

RICE-CORNELL-BROWN PROPERTY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW THREE

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0009

*Playing on
the land as a
child*

MIBS: I'm Mary Ida Brown Sprague.

I: Okay. And if you just want to go ahead.

MIBS: Alright. Well, we're going to talk about what I used to, as a child, call the house at Beaverdam—the old house. Now we refer to it as the cabin or the old cabin as there's a newer one up on the hill above. And probably my earliest memories are going over and playing in the creek with my brothers and sisters and having friends out from town and doing that. Also, I remember going up on the hill above the old house and playing under the chestnut trees. It was cleared up there then because it was a pasture of our neighbors... that our neighbors used. And we would go up there and I can remember picking up little rocks and making houses—the rooms of houses—just laying it out on the ground. And I especially remember going up there with my brother Hugh 'cause he was older than I was but I used to follow him

0113

*Memories of
being in the
cabin in the
summertime
and memories
of relatives
staying there*

around a lot. We lived across the road, which made this very convenient to go over and I remember in the summertime taking naps in the big bedroom in the back of the house. And it was a big old area bedroom with two big old beds in it. They were probably iron beds. No, I think one of them was a wooden bed from the old Battery Park Hotel that was in there. But I can remember lying there and looking up at the wood stains... I mean at the rain marks on the ceiling and trying to figure out faces or figures or something like that.

And, you know, it was kind of... it was just a real warm, airish, neat feeling in the summertime. And then I remember that when relatives would come in the summertime we would... they would stay over there. And of course we would run back and forth to play and visit. I remember one day when on my birthday, in about the forties, so I was... In the early forties I may have been about fourteen or fifteen and my brother Hugh and I were takin' cherry out of the attic of the house I lived in and carried it over and stored it in the old house. And we spent the whole day out there. We probably took lunch, and I remember sitting on that porch in a big old bench that used to be out there and spending the day. I also remember in the early forties after we moved to town, mother bought a donkey and wagon for me. And that donkey, I believe, stayed there and Mr. Scarborough, our neighbor, must have taken care of it because I certainly didn't go out

0236

*Moving to town
and Mr.
Scarborough's
donkey*

0305

*Going to the
cabin as a
teenager with
friends from
town and
from school*

every day. But one day we drove it to town in that wagon and got stuck in the middle of Merrimon Avenue where it left Beaverdam Road. But we brought it in town and kept it for two or three days and then I got it back out there and it never came back again. But it woke the neighbors up early one morning braying. I remember that! And it had gotten loose and gone across the boulevard over to the neighbors' house. Okay, I remember picnics with families out there—family friends—at night. Not so much in the daytime, but maybe going...they would call and say, "Let's go take a picnic supper to the cabin or to the old house." And we would do that. I remember in the late forties...or it must have been early forties...when I was a Girl Scout, the troop went out and spent the night and I remember we slept on the ground. And I remember how clear the stars were because it was so black out there at night. There were no lights from town, you know. In the late forties my high school friends and I used to go out there. And sometimes...it may have been before we were driving because I can remember riding the bus and walking up there with our supper and all. What, we were going to spend the night! And there would be maybe six or eight of us during high school. We'd go out and spend the night.

I: Now were most of these friends that you would go out there with people that lived in town?

MIBS: Yes. Oh yes. All of them did. Well...I imagine that two of the girls who lived in Weaverville but went to school with us. We went to St. Genevieve. And then there were some girls, some good friends from Asheville High. And there were about ten of us. And, you know, we'd go out there and spend the night and have a good time. And it was pretty rustic but it had running water, you know.

I: Did that make it kind of special going out there...

MIBS: It really did.

I: ...for other people?

MIBS: Yes. Oh, for them. And we have great memories. And there are some pictures that I don't have, but some of those who went had. And so this summer we're...you know, we haven't been back as a group. But for those of us who are close by we're gonna go take a picnic and go back out there. And we're going out on my birthday with some friends from church who meet every month on birthdays and eat, you know...choose a place to eat uptown. So I thought it would be fun to—on my birthday—to go out. And we'll take box lunches and they'll bring lunch and have lunch there. And then I can remember after my children were born... See, now

0460

*Taking her
children to
the cabin*

0496

*Taking her
children and
grandchildren
to the cabin
and
Halloween
with the
family*

I'm really skipping on ahead. So this would be after 1958...and we would go out there at Halloween. Eleanor would have things ready and I can remember taking some decorations out there that grandmother sent from Pennsylvania. And we would decorate. Eleanor... You know, I think probably like bobbing for apples and I don't know what else. But anyway, we'd go out and that would be a great place to go for Halloween. And then one time, I mean, we...you know, even though we lived in town, we packed all five children up, took fried chicken supper out there and had to take a porter crib for the littlest one—I remember that—and spent the night. And that was quite a project, but we had a great time!

I: What was it like, being able to...to go out there for events like that?

