

**Oral History Interview**  
**Anna Miele Polanski McGhee**  
**WH079**

(written transcript and digital audio)

On April 23, 2010, Anna Miele Polanski McGhee was interviewed at her home at 195 Auth Avenue, Iselin by Brenda Velasco at 10:30 A.M. Also present was her daughter June Polanski Onder who lived in Iselin for a very long time.

*Brenda Velasco:* I also want to mention that I previously interviewed John Miele who is the author of *Then and Now of Iselin*. This is his sister and his niece who assisted him with putting together the book, *Then and Now of Iselin*,

**1. Identify individual name, section, date of birth.**

*Brenda Velasco:* Before we get to Anna, we want to introduce June who is sitting with us.

*June Onder:* I'm June Polanski Onder. I was born and raised in Iselin; actually I was born in New Brunswick at St. Peter's Hospital but lived in Iselin until I was twenty-six years old when my husband's job took us away to Long Island. I went to School #6 on Green Street. I would go from here on Auth Avenue and walk down to the corner and my grandmother, who lived right next to my uncle John Miele, used to meet me because my mom was working. I went to School #6 up until third grade; and then fourth grade to eighth grade I went to St. Cecelia's Parochial School. It had just been built when I was in the fourth grade so it was a big change but it was interesting seeing both types of schools. When I was in School #6 in kindergarten, I used to go all day and we used to take naps with a blanket and everything. I think it's interesting because children today are going half day and when they wanted to change it to have them go all day the parents were upset; and I'm thinking I went all day years ago. Oh, I didn't say when I was born. I was born on September 28, 1944.

*Brenda Velasco:* So you were born during the war. Now we're going to stop here and I want to identify your mom's voice on the tape and then we're going to come back and forth. Okay Ann, give us your full name, section and the year you were born.

*Anna McGhee:* I was baptized Anna Helen Marie Miele. I have many names.

*Brenda Velasco:* You sure did.

*Anna McGhee:* And another one on confirmation, Lucy.

*Brenda Velasco:* So you were born a Miele and you also are a Polanski as well as a McGhee through marriage.

*Anna McGhee:* I married during World War II.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, well we're going to get to that because that's later on.

*Anna McGhee:* Okay.

*Brenda Velasco:* Were you born in Iselin, too?

*Anna McGhee:* I wasn't born here. Actually I was born in South Plainfield. My mother grew up in South Plainfield and when it came time for her to have a baby she had to go to mama's. And at that time her mother was pregnant with a child too, the

last of the children, and it happened. I don't know whether John added that, too. So we had family, uncles, that were the same age and we grew up with them like sisters and brothers.

*Brenda Velasco:* How many children did your mom have?

*Anna McGhee:* My mother had three, John, me and my sister Ethel.

*June Onder:* But grandma and grandpa were living in Iselin though, right, and they took her by horse and buggy to South Plainfield to her mother's right?

*Anna McGhee:* Oh, yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* And what year were you born in Ann?

*Anna McGhee:* Oh, I didn't say that did I?

*Brenda Velasco:* No, we need to know.

*Anna McGhee:* I was born October 26, 1922.

*Brenda Velasco:* So you were before the Depression?

*Anna McGhee:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* The Roaring Twenties.

## **2. How long have you lived in Iselin?**

*Brenda Velasco:* So you were born in South Plainfield.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Then when did you come to Iselin?

*Anna McGhee:* We were just born there and then came home I guess after a few weeks or whatever because at that point in time I think my grandmother had a baby a couple months after. So my mother would go back and help her with her children, the last of them.

*Brenda Velasco:* Which uncle was that or was it an aunt that was born about the same year as you?

*Anna McGhee:* No, it was an uncle and I had an aunt on the Miele side that was born a couple of years after me.

*Brenda Velasco:* You have quite an extended family.

*June Onder:* Didn't grandpa Miele's relatives live along Bloomfield Avenue.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes

*June Onder:* So when grandma and grandpa got married didn't they live up on Bloomfield Avenue first and that's where grandma was pregnant with you and Uncle John or he had built that house....

*Anna McGhee:* Well we lived there for a while, yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, so you lived on Bloomfield Avenue in Iselin.....

*Anna McGhee:* Right.

*Brenda Velasco:* And what were the other streets that you lived on?

*June Onder:* Well that's where grandma and grandpa lived so when she was born that's probably where she lived.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes.

*June Onder:* Until grandpa built the house on Juliette Street.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay.

*June Onder:* And that was it, right?

*Anna McGhee:* We lived on, naturally, Juliette Street. My father built the house there for us. I was a couple of years old when I moved there.

*June Onder:* Because my grandfather always said he built the house all by himself. He would go up the ladder with the hammer but the hammer fell to the ground and he'd go down the ladder. That was on Juliette Street.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, that's on Juliette Street that house and now you're living on Auth Avenue.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, but you stayed within Iselin.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* So then you had basically, Ann, lived in Iselin for all your life.

*Anna McGhee:* I did but when I married her father he was stationed in Camp Kilmer and we met and married. But I lived there for a year or so and I didn't move here until I was expecting and then I moved home.

*June Onder:* To Juliette Street with grandma and grandpa, right?

*Anna McGhee:* To Juliette Street.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, while your husband stayed.....

*June Onder:* He was at war.

*Brenda Velasco:* Oh, he was at war.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes and then he went on to the European Theatre.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, whereas your brother, John, was in the Pacific Theatre.

*Anna McGhee:* He was in the Pacific.

### **3. Why did you family originally move to Iselin?**

*Brenda Velasco:* Or your grandparents because.....

*Anna McGhee:* Well my grandfather moved here and they came from Long Island originally when he married and then they moved here. I don't why, I couldn't explain why, but he was the first one and that's when he had the whole family there and he had a large family too.

*June Onder:* Ten?

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, I think so.

*Brenda Velasco:* So he had about ten siblings then.

*June Onder:* My grandpa Thomas Miele.

*Anna McGhee:* Tom.

*June Onder:* His brother was a horse trader.

*Anna McGhee:* Emil, Charles, wait a minute.

*June Onder:* Uncle Mike, Uncle Sonny.

*Anna McGhee:* Michael, Sonny and Grace was the youngest. I think about five girls and five boys in that family.

*June Onder:* And Emma was the aunt that passed away, Juney's mother?

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, well oh yes, okay, grandpa Thomas, Frances his sister, and.....

*June Onder:* Joe who was the horse trader?

*Anna McGhee:* Well there was Joseph, there was Michael, there was Grace and I'm trying to think who else.

*June Onder:* Aunt Toots.

*Anna McGhee:* Anthony, Antoinette, yes Aunt Toots. We called her Aunt Toots.

*Brenda Velasco:* This was a big family then.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, he had family of ten.

*Brenda Velasco:* And they all lived in Iselin?

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, they all settled in Iselin, too and though the years. And then, you know, they moved to different parts of the township. But actually my grandfather, I don't know if you were aware, he had the first school bus route with the horse and wagon.

