MD: This is Morgan DeAmicis interviewing Nancy Hugo. Nancy how long have you lived in Ashland?

NRH: We have lived in Ashland since 1972.

MD: What was the reason for coming to Ashland?

NRH: My family and I have looked for a long time for a farm near Richmond, where my husband was working. But, we couldn’t find a farm that we could afford within driving distance to Richmond so we compromised and moved into the rural village of Ashland and it turned out to be a great decision.

MD: Do you still live on a farm or participate in farm activities?

NRH: Okay we moved in 1972 to Maple Street which is right in the middle of town but it had a fair amount of land with it. Then we moved to Center Street in 1997 and just prior to that we had bought a real farm in Buckingham County so that filled our land itch.
MD: Since you moved in a lot living on the different streets in Ashland what was your favorite and why?

NRH: That’s a hard question because they were so diff maple street is where are children were young their first contact with Ashland and lost of young families raising children and we were all friends and it was just wonderful to share this small town with them and I have a huge affection for that and for mulberry tree in our backyard that our children use to climb but when we moved to center street it was entirely different it was one of the Victorian house and romantic and exciting house but probably a little too big for my sensibilities because I sort of like the cozy better. And now we live on Gwathmy and is a little bit out of time which is south of Ashland and more rural and we have more land and here I have little bit smaller house and more land and if this had been available when we first moved to Ashland we definetly would have lived here. And here again we moved here in 1997 and we had our lifelong friends but we have found them here and we weren’t looking for any new friends or good neighbors but we found them here and it’s sorta nice community out here in addition to the Ashland community as well.

MD: You said you had lifelong friends since 1970 do they still live in Ashland?

NRH: Yes most of them do; the Shalls and the Watsons have been friends of ours for such a long time and another one of our close friends has died in the interim but other really close friends lived on Maple Street the Camps were good friends of ours and they are long gone. But um lots of them are still here.

MD: Very nice. How many relatives of yours live in Ashland?

NRH: None I’m not uh… I can tell you how I learned about Ashland. When I was young I use to ride the train out. My mother would send me out to spend an overnight trip with one of her friends who I called Punky but her name was Bernice lowers and then. But she would pick me up at the train and I would spend the night with her and her husband. That was the way I first experienced Ashland with her and of course like a lot of kids from Richmond I came out on the sanitrain occasionally but um it was those overnight trips with Bernice Levin that um her previous name was Bernice Flowers who first showed me Ashland.

MD: What are some things that she showed you and that you did?

NRH: That’s really funny. I’ll tell you my strongest memory is not so much of the town but of the den room where her husband smoked cigars because it was dark and Smokey and had one of those stand up ash trays that you push the little lever and all the ashes go down. But I do remember her yard and her yard became important to me because when we moved here her yard was a stone throw away from ours. We lived on maple street and she lived on woo what’s the name of that street? But the street perpendicular to maple street. So we were around the corner neighbors which was fun and I always loved gardening and I called her Punky and Punky would let me cut because all my plants were not very mature. Punky had beautiful handme tree and a
beautiful magnolia and um lots of bulbs and what else cows lips and she gave me my first yellow
cowslip and whenever I wanted to have flowers in the house I would go over to her house and
pick and that pit of generosity was that was really neat. So now I’m the old person with old trees
and bulbs and people come to me. (laughter)

MD: Wow That’s great, What was your first career in Ashland and what got you started meeting
people?

NRH: Okay let’s see. I have had several jobs here in Ashland My first was very part time I
guess I was called the director of the community corroborative play school. Some families
associated with Randolph-Macon and some community people we started the community
corraborative play school which is now at the Hanover Activities Center in about 1973 probably,
my daughter Kate was only 18 months at the time and the model was that each parent would
work a day and you would live your child and work a day and have day off when you didn’t have
to keep your children. Some of the people that participated were Carol Walden, Jerry Brice and
he was the father who helped and his daughter Julie and son Toby were the first children among
that little group to and at that time for a father to be doing it was sorta radical and Diane
Liliancamp with her daughter Katie and several other people but that was the first. Oh other
careers hold on. That was the first and then let’s sees um then I taught at VCU for a little while
then I was the circulation librarian at Randolph-Macon College and then I taught in Caroline.
Then I taught at Patrick Henry and at some elementary schools I coordinated the gifted program
in Hanover for a little while.