MIBS: Well, it was fun and my children...I'm noticing this with the grandchildren, too. It's just fun to go to what we now call the cabin. And then I remember another Thanksgiving when the children were older. My sister and I would do Thanksgiving together and Christmas together, and the year for me to have Thanksgiving we went to the cabin. And I can remember taking the good silver and, you know, the water glasses and the good china. I kind of think...

Anyway, you know, it was fun because it was still warm that year at Thanksgiving. And then there was a big old oil heater in the kitchen so, you know, if it got cold we could stay warm. And they must have still had a horse out there because I can remember all of a sudden Lelia, my niece and Eleanor's daughter, came roaring up and maybe one of the children... she had one of the children on the horse. And, you know, that was fun for them. But it was just, you know, it was just fun to go out there and have Thanksgiving because, you know, it certainly was more of a project than having it at home, but it was more fun! And Peter Jr., I remember, had his Boy Scout troop out there one Saturday to work on merit badges. So, you know, they could cook and it was close in town. They didn't have to go far. So it was used, you know, by the children for that.

I: Now these are your children?

MIBS: ...are my children. I was trying to think of the things that they did out there. David had a high school party out there for a high school fraternity, which was a service club, sort of. But they had parties. It was after the pasture had been cleared or down where the apple trees were. And, you know, I can remember driving out and watching them. Because they must have had music set up and had lights over there. But

0563

*The
importance of
family land
for younger
generations
and holiday
celebrations
at the cabin*

0680

*Uses of the
cabin by
Mary Ida's
children*

0720

*Apple butter-
making
parties and
square
dances*

they were out in the pasture. They weren't using the cabin, really. And also in the eighties I can remember their making a special trip home—I know Peter Jr. did and I'm not sure if others did—for the apple butter-making that Eleanor and Jim would do. And have the big copper kettle down in the front yard and the fire and that, you know, that really... They did that a number of years. And, you know, it grew and we were always welcome to bring friends and lunch, you know—it was covered-dish lunch—and everybody pitched in and the children would help stir the apple butter. But it was just a fun thing to go to, you know, and it just sort of became a tradition, which was nice. And then before my daughter Mary Stewart was married in 1985, Eleanor and oh, a large number of my friends had a barbecue and square dance out there.

And I'm wondering if that was when the square dance floor was built and set up and we had lights, you know, at night and a string band. And it was all set up to eat outside on card tables and benches and that was lots of fun. And now, see, I'm seeing my grandchildren love to go out there. Especially since they've, you know, kind of worked on... well, since all that's been done to the cabin. The restoration and whatnot.

But they still love to play in the creek! When I was little we used to find garnets in the creek and crawfish. And we would just, you know, the old story was if a crawfish got hold of your toe, it wouldn't let go until it thundered. So we were very careful with the crawfish but we'd catch them in glass jars, you know. And the children now love to play in the creek. And last year when we had a family reunion, you know, that was one of the things that the children from Louisiana loved to do. So, you know, a creek is always a fun occupation for children to play into.

I: And then what about... you've mentioned the cabin quite a bit. Did people go and use the surrounding land in addition to the cabin? I mean, I know it sounds like the kids played in the creek...

MIBS: Yes. Well, my children... None of my children hunted and, you know, I can remember people used to go squirrel hunting up there but they didn't do that.

I: Did people in your family before squirrel hunt?

MIBS: You know, I think my brother Hugh would have been the one who did, but, you know, it would really be dangerous to do that now because of people living up on top of the hill. You know, I just remember that... that the cows were in the pasture all over that hill behind it was fenced off. And, you know, when I think back, I think about the big rock pile that was there. And Eleanor has uncovered some of those

0810

*Memories of
playing in the
creek from
multiple
generations*

0873

*Uses of the
land,
including
hunting and
farming*

0925

*Bringing
rocks down
for the
Brown's
house (which
was never
built)*

buried rocks this summer. But that was, you know, that was just a landmark, sort of, because our parents were going to build a house over there. And all the rock had been hauled in by our neighbor Mr. Scarborough on a horse and wagon from the mountains. Sort of like Grove Park Inn hauled their big granite boulders in, you know. Well, some of them were large.

I: What were the plans for those boulders? Were they going to be used...

0977

*The cabin as
a family
institution
and gathering
place in
Asheville*

MIBS: It was gonna be a rock house. It was gonna be a rock house. And, you know, for years we had the plans somewhere for that. But I don't think either Eleanor or I have them. I don't know what happened to them. But it was nice when Eleanor and Jim would spend the summers out there, and, you know, you'd just go when there's gonna be someone there. And when my children were little, you know, I didn't... we just didn't pack up and go so much. But we always knew it was there. It's just been fun to... And it's so convenient. You know, it doesn't take ten minutes to get out there. And we've always lived in this end of town so it's been easy to get there. You know, it's just really been an institution, sort of. And it's been the one place that's always been in the family, you know, since all of us were born.