*Brenda Velasco:* They used a horse and wagon then?

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, because I remember seeing pictures of grandpa driving. He was young.

*June Onder:* Yes, there's a picture with grandma with grandpa driving to Woodbridge Township.

*Brenda Velasco:* Alright, the school was School #1 then. Going back to School #1 was that the school?

*Anna McGhee:* I guess. It couldn't have been the school here in the town until later, much later.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes. Okay, so we've gone over Questions #1, #2, and #3. Now we're going to go to Question #4.

**4. What physical changes have occurred over the years in the area you lived?  
-houses, streets, services, stores, houses of worship, schools, etc.**

*Anna McGhee:* Quite a bit.

*Brenda Velasco:* Quite a bit, alright.

*Anna McGhee:* It was very rural, not paved streets just cut out areas and we lived, mostly after moving from Bloomfield Avenue to Juliette Street across from the dairy farm, which was great. We were in walking distance to go to School #6.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, and you went to School #6 and you walked.

*Anna McGhee:* Oh definitely. It was walking time. It wasn't that far.

*Brenda Velasco:* And where was School #6 because it's no longer there?

*Anna McGhee:* School #6 is where.....

*June Onder:* Right next to the firehouse.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes.

*June Onder:* On Green Street. It was to the right.

*Anna McGhee:* There was this small firehouse there but School #6..... We had a couple of portables and it went up to seventh grade.

*Brenda Velasco:* You had first grade and kindergarten there?

*Anna McGhee:* We had kindergarten also.

*Brenda Velasco:* Kindergarten through seventh grade.

*Anna McGhee:* Then we went by bus to Woodbridge for eighth grade and graduated there and then, of course, completed four years of high school.

*Brenda Velasco:* And high school was at the Barron Avenue.....

*Anna McGhee:* Barron Avenue.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, and then the eighth grade that you completed that was at School #11?

*Anna McGhee:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay. When you went to the high school on Barron Avenue, because that was the only high school then, you were bused there also?

*Anna McGhee:* Oh yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Now how about services when you lived on Juliette Street. You mentioned you had a dairy farm that was **Cooper's Dairy**?

*Anna McGhee:* Yes it was.

*Brenda Velasco:* Did you have any stores in the area?

*Anna McGhee:* The only stores were up on Oak Tree Road. Of course we'd just go right across the street to the dairy and watch them milk the cows. Oh, that was great. Then, of course, everything moved right at our backdoor then. We moved right to Iselin, Middlesex Turnpike, where John lives.

*June Onder:* Did grandma used to say a peddler used to come down the street to sell eggs and.....

*Anna McGhee:* Oh yes. We had bread delivery.

*Brenda Velasco:* You had bread delivery?

*Anna McGhee:* Oh yes, we had bread delivery. We had the peddler with the fresh fruit and vegetables and it seemed like we always had somebody coming; and then the dry goods man that used to come and sell clothes to us.

*Brenda Velasco:* Wow!

*Anna McGhee:* He'd come every so often and I guess I had a couple of coats from him. He'd come from Brooklyn or some place; I don't know where, maybe even Newark. It was a very interesting time to grow up.

*Brenda Velasco:* Quite a contrast from today with the malls.

*Anna McGhee:* Oh, yes it is.

*Brenda Velasco:* Did you have doctor offices around here? Where did you go for the doctor?

*Anna McGhee:* Rahway was the closest doctor or New Brunswick.

*Brenda Velasco:* All the way to New Brunswick.

*Anna McGhee:* Perth Amboy was the hospital and I had gone there, I guess, for a couple of emergencies. St. Peter's Hospital was our favorite where we went to have our children. You had your children there too, right?

*June Onder:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* How about houses of worship?

*Anna McGhee:* We had St. Cecelia's.

*Brenda Velasco:* You did have St. Cecelia's.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, it was a small church on Middlesex. I think there's a picture of it right there.

*Brenda Velasco:* It was on Middlesex you're saying?

*Anna McGhee:* On Middlesex, yes, where the big building is now. It used to be the rectory or the nuns home.

*June Onder:* Well it's the Hans Building now. The little white church used to be the front on Middlesex Avenue.

*Anna McGhee:* Oh I have pictures of my wedding coming down the steps of that church.

*Brenda Velasco:* So it was on Middlesex Avenue then.

*Anna McGhee:* On Middlesex Avenue, yes.

*June Onder:* They moved the building from Colonia. It used to be a nurse's quarters during World War I. That's in this book.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, that's in *Then and Now*.

*June Onder:* Right, and then when the new St. Cecelia's was built, after it was built, there's an aerial view of the new school and the church and you can see the original Mother white church and the Quonset hut that they used to have for classes and dances and stuff.

*Brenda Velasco:* And you have the picture of that in *Then and Now*. Now June, when you went to St. Cecelia's it was where it is now?

*June Onder:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, so only your mom and your uncles and relatives went to the one on Middlesex Avenue.

*June Onder:* Right. Although the Quonset hut was still there when I went to St. Cecelia's because when I was in the fourth grade we used to have dances for the fourth graders and it used to be in the Quonset hut. We used to have it once a month and that was really nice when you think about it to dance to records and things. So I don't know what year they tore the Quonset hut down but that was still there.

*Brenda Velasco:* And they didn't move that, that stayed on Middlesex Avenue, the Quonset hut?

*June Onder:* They built St. Cecelia's like a T, the new St. Cecelia's, the school and the gymnasium. And the gymnasium actually became the inside church for the longest time. The original white St. Cecelia's Church was to the right of the T facing Middlesex in the corner and behind the large part of the T was the Quonset hut. It was just amazing. If you look in Ron Perry's book there's an aerial shot of that, not in our book.

*Brenda Velasco:* So it's changed quite a bit with the new church now.

*June Onder:* Yes, and then you can see like an aerial view in the Ron Perry book of Middlesex Avenue and the stores and the houses that are there. And there's a shot that goes all the way down to Green Street and Oak Tree Road where they meet at Route #27 where those five corners meet. It's fascinating.

*Brenda Velasco:* They didn't have the traffic then.

*June Onder:* No, it looks like a dirt road also. Then Jimmy the shoemaker used to have his shoe shine and repair shop.....

*Anna McGhee:* Right across from the church.

*June Onder:* Right across from the old white church and the Quonset hut and he lived in the white house. But in the front there was a porch, and he would have a bell and he would have his shop in the front. Jimmy Carbone, he was an Italian man and he had a parrot in the front and lots of plants in the front and when you walked in the bell would ring and the parrot would say, hello, hello. That I miss. Now the house is a big massive Indian shop there. They changed the whole frontage and everything. The rear is still the original building I believe but the whole front is just multi buildings.

*Brenda Velasco:* Because in that parking lot of St. Cecelia's now there's a little white house on Auth Avenue. Was that associated with any of this at the time?

*June Onder:* No.

*Anna McGhee:* No, that woman who owned that property would never sell.

