Lena: The windows and oil lamps. That was it. The windows and oil lamps.

Roberta: I am doing different generations and I am hopping back and forth and trying to remember. So were the oil lamps mounted on the walls or were they hanging?

Lena: There was one on Miss Ryder's desk and near the stove there was one. Those are the only two I can picture and just before I graduated was when I think they put the electric in.

Roberta: You left in '52 that's probably about right. I wasn't ready to go out when the electric

End of Tape 2, Side 1

Begin Tape 2, Side 2

Roberta: This is tape 2, side 2. I kind of missed the end of that on the other side. We were talking about the lighting situation when Mrs. Dyer was at Iron Hill School. They made those buildings purposely to have windows on one side so that they would get all that light but in the wintertime and fall the light wasn't as bright was it hard?

- Lena: It was very hard but like I said we had the windows and Miss Ryder had a light and then there was a little table or something where we cut food and stuff up that had a lamp. When I say light it was a lamp and then and I want to say it was a year or two years before I graduated from Iron Hill is when they got the electric in.
- Roberta: So I'm getting a picture of you know, I am reading what I've read about DuPont and the schools and he did make a difference.
- Lena: Yes.
- Roberta: But at the same time some of the amenities weren't as top notch as they could have been even though there was a big deal made about he had a particular architect at this time and the building was designed so that all one wall was windows so that you would get light and have enough light I guess compared to older schools, it still was difficult?
- Lena: Yes, in the wintertime.
- Mrs. Presbury: If I am not mistaken I think they let them out of school when it started getting dark earlier, didn't they?
- Lena: A couple of times if it was real cloudy but we went to school basically
- Mrs. Presbury: I am trying to think if there was more than 2 lights in there, I don't there was.
- Lena: I can't remember just with those two lamps. Miss Ryder had one on her desk and like I said there was one on that little table we put the food up on.
- Roberta: This brings another question, ok the different grades were in rows so which grade was closest to the windows?
- Lena: The elementary kids.
- Roberta: Ok, the younger kids:
- Lena: The younger kids because they were left, we were here, on the right.
- Roberta: Ok so you are entering the school through the door and the windows were on the left then the younger kids and then as the grades went up they were on the right.
- Lena: On the right, yes.

Roberta: Was that done because they were younger kids?

Mrs. Presbury: I think so.

Lena: I don't have a clue.

Mrs. Presbury: Probably it was because see they didn't need as much lighting because they didn't do as much reading, right?

Lena: I don't have a clue as to why that was set up like that.

Roberta: I was kind of curious when you made the comment about before they got the electricity it being difficult to see in there in the wintertime. That's very interesting.

Mrs. Presbury: Yes it is very interesting and see you have to sit down and really start to think about these things and it brings back why these things was done but I am sure that that was the reason that they did it that way. But going back to DuPont it was a beautiful thing that he gave them the school but it would have been nice if he had, well he put the windows in which is great but it would have been nice if he would have put lanterns or something to help them you know with the lighting but you had to do that on your own.

Roberta: So it was just sort of a basic structure.

Lena: Yes.

Roberta: Anything else, any amenities...

Mrs. Presbury: Anything else you did.

Roberta: It was up to the parents and the community to do it.

Lena: Which again goes back to this generational problem that I have. Children today are given everything.

Mrs. Presbury: Yes they are, more than they need.

Lena: They are given everything. There is no room for imagination, for building, it's all there. And again, it makes you very complacent and you don't have ownership really. What can you do when you buy a brand new house and everything is in it and you look at the walls. You don't have ownership of putting that light up there. You don't have ownership of putting an electrical socket in there. When I say ownership, pride in something that you did to that house which makes you appreciate it more.

Mrs. Presbury: Talking about pride – my daughter talked about the pole where they danced around and put the ribbon or the paper or whatever. Now I haven't been to too many schools recently but I don't remember seeing any schools now that does that.

Lena: They don't do that anymore.

Mrs. Presbury: A May Pole, or whatever they call it. Now see that is something that they learned to do and she remembered that.

Roberta: It's sort of like a celebration – a transition of the seasons.

Mrs. Presbury: Yes. May, but they don't do it now. Well they do basketball, baseball, whatever.

Lena: They don't have any pride in their school.

Mrs. Presbury: But now she remembers that.

