

**MSS 587, Iron Hill Museum oral history recordings and transcripts, Special Collections,
University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware.**

Special Collections Department, University of Delaware Library / Newark, Delaware

19717-5267 / Phone: 302-831-2229 / Fax: 302-831-6003 / URL:

<http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/>

Terms Governing Use and Reproduction

Use of materials from this collection beyond the exceptions provided for in the Fair Use and Educational Use clauses of the U.S. Copyright Law may violate federal law. Permission to publish or reproduce is required from the copyright holder. Please contact Special Collections Department, University of Delaware Library, <http://www.lib.udel.edu/cgi-bin/askspec.cgi>

Iron Hill School Oral History Project

Interview with Richard Lewis

Date of Interview: July 12, 2006
Interviewer: Roberta Perkins

Roberta: Mr. Lewis, could I get you to give your full name and date of birth and where you were born?

R. Lewis: Richard Wayne Lewis born January 12, 1949 in Maryland.

Roberta: And the names of your parents?

R. Lewis: Mother, Edith B. Lewis and Ernest E. Lewis.

Roberta: Do you have any idea when they came?

R. Lewis: I should have said that Edith B. Miller was my mother's maiden name.

Roberta: Do you remember when they came to Iron Hill? You wouldn't remember but do you know, did anyone ever say when they came to Iron Hill?

R. Lewis: My parents?

Roberta: Yes.

R. Lewis: No I couldn't say. I think I'm the third or fourth youngest of nine so a lot of family had been established before they moved from one place to another. I do remember them saying they lived in Glasgow area at one time, lived in Iron Hill area one time and we settled at the Pleasant Valley Road, that was the last place I remember. The only place I remember.

Roberta: And brothers and sisters? How many and names?

R. Lewis: I have three brothers and five sisters. My oldest Freda, sister being the oldest, Ernest, Jr. second oldest, there's Clifford we call him Ray, there's Don, Rosetta, Romo and myself and Sandra and Marva. We say Marva is the baby. I'm the baby of the boys.

Roberta: Let me move on to going to school at Iron Hill. What do you remember of, what was the day like for you? Like what time did it start? Did you walk to school that kind of thing? Were you driven to school?

R. Lewis: It started semi early and I do remember when we left or before we left the house we always went to my grandmother's grape arbor going to school in the early part of the school year and stole a bunch of grapes and we waited for the bus which we walked out the lane, little dirt lane we had to the end of the road and waited on the little funny shaped school bus. It would pick us up either going to coming it would go down the road and pick up some people and come back up the same people and pick up others en route to the school. When we got to the school sometimes I think the bus would let us out at the end of the road and it was long pavement from the Old Baltimore Pike that we ran up to the school. Other times the bus took us up a little crooked driveway to the door of the school that began our day. Soon about 8 o'clock or so I can't remember what time it would have been, once you got to the school and before others would come I think we would be in recess outside. I can't remember a bell or anything like that or how the teacher got our attention to get us in. I'm pretty sure we were making a lot of noise or being noisy out there and she had to get some kind of, it may have been the yard stick. I do remember a crack on the yardstick several times and so once we assembled in the school, I can't remember, I know there were rows of chairs there was some type of coat room with the boys' bathroom on one side and the girls' bathroom on the other side. We would hang our coats and hats and lunches in there. I do remember the old potbellied stove they had. I remember a piano on the right side front of the school. Miss Minnie Ryder was the teacher and I remember her playing doing the music class we had she played piano. First grade to me was spent on the right side going into the school. Second grade was to the

left of that, third and fourth grade was seated near the windows. I can remember the setup of the school I can't remember much more than that picture right there.

Roberta: When you went, during the time you went there, it was just up to the fourth grade is that it?

R. Lewis: Yes, up to the fourth grade. After fourth grade we would sing a song, a graduating song, "Merrily we go rolling down to Middletown School." We were so excited to go to the next school which was Middletown which was the Louis L. Redding School and so just before that school year ended I remember some of the older ones coming back to the school because I assume Middletown School got out before Iron Hill School did and they would come harass us and stuff because they already graduated from the school and they had a good time and now they tried to take it away from us having a good time I guess and giving us like an initiation part of it. And we also did the same thing to the ones that graduated from the fourth grade when we were in the fifth and sixth grades we did the same thing to them.

Roberta: So this sort of hazing would happen at the school or was this the first year you went to Louis L. Redding School?

R. Lewis: The first year I went to Louis L. Redding School, yes we came back to the Iron Hill School to harass the ones that were about to leave or the ones who were still there that we still knew.

Roberta: Let me ask you, you mentioned something about your grandmother's grape arbor? And so where did your grandmother live?

R. Lewis: Our grandmother had a farm right next to my mom and dad's house on Pleasant Valley Road and I can't recall how many acres it was but it was a large, large farm. They raised hogs, cattle and horses and barnyard animals. I do remember several things about the farm. They had walnut trees and all kinds of goodies around there tomato fields and stuff and the grape arbor. It stretched from a few feet from our house all the way across the field to a field a few feet from my

grandmother's house. And it was a very large grape arbor and a lot of grapes was on there and the later part of the summer, early fall the grapes would be ripe and seemed like my grandmother would always sit at that window and know when we went into those grapes. We would smash the fence down for one and take the grapes all off of one end for two, she knew that and then she would yell "Get out the grapes" and we would run into ourselves getting out of the grapes and not before we had our fill though.

Roberta: Did she kind of expect that's what you would do?

R. Lewis: I assume she expected that because she was waiting on us and knew what time we were gonna do it and she would yell and we get out of the grapes.

Roberta: Was your grandfather still alive at that time?

R. Lewis: My grandfather died in 1958 so I went to school, yes. I was like Yes, he was alive but he was probably off in the fields early in the morning somewhere and we didn't see much of him because he was always, my grandfather, this was my mother's father and he was always out in the field working and things.

Roberta: What were their names?

R. Lewis: My grandfather's name was Issac Miller and my grandmother's name was Arbll.

Roberta: Would you spell that?

R. Lewis: I s i a h I guess. Grandmother? A r b l l.

Roberta: You mentioned about a potbellied stove in the school. What was that stove used for do you remember? Obviously heating?

R. Lewis: Yeah, it was used for heating I do remember. Maybe converted to coal after that it might have been coal. I think a couple of the young boys, myself included, had to attend that from time to time.

Roberta: How was that?

R. Lewis: I think it was in a room off the main school. I think there was a door, like a heater room and I think if I can recall heat vents or duct work that pushed the heat in the room.

Roberta: In the front part of the school or the back part of the school?

R. Lewis: It was on the side of the school.

Roberta: Ok, when you are coming in the school and you are facing the back of the school was it to the right or to the left?

R. Lewis: It was to the right of the school. Once you came in those main doors, the main door just past the girls' bathroom on the right side. I remember the door being there and that door was also an exit door on that door over there on the outside of the wall.

Roberta: And your teacher was?