*June Onder:* She would never sell out. She's still there.

*Anna McGhee:* She still lives there.

*Brenda Velasco:* She's still there, okay.

*June Onder:* But there was a little house there and it was a gift shop for the longest time, a religious gift shop, but when they built the new church that got torn down. Because you used to come out of the St. Cecelia's School the way it's set up and the old church, what was supposed to be the auditorium, and you'd come out to the street there, that was Sutton Street, and then across the street was the house, it was a gray house.

*Anna McGhee:* It's closed now. That street is not opened.

*Brenda Velasco:* Was the First Presbyterian Church always there?

*June Onder:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, so two churches were the anchors then for Route #27 and Oak Tree and Green Street.

*June Onder:* That's in an aerial shot of that Ron Perry book. You can see the original church and the Presbyterian Church as well. It's a good picture. I don't know if the township has that or not.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, I think we covered the schools there but you know what June let's tag on with your school because you said you went to School #6.

*June Onder:* Yes, now I had a teacher there in kindergarten I don't know if you said you had her, Miss Laffan.

*Anna McGhee:* Oh, yes, she was my first grade teacher.

*June Onder:* And she was my first grade teacher also so she must have been near retirement.

*Anna McGhee:* I never went to kindergarten because I didn't have a kindergarten. I always said to my mother, I never went to kindergarten I was cheated. Because she had a baby and I couldn't go to school at five years old because she had a little one to take care of, that was my sister, and she said well I couldn't take you to school while I had a little teeny baby.

*June Onder:* My aunt Ethel. She was the baby sister. She passed two and a half years ago. She contributed a lot to the *Then and Now* also with pictures.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, she did.

*June Onder:* One thing I remember at School #6 also we used to get a cookie and milk break. And **Cooper's Diary** used to deliver the cookies and they were chocolate chip cookies that were in a little cardboard package with a cellophane wrap and they were like twisted and they were delicious. Then we used to get milk in little glass bottles.

*Brenda Velasco:* In glass bottles.

*June Onder:* They were mini glass bottles with a cardboard cap.

*Anna McGhee:* I think I have one left.

*June Onder:* That was kind of neat and the milk was always nice and cold. I remember those snack times. That was fun.

*Brenda Velasco:* And that was from grades kindergarten.....

*June Onder:* Through third grade.

*Brenda Velasco:* Then you went to St. Cecelia's.....

*June Onder:* From fourth to eighth. In my class at St. Cecelia's, there were sixty-four students which is uncalled for today I'm sure.

*Brenda Velasco:* That wouldn't be tolerated really. That's college level maybe.

*June Onder:* And you got lost in the sauce but the population was here enough to do it and there was one teacher that taught all the courses. In the four years I only had one nun and that was in eighth grade. Oh, in religion the priest would come in and give us our religion lesson but we had one teacher. It was a nice combination of students because they were from Menlo Park, they were from Oak Tree Road, Hilltop, Westbury, what they called Westbury Estates. When you reached eighth grade there were more parties going on because when you graduated from eighth grade you went to every party just about so it was nice memories. That was the one nice thing. Education wise if you were behind on something you just had to either keep up or get a tutor or something. That was the only bad part.

*Brenda Velasco:* So there were advantages and disadvantages.

*June Onder:* Right, I'm glad they're back to small classes. Then I went to Woodbridge High and I looked forward very much to that going on a bus and being in high school in Woodbridge. We felt like a big deal.

*Brenda Velasco:* But you said you were on split session when you were in high school.

*June Onder:* Yes, when I went to my freshman year I went the afternoon session. That was like one to five and I had taken a secretarial course but then came sophomore year to senior year and they let the secretarial course go morning and that would be from 7:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. and I would go by bus. We would walk from here, we would meet friends on Auth Avenue and Warwick, and we would walk down to Oak Tree Road and Middlesex and there was **Klein's 5&10**, Mr. Klein, he was a real nice man. As a matter of fact he gave me my first job and second job.

*Brenda Velasco:* We just received a miniature bottle of June's milk and cookies from the school. So you had **Klein's** down on the corner which is no longer the 5&10 cent store but that's where you would pick up your bus then.

*June Onder:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* And you had to walk about six blocks or so.

*June Onder:* No, eight blocks or ten blocks because we had to cross over through St. Cecelia's and come across and go to Mr. Klein's.

*Brenda Velasco:* I remember that from a long time ago.

*June Onder:* And in Iselin then, too, there was a butcher shop, there was a German butcher store.

*Brenda Velasco:* That was by the time you were grown up.

*June Onder:* When I was growing up, yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Different from when your mom. Your mom had the peddlers come to her house.

*June Onder:* That would have been the fifties.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, so 1950s.

*June Onder:* That would be '58 or '59. But they were shops that had been there though for about twenty years.

*Anna McGhee:* Oh yes.

*June Onder:* Then across the street from **Klein's** there was another store too. It was a Greek delicatessen because his son went to school.... Luganos was the last name. He graduated with us.



*Anna McGhee:* The peddler was still here when we moved in the '40s because we moved here in 1948 and.....

*June Onder:* You had peddlers in 1948 mom?

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, and you're talking about the fifties. I guess by the fifties the big stores started coming in.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, I know the stores started coming in because.....

*Anna McGhee:* There were more stores in the town, too.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, that was the post-World War II boom coming in to suburbia with the Parkway being completed as well which put Iselin on the map.

*Anna McGhee:* Oh, yes.

*June Onder:* Which was good.

*Anna McGhee:* For everybody.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, that's when you had all those housing developments because you saw that.

*Anna McGhee:* We had, what do you call it, Woodbridge Oaks and.....

*June Onder:* Hilltop.

*Anna McGhee:* Oh, Hilltop, yes.

*June Onder:* Westbury.

*Anna McGhee:* Westbury.

*June Onder:* Before the Iselin circle.

*Anna McGhee:* By Route #1. They had different names for them as they developed.

*Brenda Velasco:* But you just saw it explode, the population.

*Anna McGhee:* But this area grew individually. There were only two or three houses when we bought land up here.

*June Onder:* This was called the Star Eagle section.

*Brenda Velasco:* Right, so that was in the 1940s, the late '40s, once again after World War II.

*June Onder:* Exactly.

*Anna McGhee:* There was in the paper awhile back with a whole write up at the Star Eagle section. (*Star Ledger*)

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, I saw that.

*Anna McGhee:* Did you see that?

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes.

*Anna McGhee:* It was a good write up.

*Brenda Velasco:* So you really preceded a lot of the developments that came then.

*June Onder:* You didn't get the free property lot. That was only for so many years with the Star Eagle people at the newspaper and then they were giving out lots.

*Anna McGhee:* Oh no, I didn't get that chance.

*Brenda Velasco:* No, you didn't get that free property. How much did this house cost when you first moved here do you remember?