Lena: No pride in the community centers. No pride in nothing. If you look at the hallways where you live at in an apartment the children just throw stuff down and keep on going. That's ownership. If you own something it's yours. You are going to take care of it.

Roberta: So even though community centers have this name "community" do you feel that the students or the young people or whoever attend them don't kind of treat it like it's their community. I mean they don't have that same

Lena: That same ownership.

Mrs. Presbury: They are not trained to treat it that way. They are trained that this is the center that you are going to and you can do what you want. Somebody else will clean up after you. That's the wrong way. They had to do what they had to do in school and then when they came home they had their work to do plus their homework.

Lena: Again, that ownership. I am a firm believer in manual labor. You have to do a little manual labor to appreciate something.

Roberta: You get no argument from me.

Lena: I don't know what it is about having your hands actually doing something.

Mrs. Presbury: Well Miss Ryder taught you and you learned it well.

Lena: But you felt so much better when you completed it.

Roberta: There are 2 questions that come back to me from just saying that. What kind of work did people in the community do? That you remembered as a child and you Mrs. Presbury from your viewpoint as a parent and also black businesses. They could be anything. What did people do?

Mrs. Presbury: We didn't have none. We were a committee. Most of the women worked at home. Kept homes. There was me, Edith Lewis I think and who else was working women? I cleaned homes and offices. Edith Lewis was a cook.

Lena: She was a cook.

Mrs. Presbury: A cook I think for someone.

Lena: Aunt Bert and the rest of them took in laundry.

Mrs. Presbury: They were at home people but that's what we did. Well the men, they were farmers or whatever.

Lena: Mr. Congo was a chauffeur for the DuPonts. As a matter of face he's the one that instilled the idea of having our meetings at school, he was a chauffeur and then a property owner who lived off his farm and Uncle Maynard had jobs with the railroad. The rest of them were laborers or farmers.

Roberta: Does anybody know or do you know if anybody knows how the black community started? What was the reason for the migration and the settlement?

Lena: You know what, I don't know but now that I am thinking about that because why would the whites give my Grandmom Webster all that property? It always go back to and I wish, this is one thing I wish we had a little bit more that we could sit and listen to the old folks talk because whatever it was went back to Granny Smith who was very fair, blondish hair, when she would be talking and we know now that she was starting dementia we kids would zoom out of that house. Something was there but she got, Granny got, I'd say she had 10 acres which is right across from Iron Hill.

Mrs. Presbury: Iron Hill Church.

Lena: Her children each were given which meant Grandmom Webster, were given 8 acres, Uncle Maynard was given 9 acres, Uncle Ollie was given I don't know how many he was given. He was the fairest one too and these was all speculations because they would not let us be in there when these things were going on. If you go to Smith Lane which is off of Otts Chapel Road and you will come to a road on your left that says Smiths Lane or Smiths Road.

Mrs. Presbury: If it's still there. Otts Chapel Road, there is a white church there.

Roberta: Ok, orient me from Iron Hill – that's what I know. The Iron Hill Museum. If I go out their driveway and turn right

Mrs. Presbury: Turn right, yes.

Lena: Go down to Pleasant Valley, turn right

Mrs. Presbury: No you are taking her away from Smiths

Lena: No, I'm taking her by Mr. Congos

Mrs. Presbury: Where are you taking her to now? Wait a minute

Lena: Smiths Road

Roberta: Smiths Lane?

Lena: Or Smiths Road whatever it is.

Mrs. Presbury: That's on Otts Chapel Road.

Lena: It says Pleasant Valley, they switched it. Pleasant Valley Road is here to your left and Otts Chapel Road is to your right. The same road but its just at that corner.

Mrs. Presbury: Go ahead.

Lena: Go Otts Chapel Road

Mrs. Presbury: Now you are right because you were saying Pleasant Valley Road.

Lena: Ok, Otts Chapel Road, go round the bend well before you get there if you see all those nice pretty houses and all that, all that belongs to the Congos all the way back. Anyway you make that right and you go round the bend

Mrs. Presbury: And start looking for Smiths

Lena: So you are going to go a good maybe 3 miles

Mrs. Presbury: Smiths Lane.

