

Oral History Interview
Bernice Leo Nufrio
WH086

(written transcript and digital audio)

On September 16, 2010, Bernice Leo Nufrio was interviewed at the Henry Inman Library by Brenda Velasco at 11:00 A.M.

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

Bernice Nufrio: My name is Bernice Leo Nufrio.

Brenda Velasco: Where do you live in Colonia?

Bernice Nufrio: Amherst Avenue.

Brenda Velasco: What year were you born in?

Bernice Nufrio: '31.

Brenda Velasco: So you saw a lot of things happening growing up.

2. How long have you lived in Woodbridge?

Brenda Velasco: Now these questions are going to be generic but basically it's Colonia. How long have you lived in Colonia?

Bernice Nufrio: Since 1955.

Brenda Velasco: In 1955 you moved here?

Bernice Nufrio: Yes, fifty-five years.

3. Why did you or your family originally move to Colonia?

Bernice Nufrio: My sister-in-law brought a house on Jordan Road and we came up to visit her; she bought it in '54, a year before us. We decided we liked the area and we stayed. It was very open space then.

Brenda Velasco: Okay and you bought on Amherst Avenue. Was it a new home that you bought? (158 Amherst)

Bernice Nufrio: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: So you moved into a brand new home?

Bernice Nufrio: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Do you recall the number of rooms you had?

Bernice Nufrio: Four rooms and a bathroom.

Brenda Velasco: How much did it go for at that time?

Bernice Nufrio: \$13,500 I think.

Brenda Velasco: When you say open space what do you mean open space?

Bernice Nufrio: Well, Amherst was a dead end road.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, Amherst was a dead end.

Bernice Nufrio: There were big white gates going through each side right after you passed over Inwood and that's what we liked. We didn't know they were going to knock it down the following year and put a hundred houses up there.

Brenda Velasco: Surprise!

Bernice Nufrio: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: But this is the post-World War II boom in the suburbs that Colonia exemplified. So how many houses were on Amherst then when you moved here?

Bernice Nufrio: Not many, because I used to walk home from the bus every night. In my section there were four and then there was a lot. Across the street there was just one house. Now there are three there. Around the corner there was only one house after the corner house, one house was an electrician, and the rest was all empty lot right up to Fagan it was all empty. Then down the road there were so many empty lots there. We had one right next to us, too. I couldn't tell you the exact amount of houses though, I never counted them.

Brenda Velasco: Where did you get the bus then?

Bernice Nufrio: Down on the corner.

Brenda Velasco: On Inman Avenue?

Bernice Nufrio: Yes, Inman and Amherst.

Brenda Velasco: Because we still have the bus service.

Bernice Nufrio: I know, the bus would take you all the way into Newark but I used to go first into Linden and then I'd change because you had to take two buses to get to Linden. So I got a job in Rahway and it was just one bus so it wasn't bad but you never could rely on them let me tell you. They used to have two #32 (buses). One had a big sign that said Gertrude's and the other one said Potter's.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, when we say Potter's Crossing you meant down by Inman Grove Shopping Center in Edison.

Bernice Nufrio: Right. They used to have all these little shacks out there. It was terrible.

Brenda Velasco: Yes and a very high crime rate at the same time too. So with the shopping center and all those new homes down there after yours was built.

Bernice Nufrio: Oh yes, that was all dead other than the shacks.

Brenda Velasco: What size property did you.....

Bernice Nufrio: 50 X 200.

Brenda Velasco: And where did you move from that this seems like it was open space?

Bernice Nufrio: Elizabeth, Peterstown. (Italian section of Elizabeth)

Brenda Velasco: Okay.

Bernice Nufrio: Off the Avenue and Amity, right across up Route #9 (Routes #1 and #9). So I couldn't sleep in the beginning when I first moved here because it was only crickets I heard.

Brenda Velasco: It was so quiet. You weren't use to the outdoors.

Bernice Nufrio: My husband said listen to the crickets and if they stop then you know something's going by because he always worked shift work.

Brenda Velasco: So this was quite an experience for you coming from a very built up area.

Bernice Nufrio: You didn't need a car.

Brenda Velasco: No, you walked to the stores in Peterstown.

Bernice Nufrio: You're right. I needed a car; we couldn't afford a second car, so I had to take the bus. That bus, in really bad weather, every bus that came said St. Gertrude's. Nobody said Potters because one night we were waiting at the Rahway Station, the benches there, and the first three came by and all said St. Gertrude's. I

finally said I'm getting on the next bus that comes. It was zero degree weather. So I got on and my neighbor got on and everybody else got on with me. There were about fifteen of us and we said to the bus driver, we're going to Potters. He said, well I'm not. Can't you read the sign? We had a big argument and said we're not getting off. He agreed to take us to Wood Avenue. He said that's as far as I go, because the plows were terrible on Inman Avenue.

Brenda Velasco: Oh yes.