MD: Since, you have taught a lot of children have you seen a change in the children what they
do, what they look like and in their education now that you have been here for so long?

NRH: Oh sure and I will tell you a funny story about that. God I was at Atlee my very first year
that Atlee High School opened and I was coming back from teaching after being away for awhile
and that was wow the hardest year of my life because I was split between Atlee and Patrick
Henry High School. Woo what a job. But anyway the kids I’ll tell you….. I really don’t know the
answer to that, the students and young people that I know that are the same age as the ones I
taught seem quite similar and equally wonderful umm but I’ll tell you a funny story. I remember
a faculty meeting at Patrick Henry High School and I wonder if Connie Hoffman also remembers
this story. We were saying we don’t want computers we don’t like computers and we want a
choice in this and the technology person at the time said you don’t have a choice in this and that
this was coming you can’t resists and of course he was right.

MD: Since you taught at Randolph-Macon and a citizen in Ashland do you see a separation
between the two?

NRH: Now I didn’t teach at Randolph-Macon I worked in the library but um no I’ve never
experienced that no. Maybe people who lived here… I don’t know… no my friends have always
included people who were affiliated with college and to me it kept the town from being conventional you know there are always wonderful events going on at the college and I don’t take advantage of them all but it’s nice having friends who care about ideas and books and are serious scholars and to me is incredible enriching and which is probably why I love the town so much because the college is here.

MD: You mentioned events at the college are there any particular event that sticks out in your mind that you have wonderful memories from?

NRH: Well one that I remember and that no one else does is now I don’t know if it was sponsored by the college but Nina Peace ran this square dance. I don’t know exactly where I guess it was in the gym but I remember it being a wonderful thing and I don’t know what you call it but the variety shows in Blackwell are always wonderful and we went to those cultural events as well but they don’t stick out as much as the square dance and variety shows do.

MD: Raising your children in Ashland was it more of them playing with themselves or in the community?

NRH: We thought it was wonderful in fact I think it is so sad that the kids can’t wait at the bus stop alone that their parents wait with them. Are kids walked to school when they were at Henry Clay. It was so nurturing. One time our dog followed our daughter to school and we got a call from the school’s secretary that Bear is here and you better come get him. Of course I would just walk over and get him and I have told this story a thousand times. I joke that the school would call if the hem came out of her skirt that’s how sorta tight it was and wonderful and yea it was just great. I don’t know who to compare it to now but back then.

MD: How old are your children now?

NRH: My son is 40 and my daughter is 36.

MD: Have they decided to live in Ashland?

NRH: No they do not live in Ashland. They thought about the idea but they do live in the area. One lives in Richmond and the other lives in Enricko.

MD: What were the parenting roles that you and your husband played in raising your children?

NRH: Hmm parenting roles… I would say shared umm do you mean was he the disciplinary one and I was the something else? Well actually he worked very much and the kids remember something I don’t which is that he wasn’t usual home for dinner and I don’t remember that. I always thought he was there but maybe he wasn’t. (laughter) He did work at night a fair amount. But I’m sure I was home more I mean I worked most of the time or was in school. I usual tried to get a job that allowed me to be home when the kids were and so I’m sure I was home more than John. But he was certainly actively involved.
MD: Um did you ever influence a religion on your children or do you practice a religion that is known for Ashland?

NRH: Okay well we have been all over the place with religion. I believe when we moved here we were Unitarians and then we started our own little family church by having our own little services just at home for awhile and that was interesting. Um then I visited the active Quaker community in Hanover for awhile that I enjoyed but for right now I suppose I’m a Jew-arid.

MD: Very nice. Where were the places that you use to shop at? Do you still shop at those local markets?