- Lena: And you will see it's either Smiths Lane or Smiths Road or Smiths something. Make that right turn and from that corner all the way – I want to say a quarter of a mile on the left was Uncle Ollie's property.
- Roberta: This is Oliver Smith:
- Mrs. Presbury: Yes. Old man because young Oliver
- Lena: Uncle Ollie divided it up into his kids. So getting back to Granny and the puzzle that I wasn't able to figure out because I was always booted out of the room when there would be like a little squabble between the older ones we were kicked out but it had to go back to Granny. Why would this white man give Granny all this property and her kids, each one of her children had all this property. That's as far as I can get to the originality of Iron Hill.
- Mrs. Presbury: It will always be a mystery because nobody knows.
- Roberta: I wonder if somewhere the property transfers like in land transfers you know you go to offices I don't know if it would be in Newark or Dover or where. What was her full name? You said that at the beginning.
- Lena: Mary Smith, that's the Granny. Uncle Ernie and Uncle Casey never got no property.
- Mrs. Presbury: No. Is that being taped?
- Lena: They were the dark ones. I'm telling it like it is from a child's point of view. They lived with her.
- Mrs. Presbury: Yes they lived with her.
- Roberta: Who is related to her? The reason I ask that is because Laura was talking about shortly after I interviewed Mrs. Thompson who I think was a Webster --her name is Nora Mae
- Mrs. Presbury: Oh, Nora – Sussy – that's her great granddaughter.
- Roberta: Because he came and he started talking to Laura about this lady and he was saying something about Indian you know or whatever but he didn't have but he said after I left she started remembering stuff but she has been ill and I haven't gotten back to her and I want to call because he sounded like she was interested. So Nora is Nora Webster the granddaughter

- Lena: The great, great granddaughter to Mary Smith.
- Roberta: Because her son Irvin was saying to her and it was like she wanted to tell more but there were 2 people from the University of Delaware there and I knew she was a little reserved. She didn't want to say as much. I might call her and see if she's healthy enough to want to talk.
- Lena: She might have a picture of Granny.
- Mrs. Presbury: They all may have all those pictures. It would be good to ask them though.
- Roberta: Because the more I was doing this I got more and more curious you know because as I am doing this I see this community unfolding and I'm ok well how did start? Where did this come from. So that's probably going to be another level
- Mrs. Presbury: It should be you see this is a shame in a way its a good thing that it is happening now but its a shame that somebody hasn't done it when the school first closed and documented a lot of stuff that we don't remember.
- Roberta: I'll have to ask Laura when she first got interested because I know it's a natural history museum and she enjoys that but she's really gotten curious about the people who went to the school.
- Mrs. Presbury: There is a lot of history of Iron Hill. I think Iron Hill really has more history in back of it than Christiana. You know Christiana has a black school that DuPont also gave them that caught fire and they are trying to redo it.
- Roberta: Oh yes it's a community center. That one.
- Lena: Iron Hill is where they got the iron out of there for the bullets and all that.
- Mrs. Presbury: There is an iron pit back there. I don't know if you knew that or not.
- Lena: It has a lot of history. Some how or another Granny is the key and I don't have the pieces. I know she is the key and that's because whenever the grownups had a little dispute, a little issue, we were kicked out.
- Mrs. Presbury: Children weren't allowed then. That's just like when we had our committee the children didn't know what we were doing. They didn't know at all what we were doing. They just knew that they were getting a

bus and they were going to be able to have a bus. You didn't tell children then. The only thing we did tell them was how they were going to react. Now that we did get through to them but anything else. What I am hoping is that when this is finished that this will and I am hoping that somebody has a picture of Miss Ryder that maybe they can have put in this because she was the main force behind all of what went on.

Roberta: Oh I know what I need to ask you and then I need to let you ladies go. Do you remember when the school opened who was the first teacher?

Lena: Dorothy Grinnage can tell you that. She has the answer to that. She is the generation before me which would be Gail's mother. I think there was 3 of them, the generation before me left now?

Mrs. Presbury: Dorothy and who's the other one?

Lena: There's one left now?

Mrs. Presbury: Ev?

Lena: No.

Mrs. Presbury: No, Ev's behind you.

Lena: Ev's my generation. I think Dorothy is

Mrs. Presbury: Dorothy might be the only one.

Roberta: Let me make sure I have this right. Of the folks that were on that Transportation Committee it's Mrs. Presbury, Edith Lewis

Lena: They are probably the only ones left now.

Roberta: Thank you all so much for your time.

Lena: Oh I enjoyed this.

Mrs. Presbury: Anytime.

Roberta: This is just great. I will definitely tell Laura you all are interested.

Lena: Yes.

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