*Anna McGhee:* Yes I do. We brought the property, 100 X 100, for six hundred and fifty dollars which was amazing of course at that time but the reason why we chose this is because this was the only street that had sidewalks. Of course we didn't have them on that side of town. I doubt if they had..... there were no homes built on Middlesex at that point, maybe a scattering of one or two but no sidewalks. This was

the development and that's why, I wanted sidewalks: Warwick Street and Auth Avenue.

*June Onder:* Now you really can't say the house was already built and she paid a price for it because there's a story to how this house was built.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, so let's hear that story.

*June Onder:* You tell it mom. Who dug the cellar?

*Anna McGhee:* Grandpop dug the cellar.

*June Onder:* Grandpop Miele.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, he had a tractor and he dug the cellar and then he put like the basement part of it. Then we had a couple of uncles who went into carpentry and they put up the structure and then the frame work and all and then we helped finish it. Well they did bit by bit but I was here with my husband helping put up the plaster boards and all.

*Brenda Velasco:* This was a family affair.

*Anna McGhee:* It was a family affair.

*June Onder:* Uncle John might have helped with the foundation, right?

*Anna McGhee:* Uncle John did, yes, because he had equipment then at that point. Then he went into business.

*June Onder:* Tell her where some of the lumber came from.

*Anna McGhee:* The base of this house is the packing cases of World War II, the gun casing. So we got a lot of history in the house.

*Brenda Velasco:* It sure does plus a family affair in the construction.

*June Onder:* The uncles from my grandmother side helped and uncles from grandpa Miele's side helped that were on Bloomfield Avenue.

*Anna McGhee:* It was good. It was a helper outer.

*Brenda Velasco:* That was barn raising many, many years ago in the early history of the church. Okay, so we've got you living on Middlesex growing up and then you moved to Auth Avenue.

##### ***5. What public buildings/property were there-post office, library, parks, firehouse, schools, etc.***

*Anna McGhee:* The post office was on..... there was a hardware store there.

*Brenda Velasco:* **Eagle Hardware.**

*Anna McGhee:* **Eagle Hardware** and of course I guess the theatre was there too at that point in time. But the post office was run in the living room of a friend of mine who I met after I was in Girl Scouts. Her grandmother ran the post office for a while. Then from there they moved it across the street for a while, across from where the hardware store was, and that was there for quite a number of years until years later then it moved down on Middlesex.

*Brenda Velasco:* So it wasn't there when you were going up then?

*Anna McGhee:* What?

*Brenda Velasco:* The post office because you grew up on Middlesex Avenue. Was the post office there when you.....

*Anna McGhee:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay so finally.....

*June Onder:* Well which one now, the post office that was on Middlesex or are you talking about the one that was Middlesex/Essex Turnpike?

*Anna McGhee:* No, the post office there. The library opened up then too in that little house after the post office left and this lady opened the library up in her living room.

*Brenda Velasco:* Do you remember the name of the people?

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, Mrs. Nash.

*Brenda Velasco:* So she had a post office at one time until it moved out and then she had the library.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, she had the library for a while until then they actually had a public library. It went on to do the same thing, it moved right in that area.

*Brenda Velasco:* And then eventually we know the public library for Iselin is on Green Street. So before that it was in Mrs. Nash's living room and then was there an interim where it was someplace else besides Green Street where it is now?

*Anna McGhee:* Well as I said it moved.....

*June Onder:* It moved into a building across the street on Oak Tree Road where those row of stores were.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, you're right.

*June Onder:* And then from there they built a small white building, when I was going to school, on Middlesex Avenue. As I say it gets confusing, where the Presbyterian residence is and there's a parking lot for the town of Iselin.

*Anna McGhee:* That's right that became the library.

*June Onder:* There's a picture of that in here. It was a little white building.

*Brenda Velasco:* Right, and then eventually that was used by Pop Warner for something.

*June Onder:* Iselin Library was like one of the most used library of the libraries in the township other than Woodbridge. They had more people coming to take books in and out.

*Brenda Velasco:* How about parks? When you were growing up, Ann, were there any parks?

*Anna McGhee:* The closest park was Merrill Park which wasn't called Merrill Park. It was actually a farm area. I can't remember the man's name right now but we used to go up there as a park and would picnic there in the summertime and all.

*Brenda Velasco:* That wasn't too far from Juliette Street then. It was just down the road.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, that's right.

*Brenda Velasco:* For you June, Merrill Park is going to be established by the time you're growing up, am I correct?

*June Onder:* Right, it was already there.

*Brenda Velasco:* That's a county park now.

*June Onder:* As a kid I didn't get to use it a lot but a couple of picnics with friends.

*Brenda Velasco:* Did they have fireworks there at all?

*Anna McGhee:* They did have, yes.

*June Onder:* I don't remember.

*Anna McGhee:* Not any more.

*June Onder:* Not when I was here there weren't fireworks.

*Anna McGhee:* But they did have them there for a while.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, the firehouses.

*Anna McGhee:* We had the one on Harding Avenue.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, you always had that one then

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, and the one on Green Street. But then from Harding Avenue it moved to here on Auth Avenue.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, so that originally was on Harding Avenue and then it moved to Auth Avenue.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes.

*June Onder:* But it actually originally was behind the hardware store then it moved to Harding Avenue.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, we're talking about Eagle on Correja?

*Anna McGhee:* There was a firehouse by the **Eagle Hardware**?

*June Onder:* Yes, way, way back when.

*Anna McGhee:* Well, then that had to be way before that.

*June Onder:* I'm very sure of the time and then it went over the Harding Avenue.

*Anna McGhee:* Oh, okay, yes.

*June Onder:* Off Middlesex Avenue.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, so that was a traveling firehouse.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes it was until they finally settled in a good spot.

*Brenda Velasco:* But the one on Green Street was always there.

*Anna McGhee:* That was.

*Brenda Velasco:* We have to also mention that the railroad was at street level when you were growing up.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, and we'd have to cross the tracks and wait for the trains to go by, the gates would go up and that was dangerous. People would walk across when trains were coming in.

*Brenda Velasco:* Both of you went to School #6? (1917-1957)

*Anna McGhee:* Yes.

*June Onder:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* When was that because it's no longer there? I mean you have other schools in Iselin now but no longer School #6.

*Anna McGhee:* They closed that down because, what was the reason, they rebuilt it.

*June Onder:* You see I don't know all the years on that either. They built the school on Indiana Avenue which is behind the library. (1956)

*Brenda Velasco:* Right, Indiana Avenue and then Robert Mascenik/Benjamin Avenue (1964) and then Kennedy Park (1960).

*June Onder:* Then there was a school, remember you told me there was a school on Pershing Avenue.

*Anna McGhee:* Oh yes, School #15.

*June Onder:* School #15 and there are homes over there now.

*Brenda Velasco:* The original school is in Iselin, the public schools are no longer.....

*June Onder:* Right, so maybe they took down #6 because they put up the one on Indiana Avenue and they put up the one that's over here. What number is this one over here, where you do the polls sometimes?