R. Lewis: Minnie Ryder at the time. I do remember her. She was very, how can I describe Miss Ryder? She was very she was a very nice lady. I respected her very much. I know she played the piano. I know she always had a ruler in her hand, a yard stick type thing. If you got out of line you definitely got your hand smacked. I can't remember getting beat too many times. I do remember my hand getting smacked a couple of times. I didn't say a whole lot in school. I think I was kinda quiet. One of the quiet ones at the time, first grade, second grade and I think I just did my work. I was a thinker I do know that. According to my report cards I was an A and B student. I didn't do a lot of participating or talking. My work was in my pencil I guess. I know I loved numbers. I know I loved math. Spelling, I don't know what grade it was in, spelling was, I loved spelling and reading was my weakest point. I remember to this day a word that Miss Ryder would always tell us to break the word down into one word, two words, whatever and make some sense of it. I remember this word to this day, island. When I read the word I said "is land". I think I got a beating for that. I do remember that and from this day on I knew how to spell island. It was two words if you think about it – is land, that's

how my mind thinks and when I read that word, is land, meaning island, I was scolded and got my hand smacked.

Roberta: Did Miss Ryder, if you stumbled over something like that particular word or math or something did she do anything that was supportive you know to try to get you to understand better what she was trying to teach?

R. Lewis: It's obvious that she did. Other than correcting or scolding she was never abusive to me. That stuck in my head and I remembered that corrective how to spell island from that day on and of all the assignments, I do remember that. I can't remember anything else other than reading was my weakest point in school. I couldn't, attention span, I couldn't stand it. Even now I can't read a complete book. I've read complete books. If I read a book now I would skip back and forth or read a chapter here and go back to another chapter or put the book down and come back to it. Advance myself in chapters and read from page to page. I want to know what's going on at the end.

Roberta: I recognize that. Did you feel that in her class that students' were encouraged even the ones that may have needed a little bit more help. Did you feel a certain support encouragement? Or was it more just ok, this is the lesson and this is what I expect from you?

R. Lewis: She walked around I do remember that and I can't remember exactly how many was in each row each class but I know at least four or five in the first grade, five or six maybe more in second and first grade and maybe more in third grade than fourth grade but she took her time to me and we all had fair time with the teacher cause I was looking back over some of my old report cards and they indicated that everything was pretty good, she was teaching pretty good and I know problems with learning or paying attention. I was curious, very curious person I was. Some may say I was a little ornery but I don't think I was but I did my work, I did my work.

Roberta: Do you remember your teacher, cause I have to realize you are going way back first to fourth grade you don't think about things to remember them the way you would in junior high, but do you remember whether or not there were conferences between your parents and the teacher, did the teacher ever contact the parents to kind of give them an update one way or the other beyond a report card?

R. Lewis: No I can't remember. I do remember the teacher coming to our house.

Roberta: Ok, what was that occasion?

R. Lewis: I knew I had the measles or something like that at one time and she was concerned. I do remember a teacher coming to the house for something and it might have been a conference I don't know. Children kind of stayed out of the adult's way when adults talked. You had to leave the room or go outside and play and I assumed it was something about my schooling. Not only was I in the school my two younger sisters were in the same school at the same time or my two older sisters were in the school during the time I was in there in that period of time so me being in the middle it could have been for any one of the four why she came to the house.

Roberta: Ok and when she came to the house and after she left none of the three siblings heard from the parents what the conversation was about?

R. Lewis: No.

Roberta: Let me ask you about school supplies school supplies and library. Do you remember if there was a library in the school and what were your school supplies books and that kind of thing?

R. Lewis: I know we all learned on Run Sally Run and Dick, Jane and Spot. Beyond that I think there was a book case in the back of the school room. I remember the chalk board being up front and one on the side. Teacher's desk was in the front of the school and she had a pointer that she used. Other books I can't recall. She always had the assignment or some type of book to be read and I do remember that See

Sally Run book. I can't remember the name of it but I think everybody knows what I'm talking about that had that See Sally Run.

Roberta: I think there was a series on Dick and Jane and See Sally Run.

R. Lewis: Yes, Dick, Jane, Sally and Spot. And the other books I can't remember them. I am pretty sure there were first grade, second grade, third grade readers and the fourth grade. I know I indicated once I was reading third grade level and I was in the fourth grade. She mentioned on one report card maybe if I read more and when we were young I don't think our parents pushed her study times that I can remember. We may have done our homework; obviously did our homework but I can't remember getting scolded to do it. Either I was excited to do it, wanted to do it or got it done. I can't remember my parents saying you better get in there and get your homework done when I was young. I can't remember that.

Roberta: It's probably just a general expectancy. Was there a dress code? Was there a required way of dress and did the teacher kind of do an inspection so to speak for the children to be kind of neat and clean when they came in? Do you remember anything like that?

R. Lewis: That was a way with our families. We were clean. I don't think there was a dress code. I do remember my parents bought me a suit blue jacket and blue pants, two pair of pants, one jacket and two pairs of pants and I wore those suit pants to school one day and at school we liked to play marbles, carried a pocket of marbles and we would draw the circle, put our marbles down and start playing marbles. So obviously you have to get down on your knee and so you get down on your knee, you get up your knee is dirty. So you get down too many times the threads start to thin and I wore holes in one of my pants, my suit pants and of course when I got home I got it a little bit but wearing the suit pants to school so the dress code we wore whatever. Jeans, yes I guess we did wear jeans with the big rolled up cuffs type thing. There were no holes in our clothes because that was a no no and if you had holes in your clothes, unlike today, it meant you were really poor and nobody

really wanted to be poor even though we didn't have a whole lot as children have today.

Roberta: You were describing the classroom a little bit. Do you remember what was on the wall behind the teacher? Was there a blackboard behind the teacher's desk and then were there pictures or anything above that? Do you remember?

R. Lewis: I remember the blackboard with the a, b, c's in upper case and lower case and I can't remember anything else about the school. I haven't been back to that school since I went back and harassed some of the ones that were about to leave that school. I can't remember anything else. You forget over the years. It's amazing it's still standing. I understand it's a museum now right?

Roberta: A natural history museum. Delaware Academy of Science took it over and I think that's the reason and I don't know that history very well, they maintain the integrity of the roof and that's why the building is still standing. It's totally different from what you remember. It's all animals and plant life and that kind of thing. It's a natural history museum, pieces of rock and shells and that sort of thing and that's going to be all moved out.

R. Lewis: I ride by there a lot and you know of course you look over there as memories, seeing the flag pole and the May Pole they had over there and the swings they used to have in the back. I remember that area. I think the pole is still over there where they used to wrap the May Pole. I remember the girls used to get on that thing and put their arm through that little loop and go round there with their legs flying in circles and you'd better get out their way or they would kick you. I do remember that and the swings see how high you can go on the swing and jump out. I do remember a big old pine tree it was down in front of the school on the right side of the school.

Roberta: Ok, so facing the school?

R. Lewis: Facing the school it would be on the right side and we used to play tag and I do remember a friend of mine, Reggie, Reginald Reditch, and I would run for the

base and the next thing you know we flipped each other and I go up in the air and he comes down and his tooth hit me right in my head and it bled and I still have that mark today in my head somewhere. Hair is covering it; some of the hair is covering it. I don't know if you can see it.

Roberta: Let me see. Point to it. That right there? Just a little mark.

R. Lewis: Yeah and never got pictures of it but his tooth hit my head and I don't know if he beat me to the base or whatever.

Roberta: Did he lose his tooth?