NRH: Um I pretty much shop in Ashland… what do I go to Richmond for? Not much I occasionally go to the mall but uh we shop at Ukrops but oh I do remember and this is what you want the Sabway and the A and P they were here and of course Crosses as always been here since we were and that is wonderful. Really the shopping area down town along the tracks where Iron Horse is nicer now then when we moved here. There was a little Five and Dime in fact right there on the corner where the club cars are now… ahh do you hear the train? This proves that you are in Ashland. Umm Dukes Market yes I miss that being there… I didn’t do my grocery shopping there but I would occasionally stop on my way home from work just to pick up something. Um I’m trying to think of other stores… I can’t.

MD: Ashland has a lot of historical building do you see the town restoring them or how do you see the town dealing with that?

NRH: I think the town has done a good job with protecting its old buildings. But what’s so good about Ashland is the mixture; not just the old Victorian house but the Sears houses and the bungalows and that’s why I love Ashland is that it is so mixed up. There isn’t a good neighborhood and a bad neighborhood or a rich neighborhood and a poor neighborhood it’s all mixed up and that appeals to me.

MD: You said when you would head to Ashland you would pick flowers and do gardening but what do you do now for fun?

NRH: Same thing gardening (laughter). It is my favorite thing to do; in fact I didn’t know we were going to have a structured interview but the things that I remember most about Ashland are the particular trees and shrubs and rose bushes and that kinda thing. Whereas some people remember architecture and other people notice wildlife but I just notice the plants so hmm.

MD: Did you have any specific plants that you remember?

NRH: Yes of course everything in Punky’s backyard I knew well because I would go over there and cut plants. Sarah Wright had or still has a wonderful salser-magnolia in her yard and I… when we lived right in the middle of Ashland it was sorta our right of spring to go and watch it’s pedals fall to the ground umm… let’s think what else … oh Susan Tucker ‘s dark flowered
lilacs… um… There use to be a beautiful rose growing on the chain linked fence over what now is the group home over on Virginia Street and I don’t know what happened to that; I tried to root it once… um a wonderful Japanese Maple at Duncan Memorial Church oh and the crab apples over in Truney McJetts front yard and I don’t know if you all don’t know about the tricycle tree at Randolph-Macon College. Well I think I’m going to right that up because they are collecting tree stories to tell all about the trees. But umm there is a tree over what use to be Dr. Blinko house but is now one of the fraternities. The tree has a tricycle up in the tree and antique tricycle that has been there since 1908. When Dr. Blinko was a little boy he put it up in the tree and used the rim of the wheel as pulley, to pull things up to their tree house and now this tree has almost totally covered this antique tricycle and the tree is huge, it’s a willow oak. I’ll tell you more specifically where it is… I wish I could think of the name of the fraternity. It is one of the fraternities along the railroad tracks it is not along College Avenue it is across from what I guess those are soccer fields anyway before you leave I’ll tell you exactly where it is because you need to go see it.

MD: Ashland use to have carnivals did you every attend them or go to the movie theater?

NRH: I completely forgot about those carnivals but I have a precious picture of my daughter wide eyed looking at a clown…. I have completely forgotten them. Yes we went to the carnivals and the movie theater … yes we went to the theater but it has been very on and off thing in our tenor here because sometimes it is operating and sometimes it’s not. I actually thought about buying the theater once and went to go talk to the owner and there was about two weeks in my life where I thought I was going to run and I can’t believe it I actually thought about that for awhile.

MD: You mentioned that you would walk to school if your daughter needed something how else did you get around Ashland? Did you ride a bike or drive?

NRH: Truth be told we probably drove more than we walked but in our little neighborhood certainly everyone walked and um the kids could walk to school but when we lived over on Oak Kate could walk but we mostly drove. We sometimes road bikes because Ashland is a great little bicycle town because it is so flat.

MD: You mentioned that you would ride the train when you were younger do you remember any of the other names of the trains or how it has changed over the years?

NRH: Oh well I’ll tell you a funny story about the train. Again the frequency of the train services waxed and rained since we’ve been here. My most funny train story is every year as an adult I would go up to New York with friends on the train and they would usual get on in Richmond and I would get on in Ashland. But, one time I got on with them at Staples Mill and went to New York. There was a huge snow storm and on the way back and at that time the train did not stop in Ashland but we asked him on the train on the way back..We were young and cute
then.. So we had some influence with him and the guys that worked on the train and we were just playing around with them and flirting I’m sure and asked if they could drop me off at my house and they did! They stopped right in front of my house and dropped me off which was so much fun but the funniest part was that my family had spent all this time that morning digging the car out so they could come get me and they were at the Richmond Station waiting for me which was sorta embarrassing but it was still neat to have gotten the train to stop right in front of the house.