*Brenda Velasco:* Kennedy.

*June Onder:* Kennedy Park.

*Brenda Velasco:* Kennedy Park.

*June Onder:* So that might have been why because the population became more and St. Cecelia's came into play so that might have been the reason why the split. Now you talked about Merrill Park but there was like a makeshift park, I don't know what you would really call it, where Indiana School was before it was built. There was the Pony Club, remember?

*Anna McGhee:* That's right.

*June Onder:* My grandfather, well Mr. Costello not Costello, Tomasso, Gene Tomasso had a real estate agency in Iselin. He more or less helped out. The property that was on Indiana Avenue they had a pony track back there and there was the Horsemen's Pony Club of Iselin, Middlesex County, and they would have weekly pony trot races in the property up there.

*Brenda Velasco:* Wow!

*June Onder:* My grandfather had built his own sulky cards for the ponies my grandfather owned. He had two or three ponies as we were growing up. I remember I was dating my husband, before we got married, and we would go watch the pony races on Indiana Avenue.

*Brenda Velasco:* So this goes back to fifties?

*June Onder:* This is early sixties.

*Brenda Velasco:* Early sixties.

*June Onder:* '62 or '63 or '64 and there's an article about that races here in the book too, we have it. It was nice. That was before they developed to put the school in. It was a big track and a lot of people would show up and come to it. Trotters were, you know, part of central Jersey. They would bring the ponies in the trucks and take them out and.....

*Brenda Velasco:* That was the horseman's club?

*June Onder:* Yes, it was New Jersey Pony and Horseman's Club. That's a nice memory.

*Brenda Velasco:* Oh I'm sure it is and all the open space. You had to have that so that was great.

*June Onder:* Yes, that was fun.

*Brenda Velasco:* You were living with sidewalks because you mom wanted sidewalks.

*June Onder:* I'm sorry, Central Jersey Pony Trotting Club it was called.

The Coopers and the Miele's formed the New Jersey Trotting Club and the county gave them the use of the land. Oh, it was Elizabeth Avenue. Gene Tomasso helped to fund it. He was the sponsor and races were every Sunday.

*Brenda Velasco:* That was quite an event.

*June Onder:* It was. They'd come from as far as Freehold.

*Brenda Velasco:* Because Freehold has its own racetrack for trotters right now.

Anything else you want to mention for Question #5? I think we covered quite a bit.

*June Onder:* I miss the old train station. I really thought that was a classic. It's really a shame they couldn't have kept it.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, the old train station in Iselin.

*June Onder:* Yes, wooden floors and mommy remembers when they took it apart and the bricks were just laying up there. Some people would go and take some of the bricks as a memento.

*Brenda Velasco:* And that was on Middlesex/Essex Turnpike.

*June Onder:* No, that was on Route #27. Oh, no, you're right Middlesex/Essex Turnpike and then you would go up the back steps under the railroad trestle when you were coming to it on this side, I apologize.

*Anna McGhee:* I used to take the train to New Brunswick.

*June Onder:* I remember going up the other side. The steps are no longer there because there's a steep hill. I can just picture it still in my mind where those steps were when you come in from this side of town.

*Brenda Velasco:* When did they take that down, do you remember?

*June Onder:* Well you would know because I wasn't here yet.

*Anna McGhee:* What was that the train station?

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes.

*Anna McGhee:* Oh yes, that was heartbreaking. I even have a couple of bricks from it.

*Brenda Velasco:* Do you remember the year that they took it down? Were you still living on Juliette Street?

*Anna McGhee:* No.

*June Onder:* She was up here.

*Brenda Velasco:* Auth Avenue then.

*June Onder:* The building stayed empty for the longest time.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, it was.

*Brenda Velasco:* And then we have **Metro Park** now.

*June Onder:* Right, then they closed it down and **Metro Park** has been there, in existence, for forty years. (1969 – Groundbreaking Ceremony)

*Brenda Velasco:* And expanding. People from all over New Jersey come.

*Anna McGhee:* Oh, yes.

*June Onder:* I believe it.

*Brenda Velasco:* Because it's right by the Parkway.

*June Onder:* Well I take the train back and forth from Long Island. I just go to Penn Station. I don't want to drive on the Belt Parkway in Long Island and I feel like actually when I'm on the train I really feel like I'm in the City because there's just a blend of wonderful cultures and everything and no matter what time you come the train is crowded.

*Brenda Velasco:* Every time, because I take it into New York City. It's always crowded.

*Anna McGhee:* It is, all day long.

*June Onder:* I remember that all being cornfields owned by the Coopers.

*Brenda Velasco:* Right.

*June Onder:* And it was just the house and the cornfield where **The Hilton** now sits.

*Brenda Velasco:* And I remember the cattle back there going to Menlo Park Mall if you went the back way, not Route #1. No, Iselin has changed tremendously.

## **6. What did you do for recreation?**

*Anna McGhee:* This would be growing up?

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, growing up.

*Anna McGhee:* Actually we spent most of our time in our own backyard but I did have recreation. I joined the Girl Scouts and we'd come up from the one side of town to the firehouse on Harding Avenue. That's where I first met the Montcey's and Mrs. Nash. That was all of the same family and they lived on that side and we became lifelong friends. I still keep in touch with the one friend and she's in Texas. We talk and spend time reminiscing.

*Brenda Velasco:* How old were you when you were in the Girl Scouts, do you remember?

*Anna McGhee:* I was twelve. We didn't have the Kid's Scouts until some years later.

*June Onder:* You also said, remember, you were the youngest member of the library when Mrs. Nash had.....

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, as a matter of fact my girlfriend, that was her grandmother that had it, and she said you're the youngest library member. I was seven years old. I must have just started to read.

*Brenda Velasco:* You had quite a walk to get to the library from where you lived on Juliette Street.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, but I'd walk with my mother because all of the shopping was right there on Oak Tree Road.

*Brenda Velasco:* Was the movie house there at all?

*Anna McGhee:* Yes it was. It was there from the twenties.

*June Onder:* And St. Cecelia's had a band that played opening night when they renovated and it was called the **Embassy Theatre**.

*Brenda Velasco:* That's what it was called the **Embassy Theatre**?

*Anna McGhee:* Yes.

*June Onder:* Then when they renovated it or something the band from St. Cecelia's played the night of the opening.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes.

*June Onder:* And it was that same pastor, Father Brennan, that was responsible for doing that but he's also the man that was responsible for starting the Iselin Fair that still continues today, Reverend Brennan.

*Anna McGhee:* That's right.

*June Onder:* And that's over seventy-eight years old the Iselin Fair.

*Brenda Velasco:* It's moved its location now.

*June Onder:* There's a story to that too. The location moved but that's the original location.

*Brenda Velasco:* Oh, right in the church parking lot then.

*June Onder:* You tell that story. The Iselin Fair was on Middlesex/Essex Turnpike, Cooper Avenue and all that for so many years, fifty years, but.....