R. Lewis: No he didn't lose his tooth. He didn't lose his tooth but we did that those are the games we played and I do remember getting knocked out. We played a lot of outside games during recess. We ran around and played baseball. We had some trails up through the woods. You know we used to play in the woods a little bit, kick ball, dodge ball. Of course the swings and the May Pole and that's about all. They boys played baseball.

Roberta: What other activities do you remember that involved outside? I think they used to have field day? Did they have that the time you were there?

R. Lewis: Yes, they had a May Day or something like that. During the end of May all the alumni would come back, I think all the alumni would come back and we would have all day outside doing activities.

Roberta: Do you remember if the school was used for anything other than classes?

R. Lewis: Yes, it was used for a polling place for the political parties. I do remember the political parties would come around and pick up our parents and take them to that place to vote and they would give out apple cider and those oatmeal cookies. Not the oatmeal cookies, the ginger snap cookies I do remember that during the fall of the year. Other than that I don't know if it was used for anything else.

Roberta: So when the political parties, members would come by to pick the parents up do you remember if there were any other incentives, did they encourage parents to vote a certain way or they just made sure they got to the polls?

R. Lewis: I think they encouraged the parents to vote a certain way because that party was a democratic party for instance and they did pick up the parents and I assume that's why they picked them up to make sure you voted my way.

Roberta: In first through fourth grades do you remember ever taking any tests?

R. Lewis: Not per say taking the test. I'm pretty sure we did. I'm pretty sure we did take tests whether they be written tests or oral tests but I know we had spelling tests and I do know that because I was good at spelling. I was good at spelling and that's about all I remember about tests.

Roberta: What about health care? Do you remember a nurse who would come by, dentists, doctors?

R. Lewis: Yes, they would. The medical system would come by I don't know how often they would come, but they would come and give out needles like Polio shots, that's how I got my Polio shots and the other vaccinations you would get, they would come to the school and I do remember some of the one, I was never scared of anything like that, but some were very scared of getting pricked with the needle and it was exciting to see the expressions on some faces who were going to get pricked with the needle. It would make me want to go just to see who was going to run from the needle or see who was going to get held down or whatever. Yes, they used to come and check our health. Give shots and the dentist used to come.

Roberta: Was it usually a nurse and a doctor or just a nurse or just a doctor?

R. Lewis: I don't know if it was a doctor, I just assumed just a like a clinic situation just the nurses and their helpers. It could have been a doctor I really don't know.

Roberta: This is side two, tape one and we're continuing the conversation with Mr. Lewis about the health care he remembers the students receiving.

R. Lewis: The hygiene was very important you know. I know we had to wash everything we ate or washed our hand when we came in from outside and but the nurses I do remember them brining their instruments and setting up in the back of the school and we would go from grade to grade to get our vaccinations during that day. Now I think they may have come two or three days just to get everybody, somebody may have been out sick and I can't remember not being there for any of them.

Roberta: Was it all day or was it just certain hours of the day and then they would come back if they missed somebody?

R. Lewis: I assume it was part of the day. I really can't remember or recall every detail but I think it was part of the day. I don't think they'd give us a whole day of not doing anything. It amazes me now that the teaching in that one room class room setting and you had four grades and four, five or six students in each class, it amazes me how the teacher taught without fourth grad interrupting the third grade or whatever or someone throwing a spitball or throwing something at each other a piece of paper or something at each other it's not like we got caught every little thing we did the teacher being very attentive to the class and I can't remember any disruptions while I was there from one to the other that would cause the teacher not want to come back the next day and teach.

Roberta: So Miss Ryder commanded, she had enough skill if you would to command the respect of the students or was it a combination of that and they times? Children came to school and that was their background at home.

R. Lewis: Children came to school to learn and Miss Minnie Ryder was a teacher understanding that and she knew your parents as well and she could spank as well as when you got home you got spanked so we came to learn and I feel that her being a teacher the way she was we did not disrespect her in any way. The ones that I remember there may have been times that there was a problem but I can't remember. Miss Ryder she changed her name when she got married during the time I was in that school. I think it might have been the third grade her name was

Mayfield. She married a Mayfield and I do remember him coming to the school several times and you know other than that we were still under control if she had to go outside to greet him or meet him and we always had something to do during that time.

Roberta: Did she, going back to she knew your families, did she live in the community before she got married? Did she live in the community after she got married?

R. Lewis: I know she lived in Newark I'm trying to think of the road, New London Road? She may have lived there for a long time. I do remember we I don't know if it was after school or during a period of time me and a couple of friends went to her house to pick up something. I can't remember now but I remember going to that house to pick up something. Whether it was with her husband or whoever I can't remember exactly I remember going to the house and that was in Newark.

Roberta: Did she drive?

R. Lewis: Yes. Yes she drove. If I recall right it was a Plymouth a 1957 Plymouth blue and white.

Roberta: A substantial car.

R. Lewis: I do remember that car, that color car.

Roberta: That brings to mind, you talking about the color, do you remember what the outside of the school looked like? Like what color?

R. Lewis: It was a rustic yellow or something like that. Yeah as a matter of fact it's not much different than what it is now. Not much different in color than what it is now.

Roberta: One person we interviewed remembers an old like railroad red being used. I mean it could be that it was painted over.

R. Lewis: No it was always yellow to me when I attended here.

Roberta: Oh, ok. Laura will be glad to hear that. That will be interesting.

- R. Lewis:** Prior to that it may have been I don't know how long 1920's?
- Roberta: 19—I'm trying to think. Iron Hill was 1923 I think there was a time period 1910 to 1923 something like that, there was a time period when schools up down the state I think Iron Hill was opened in 1923 I think.
- R. Lewis:** Ok I went there almost thirty years later so there could have been a first color and it could have been reddish or whatever.
- Roberta: Oh what do you remember about lunchtime? Recess I think you already did say some of the outdoor activities. How did you handle that?
- R. Lewis:** Lunchtime. It depended on whether we had bag lunches or a shiny little lunchbox we carried little lunchboxes. If you didn't tear them up it lasted all year but like me mine didn't last all year so we had to brown bag it I guess and you would put your lunch in the lunch room which is where you put your coat and hat and each time somebody would have something different in their lunch and you'd always be curious of somebody's what's in their lunch you know an apple or orange or candy bar something different would be in someone else's lunch. I think you got a candy bar today so I think I'm going to tell on myself you know I did go into one lunch and knew who it was and I got an apple out and I started eating that apple and the teacher came in and caught me in a sense so I tried to hurry up and eat the apple and it lodged in my throat, a sliver got lodged in my throat and I'm sitting there trying to swallow that apple and it wouldn't go anywhere and I was choking it was like it was cutting my throat and so all I thought about was a drink of water so I drank water and got it down and I never touched anyone else's lunch again never, never. The boys would try to sneak in and get the girls' lunch and I think the girls' tried to sneak in and get the boys' lunch but I did get caught myself doing that and that was the only time I ever did that and I paid for it I guess.
- Roberta: Did the teacher see how much stress you were under?
- R. Lewis:** Yeah, my eyes apparently went back in my head and I couldn't breathe and I'm cutting my throat and she made me drink some water and it kinda went down.

Roberta: So instead of scolding you she figured that that was punishment enough?