MD: How about the trolley? Was the trolley around when you moved to Ashland?

NRH: The trolley was not around when we moved to Ashland. But you should the trolley….

And before that the electric train believe it or not was something even more monumental before the trolley came and it ran right up here where we live now and it’s just so wonderful that the lovely piece of transportation. Then dropped out but what we would give for it now. Um... I’ll tell you what did serve Ashland though was …oh I forgot to tell you that I worked for the general assembly and I rode the bus to and from Ashland everyday and that’s interesting to think that Ashland had well two reliable bus services both the Grey Hound bus and some sorta of local bus stopped here that went to Richmond. A lot of commuters and people who worked in town rode it and um… I rode it back and forth to downtown Richmond every day and it was really wonderful because no one could ask you to work late because you would say, “gee I’d love to but my bus leaves at 4:45”. But that ya know startles me because with the bigger need of transportation then ever and we had it and now we don’t anymore. Anyway.

MD: Have you ever thought of going to the council meeting to try and get those transportations back?

NRH: I use to be much more active in politics but I’m embarrassed to say that my interests have gone totally to the natural world things. Actually there use to be a petition going around trying to get the bus service back but the town had to subsidize it and there was some sort of controversy over it and I was very much for it. I should be more active but I’m not on that.

MD: When you were active in politics what were some of the issues?

NRH: Oh well. One of the first meetings for Citizens of Sensible Growth which was to my knowledge the first planning and environmental group in Hanover and they discussed in which way and how fast the county was going to develop and the moving force behind that was Margret Miller who was sort of a mentor of mine at that time and she is the wife of Dr. Schyler Miller at Randolph-Macon and she was quit uhh can’t think of the right adjective but was powerful woman and we worked really hard with the planning commission, water control board, town council and with every… woo there goes another train perfect… with all the appropriate officials to try and influence the comprehensive plan in terms of how the county would develop and grow.
MD: That said, what were your views on Wal-Mart?

NRH: Oh I was opposed to Wal-Mart. Although, I do understand that they have inexpensive things that make life more comfortable for a lot of people. So umm… Wal-Mart and things like it worry me because they have a bad influence on local businesses and a negative impact. But, I lost that one.

MD: Do any specific colorful characters stick out in your mind?

NRH: Oh so many gosh oh… Well certainly Nina was and I am sure anyone you interview is probably going to remember Nana I’m sure anyone you interview will remember because she was a close friends and very colorful. Um… Outspoken and sort of charismatic women. Um… I don’t know why John Nule is coming to mind and that’s fun. Now John Mule has been working as an environmentalist in Ashland and is sorta behind the scenes and has been on town council for a long time and he is funny and has a very dry wit and I enjoy him. Um… other colorful people… There are so many Susan Tucker is a hoot she lives Center Street she is just so funny and I hope someone is interviewing her because she will remember everything and tell it in a way that makes it funny and fun. Uhh… Margret Miller was certainly colorful… Umm… Johanna Gillhoff now she lived in and was a member of the Ashland women’s club and was quit a character. I can’t think of it or tell her funniest story let me think about that for a little bit.

MD: Now who was Nana to Ashland?

NRH: Uhh… Nina was an attorney and she was on the board of supervisors and I think she was a judge for a little while and her son is on the general assemble and is also active in politics. Nina, Sue Watson and I we all sorta I think we came to Ashland around the same time and we sorta have this tight friendship.

MD: You mentioned the jobs earlier do you remember your wages at the time and how they compare to your job?

NRH: Uhh… I don’t think I’ll be able to remember. Uhh… I don’t think I ever made more than $30,000 teaching school. Umm… I cannot remember what I made at the library it was part time so it was an hourly wage. Umm.. I can be sure I made next to nothing at the Cooperative Play School it was probably no more that $15 a month. I don’t really know how much it was. I honestly don’t remember my salary they only time I ever made any money was working at the Lewis Skinner Potomac Garden. It was always pretty low.