Because our father bought it in, I believe, 1921, so that was before any of us were born. In fact, it was before he was married! And I'm sure Eleanor told you that the addition that he made was in about 1927 which was after the house we lived in was built and had moved out there. But I also remember that, when we were small, that the cabin was owned by—or as we called it then, the old house—by our Aunt Jane and Uncle Edwin and daddy. They bought it together and then mother, in later years, probably in the forties, bought Aunt Jane's. They... mother and daddy owned the land other than the cabin and the acre that it's on. But Aunt Jane and Uncle Edwin and mother and daddy owned the old house and the acre that it's on.

1032

*Brief history
of the cabin's
ownership*

I: How long did you live in the house across the road?

1088

*The move to
town
following Mr.
Brown's
death in 1938*

MIBS: I was born in '31 and we moved in '39. Our father died in '38 and mother stayed... You know, I think we spent the winter months in town in my Aunt Jane's apartment and she was not there... because the weather was bad and, you know, it was hard getting back and forth out there because I think the bus had stopped and sometimes the telephone wouldn't even work, you know. So then in '39—it may have been in the summer or fall of '39—we moved to town. And so, see, I was about eight.

1141

*Boarding
schools
attended by
the four
Brown
children*

I: And then did you live in town with your mother?

MIBS: Yes.

I: And did your brothers and sisters go to boarding school at that time?

MIBS: Okay. I went to the local school, which was Grace school then. At that time it was a county school. And my two brothers and I had gone there, to county school, and had ridden the school bus from Beaverdam. We walked when we lived on Griffing Boulevard because it was just, oh, you know, a half-mile or so. And Eleanor was at St. Genevieve and then she... probably when we moved to town she went to David Millard and then she went to boarding school. And my brother went to Christ School, boarding school, and Edwin spent his last three years at the Asheville School. But I stayed home the whole time and I went on to David Millard and then I went to St. Genevieve my last four years in high school.

1192

*Mary Ida's
close
proximity to
the cabin*

And we lived on Griffing Boulevard. And then I was married in 1956 and in 1958 our mother bought a smaller house and Pete and I came back to Asheville to live and she said, "Well just move in the house on Griffing Boulevard until you find a place." Well, we fast started filling up the house on Griffing. We moved here with one child and then I can't remember exactly what year we bought the house from her. But we lived there about ten years until we moved here, on Kimberly Knoll. So that was just a couple of blocks. So I've lived within three or four miles of each house all my life.

I: And when you were living at home with your mother, did you go out to the old house very often? Maybe more than your siblings since they were in boarding school?

MIBS: Possibly. Let's see what I can remember. I can remember when Eleanor and Jim would come and mother would go out, maybe, and take breakfast food and we would make the beds, maybe, for them when they came. You know, they would stay at the house on Griffing some, but I feel for sure they would stay out there maybe if it was summertime. I sort of remember that. And then I remember when they spent the summer and Lelia was a year old and... I bet they had moved away then because she was baptized out there by our uncle who had baptized her mother and all of us. And so I remember being out there then, you know, Eleanor would have to tell you when they really started going out there to spend summers. And so whenever they were out there and spent the summer, I'm sure that I kept the road hot because it was great fun for me to go and visit Eleanor and Jim. I was about, you know, fifteen or sixteen when she was married

1235

*Summers at
the cabin with
Eleanor's
family and
Mrs Brown*

and, oh, it was... I mean, you know, I can remember going to visit her when they lived in Canton and that was just so exciting, you know! So whenever they were out there I'm sure I spent a lot of time.

I: And then how do you use the land and the house currently?

MIBS: Yes. You know, I'm taking the grandchildren who live here out there a lot. One day we were headed over here from their house—they just live a couple of miles from here—and all of a sudden I got to Beaverdam Road and I said, "Do you want to go to the cabin?" "YES!" You know, I mean that is really... And so we were out there just the day before yesterday. I keep them regularly on Tuesday. But also Peter Jr. told me that one Sunday after church they went out to spend an hour and stayed four. So, you know, the children were just having a great time. And they just stayed in the creek the whole time, I believe. But it's nice... There were several years when it was being restored and work was going on so we couldn't use it at that time to enjoy. But since then... And, you know, we had a good time at the family reunion and the family from Louisiana stayed out there and that was fun for them because they can remember going to parties and square dances. You know, Three Mountaineers used to have sales meetings and the salesmen would come and so there would be a... we'd have it catered but have supper for all of them. And then one year had a string band and we square danced! Yes! It was wonderful. And that house would really shake, you know! I mean, we would square dance in the living room so we must have just moved all the furniture back. And everyone couldn't square dance at one time. But I remember the band played standing in front of the fireplace and, you know, here were people from New York state and New York city and Minnesota and California and all over the country. But, you know, that was great fun for them and gave them a flavor of Western North Carolina, you know. And they often refer to the times they spent at the cabin out there. So it's always been... but Eleanor has made that real important because she's been the one that's had the brunt of the responsibility, you know, of having it ready and... I mean, you know, she used to be the one who'd bring in the wood for the fires and do all that. You know, we really would just kind of go out and enjoy it. And I mean, I remember helping her a time or two out there. One time I remember when we were cleaning it and I always... This was before I was married now, and I got a taste of what