R. Lewis: That was punishment enough. I don't even know if the other classmates knew about it. That's the type of person she was you know. I know I got caught and that was it.

Roberta: It sounds like she was a very caring person.

R. Lewis: Yes she was.

Roberta: What about a lot of times, certain times of the year there would be special activities especially around the seasons. Do you remember anything like that, like plays or recitals?

R. Lewis: I used to hate to do that square dance and we used to have to dossier doo with the girls and I didn't per say like to do that too well. When I did do I kinda swung the girls off their feet you know so they would fall down so I would sit in the corner or sit down so I wouldn't do it again. I don't know if that's once a week or part of the curriculum we were doing or part music I used to hate to do that and coloring was another, I hated to color too. I hated to stay inside the lines so I didn't like coloring too well. Any other activity I can't remember. Let's see I do remember the square dancing cause we always had to dance with the girls and at that age you know you didn't want to be with the girls when you're seven, eight or nine ten I guess. When you're eleven it changes. That's about all I can remember **[inaudible]**.

Roberta: Ok. Any holidays or celebrations you can remember or that was pretty much it?

R. Lewis: Other than the Thanksgiving Pilgrim stuff, Halloween, I vaguely remember Halloween celebration. I'm pretty sure we carved a pumpkin somehow. Christmas we always made these little wreaths out of construction paper and trimmed the tree and made beads out of the berries and the holly we used to go pick the holly outside in the woods.

Roberta: Oh really?

- R. Lewis:** Yeah, and they used to call it the evergreen we had another name for it yes. The evergreen that grows close to the ground to make wreaths, we used to make wreaths during the Christmas.
- Roberta: Like juniper or something?
- R. Lewis:** We called it Crow's Foot or something like that and we used to go get it and make wreaths make a circle and dress with berries and put those chains and wrap the tree or bring it home after the season is over and make some for home. I do remember doing that Christmas. Easter I can't remember doing an egg hunt pretty sure we did cause those were the norms during that time. The Christmas, Easter and Halloween Christmas was about it.
- Roberta: Do you remember what the lighting was like in the school I'm going back into the school now trying to get a picture idea when you were there of what you remember it looked like.
- R. Lewis:** Well they had windows on the one side and I knew the blinds were pulled down every evening and I do remember putting the blinds up in the mornings for light. As far as the lighting itself, the electrical I can't remember if it was bulbs, fluorescent or any other light, I can't remember that. That had to be electric lights. You know except as a kid you don't pay attention to that. Flip a button and the light goes on. Whether the light's incandescent or whatever you don't think about that.
- Roberta: What about the desks. Were they movable or were they attached.
- R. Lewis:** They were movable. They were little desks, movable desks. I think we had to move some desks to do the square dancing.
- Roberta: Do you have any recollections of any parents being involved with the school in any way like who did the maintenance, that kind of thing.
- R. Lewis:** That's something to think about now. I'm trying to think of an adult I've seen at the school during the time I was there even to cut the grass a lot of grass to cut.

Now they didn't trim it all the time because I remember running through the tall grass sometimes. I can't recall anybody doing the maintenance.

Roberta: I wonder if by that time because we're talking about the 1950's the mid to late 50's if that was a county you know the school district supplies that.

R. Lewis: I do remember seeing horses and stuff like that cutting grass along the roads sometimes. They used to have these horses pull the grass cutter and I can't really remember what type of grass. The blade I know had little quirks and sharp knives on the blade on it. I do remember the horses pulling the grass cutter. At the end of the road now as far as coming up into the school yard I can't remember seeing that. I don't know how they cut the grass. They did and they may have done a big tractor or something I don't know.

Roberta: Ok, ok. Was it two horses?

R. Lewis: Yeah. The two horses would cut the grass along the road I remember that.

Roberta: Do you remember across Baltimore Pike across from the school looked like? Was it orchards, fields, houses there?

R. Lewis: It had orchards there. We never went across that way. We had such a large area to play in we never played too much on the left side of the pavement cause there was a pavement going straight down to Old Baltimore Pike to the school and we always played on the right side where the driveway was and had these plain looking rocks, iron ore I guess the rocks were reddish looking and jagged a lot of stones all over the place and you find one anywhere really.

Roberta: It must have been moved because I don't remember that **[inaudible]**

R. Lewis: Yeah, a little small stone any type of iron ore any reddish stone I guess since then they've paved and graveled that road. Did they pave the driveway?

- Roberta: The driveway is gravel. There's a walkway that still goes from the school in the direction of Old Baltimore Pike. I can't remember I don't think it goes all the way down to Old Baltimore Pike.
- R. Lewis:** It went all the way down to the road and the flag pole was just a ways down the steps.
- Roberta: I'm trying to think. I think the flag pole is there to the left of the pavement. I think they left that there.
- R. Lewis:** There as a home/house on the other side on the right side of the school down there at the end of the road.
- Roberta: Facing the school?
- R. Lewis:** Facing the school, yeah down near Old Baltimore Pike on the right side. I'm trying to think the people's name was Burke I'm not sure if the last name was Burke. I remember one of the boys lived there and he was in our class and I think his name was Allen, last name was Allen, Tony Allen. I think his name was Allen and I think he only went to school there a couple years I can't remember him. I don't know third or fourth grade might have been second or third grade he went to our school. I can't remember him in the fourth grade graduating with us or leaving and they had a couple apple orchards over there and we used to go back and forth from time to time. That's the only close proximity of any other houses that were in the area to me.
- Roberta: So what was facing the school? What was to the left of it?
- R. Lewis:** It was all woods, it was all woods and there were trails through there. Behind the school was all woods and to the right side of the school there was a house down there it might have been some farm to the right of the school, but it was like vines and trees and woods in between that. We didn't venture on that side too much.
- Roberta: So what was it like, what were your memories of living, growing up and living in the Iron Hill community? What was that like for you?

R. Lewis: It was the only thing we knew really because we never went anywhere else. We used to walk everywhere we had to go. I'm speaking beyond ten years old now. When I was six, seven going to Iron Hill School apparently we went to school, we went to bible class and there was a bus, the same bus would take us to Miss Congo's house on Old Baltimore Pike and we would have after school bible class and we would do things there for an hour or hour and half and then the bus would take us home.

Roberta: Ok, so the bible class was after school.

R. Lewis: The bible class was after school. I remember once a week I do remember going there and I do remember from that bible class I do remember one verse that I still quote sometimes and I learned it at that bible class and that's II Peter 3:18 which is "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" to him be the glory. That's the bible verse I learned there and I guess it all tied with what we were doing all and that kinda stuck in my head all these years and since then I've been growing in grace and still learning and so that to me is the essence of why the bible school existed you know for us to learn and I picked that up and it still stays with me today.

Roberta: Was that verse chosen for you? Did you pick that verse? Why does that stay other than personal meaning for you?

R. Lewis: I remember it. I don't know if I was reading it, reading that book of Peter and that was the last one in that book in that verse. I don't remember how I got to know that one or remember that one.

Roberta: Ok. This was at a time when you had graduated from Iron Hill that you're telling me about?

R. Lewis: No, this is still at Iron Hill.

Roberta: Still at Iron Hill, ok.