MD: And what’s your occupation now?

NRH: Umm… I am a writer and have small business call Flower Camp in Buckingham County.

MD: Nice. What do you know about the CCC Camp?

One Ashland, Many Voices Oral History Project, McGraw-Page Library, Randolph-Macon College
Interview with Nancy Ross Hugo
NRH: Nothing. I don’t know anything.

MD: What the buildings and roads in Ashland do you have any comments or stories about them?

NRH: Buildings and roads… I really don’t I can’t think of that much change really has come up. I’ll tell you one huge thing I don’t know if anyone else will mention it so I will… Enormous amount of trees along the railroad came down in hurricane Isabel. I thought would never experience that street in the same way again and oddly it’s amazing the way it fills in or temperature not your temperature but your memory fades and now it looks beautiful to me again. I thought it would never be the same but uhh…that was uhh… I hope someone in the archives has or took a picture of these trees coming from each direction over the railroad tracks. It was like you know umm I don’t know stick fertile with leaves.

MD: You said your parents lived in Richmond umm... Do they come visit you now or when you were raising your children?

NRH: Both my parents are dead. But they both came to visit here. They did. They did. But of course they had… Now here is a story I bet nobody knows. Of course my mother… Bernice Flowers was my mother’s childhood friend and they grew up in north side Richmond together. So my mother…when did they… They both lived on the north side but both my mother and Bernice Flowers would come to Ashland for dances. Big fancy dances at a house that no longer exists. It was over across the tracks not too far here Gwathmy and my mother and remembers I called her Punky, Bernice Flowers would described just wild dances back there…Um… Where the Robinson’s live now and I did go and I think a part of the chimney is still there and you know the Randolph-Macon boys would come. So for those girls to come out to that house which I believe burned down to dances… when would that have been?... The 1930’s I guess umm… anyway that sounded like quit and event.

MD: What other stories did you hear from Poppy or what did you call her? Punky I mean, sorry?

NRH: Not many but Punky was a business woman she owned some of the buildings that are now in historic downtown Ashland. I don’t know exactly which one she owned but umm… she was a character to. She was a serious business woman at a time when not too many women were. I wouldn’t have wanted to mess with her.

MD: Where did your grandparents live? Live in Ashland? Richmond?

NRH: I didn’t know my maternal grandfather but my maternal grandmother. Let’s see she didn’t grow up in Richmond but where did she grow up… hmm… I’m not sure I know… Um she lived in north side Richmond most of her life. And my paternal grandfather didn’t know him either but my paternal grandmother lived on Henry Road in Richmond at least by the time when
I was a child. She lived on Henry Road in Richmond. This is a fun story and it doesn’t relate to Ashland but it relates to Richmond. It is near St. Christopher’s and is now considered inner or pretty close to Richmond and when she moved there everyone said that it is “way too far out into the country” and they were worried for her. So Henry Road in Richmond use to be considered the boondocks as a part of Richmond.

MD: How would you describe Ashland and what does it mean to you?

NRH: I cannot imagine a better place to live. I just love it; Interesting people, people who care about the town, beautiful. It was the most beautiful spring I have ever seen. We haven’t had a real spring for awhile. It was cool and long and things had bloomed and stayed blooming. Um… We… Our children grew up here but so did John and I. We sorta married young and so a significant portion of our lives have been spent here and I have found it stimulation, nurturing and what people say about small towns and they are smothering or something like that it was never any of that. Um... anyway it has been a great place to live.

MD: Would consider Ashland diverse?

NRH: Yes absolutely. I love the way well now… if it’s compared to New York City well now but I went to an award ceremony and a school board meeting and it was so well diverse nationality wise then when my children went to school out here. Um… it was always racially pretty mixed which is what I liked when my children went to Patrick Henry and Henry Clay and Gandy for my children. I deliberately wanted them in a racial mixed environment. They had lots of black friends and in fact my son from the time he was a little boy on Maple Street the kids from Berkley Street come over and play ball and I still run into those kids all over town and I love it. Um… So… it has always since I’ve been here I have felt it has been racially mixed and there is more ethnicity now which is good and that is relatively new in my experience.