*The importance
of the cabin
and
surrounding
family land for
Mary Ida's
grandchildren*

1328

*Use of the
cabin for
Three
Mountaineers
company
parties*

1388

*Events at the
cabin—a
flavor of
Western
North
Carolina*

*Eleanor's
instrumental
role in
preserving
the property*

1445

1478

*Eleanor's
dedication,
contd.*

cleanliness next to godliness is because I think we washed the bedroom floor and rinsed it seven times! And that made a big impression on me. But it was clean, you know, and it was just fun. I loved going out there when they were there, you know. Jim was such fun to be around and Eleanor would just ... You know, it was always just, "Come on out!" You always felt that any time you wanted to go you were welcome to go.

I: Do you share Eleanor's feelings about her desire to preserve the cabin and the land?

MIBS: Okay. You know, I respect that and I understand that. You know, some people think... I'm sure, gosh, she's, you know, she has really given almost every waking moment to that for the last three or four years. It may have been longer. But it's been a long haul because even though she and my brother own it... I know he's helped her financially but she's been the one who's done it all. And overseen it all. And I go out to enjoy it. But, you know, I'm very grateful that she's had that. It's been a dedication, really, to preserving it and keeping it. And, you know, it's just like... you know, I had these five children in seven years. And mother had given us—divided the acreage—which was like twenty-six acres. I mean, she had said, "It belongs to the four of you. That part."

1558

*The division
of the
property
between the
siblings*

And then she had given the cabin and that acre to Eleanor and Edwin. But, you know, all of a sudden, we had five children and taxes to pay on our own house and I said, "I can't handle all this. I can't even think about it." And my brother Hugh took it and I just deeded it over to him. You know, I mean, it was just overwhelming to me. I felt overwhelmed by other things, you know. And I felt like one house was all I could look after and take care of! And then in later years Hugh just deeded it back. But, you know, he carried that with the taxes. The taxes weren't so great then but on the other hand, you know, it kept me from feeling guilty all the time of not doing anything. But, you know, I still, you know, now I have ten grandchildren and this big old barn and, you know, this is... We, you know, my brother Hugh has helped because he gives her moral support and financial support. And I've lent a little financial support off and on, you know, toward maybe a bridge or something like that. But basically it's been her. And I'm very grateful that she has had that because she's been the driving force behind keeping the cabin and preserving it. Because it was literally falling down, the newest parts were falling down. The old part has... has remained pretty stable. And they had to go under it and put supports and whatnot, I know, but it's been

1618

*Supporting
Eleanor in
her efforts to
preserve the
property and
keep it in the
family*

1654

*Eleanor's
work, contd.*

amazing that that's been the part that has been the most stable. And then the next addition—that bedroom and fireplace and area. But, you know, the part that was built in '21 was literally gutted. And then the kitchen that was built in maybe '54 was completely gutted and redone. It looks great, doesn't it?

I: It does.

MIBS: It really does. And she works in the yard, you know. I mean, the other day when the twins and I drove up to go out there and play I saw she's been working on the fence and pullin' vines and doin' all that, you know. And it's too bad. I do not feel the freedom to go out there to...to really just put in the days of work that she does. And, see, I have a son here but he's got three children and a full-time job and other family responsibilities with Three Mountaineers. You know, it'd be nice if he could give some time out there. But anyway, she really carries it.

I: Do you have any memories of your parents or maybe the Scarboroughs—neighbors in the area—talking about, you know, wildlife? Or do you remember seeing any particular wildlife?

MIBS: I know that the red foxes were there and other than that, I really don't know. I really don't. And I don't remember the Scarboroughs or mother and daddy talkin' about it.

I: And then you mentioned something about chestnut trees earlier?

MIBS: Right.

I: Was that...

MIBS: Up on the hill behind the cabin. They were there. And, you know, they fell, of course, eventually. And, you know, some of those trunks are still lying on the ground that have just rotted, you know. And there were persimmons. I remember the persimmon trees that were there and then there were cherry trees and apple trees. The low...where the pasture is was really an apple orchard. And I sort of remember maybe picking up apples down there. But Eleanor is still, even the last of the last apple trees, she just picked up the other day with some people who were out looking at the cabin and talking about it, you know. I do remember the persimmon trees and how you couldn't eat them until the frost hit them because they'd just turn your mouth inside out. Have you ever had a persimmon?

I: Yes, I have.

MIBS: Have you ever had one that hasn't had the frost cure it? Okay, well you would not believe what it does to the

1731

*Memories of
chestnut trees
and the
family
orchards*

1789

*Memories of
walnut trees*

inside of your mouth. But it has to have the frost on it for it to be sweet and tender, you know, and not just tear up the inside of your mouth. Oh, and the walnut trees. I remember the... you know, I remember the walnuts and I can remember cracking walnuts. And I remember the children up the street who would... up the road, I mean, who lived up there named Pegg. And they would come down and they would know just how to take rocks and break those. And their little hands were just stained dark brown! And see, they would crack walnuts and sell them. See, we lived there... See the Depression was in '30... '29 to '30 and I was born right then. And Beaverdam was different. School was different. You know, my children will never be exposed to the poverty I was going to a county school in the thirties.