R. Lewis: It may have been third grade and then there after Iron Hill that's the only other activities we would do and then we would go home. Then after the bus let us off at home we would play ball outside or if we had homework to do we'd do it, come in the house and do it before we went to bed or something, after we did our chores.

Roberta: I was going to ask you if you had chores.

R. Lewis: Yes, yes we had chores to do. Cut grass, take out the trash, then we burnt our trash at that time. There was a burn barrel and we'd take it out back and dump it in there and light the trash and burn the trash up and then my dad after barrel, a big old fifty-five gallon barrel got full, they would take it way down in the woods and dump it I guess and that took a long time. We had to make sure the stove was filled with kerosene and then if you was your turn to fill it and you let it run out you had to get up at eleven o'clock in the night and go get it and I remember I was scared to out in dark time you know.

Roberta: There were no street lights.

R. Lewis: No it was pitch black out there at night time and so we stayed around our area most of the years from ten, eleven, twelve years old. Twelve years old you know gets up about sixth grade, so I met other people, we walked the roads of Iron Hill from my house about a mile or two miles to next neighbor's house, not a neighbor's house a friend's house and we would walk from his house to another two or three miles up to another friend's house and then we walked from his house another two or three miles going swimming and we did that all day and then we had bicycles from time to time we ride bicycles mainly though the course was walking. I'm talking five or six guys would get together and walk at one time and look like a little gang or group or whatever it would be today but then we were walking nobody really messed with us in the sense to throw things at us. It never happened while I was walking with anybody.

Roberta: So when you said you would do this all day was this on the weekends you're talking about obviously summertime. During the school year was that kind of during the weekends?

R. Lewis: Mostly in the summer after school was over we would after school we would definitely go first order of business was going swimming. We would leave the school if it was a half a day of school we would all get our swimming clothes and we would walk two miles to go to the old creek under the train bridge to go swimming.

Roberta: Now which train bridge was this?

R. Lewis: This is straight up towards the Newark Elkton Road right from Pleasant Valley Road right up Otts Chapel Road straight up there. They've changed it all now.

Roberta: There was a train station there?

R. Lewis: No, it wasn't a train station it was a bridge where under the bridge there was a creek and we used to go swimming and wading in the creek. We were always warned to go up there. Our parents always warned us not to go up there but we always did because that was the only relief we had during the summer and in fact I learned how to swim in that swimming hole. Had to chase the snakes away you know and we'd swim in that hole. Then we start to venture from place to place in that circle in that circle. It was like a big old circle from Pleasant Valley Road to Otts Chapel Road up to Welsh Tract Road, Ironside Road, Whittaker Road and back down Old Baltimore Pike those are roads we kinda traveled in. We would venture to, when we got older, we would venture further down Old Baltimore Pike towards Elkton area when we got older but just [inaudible] around that Iron Hill area a lot of friends we'd hang out there when we were younger.

Roberta: What were some of the names of the buddies you hung out with?

R. Lewis: William Earl was one, we called him Bill. He was my best buddy at the time. Ronny Earl was another one. Tom, he was older but you know still, they're all

older than myself, two years older than I am, three years older some of them are. I had a cousin who lived next door, Ikey/Leroy we would pick him up and he and I would take off and walk up the road and I had nephew that come down during the summertime and later part of the year when he was on vacation from his school. He lived in the Wilmington area and his name is John Lewis and we all called him Butch and he would come down and stay the weekend and or whatever with me and we would venture with the guys and we would go play baseball and football you know and go swimming. Of course we were like twelve and thirteen years old at this time you know.

Roberta: I have a couple more questions that I want to ask you but I want to catch this tape. This ends side two tape one.

Roberta: This is Roberta Perkins. This is tape 2 side one and I am speaking with Mr. Richard Lewis. Continuing along that line of conversation your friends and the things that you did in the general Iron Hill community did you have hobbies? I know it sounded like the baseball and the football took up a lot of your time. Did you have any particular thing that you liked to do?

R. Lewis: I know I sent away at various times and got little gift packs or seeds and you sell the seeds to various people and you win a prize and one of those prizes was a camera and cause I can't recall any baby pictures of myself, my mother apparently never had any, my grandparents if they had them I never saw them. I think I was like ten years old I remember a picture of myself and that picture was taken at the new school and I had the little Indian type sweater thing on you know with designs in it and I think I still have that picture today somewhere and that's the only one I remember myself as a youngster. Some of my aunts may have some but I've never seen one so I got this little camera and so from this point on, that camera I guess take pictures I don't know what I've taken pictures of but I do remember that camera and so even to this day I'm a camera bug. I do photography now and so that's a hobby that I apparently started from selling seeds and got my

camera, first one, and then I ended up still doing that. Its still, always been in my heart to do that so I do that.

Roberta: Well number one do you remember what the camera was, what kind of camera it was?

R. Lewis: I think it was an Ansco 127 something like that. It was roll film I remember that and I think I was still pictured in the [inaudible] that first camera and I think there was another one I may have gotten later on the kind you look down into. At the time I guess they weren't great cameras but they was a camera for a kid you know. I do remember that. Any other hobbies, played marbles, carried marbles around in our pocket and frankly every day we did something different. Not to stick on anything you know per say that I did on a routine basis but we just did whatever we had to do. I was fascinated with, I tell the young people this, with weapons, guns and stuff cause my dad and my grandpa used to hunt a lot and so I was always fascinated with that type of stuff. They always kept them locked up and I don't know whether to tell this story or not but anyway, they always kept them locked up and every day I would check, very curious I was, I guess you know, I would check every day the gun cabinet especially when they came back in from hunting always be locked. One particular day I was home by myself.

Roberta: Are you ok telling this? Go ahead then and tell us the story.

R. Lewis: I checked the gun cabinet every day at the one particular day I was home by myself and I went by it and I turned the lock and it was open so I backed up to my surprise curious as I was and I started looking through it and I climbed up to the top shelf and there was a gun up there. The guns' all in the cabinet but you know one took my interest and I grabbed it out and I knew enough to take the clip out it was a 45 caliber. I knew enough to take the clip out of the thing and took it out and I'm looking at the thing and I sat down on the floor and I was looking at it and looking at it and pointing it you know. My niece was home at that time that's what it was I watched my little niece Carmela and she was sleeping and so I set by the stove which is the heater in the living room by the window in a hard chair, kitchen