MD: You said the children would come over from Berkley Street was that predominately an African American society?

NRH: Yes. We lived on Maple Street and Berkley Street was predominately blacks and they would cut through… well when was the road built?.... well they probably cut through even before the road was built. But, before the road there was an easy way to cut through and our backyard was the football playing place and trees were the climbing place and my husband could tell you everybody’s name… ugh gosh I hate it how I can’t remember people’s names…Umm… we can call him down if you want him to give you some names. He would now all those kids names…. Okay

MD: Do you still think it’s separated?

NRH: Probably some… although I went to the Shiloh Christmas …uh… Concert and their choir did a wonderful Christmas program and that was just wonderful. You know? Um… In my
experience you know there have been an African American principal, who was Mr….uhh… how could I forget his name? I’ll have to call John… Now I’m scared that I’ll forget everything but it will come to me…. But he was wonderful everyone will know him he was the principal at Henry Clay and on town council and it was good for our kids to have a black person in authority from day one. Um… There have been people in politics and it has always felt mixed up to me which is a good thing.

MD: You also mentioned that you still see your children’s friends around do you think the majority of them remained in Ashland?

NRH: Um… I have no idea. I would say it probably half and half. But, this morning I had to go to the laundry mat and there I ran into a young man who was in Jay, my son’s Webelo group and I was the leader of the Webelo and I probably haven’t seen him in thirty years and really I have a really bad memory and I appreciate the fact that they have better memories then I do and it was the most pleasant thing when he came up and said, “Mrs. Hugo” and I appreciated that he made that effort and stirred up a piece of my memory that I sorta lost.

MD: He had a respect for you when you would come visit when you were younger was there a certain way you had to act around adults?

NRH: Um… Uh… Well, I was evidently holy-terror. So whatever I did was wrong. I was famous for not cooperating and maybe that’s why they sent me to Ashland, I don’t know. So Punky could take care of me. Uh… I don’t know. I honestly don’t remember well enough. All I know is whatever was required I didn’t usually do it.

MD: What were some of the gathering places where you and your friends would meet when your kids were growing up?

NRH: Hmm… Let’s see the McGowan’s lived down from us on Maple Street and they had fairly frequent parties. It was mostly the kids going from backyard to backyard. The Monroe’s, Bev and Stu Monroe, they lived up the street from us and both their son Gavin was a friend of my son Jay and their daughter Shannon was a friend of my daughter Kate and it was sorta back and forth up and down the street. You know?… There wasn’t anything like a pool… oh well we all did things at the community center. In fact I remember a wonderful Halloween event that we all participated in… um… the arts and activities center. That was fun. We decorated it and had a little play area that was for all the kids. I remember that Nina was Alice in Wonderland. Um… I guess the community cent…. The arts and activities center was maybe the center of most activity because that’s where the play school was and they had art shows there and things like that. Oh and concerts occasionally.

MD: Since you and your husband married young were there any activities that you participated in as young adults that?
NRH: Okay we have lived before moving here in Alabama and California so we weren’t that young when we moved to Ashland but um… neither of us has been particularly active in you know community groups and that kind of thing. I was in um… Ashland’s women’s club. Um… but we haven’t been… we’ve done a few civic things but not a whole lot.

MD: What’s the best part of Ashland?

NRH: The people, for sure, the history is fun. I mean I think its neat how it’s a railroad town and people care about it a lot. History is not and never has been one of my strongest interest but now that I realize there are so many things that I remember I begin to get history and I’m like oh wait a minute I’m the one who is suppose to be remembering and I’m like oh my gosh it is going to be lost if I don’t remember it. So, that is sorta neat and Ashland has a lot of people who have been here a long time so there is a lot of continuity… Um… I also like the fact that I have lived other places. I’m not sure I would have liked it if I have lived here always. Umm… and of course for the trees. Um… trees are huge in my experience and Ashland has some good ones and lots of old fashion plants. In fact you could, when we lived closer to the center of town you could sorta watch as people shared plants and move from garden to garden and then there is even a sort of an underground history of Ashland and in that you could trace who was in the garden club by who had a particular variety of daffodil or who had shared a particular shrub you could really do that.