1806

*Growing up
during the
Great
Depression*

I: Could you just talk about that a little bit?

MIBS: Well, you know...

I: Things you remember?

MIBS: People lived... came to the school from Beaverdam. The bus picked them up. They came from Woodfin and, you know, I remember so many who lived right around the school; who just lived in the neighborhood who came there to school. I have pictures... And I'm still seeing some of those people! I still, you know, who live here, and I still recognize. A few years ago I was in Belk and I went up to this girl and I said, "Were you..." Gosh, what was her name? Oh, I can't even remember now. Doesn't matter. But she was, and see, she still lived here. I remember Gladys Parker, who was in my class and I remember the Harris twins and, you know, the Owenby's. And I was in the outlet at Three Mountaineers and my friend Ruth Owenby came in and she recognized me.

1826

*Natives of
Asheville,
including the
Browns*

Ruth Ward. And you know it's just amazing how many people still live in Asheville even though I can go out now and not see... be in a group and not anyone is a native. And here our parents were both born in Buncombe... you know, in Asheville. Which is unusual because daddy was born in 1884 and mother in 1890. So you really, you know, there are not many groups you're in when there are people my age who were born here, much less who had their parents who were born here. And, but, you know, the school... the school was different. All of my children went to Jones School, which was the new school built on the same location. But, you know, I remember abject poverty from students who came. They were poor. Nobody is poor today by those standards... same standards. And I remember people who lived up Rice Branch Road which is the road we lived on and the old house is on. You know, they were poor.

1900

*The effects of
the Great
Depression in
Beaverdam
Valley*

I: So it affected both people in the more rural area, Beaverdam Valley...

MIBS: Oh, yes.

I: ...and people, family, friends you knew in the city?

MIBS: Right. And, you know, there were subsistence farmers. They grew what they lived on. They canned in the summertime and had that through the winter. And then, oh, I'll tell you something exciting I remember about Beaverdam!

I: What?

MIBS: Was we would get to stay home from school on the day the hogs were slaughtered! And of course it had to be really cold. And the Scarboroughs had hogs. And I can remember going over there and sitting in the pasture and they would shoot the hog. And I remember my brother saying, "Shoot him in the head, Mr. Scarborough! Shoot him in the head!" I mean that's just awful to think about, you know. But, anyway, they would have all those big pots and boil that stuff and string those hogs up and skin 'em and do the sausage. Everything was done that day. On a cold, cold day. And then they had a smokehouse right there. Now that is a picture I really do remember, you know. So I was in school by then but I can remember mother let us stay home. Then I can also remember when the threshers would come with the combines to thresh the wheat that Mr. Scarborough grew. And he grew that across the road on the same side we lived. And...and that was another thing... Well, that would have been in the summertime so we would have been home. But then I can remember going out there to watch them and then Ms. Scarborough and I don't know whether other women... but they would prepare the midday meal. And I've never seen as much food in all my life as she would put out on the table! You know, it was always, there were always big platters of beans and potatoes and probably corn and then the big biscuits, you know, huge biscuits that she would make, and cakes and... I mean, you know, it was just a fun...it was an exciting way to grow up that my children would never have. And then, see, they had the cows and Mr. Scarborough brought us the milk that was raw milk that we grew up drinking. But I can see him walking the path to our house bringing the milk cans full of milk and putting them on the back porch. And then Ms. Scarborough had a brother who lived in an unheated, you know, unelectrified little cabin between our house—it was on the same side of the road as our house. And his name was Rob, the brother, and then Grandpa Scarborough who obviously was Mr. Scarborough's

1946

*Slaughtering
of the hogs at
the
Scarboroughs*

1982

*Threshing
day at the
Scarboroughs
and the
benefits of
growing up in
the country*

2034

*Rob and
Grandpa
Scarborough
and the
family
dynamic*

2054

*Rob
Scarborough,
caring for
family
members and
listening to
baseball
games on the
radio*

*Neighbors as
surrogate
grandparents;
evidence of a
close-knit
community*

2138

*The
neighboring
Lakey family
and dying
Easter eggs*

father, lived there who had terrible arthritis. And he sat in a chair and just scooted around in that chair. And he had one room and Rob had a room. And Ms. Scarborough brought him three meals a day, 365 days of the year. She carried... because Rob was blind and had terrible arthritis and was bedridden. And every time I'd go to the Scarboroughs house... See, they were like grandparents to me because, I don't know if I'd mentioned, but our grandparents had died before mother and daddy were even born...um, before they were married. And so the Scarboroughs house was a refuge for us. You know, if mom got after us, we'd just hightail it to the Scarboroughs and, you know, they'd just pet us and give us cake and anything. They'd just be a real refuge and comfort to us. And when we would walk past the little cabin where Rob and Grandpa Scarborough lived, you know, we always said, "Hello Rob!" And he would know exactly which one we were. He'd say, "Hello Mary Ida," or "Hello Hugh," or "Hello Edwin," you know. And then we'd go in and visit. And see, I can just see him lying in that bed with those crippled hands and he would just pick up his food off the tray that she would bring and eat. And then I can remember listening... hearing them listen to the ballgame. They would put a line out there and a radio and that was great... You know, ballgames, then, by radio was great summer pastime. And I remember that sound, listening. That was great entertainment for them. But I mean, I think Rob was there twenty years, you know, as an invalid! But how faithful. That was a great lesson in caring, to witness that.