chair, I was setting looking at the gun you know, the clip was on the floor and I looked down the barrel and looked it all over and I held it down towards the floor looking down the sight and next thing I know I pulled the trigger and it goes off and it hits me in the leg and skins my knee and didn't bleed it fused it like dark black blood and like a skim shot I guess. It ripped my pants wide open and of course what'll I do, I'm scared and we had these old hard wood floors and they weren't finished or anything of that nature so there was a throw rug near the step which went into our kitchen and it went sort of near that throw rug so I pulled the throw rug. It didn't make a great big hole, it creased it and you could see some splinters and I pushed the spurs down and pulled the rug over it. Of course you don't tell your dad, your parents, this is a no no of course, nobody home nobody knew it so why should I tell so I get on the phone and called my buddy Bill. "Bill I just shot myself in the leg" and he said "no you didn't, no you didn't" and I say "yes I did and you gotta come down, you gotta come down" so he comes across the field and he lives about one half mile or more you know so he gets there and we start talking about and show him everything you know. Put the clip back in the gun; put it back in the cabinet and to this day I never knew where the casing was. Never thought about the casing and so we put some vinegar all kinds of things on it you know keep the infection out I guess you know. It never looked that great big wound just a flesh wound but if you think about that now you know what could have happened if I had not learned that scripture first, "go in grace". I was still growing and I was young and still curious and that happened to me and it could have blew my leg off, I could have shot myself in the head, my little niece could have been out there you know or I could have done a lot of damage playing with this gun. You hear about that a lot, people playing with guns, children playing with guns it was always locked but that one particular time I checked it every day and that one time it was open. Whose fault was it you know? My dad's fault for leaving it open but he never left it open before, my fault for being curious and wanting to see what's in there or should he sit me down and told me about the guns you know, but he didn't know how curious I was. If he had set me down and told me about the guns and let me handle the gun or showed me the gun or let me

shoot the gun it might have been a different but from that point on respective of guns, weapons and I went into the military some five years later and I got a very respect of guns, weapons so I learned that and safety is number one with weapons and stuff even to this day. It's very scary to think about it now. I never went to the hospital and some ten years later when I used to go hunting and various things with my dad's weapons he had I had and one picnic day I told my son about gun and I taught my son about guns, told him the story so a couple years have passed and we was talking about some things and my father was there and other people were there and he said, "Dad, remember that time you got Dada's gun and you shot yourself in the leg?" and I said, "Boy be quiet, be quiet." And I was ready now and my dad never knew anything about that. He kinda looked up at me and he never said anything even then he never said anything and I never said anything to him about it so no one ever knew other than me and Bill Earl and I never told anyone for the longest time and I tell the story now to the children because of how curious you are and danger is always there in your presence. That one in the chamber is always the one that gets you and you don't realize it happened so I try to tell them in a sense that safety first and never trust what you see on the outside something on the inside is what's damaging. That's the story that everybody don't know. My mother never knew til now.

Roberta: So they never, I mean nobody ever saw the splintered floor and wondered even though you pushed the wood down?

R. Lewis: Apparently not and never approached me about it.

Roberta: Did you think anything of it? I know they must have seen it.

R. Lewis: Well the floor's not kept the way they are today, not shiny, glossy and the splinter you know it was just a part of the wear and tear of the floor you know, the hard wood type floor and it wasn't highly polished or anything.

Roberta: Alright.

R. Lewis: And it was lumber enough so like a little splinter and that really stuck with me for a long time even now. I've got the mark the wound to show it to prove it you know.

Roberta: That was fortunate.

R. Lewis: Yes thank God. God's in my life all the time now and that's one of the incidents I reflect back on the testimony that as a young child I could have been you know not telling this story right now.

Roberta: Or telling it and missing part of your leg or something.

R. Lewis: Yes, yes. It just so happened. The chance of a skim shot just nicking you you know and I had it all over my face for the longest time. The Lord was watching after me then at a young age.

Roberta: After Iron Hill what was, you went to Louis L. Redding School is that correct?

R. Lewis: Yes.

Roberta: To that, there was a bus from the community that took students to Iron Hill, Louis L. Redding?

R. Lewis: Yes there was. As a matter of fact just to back up just a little bit about the bus to Iron Hill even. The bus to Iron Hill we had several drivers I do remember one named Moody. I don't if he owned the buses or whatever. There was another name, the last name was Moody and matter of fact my father-in-law right now had driven the bus from time to time, the little school bus to Iron Hill.

Roberta: And what is his name?

R. Lewis: It's Herbert Neal and I married his daughter. He tells the story that after we had married and everything that he used to pick up this little snotty nosed boy down on Pleasant Valley Road getting on the bus and I used to fight over a seat and I used to stand in front of the seat and make somebody move out of my seat and not

knowing that I was going to be the one to marry his daughter. That's the story he used to tell and sure enough he used to drive the bus from time to time and I ended up marrying his daughter. It's predestined I guess.

Roberta: And what is her name?

R. Lewis: That's my wife Annabelle. She didn't go to Iron Hill School she went to Aspen Jones another colored school but her father drove the bus that picked me up to take me back home so some years later you know I show up on the scene with his daughter. So he was one of the drivers for Iron Hill and we made the transition to Louis L. Redding School Mr. Rudolph Valentine he was a bus driver who lived down the road from our house on Pleasant Valley and he was the bus driver started out with me I think and there were other bus drivers Smith when he couldn't do it he would have someone else do it you know. So Mr. Ruddy took us back and forth by bus to Middletown and of course you couldn't talk loud on these buses. You couldn't talk at all you just get on the bus and you sit down because the driver, you respected a driver so much that you did your homework on the bus or you just went to sleep on the bus. You didn't talk and you didn't get up and walk around and we rode from Iron Hill to Middletown you know it took us an hour or better to get there with all the stops and I think it was about eighteen miles or something like that or more to Middletown [inaudible] school every day.

Roberta: One way?

R. Lewis: One way and then the bus would pick us up after school and bring us back the same way. We did that for my fifth grade year to my ninth grade year. I went to that school for four years and of course we had another bus driver, Miss Marian, Marian Williams when we went to school. Mr. Rudy he apparently getting older and I don't know if he died during that time or not but Miss Marian Williams took the bus ride over and she drove the bus I guess from my sixth or seventh grade on, maybe two or three years after Mr. Ruddy stopped driving. That was exciting going from the fourth grade to the fifth grade, different teachers where you see a lot more people.

Roberta: Larger classes?

R. Lewis: Larger classes, classroom yeah. The fifth grade we did more activities 'specially we went to the auditorium you know how they march you down the hallway and you're rubber necking all over the place because you've never seen anything that big before or go to the gym for any type of physical activities. It was exciting to do that. So you were proud to say that you went to Louis L. Redding School because it for grades one to twelve even though they had grades one to five but Iron Hills went to four so we didn't get to so new people we met them in the fifth grade other than the few people that went from Iron Hill to Middletown with us and I remember one that was in my class, Reginald Grimmage, was in my class that we went to Middletown together but we weren't in the same classrooms when we got to Middletown. There was like a 5A and 5B. There was other people I knew but in that classroom I was the only one from Iron Hill and he was in another classroom.

Roberta: Do you remember how many students? This was all one grade right? It was all fifth grade, right? Do you remember how many students?

R. Lewis: It must have been about twenty-five, thirty at one time.

Roberta: That was a big change for you wasn't it?

R. Lewis: Yes it was. It was but you know like I said looking back at my report cards the change was very...

Roberta: It didn't hurt your report card any.

R. Lewis: No, I still did my work. I love to do work. Days absent I loved to go to school because there were always so many exciting things to do in school I guess and my spelling, I still love my spelling and still do that.

Roberta: That's not bad you did better math than I did.

R. Lewis: Even my reading stuff and all you know. So the school transition wasn't bad at all to me I adjusted well. I wasn't a small kid but I wasn't a big kid. I was just the same size all the others so I was never picked on. As a matter of fact you know I held my own because I grew up with a bunch of ornery bigger kids and I could fight if I had to and fifth grade I never recall fighting. Sixth grade yes I recall fighting, three or four fights I had in the sixth grade. Seventh grade I can't recall any fights but eighth and ninth grade yes. There on tenth grade yes. Instigating some of those fights yes. I did that but the fifth grade transition from Iron Hill School to fifth grade, sixth grade it was smooth for me.

