

Mildred "Bunny" Burns (Farnsworth House)
Interviewed by Vanessa Vanon (2005)

My name is Mildred Burns, but I prefer my nickname — Bunny. I hate "Mildred." My mother's name was Mollie Johnson, and my father was Daniel Green. I had a pretty good childhood. I lived with my mother, and I had four older brothers — Dolphis, Eddie, Willie and James. I was the youngest. My brothers got into more mischief than me! We use to play ball games. I played with my niece and a couple of my cousins. When I was in school, I liked to draw and I liked Math.

I was born in 1930. I grew up in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I lived out in the country, but I loved the city more. I only lived in the country for a while, and when we lived out there, my mother use to love to go fishing. Sometimes, when she would come home, there was this special store she would go to. We loved the cookies from that store, and she would bring us home some cookies.

Oh, yes. I had to do chores at home. When I'd come home from school in the afternoon, my mother would tell me to change my clothes, and then she'd tell me to clean my room, or whatever she needed me to do.

My friends and I use to ride our bikes or play basketball. Yes, I had my own bike. I remember one time my mother told me not to cross the street on my bike, because it was a big street, and I did. And, that's the time I got a big beating!

Young people today are different than we were. Yes, the way they act, and they do a lot of things, we never knew very much back then, but they know a lot today!

Yes, I drive. I don't remember how old I was when I learned to drive, but it was when I was in the country because I was in and out of the ditch! We had dirt roads, and it was easy to go into the ditch. I was lucky because there were some people right down the road from us. This lady and her daughter were going shopping and they saw me, so they helped me get out. They showed me how to turn the wheel and all. and at that time, there were no men around. When you needed them you couldn't find them! I'm a good driver now.

No, I was never in the hospital when I was young. But I've been in while I was here in Boston. I got a new knee! I've never traveled outside of this country, but, yes, I've been to other places in this country. When I leave here in the summer time I go to visit my son Robert in Maryland.

I remember one time when I was small I went out and I locked myself out of the house. Believe me, I think I cried half-the-night before anybody came home. It took me a long time to get over that! I was scared half to death. You know I was out in the country and it's really dark. They didn't have the lights like we do here. So now I always have my keys in my hand.

Yes, I wish I had stayed in school longer. I dropped out when I was still down south. I must've been about 9 years old. I did go back when I was 14, but I had to get use to the kids. They were all younger than me.

The hardest thing that ever happened to me in my life? Well, when I was young, we had a fireplace. And my sister, she always liked to play around the fireplace, but one day, she fell in. She was burned all over. It took a lot out of my mother, she never got over that.

Some things happened to me that took a lot out of me, so now I just try to go with the flow. Well, the first thing I look forward to when I get up is to brush my teeth, wash my face, put on lotion and I'm ready to go. Then I turn on the TV. And I like listening to music. I like Al Green, I don't like Rap music.

The most happiness I have in my life right now is that I'm enjoying my grandkids. They bring a lot of joy to me. It's better than sitting around getting old!