I: Do you remember any other families in the area...

MIBS: Yes.

I: ...aside from the Scarboroughs?

MIBS: Oh, yes. The house up above the Scarboroughs were the Lakeys. And they were a really nice family of three girls and a boy. There was Lois and Yvonne and Alice Ruth and Pete. And Alice Ruth and Pete were younger than I was, but I remember going up there playing. I remember that the grandmother... I don't think her name was Lakey; I believe it was Ms. Lakey's mother. And I can remember dying eggs and she had tin cans sitting on the coal—or probably the wood stove—with dye in it. Now see, if you hadn't asked me this I wouldn't have remembered this. But, you know, seeing them improvise that way... Not improvise! That's the way we dyed eggs, too, were in tin cans, I guess. But I remember going up there to do that. But I remember playing with them. And Mr. Scarborough had a horse, a workhorse. He had two workhorses. And, you know, he had corn and raised lots of

2183

*Mr.
Scarborough's
wagon and
horses*

2224

*Slaughtering
and
preparing the
chickens*

2245

*Picking
blackberries
and black-
heart cherries*

2268

*Rice Branch
Road at night*

2285

*The Brown
family
Christmas*

things I'm sure. But those horses... Bess was the one that I thought was my horse. And I always referred to it as my horse. And I would run down the road... Mother got a new car in 1941 so see, I was about ten then. But anyway, before that I would run and jump up on that wagon and far prefer to ride up the road with Mr. Scarborough on the back of that wagon. It would be full of corn shucks and things. I don't know where he'd been but I remember that well. And I remember going over and watching him milk. He had a big barn over there with cow stalls and the horses were in a horse barn and then he had the corn crib and, you know, I can just visualize the layout over there. I remember seeing Ms. Scarborough, she would... what did she...? Oh, she would cut the chicken's head off. That's how she killed a chicken. And I remember seeing that chicken flop around and then she'd pick it up, dunk it in scalding hot water and we would stand on the bridge and pluck the feathers off. And they would go into the creek and down the creek. Now, see, I can remember that sensation of plucking those because they would come off real easily after you would scald that chicken. And then she'd fry those big chickens.

I: Do you remember collecting anything from the surrounding land—berries, anything like that? Did you use the land in that way?

MIBS: I guess we would pick blackberries. Cherries. I can remember the cherries. We'd pick cherries. They were red-heart cherries... black-heart cherries. They were wonderful. No, I don't remember.

I: And then do you have memories of what it was like at night being out there?

MIBS: It was very quiet and very black. And you could see every star in the sky because it was... on a clear night, you know, because there was no town lights then or street lights. You know, there were just no lights other than house lights. And it was beautiful. It really was beautiful. The last year we were out there at Christmas. I had broken my leg the first day of Christmas vacation. My brother—this brother Hugh that I used to play with so much—was playing football and he had learned to tackle. And, you know, I sort of did whatever he told me to. He said, "I'm gonna tackle you now!" And first time he came toward me I jumped out of the way. He said, "Oh! No, no, no! You can do that." Well, when he tackled me I heard my bone pop when I went down. And of course I started bawling and that upset him, you know. Oh my goodness! And mother wasn't there. So by the time she came home I can remember saying, "I hurt my leg but it doesn't

2322

*Christmas,
contd.*

hurt really bad. Ooohhhh it hurts somethin' awful!" But anyway, she took me to town and then set that leg. It took forever because they used that plaster of Paris. You know, that wet stuff they had to set up. And mother would have to pick me up off the floor with that great big cast in the wintertime. And I remember that she told the story, and I can remember this vividly. Now, you won't believe this, I know, but it happened. And mother, if she were here, she would stick by it. I was not ready to go to bed and finally she came and said, "If you don't go on to bed and go to sleep Santa Claus is going to come and just pass right over." And see I was still believing in Santa Claus. I was seven then. And about that time, honestly, we heard this little light "bump"² landing on the roof and jingle bells! You would not...! You know, and mother said I grabbed the covers and said, "Get out of here! Get out of here!" And there was never, ever an explanation as to what that was. But anyway, we both heard it. And, you know, I can hear mother telling that tale now! But our Aunt Marion was living with us then. She'd had surgery and I remember...