Roberta: What was the atmosphere like in the classroom because at Iron Hill you know teacher ruled and there was respect and caring? Did you find that there was still some of that or was there a difference or not?

R. Lewis: It was the same. In the black school to me they cared for you. I remember all my teachers well. Clarence Fields, Mr. Fields was my fifth grade teacher. He was a well-dressed man. Short man very distinctive voice and he taught well. Tome I can't recall any him banging, fingers or beating or anything like that nature. I did my work you know. Sixth grade yes Mr. Wright, Richard Wright. Now if you didn't spell things correctly with his class or you didn't dot your I's or cross your t's you'd get a licking on your hand or whatever so that me to learn to spell even better because he would definitely give you the yard stick. You learned in his class. Twelve, you're eleven, twelve and thirteen during that time in that grade and you get rebellious and some of the kids attitudes change you know. Anticipating adulthood and so your think you know it all and so I guess his attitude of teaching was that you don't know it all and I got control here and he was a football coach, baseball coach so you respected him

Roberta: Did you find as you went up the grades did you find a sort of disciplinary approach, not disciplinary but firm approach it got tighter, more intense as you got older?

R. Lewis: Yes, yes it did.

Roberta: Ok.

R. Lewis: From Miss Minnie Ryder and her subtle teaching, Mr. Fields fifth grade teaching they more comfort you and whatever. Sixth grade you more or less got punished by you know physically. Seventh grade was the same thing. Miss Sally Tart was her name. Tart was her last name and oh she would definitely beat you if you messed up. Only if you messed up you know. I can't remember her beating me so apparently I didn't mess up.

Roberta: Was it Tarch or Tart?

R. Lewis: It was Tart. T A R T. Sally B. Tart. I remember her name just like that. The eighth grade was a challenge of where the teacher, if you do something ornery, you're fourteen now, and you do something crazy he'll throw a book at your head you know that type of thing.

Roberta: Yeah.

R. Lewis: It was moody they would definitely beat you or throw something at you if you didn't do something you know to their liking. A couple other teachers at Middletown school was pretty tough on you but you learned. Mr. Frisby he was the math teacher. They didn't play, you're here to learn. I got mine you've got yours to get you know type thing. Henderson, he was another one that would teach you as long as you were obedient and you got disobedient that's when he got disobedient with you. I remember he was the librarian, not the librarian he was in charge of the library one day and he told a joke and we all got in class blah, blah, blah and everybody laughed. So one particular girl kept on laughing, she kept on laughing after everybody said ok joke's over. She laughed and laughed and laughed. I told you joke's over, you know. So I said the joke's over so he gets up she gets up and runs down the hall, he takes his belt off and goes after her and whips he all the way back up to the thing. I told you the joke was over. So those are the things I remember about Middletown School and how they disciplined you. He didn't hit her in the face you know, the dress was flying you know, that

was it and so the ninth grade and then the transition for me to go to the white school at tenth grade.

Roberta: And that was Christiana?

R. Lewis: That was Christiana High School. That was the transition that was hard. I played football in ninth grade so ok we go the Christiana School which was an all-white school at the time. I think they built that school in '64 or '65 so the first graduating class was like '65 and I was like in the second graduating class '67, third graduating class I think and so we go to school, five blacks going to the school and we want to play football. The first year we go out for football. Things starting to act crazy, some of the kids you know and so we end up quitting you know the football team and matter of fact I didn't play that year and I think I went on in school and did some things. School was fun which wasn't fun and I quit school in the tenth grade going into the eleventh grade. I didn't go back to school for eleventh grade year because and then my dad got on me with you know you didn't go back to school and various things and I wanted to see the young girls at school too which my wife now so I went back to school for that so in November I go back to school. Principal comes to me and says you know you're not going to pass already and gave me a you know you're not going to pass so from that point on that talk saved my head so I didn't miss a grade. I went back to school in November and I made incomplete for the first marking period but I made up for everything else there and I went on to the twelfth grade but I did quit school going into the eleventh grade because of the circumstances. If I was at the Louis L. Redding School all the other friends I probably wouldn't have done that. I would have stayed but the circumstances there I just didn't, it wasn't right for us, for me so we graduated Christiana High School only four blacks graduated from the school.

Roberta: Wow. What were the teachers like? Comparing I guess, what were they like you know and what was your feeling compared to what you had been used to up to that point.

R. Lewis: The teachers at the high school seemed like they didn't care too much because of the classes I was enrolled in it was just general classes. It was nothing on the sense of technical, nothing technical other than shop and those type things. You weren't geared to take any type of business classes or French classes or anything that would advance you to office type positions whatever. Your general classes always had you to be a factory type worker to me you know. The guidance counselor there never sat down and said ok your transfer from that school to this school this is what you need to do or this is what you can do, the guidance counselor never, whether it was on my part to go to the guidance counselor but being shy in the school and from one place to another place your new and it was just the transition.

Roberta: How did your parents feel about this?

R. Lewis: They never talked about it much they never talked about it much at all. We just had to do what we had to do I guess you know going to school and I remember getting in a fight on the bus because we sat in the front of the bus at this time and there was only a few blacks on the bus and they used to throw spit balls up to the front of the bus the white kids did and this time I was the only boy on the bus, bigger boy and the girls, **[inaudible]** and a few others was on the bus and I'm being bold go back there and beat the guy up that was throwing the spit balls. Something happened to my hand, that was in the tenth grade, eleventh grade, tenth grade and so I pick a fight with the boy and we end up breaking the back window of the bus out so the bus driver stopped the bus and puts me off the bus you know and I had to walk home which wasn't really far you know so the next day I tell my dad what happened and we had to go to the school and then pay for the window so evidently the other family paid for half the window as well, my dad saw to that and he never really got on me you know. I guess that was a lesson, I wasn't a bad kid, I understood you know, but I told the story how it happened and why I did what I did and end up the window being busted out and he didn't put him off, but he put me off you know.

Roberta: This ends tape two, side one.

Roberta: This is tape two, side two. Mr. Lewis, how did that incident make you feel, you know, even though both parents had to pay for that glass one kid got put off, you, and the other kid was allowed to ride home?

R. Lewis: I guess it showed me that prejudice still existed even then you know. I could see if he put the other one off maybe not there but maybe we'd still be fighting but I don't know but after the fight was broke up you know if he had punished the other boy that I knew I was embarrassed because when the bus pulled away they were all laughing and you know it made me feel pretty low however I got back on the bus the next day or did I get back on the bus? No I think I was off until the matter was settled with my parents I think I was off for a couple of days. I don't know if the other kid was off or not you know it just didn't , wasn't brought to my attention whether the other kid was still riding the bus or not but I do remember that incident you know. Now you think why those things happen you know. I guess they happen because you are put on the spot you know. Me being the only adult, not adult black on the bus, boy you know they were throwing spit balls toward our direction so I had to defend my honor or the girls' honor in the sense you know and that's what happened. Whether I feel sorry for it now you know would it happen again I guess would do the same thing in defense of just to get it stopped. From the time we rode the school bus going to Louis L. Redding School we set in the seat and didn't do anything. Now we ride the school bus and all kinds of things are going on around us on the school bus and then you know even though we set in the front area and I didn't ride the bus all the time because I was trying to play sports after school you stayed after school but this particular time my hand I knew my hand had been damaged for some reason and I was riding the school bus home and that's what happened so this could have gone on every day I don't know. That particular day I was there and they was doing it and the girls kinda looked at me and said they're throwing spit balls what are you going to do and so the bus driver he's not going to say anything. He's not like the bus driver we were used to and so we just had to deal with it.