MD: Since you have lived other places people often refer to Ashland as the Center of the Universe what do you think about that?

NRH: It’s just cute. I remember when Dick Gillis coined the term and oh well know he was colorful. Dick Gillis, that mayor, he was very colorful, very much a booster, very chamber of commerce and I think he had been presidents of the chambers of commerce one time and he was definitely a booster and um… you know it is fun to think that. And of course he is gone but still his idea that corky little idea has held on and now to see people who would have never heard of Dick Gillis other than knowing it was the name of the library are over there finding Ashland over there on the round globe in front of the library and them enjoying that so much and there is the power of an idea. You know everyone has enjoyed

MD: Ashland is famous for along with Ashland for their ghost stories what do you think about that? Do you have any that you could remember?

NRH: I can’t remember any ghost stories. Um… I use to hear some associated with Emily Graves’s house but I can’t remember what they are…. Well I have told you that trees are really important to me and I think this story is worth telling. Um…On Maple Street lived I think it was Dr. McClarken, I think it John McClarken, who was quite an odler-culturalist and he had a greenhouse on the side of his house and would use to arrogate plants and camellias and so I was very much interested in what he was doing. But, his legacy which is what I think is interesting is that in front of the arts and activities center there use to be a row of very old red maple trees and
at a time when no one was thinking that those trees were going to get old and die he insisted that little ones be planted between them and at the time it looked so silly and I’m sure it was just a hassle for the mowers, here are this little saplings between some real trees, and if you go over there now there is only one really old one left and there are four good sizes trees that are left and to my knowledge are the ones that Dr. McClarken insisted be planted. But, that’s sorta a fun thing that you know while everyone is living there lives little trees are becoming big trees.

MD: Did a lot of people stop in from Ashland from the train or did any famous people come here?

NRH: When we lived at 904 S. Center Street which is very pretty old Victorian house and occasionally, actually a lot people would just drop in and say “we just love your house” because it was such a dramatic house. Um… and occasionally some people would come and say we passed this house so many times on the train that we finally decided to come and see it which was really very nice. Which brings me to another story… but…? Umm… this is really a fun story. It shows how little and small the town was at one time. One of my sons friends, I guess it was his freshman year of college or I don’t know if it was before he was in college or I guess it was his freshman year. I don’t know. Anyway, wrote us a letter. He had come to stay with us, it must have been in high school or he had come to visit him for some other reason. Anyway, he had come to stay with us in that house and it was a weekend that we were making the kids clean up the attic, which was a big job, and he couldn’t remember our street address. So he wrote the address something like; Mr. and Mrs. Hugo the big Victorian house on the railroad tracks that make the kids clean up the attic Ashland, Virginia and it go to us. (Laughter) That was so cute that the mailman would deliver anything.

MD: That’s funny. Are any other historical stories about Randolph-Macon College like you mentioned the bicycle in the tree?

NRH: Well I remember Mrs. Owen very well because she was my boss when I worked in the library and she was another very intelligent and very professional woman who was ahh hard driving when it was hard because a lot of women weren’t at the time. So I remember her very well. Umm… other things with the college. Hmm… other things I can’t remember.

MD: I know that there are some unsolved mysteries in Ashland and Um… do you know anything about them?

NRH: I have heard some of those stories but I am not the person to ask Roseanne Shalp is the person to ask she can tell wonderful stories about those. I will tell you a story that maybe no one has is… Um… Next to our old house at 904 S. Center Street, if you looked to the next lot north on the same side of the street there is a concrete stairway that leads to nothing. There are now a lot of pine trees around there but that concrete stairway is still there. There use to be a house there and that is where Katherine Hepburn use to live. Her father was a minister here evidently.
Now I may be getting my thoughts all balled up but that used to be the Hepburn house and I think he was a minister here but the house burnt down long before we have ever moved into the house next door. But that’s sorta fun, it’s a little vestige stairs; it is like glen oak tree because it is something to remind you of what went before.

MD: That’s wonderful. Thank you so much Nancy Hugo for your interview this concludes it.