2380

*END SIDE
ONE*

(END SIDE ONE)

2386

*The importance
of the cabin to
children and
grandchildren*

MIBS: I remember—speaking of Aunt Marion—she and my Uncle Clarence came to spend a summer at the old cabin one summer and this was after I was married and had our children. And Peter and David would love to go out there and spend the night with them. And Clarence would fix them pancakes for breakfast and whatnot. And one morning they were playing at the creek and David—David must have been about three or four and Peter probably about six—and David said, "Oh, Peter, look at this great big worm!" And Peter went over there and it was a snake, you know. And Clarence came out and promptly cut its head off with a hoe, I think. But anyway, that was fun for them because they'd love seeing... my children would love to go out there then. When anyone was at the cabin is when we would go. I... it just wasn't as much fun for us to go even though that one time we went out and packed them all up and spent the night. That was fun. You know, it sort of had to be a gathering, in a way. I: Do you remember either yourself or your children going up on the mountain? You know, going up...

MIBS: Behind?

I: ...on the back of the...

MIBS: ...cabin? Yes. And see that's where I remember the chestnut trees were and where we built the little houses with

2509

*Playing on
the mountains*

rocks and laid out rooms, sort of. We didn't build a house. It was just that you just laid a rock for pretending that it was, you know, there were different rooms. And I can remember just walking. See, it was clear then because he kept the cows in there. And it was fenced off so it was easy to go up on that hill top. I don't remember so much about it when I was little, but then... You know, after Eleanor and Jim built their cabin up there, you know, and cleared some of it... It's still... Where they built was where we must have gone up there because I remember it leveled off. You know, you could kind of go up the rise. And we would probably go up the way of that old logging road that was up there that goes up to the new cabin now. And that, I know that one of those big chestnut trees fell over right up that way.

I: Has...it sounds like the cabin and the land around it has sort of been a nice...a stable...something that doesn't change...

MIBS: That's right.

I: ...something that's a refuge that you can go back to. Has your perception of the land or of why it's of value to you changed over the years?

MIBS: Um...

I: Has the meaning for you changed?

MIBS: Yeah, that's right. But it, I think, you know, I think all of us just hate to see the land being torn up, sort of, by roads. And it's really nice for that land to just be there and kind of remain in its state that was always the way we remember it, you know. And it's...you know, the old road, it's so nice that that bridge is there. Well, it'd have to be for getting to the new cabin up the road. But, you know, we used to refer to the old road and that was the original Rice Branch Road up there. And, you know, that level part where the pasture is and all the way to Beaverdam Road, you know, I've often thought that if anyone built... It would just, it would be nice if no one ever built on that and you sort of tucked houses back in the woods. But being level, it, you know, it'd just be nice to have. I mean, you know, one time I thought, "Wouldn't it be fun to have a tennis court there." Or having it cleared and, you know, there's a basketball goal there now. And, you know, I said to the twins the other day, who are eight now, "Gosh, this is such a perfect night. It'd be a wonderful night to have a square dance." And the ground's so hard now, you would hardly need a dance floor—a portable dance floor—which we had and still have. I'm not even sure where it is. But anyway, you know, it's just fun to have a place that's the same that you remember it. And, you

2610

*The cabin
and land as a
stable refuge
over the years*

2784

*Development
and change in
Beaverdam
Valley,
including
information
about
condominiums,
houses and
stores*

know, it really hasn't changed. I just kind of think of going to Beaverdam. You know, whenever I think of going to Beaverdam, my mental picture is just going there. And I know people who live out there and, you know, it's really developed.

I: Could you talk about how you've...you know, how you've seen it change and when the changes...

MIBS: Well, the traffic is horrific on Beaverdam Road now. And, you know, there's a...there've been lots of areas developed and built. They're probably...the biggest area is Beaverdam Run with all those houses all over that mountainside, you see. All the condominiums built. And, you know, I remember when the Bagwells lived sort of across Beaverdam Road from Rice Branch up there on that hill and, you know, now that's a street with houses on either side of it. And I don't know if Eleanor mentioned to you about the little church, the Episcopal Church, it was called St...oh, I'd have to look it up. St. Philip's, maybe, or St. Timothy's, I think. And it's been converted to a house. But if you drive up there you can still see the remnants of it being a church. Um, you can see where the, sort of the arch was for the door, for the front door, you know. And now it's a smaller door. And some of the architectural features are still there. And then there was a schoolhouse on the lower part of our property down near Beaverdam Road. Did she mention that?

I: She did.

MIBS: And that, you know, the man who was the priest at that little Episcopal church may have been the school teacher. I'm not even sure. Then I remember the little green store that was on Beaverdam Road. You know, they just, you could buy small amounts of groceries and dry goods in there. And then there was a little store up at the fork of the road at the end of Beaverdam Road where Lynn Cove and Webb Cove fork there. There was a little store right there. I remember. And our Uncle lived right there, too. Daddy's brother who owned the old cabin with daddy. He bought that property and built on it.

I: Now did you go up there?

MIBS: See, I don't remember that. I think Uncle Edwin died in about 1934 and I just don't remember that at all.