Roberta: Yeah, it was just a different world.

R. Lewis: I was respected differently after that.

Roberta: You said? I'm sorry.

R. Lewis: I said I was respected differently after that. I had no other problems in school, fighting, one other incident playing football. Of course the "you can't take my position" I'm not trying to take your positions I'm just playing like everybody else you know and so I had to fight him you know and after that fight we ended up being good buddies after that and because I wasn't you know I wasn't a wimp and they knew that. I didn't pick fights but I didn't run from them either and so I got through the school year you know and there after school we went to some reunions. The fifth reunion, no the tenth reunion was first the first one, the fifteenth reunion. I was the only black at the reunions, my wife and I. the other two that graduated at the school, three others that graduated with me they never cared to go up to the reunions but each one I went. The football team respected me in a sense and I respected them. I knew all those guys and their friends that played athletics even though some knew I was in school and I found out afterwards I didn't know who they were then they knew who I was but during the reunion they wanted to be friends that type. Where were you, you know ok. It all changed.

Roberta: You all had time to grow and become adults.

R. Lewis: Yeah, yeah, it all changed. So that was my high school.

Roberta: If the segregation had continued and so you and the other students I guess I should just talk about you had continued your schooling from grade one to grade twelve you know with the same types of teachers, the same type of atmosphere and caring you know and the concern you know do you think the quality of your education would have been better than what you got making that move from predominantly black school and then to the white school?

R. Lewis: I know I would have to prove myself you know which was a challenge I was always up against once I left that school.

Roberta: Which school?

R. Lewis: I left the black school, Louis L. Redding School. The challenge for me was to prove myself and especially when the vice principal of the school came to me and said you're not going to do this and I said myself I know I can because the grade at the other schools led me to believe that I can academically **[inaudible]** if I studied enough and so that challenge when he said that I just put my head to the books in eleventh grade and went on and made a fool out of him rather than myself.

Roberta: Did you find that the quality of what you knew, what the teachers had taught you, you know in Iron Hill and Louis L. Redding once you got into classes with white students you did or did not have trouble keeping up or joining the lessons.

R. Lewis: No I didn't have trouble keeping up at all. The teachers from the black area they were more concerned about your learning so they may went over more than once because they wanted to make sure you got it. When I went to the other school you know you heard it one time. If you missed it you could do a make-up test, make-up this on your own so that transition was you know they cared on one end and get it you have to get it or missed it tough luck I'm not going over it again. There was a couple of teachers that I do remember Tulpin I think her name was in the tenth grade. She was a very caring teacher at Christiana High School to me and there's another one, Schultz, she was very helpful you know, very helpful and these are like home room teachers. Home room teachers I think but you can go back to them and they let you know that they care and the facts and they knew the transition you know they to me should have been like the guidance counselor to me. The guidance counselor should have come to us and said you know this is the transition, this is what's gonna happen in school but you can come to me. I don't think they ever approached us.

Roberta: One or two last questions. What did you do after high school?

R. Lewis: After high school, two days after high school me and my friend Reginald Grimmage we were riding by a [inaudible] about a job factory work like our dads you know so we go to Westvaco along 273 Chrysler and put applications in about a job/work. So two days after high school, we're eighteen now and Chrysler calls me to work.

Roberta: What year was this now?

R. Lewis: This was in '67, they called me to work and I started working at Chrysler in 1967 until I retired. Of course that was the military the next year 1968 Vietnam, I went to Vietnam first off also I went to military school training prior to Vietnam which is the reason I took another year for the military said you go to this school it's a quartermaster type school, you go to school and then you come home every weekend and you won't go to Vietnam, they lied. I went to the school, I came home every weekend but first job Vietnam so I came back from there and lived in Texas for a while my wife and I, I was married at that time then, I married my childhood sweetheart [laughing] and then Chrysler kinda laid off you know, the automotive business, factory business you know things change and all of a sudden they got laid off, had no other education other than high school, military training so I used the GI bill and went to college and then I studied industrial engineering in college and then there still being at Chrysler the automotive I took my application resume up front and then they [inaudible] upon me in the payroll area at Chrysler in the area of administrative and I worked there for a while and then I got promoted to another position and ended up in production control where I was a records analyst.

Roberta: Ok.

R. Lewis: I was dealing with a lot of inventories and a lot of the outside vendors and different countries and parts and damaged parts and consolidating records and correcting records all kinds of things, numbers again.

Roberta: So you found that the GI Bill worked for you?

R. Lewis: Yes it did. The GI Bill was great, that's about the only thing I used from the military after. That was great, it paid for my education it also helped my because I was married at the time and had a house and cars and no job so I went school and then when we got called back to work I still continued school and continued to work until I graduated when I finished. I graduated in 1978, I had a family, two children and a house and everything and it was pretty hard on me staying up all night studying, working all day and working all night and studying and whatever. I did it, I did that so that still led me back to the vice principal and when he said you are not going to make it. I know I can and I know I'm better than that. So then up hill, down-hill and level ground I just thank God I survived it all. I have a testimony I'm a happy person every day now.

Roberta: Yeah, that's good, that's good. Do you have any other thoughts or experiences you want to share? I think I've probably talked to you and asked you [laughing]

R. Lewis: No unless you have a specific question that I could try to answer it but the life from me playing marbles down on Pleasant Valley Road and going through the school system of New Castle County, the public school system and the public school system is not that bad. Was it changed, I don't know when it changed. Was it changed in '60? I left the school in '67 so the school was still more blacks kept coming to the Christiana High School that was '68, '69 and '70 and I guess around '75 then they had a change of bus law, busing all changed or something. Where I was bused from Iron Hill School to Louis L. Redding School for a number of years and no complaints but when they came up with this busing thing everybody that had a child that was bused more than two miles was complaining about it you know. We bused for two or three hours a day we were on the bus every day and they on the bus fifteen minutes they say oh they bused too much. Whether the schools are regulated, public schools or not public schools is really hard to say and now they have the charter schools and the private schools and who's going to the private schools other than the ones who can afford it. The public schools may

be changing I don't know but public school for me was great, it was great. As far as going to a four year college institution my family couldn't afford it. I knew they couldn't afford it so I never went to them and asked them, I never tried to do that so on the GI Bill was available for me I used that opportunity to go to college and other than that I don't think I would have gone otherwise if I hadn't gone in the military you know. So it was a fun and exciting period of my life. I guess I had to go through that nobody else would have went through that for me. So here I am.

Roberta: Well thank you so very much for your time, yeah. This is very interesting.

R. Lewis: It's been a pleasure, a pleasure.

Roberta: This then is tape two side two.