*Anna McGhee:* And then it moved on this side.

*June Onder:* But you said it started on Middlesex Avenue and Oak Tree Road.

*Anna McGhee:* It did, right on the church ground.

*June Onder:* And there's newspaper articles to that effect that I had researched and was in the *Then and Now of Iselin*.

*Brenda Velasco:* So it's back to its original site.

*June Onder:* Back to its original home.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, and here I thought it was going backwards but....

*Anna McGhee:* It went back to its home turf.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, home turf.

*June Onder:* People came from all over the State when it started there on the original spot in Middlesex.

*Brenda Velasco:* Because it was right off of Route #27. It had easy access. Do you remember what they had at that fair going back when you were.....

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, they had a children's section. We used to have our own booths. It pretty much had what it has today but I think it was more home stuff. But our first pastor used to go around to all these stores, it didn't matter who they were whether they were Jewish or whatever or Presbyterian, and get donations for the carnival and encourage them to join in which they did and it was nice. We had dances, we had a dance pavilion, and in the book you will see that there was a band.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay and this was at the fair?

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, and that was at the fair in the summertime.

*Brenda Velasco:* What about other areas of recreation? Did the church have events during the year?

*Anna McGhee:* They did.

*Brenda Velasco:* What were some of them?

*Anna McGhee:* They had bingo, they had card parties and we had youth activities.

*Brenda Velasco:* And this is where you said you went to dances.

*June Onder:* In the Quonset Hut, yes.

*Anna McGhee:* We had them too.

*June Onder:* But then when it was years later when the fair was still, like I said ongoing, I would help out. It seemed like to be a teenage project. We'd go down in the mornings and work in the kitchen at St. Cecelia's kitchen and help stir the sauce and everything. I think that was my freshman year.

*Anna McGhee:* That's how you contributed.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, it was a community effort.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, it was.

*June Onder:* It still is.

*Brenda Velasco:* That's a lot of work. The fair is a tremendous amount of work.

Anything else you want to mention for recreation? Did you go to the movies?

*Anna McGhee:* I did in the afternoons.

*Brenda Velasco:* Do you recall how much you had to pay?

*Anna McGhee:* Probably ten cents to start with as a child and fifty cents and it kept on going up.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, June did you go to the movies? The movie house was still open for you, right?

*June Onder:* Yes, I don't know what we paid but I remember it was a small theatre.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, it wasn't one of these big multiplexes.

*June Onder:* As a matter of fact we have a small one where we're at now that's an old one so it's kind of reminiscent of Iselin and there was a bakery next door too.

*Anna McGhee:* That's right.



*June Onder:* What was that bakery's name?

*Anna McGhee:* **Heeber's.**

*June Onder:* **Heeber's.** Well now when I'm in high school, '59 through '62, my girlfriend Barbara Koch, Angelini now, two blocks down the street, my Polish girlfriend. We would walk to the bakery and they had the best round bread that was maybe four inches across. You couldn't wait to buy it and you'd start snacking on it walking back home. It had a nice flavor to it and a nice crust. I never had bread like that again and that building was in between what was the post office over there and the movie house. I don't know what year they went out of business either.

*Anna McGhee:* No bakeries.

*Brenda Velasco:* No bakeries. Colonia doesn't have a bakery now either. That was a cornerstone. Anything else we want to mention for recreation?

*June Onder:* I was in the Girl Scouts and the 4 H Club.

*Brenda Velasco:* Oh, you had a 4 H Club here too?

*Anna McGhee:* Yes.

*June Onder:* It's kind of a sad story to that in a way. The woman who was in charge of the Girl Scouts was Mrs. Rapachelly and she was a lifelong resident of Iselin. I mean someone is still living you met her, her daughter or daughter-in-law.

*Anna McGhee:* Daughter.

*June Onder:* The woman lived three blocks up the street and then she had a heart attack and she must have been in her fifties when she had the Girl Scouts. The counsel wouldn't allow her to continue it and she was so hurt because she had it for years. So then rather than disappoint all the girls that were in her Girl Scouts she started the 4 H Club and was able to have that and that's how we had the 4 H Club two blocks up the street. She did it for a few years because we did enter the County Fair of Central Jersey. I remember doing a sewing project. Her sister-in-law, I can't remember what her name was, she was a block up the street and she was the Brownie leader. So I went from Brownies from the one lady to Mrs. Rapachelly who had the Girl Scouts and they had it in their home. That was nice memories with them.

### **7. What was the focal point of your community at that time?**

*Brenda Velasco:* Was it family, church, or township activities?

*Anna McGhee:* Well actually it was the church and family. We're close with family. We got to visit them on Sundays.

*Brenda Velasco:* A lot of them lived in Iselin.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes.

*June Onder:* One thing I just remembered like the original house that Grandpa Miele was from was on Bloomfield Avenue and is still up there. A lot of the uncles had built houses up there and then when their siblings married their children also built houses. But the original house used to be like a focal meeting point. This is from a story that Cousin Joan told us, that is in her seventies, that's close to my mother's age, there was a big coffee pot under the grape arbor and all that.

*Brenda Velasco:* And it's still there that house?

*June Onder:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Is it lived in by a Miele?

*June Onder:* No.

*Anna McGhee:* No, it's changed hands over the years.

*June Onder:* A little narrow house.

*Anna McGhee:* But the home is still there and it has a little flat roof and it's on the corner.

*Brenda Velasco:* What was the address, do you remember?

*Anna McGhee:* Bloomfield Avenue and Winding.....

*June Onder:* There's a ramp going to the house and it's a narrow ranch. Its right down the street from.....before you make the turn. I don't know what that turn is on the right.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, it's on the right hand side coming from here but it's on the left hand side of the street on the corner. It's well kept. It didn't look like that when we were growing up. It was very simple and plain.

*Brenda Velasco:* You had some good memories there.

*Anna McGhee:* Lots of memories because it was all open fields all around there and very few homes.

*June Onder:* Even when I was growing up it was nice seeing all those relatives and everything.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes it was.

*June Onder:* I'd get together with a lot of cousins.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, because everybody made sure they took the time to come and it was just taken for granted you were to be there; and the cousins were also included in everything at that time period. You didn't have going off to soccer practice, baseball practice, all these dance lessons and everything. The family was the center.

*June Onder:* Now everybody's detached. It's weird.

*Brenda Velasco:* It's quite different compared to the way you grew up June and your mom grew up.

#### **8. What did you like about living in your section of Iselin?**

*Anna McGhee:* Well, I had lots of friends and activities that kept me busy. When I was about sixteen I said I'm not going to live here anymore, I want to get out of here. The furthest I moved was after I was married and moved to New Brunswick but when it came time to build a home we moved back here.

*Brenda Velasco:* And why did you move back here from New Brunswick?

*Anna McGhee:* Because it was home.

*Brenda Velasco:* June, we know you had left. You married and your husband got another job but you have good memories of this part of Iselin.