I: Um, how does it make you feel to, you know, drive up that road now? I'm sure it looks very different.

MIBS: Rice Branch or Beaverdam?

I: Beaverdam and then Rice Branch. Just the entire area.

MIBS: Well, you know, they haven't changed the layout of the road and some, you know, there are some houses that

2960

*Changes in
the Valley*

have always been there. Like the one right across from the Baptist church. Now, you see, the Baptist church used to be a white-frame church that sat about in that same position. But the cemetery's still there. And now where, let's see, oh, that development that is right across from the cemetery. I can't even think what the name of that is. But, you know, that just used to be pastureland and a great big old house that sat over there where the Stradleys lived. And, you know, and thinking about the people that we knew and the Weavers...

3045

BREAK

(BREAK)

3047

*The smaller
community of
neighbors on
Rice Branch
Road*

MIBS: ...lived up there, up the road from us.

I: It was the Pegg family?

MIBS: Yes. And they had a lot of children and they were very poor. And then Ms. Bohannon who lived on up the road and the Palmer, Ms. Palmer, and the Stradleys who lived at the head of the road. But, you know, I can't remember too much else except there were not so many houses up there and now, you know, they're building roads and that has changed. And it's paved! You see, it wasn't paved.

I: Which one wasn't?

MIBS: Rice Branch.

I: Rice Branch. But Beaverdam...

MIBS: Beaverdam was always paved.

I: Eleanor said something about remembering going roller-skating on Beaverdam. You being younger, you may not have been out roller-skating.

MIBS: I was not. Right. Right.

I: Do you remember if there was a sense of community there? You were fairly young and I know you were well acquainted with your neighbors, but...

MIBS: Well, I'm sure there was. You know, we moved out there from town and...and we knew families on Beaverdam and then mother and daddy went to Asbury Methodist Church which was on Beaverdam Road. So that made them more of a part of the community to a degree. You know, it was sort of a mixture because she had friends who were in town, so I'm sure there was some mixture. But, I mean, for instance, you know, she wasn't in the Beaverdam Community Club or something like that. Or even if they had it then. But I can remember daddy hearing that somebody didn't have heat or there was a family that needed something on up Rice Branch Road and he took some people out and they put a window in and maybe put a stove up or something, you know. I mean, they would have been that caring, you

3097

*Community in
the Valley via
churches and
neighborly
assistance*

3221

*The end of
Beaverdam
Valley's
farming legacy*

know.

I: Do you have memories—I guess you probably wouldn't—during the Depression when your father would get prescriptions for people in town. Bring people medicine.

MIBS: (Shakes her head no)

I: Okay. That was something Eleanor had talked about.

MIBS: You see, he had a car and I'm sure that made a difference.

I: Do you know if anybody still farms up in that area? Do you remember seeing farms?

MIBS: No. I don't know what Jim Stradley did until he died up at the head of the road because he had a big area. I'm sure he did some things but I don't know of anyone who... other than maybe just, like, tomatoes or something like that, who gardens.

I: How would you envision what you'd like to see the old house and the land looking like in, say, fifty years from now?

MIBS: Well...

I: Or is that important to you?

MIBS: Fifty years from now. Well, you know, I'd like to think it was still in the family and that it wasn't developed. I don't know that—see, my brother who's in Louisiana, my brother who's in Chapel Hill—you know, they don't have the connection that I would feel and that probably my son Peter feels as much as... more than the rest of my children because he lives here. But, you know, the sons-in-law, let's see, maybe two of them, with me and some others... I can't remember... one year after the leaves were off the trees, walked all over the property, you know, up there behind the cabin. And I can remember Scott saying, "Oh, this would be a great place to have a Christmas tree farm!" (Laughs) And then, you know, I don't know if anyone would ever build there. I don't know if Peter and Leslee need a larger house. But I would have never built out there because I need to be—with my five children—I need to be on the bus line and I'm not one to move out. I need neighbors. I don't want people runnin' in and out of my house all the time but I just want to know they're there. And, see, Eleanor used to go out there and stay by herself. I would a never spent the night by myself and I wouldn't today! You know, that's just not my nature at all. I love to go out there, but you know, I don't get spooked as much as I used to. In fact I'm never afraid to stay in this house by myself. When we lived up on Griffing Boulevard I was scared to death all the time. But that was just a childhood thing. Now my husband hears all kinds of, "What's that! What's that!" And, you know, I can just identify every sound

3252

*The
importance of
preserving
the property
and keeping it
in the Brown
family*

that I hear. You don't need to listen to all that! But Eleanor has that connection, you know. She stayed out there by herself. When Jim was in the hospital she stayed out there by herself 'til her little dog got killed. It was terrible! Mother said, "Honey, you just come right into town!" Mother was living on Griffing then. I was in college and Jim...

I: Is there anything else that you'd like to add?

MIBS: Not that I can think of offhand.

I: Well, thank you.

MIBS: You're welcome. I've enjoyed it.