*June Onder:* Yes, my heart is still here. I think of my grandparents and my grandfather cutting out the streets and the pony races and the ponies in their yard.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, everybody had ponies growing up.

*June Onder:* And St. Cecelia's and the large class I came from and the dances in fourth grade.

*Brenda Velasco:* So you have good memories too.

#### **9. Did you experience any significant happenings in Iselin-construction, accidents, sports events, riots, discrimination, etc.**

*Anna McGhee:* Well we did have a few accidents. We had a big fire when the barn burned down over at the dairy. You were a little kid and we got all excited and the flames were up in the air. That was frightening.

*Brenda Velasco:* How old were you, do you remember? Were you still living on Juliette Street?

*Anna McGhee:* I was living at home because we hadn't built the home up here yet and she was only a baby. You don't remember that. I remember carrying you in my arms running up to see the flames. It enveloped the barn. I don't think the cows were in danger. They probably let them out but it was scary.

*June Onder:* The parades that they used to have.....

*Anna McGhee:* We used to have big parades.

*June Onder:* They don't have them anymore.

*Anna McGhee:* No more.

*Brenda Velasco:* And what were the parades for, do you remember?

*June Onder:* Memorial Day.

*Anna McGhee:* Well, we had them in the summertime. We would have the Memorial Day parade and Veteran's Day. We used to have several parades a year.

*June Onder:* 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

*Anna McGhee:* The firemen would have a parade when they had their carnival. So they would have a parade just up and down especially that side of town.

*June Onder:* And grandpa would have the pony carts in it and then we would ride in the pony carts that he built. I'd go in there as a Girl Scout and not march with my Girl Scout or Brownie troop. I remember people sitting on the curbs with their flags.

*Brenda Velasco:* You had a lot going on.

*June Onder:* For a small town.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, how about construction?

*Anna McGhee:* Well construction now, nothing but big buildings. All the small stores and all are no longer. You just see little shops.

*Brenda Velasco:* And they're catering to a different clientele.

*Anna McGhee:* And a different ethnic group.

*Brenda Velasco:* Alright, you mentioned your grandfather, he did the streets?

*Anna McGhee:* My father did.

*Brenda Velasco:* Your father did the streets. He cut out streets in this area?

*Anna McGhee:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Was he in construction?

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, he was self-employed, not large scale things. He never became a millionaire.

*June Onder:* They called it excavating and grading and landscaping. Grandpa did Victory Gardens, right mom during the war?

*Anna McGhee:* Yes. He used to be very proud of it. He'd say, see that home I did that ground. He planted the seed and all that. So he kept busy. He was very proud of what he did.

*June Onder:* How did you feel when **Cooper's** sold their field on Middlesex and like the **Hilton** went up and all that industrial work went up?

*Anna McGhee:* It was sad because all of that small town and open land was no more. That was the first when your sister went to work in **Eastern**.

*Brenda Velasco:* That was in the 1970s or '60s?

*June Onder:* My sister is younger than I so late '60s.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes.

*June Onder:* Because after she retired from **Eastern Airlines**.

*Anna McGhee:* She went to New York and got her training. I guess she worked about twenty years with them until they moved on. **Continental** I think took them over.

*June Onder:* Something else mom used to do with your activities you left out.

*Anna McGhee:* What?

*June Onder:* You used to belong to the Sodality.

*Anna McGhee:* Oh, yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Sodality at St. Cecelia's.

*June Onder:* And the crowning.

*Anna McGhee:* I was in the crowning.

*Brenda Velasco:* The May crowning.

*Anna McGhee:* When I was seventy-five years old the church had a seventy-five year anniversary and I said well I'm as old as the church so I became the crowner for that year. They said oh were you baptized here? I said no I was baptized in St. James.

*Brenda Velasco:* In Woodbridge, right.

*Anna McGhee:* In Woodbridge, but I became the May crowner.

*Brenda Velasco:* That was a nice combination.

*June Onder:* It was very nice to see mom crown, yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* What year was that?

*Anna McGhee:* Seventy-five and I'm now eighty-seven.

*June Onder:* Twelve years ago. It doesn't seem like it.

*Brenda Velasco:* So you've seen St. Cecelia's just grow.

*June Onder:* Yes, it was 1998. I miss the May crowning. A lot of churches don't do that anymore.

*Brenda Velasco:* No they don't.

*June Onder:* And it was beautiful.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, I've gone through that.

*June Onder:* And the flowers. I wish they would start that up again.

*Anna McGhee:* I miss it.

*Brenda Velasco:* How about any other accidents that you saw? You saw **Cooper's** dairy, well that wasn't an accident that was just the fire. Did you witness when they made the elevated railroad tracks?

*Anna McGhee:* Oh yes, that was a highlight. It really was, because we didn't have to go over the tracks and wait for the train to go.

*June Onder:* She used to go sleigh riding down Middlesex.

*Anna McGhee:* The freight trains would take forever to go.

*June Onder:* How long did it take them to build that, I mean to excavate that?

*Anna McGhee:* I was in high school.

*Brenda Velasco:* You were in high school.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, I was in high school when that was completed. I graduated in 1940.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, so you witnessed that.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, I did.

*Brenda Velasco:* And June, do you remember how long it took? Did it take a couple of months?

*Anna McGhee:* Oh, that did take a while.

*Brenda Velasco:* Was it done during the summer?

*Anna McGhee:* It would have had to be, yes. Now they work around the clock, you know, to get things done faster.

*Brenda Velasco:* Oh yes, like when they did **Metro Park**. That was done in one night, the trains were shut down, because I was there witnessing that. I had little boys at the time and little boys love that type of activity with the big lights and the cranes and everything. Okay, so that was in the late 1930s then.

*June Onder:* What about Thomas Edison?

*Anna McGhee:* That's right. That was during my lifetime too when they put the light up. Thomas Edison and grandpa and Uncle John went and walked up when they had the dedication to it. I wanted to go.

*June Onder:* Why didn't you go?

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, why didn't you go?

*Anna McGhee:* I was too young. I couldn't go.

*June Onder:* A year younger and you couldn't go. You were a girl that's what it came down to.

*Anna McGhee:* It was just boy stuff. So that was exciting. I don't think there were pictures taken for that.

*Brenda Velasco:* Too bad.

*Anna McGhee:* Now we have a snapshot to take everything.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, you can't get away without having the camera.

*Anna McGhee:* My mother had the pictures. She had this little old brownie camera and in that book they were from her.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, you haven't moved out Ann. You're eighty-seven years old and you're still in Iselin. That gets us down to Question #10.

### ***10. What do you like about Iselin today?***

*Anna McGhee:* Well it's grown some. There are a lot of activities that you can keep up with. I do have things that I belong to, the Woodbridge Garden Club and I'm active with that.

*June Onder:* You meet monthly.

*Anna McGhee:* We meet monthly and I just had a meeting with my Golden.....

*June Onder:* Well finish, you meet monthly with the Garden Club where?

*Anna McGhee:* Oh, at the Iselin library on Green Street.

*June Onder:* And you've been a member of that for a long time, about twenty-five years, right?

*Anna McGhee:* When I retired I joined it.

*June Onder:* In '65?

*Anna McGhee:* Actually I became more active when I retired.

*Brenda Velasco:* Well you had more time.

*Anna McGhee:* I had more time exactly.

*Brenda Velasco:* You weren't on an organized schedule. Where did you work?

*Anna McGhee:* I worked for **Johnson & Johnson**. As a matter of fact I just went to a.....

*June Onder:* You worked there for how many years?

*Anna McGhee:* Forty-five years.

*Brenda Velasco:* Wow! And what year did you retire in Ann?

*Anna McGhee:* I retired in 1985 after forty five year, '41 to '85, and we just had a meeting yesterday in the **New Brunswick Hyatt**.

*June Onder:* You also were a member of the auxiliary and you still are, the VFW auxiliary.

*Anna McGhee:* Oh yes, I belong to the VFW auxiliary the one here.

*Brenda Velasco:* Where does it meet on Brown Avenue?

*June Onder:* No, that's the American Legion.

*Brenda Velasco:* That's the American Legion.

*June Onder:* She's in the Foreign Wars auxiliary.

*Anna McGhee:* I belong to that one also. I don't get to meetings. I'm not as active as much as I am with the VFW.

*June Onder:* But the VFW one was on Route #27 and it sold the building.

*Anna McGhee:* We do meet once a month at the library in Colonia.

*Brenda Velasco:* The Henry Inman Library?

*Anna McGhee:* Yes.

*June Onder:* The Garden Club, the VFW club and a lot of the women from the VFW club are also part of the Golden Years or something.

*Anna McGhee:* The Golden Years they call it and we have a meeting there.

*June Onder:* They meet once a month with that.

*Brenda Velasco:* So you have a busy schedule.

*Anna McGhee:* I do.

*June Onder:* And she belongs to the **Johnson & Johnson** Retirees Club that meet once a month for a meeting and a luncheon up in Somerville. They used to go to North Brunswick and now it's Somerville. I come out once a month to take her to that meeting.

*Brenda Velasco:* I was going to ask, how do you get around?

*June Onder:* I take her.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, well I don't unless somebody comes out or if Elaine is able to. Of course she works and June has a little bit more access to time but she's busy being a grandmom also. I kind of lost out on a few meetings.

*June Onder:* But the other thing you did also with part of the VFW which you've done for years and you received a citation from the mayor, not this mayor, McGreevey. My mother used to take care of the park on Dow Avenue. She used to go down and do the weeding and she would go down and put the geraniums in for Veteran's Day and Memorial Day.

*Anna McGhee:* I used to go down there but I don't know who does it anymore. I don't think they even bother with it anymore, just a few little shrubs.

*June Onder:* And she always enjoyed doing that, right?

*Brenda Velasco:* Well your father was in the service.

*Anna McGhee:* Well that's why. She said it's a tribute to my father and uncles that served in the war and to my stepfather.

*Anna McGhee:* And Connie was inactive.

*June Onder:* Well, I was proud when she did that. It was nice when she got the citation from Mayor McGreevey. It was at **Woodbridge Center**, right.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, we have that in October. Usually it's held in October.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, I've gone for a couple of other people who have been honored.

*Brenda Velasco:* Very good. So you still keep a busy life though. Very busy at eighty-seven years old.

**11. Do you have any family members still living in Iselin?**

*Anna McGhee:* Other than my brother.....

*Brenda Velasco:* John.

*June Onder:* Niece and nephew.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, Maureen, my niece.

*Brenda Velasco:* Do they live in Iselin?

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, and of course John you know where he lives.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes.

*Anna McGhee:* And Maureen lives down Juliette Street.

*June Onder:* Frank and Margie.

*Anna McGhee:* Oh that's right, the Crowe's on Benjamin Avenue.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, so they're still in Iselin then.

*Anna McGhee:* They're in Iselin, yes. I'd say that's about it. The rest have either passed away or moved away. Joan and her brother live down in Farmingdale.

*June Onder:* Frank and Junie though remember, Frank's mother, your aunt, who was related to Grandpa Miele. They used to have a little candy shop in their house around the corner when my mother was growing up.

*Brenda Velasco:* Where was that?

*Anna McGhee:* On Benjamin Avenue. She was an enterprising young woman, too.

*Brenda Velasco:* This was your aunt?

*Anna McGhee:* My aunt, my father's sister.

*June Onder:* What was her first name again?

*Anna McGhee:* Frances.

*June Onder:* Yes, Frances.

*Brenda Velasco:* So she had a candy shop.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* And the school wasn't too far away either.

*June Onder:* Right, School #6.

*Brenda Velasco:* I always associate candy shops with schools because you didn't have vending machines at that time so you waited until after school which was healthier.

*June Onder:* Penny candy.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, but it was healthier wasn't it, June?

*Anna McGhee:* That's right.

*June Onder:* Not all this corn oil and partially hydrogenated stuff.

**12. Are there any other stories or events that you'd like to discuss?**

*Anna McGhee:* I think we covered quite a bit. I'll probably think of something later.

*June Onder:* All the memberships you belonged to. All the things you did.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, I think I covered a lot.

*June Onder:* Rosary society she was in and Sodality and May crowning.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, well if you think of anything you just give me a call.

*Anna McGhee:* Okay.

*Brenda Velasco:* I'll write it up because it takes a while for this transcription to be typed up. But I thank you very, very much, both of you. This was a surprise having June here. I'm glad she was here.

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, she filled in on a lot of things I forgot. The young can remember. Nice having you.

*Brenda Velasco:* It was a pleasure.

*June Onder:* She wanted to give you the name of Mrs. Nash's son. Remember the one that you were going to give a book to that still lives around here.

*Anna McGhee:* Wait a minute.

*June Onder:* What's his name?

*Anna McGhee:* That's not her son.

*June Onder:* Oh no, who's that, the brother of your friend in Florida?

*Anna McGhee:* That's Bucher.

*June Onder:* Yes, but how old is he and he still lives around here?

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, he lives on Middlesex Avenue. His name is Walter Bucher.

*Brenda Velasco:* And he has a book.

*Anna McGhee:* No, I have a book to give him.

*June Onder:* But he's.... How old is he?

*Anna McGhee:* I can't remember. He must be about ten years younger than his sister and she's my age.

*Brenda Velasco:* So he's in his seventies?

*Anna McGhee:* Yes.

*June Onder:* And he was born and raised here?

*Anna McGhee:* Yes, he's lived here all his life.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, if you see him, because I am a stranger to a lot of people.....

*Anna McGhee:* You would like to talk to him.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, usually if I meet people like I met you at that firehouse. I wanted you to meet me and talk to me and it was up to you if you wanted to do it. I don't want to push this on anybody and some people do not want to be interviewed. That's their prerogative, you know.