Bernice Nufrio: So he took us as far as Wood Avenue but I got off before. I felt sorry for the people who had to walk down to Potters. But I walked from St. Gertrude's many a times, believe me.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, our bus service has improved.

Bernice Nufrio: I hope so.

Brenda Velasco: But we all have cars now. So you liked the open space and I guess you could afford the house too.

Bernice Nufrio: Well we had a mortgage. When I moved here the taxes were a hundred and twenty-eight dollars.

Brenda Velasco: Wow!

Bernice Nufrio: And my husband had a fifty dollar deduction for service so we paid seventy-eight dollars a year for taxes.

Brenda Velasco: That's unheard of now.

Bernice Nufrio: That's one of the reasons we came up here too.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, and that's always a good motivator.

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

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

Bernice Nufrio: They opened up the street.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, they opened the street and a lot more houses were built.

Bernice Nufrio: Yes, every fifty feet. When I moved here we had no running water, we had well water, and we had septic tanks. Can you imagine septic tanks every fifty feet. I couldn't believe it. I said to my husband I can't believe it, all these people have septic tanks and when one went the whole neighborhood smelt, it was terrible. I used to say I was sorry I moved here and all that. But then they came around but we had to pay for it, the sewer and the water. I asked my husband to get rid of the well and just leave it outside for outside water. We had that until it broke. The guy wanted a hundred and something dollars just to come down and look at it. I said to my husband, it isn't worth it, you know. Because everybody else, my girlfriend, all of them, used to come and get the fresh water.

Brenda Velasco: Because it was nice and cold.

Bernice Nufrio: Yes, and I said we're running this and it's costing us so much so we didn't fix it. We stayed but the smell here sometimes was terrible. The odor was terrible. When I used to walk up the street I used to walk with a handkerchief over my nose.

Brenda Velasco: This was quite a contrast from where you came from because you had sidewalks, you had sewers and you had running water.

Bernice Nufrio: That's right.

Brenda Velasco: This was the country then for you.

Bernice Nufrio: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: With skunks in the area as well.

Bernice Nufrio: I didn't mind that.

Brenda Velasco: So was Amherst paved at all?

Bernice Nufrio: It was like chopped up I can't explain it, like it might have been paved once. I know my husband broke a spring on his car coming up the street because the holes were so bad. But when after they built that development, it was terrible because I said they should have been forced to fix the street. They left it in worse shape than it was when we moved in. But they didn't get after these guys.

When I first moved up here they had one school.

Brenda Velasco: Where was the school?

Bernice Nufrio: Barron Avenue.

Brenda Velasco: That was the high school?

Bernice Nufrio: Yes, well the junior high also was over there.

Brenda Velasco: Okay.

Bernice Nufrio: Because the only schools in this whole township for all Colonia is where Evergreen is now- that was #17.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, you had School #17 when you moved here.

Bernice Nufrio: And the one by the park, #3 and #10. They were the only two schools. (Schools #2-16 were built in 1922)

Brenda Velasco: That was by Merrill Park and both those schools have closed.

Bernice Nufrio: I know.

Brenda Velasco: School #17 is now Evergreen for seniors.

Bernice Nufrio: What is School #10?

Brenda Velasco: That was storage and some offices so they don't use that either.

Bernice Nufrio: Well that was the oldest. #17 wasn't as old. (School #17 was built in 1954)

Brenda Velasco: No. Okay, what services did you have? Did you have any stores here?

Bernice Nufrio: No, we just had **Benny's**. He was on the left as you're coming down Amherst. There's still the white building with the little apartment behind it and only now it's added on. But he was very nice to everyone. We came down with mud on the road and wore boots and he would let us leave them there and get them when we came home. You couldn't walk in high heels and I worked in high heels. But he was a little high but not that bad. Then you had **Tremarco's Hardware Store**.

(**Walgreen** area)

Brenda Velasco: That's right.

Bernice Nufrio: That's all that was there, both inexpensive.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so **Benny's** had general items like food and.....

Bernice Nufrio: Lunch, cold cuts and salad. They had delicious salad, potato salad, and he had a counter if you wanted to get coffee. Sometimes when the bus was late you would sit there and have coffee. It wasn't bad. He was very good.

Brenda Velasco: And how about the post office?

Bernice Nufrio: It was you know when you go towards the park from New Dover Road, you go down Fairview Avenue, well you had to make a fast right and there was this building, it was really a store front. My husband sent me there the first time, he knew where it was and I went past it like three times and said, where is it? Down in the corner there was a strip of paper that said post office.

Brenda Velasco: So it was off of New Dover Road then?

Bernice Nufrio: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Close to that other part of Colonia that had the old library because that's where the library is.

Bernice Nufrio: Yes, right.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, in that general area.

Bernice Nufrio: Right, it was just a store front. It was only temporary I think and they also had a railroad station.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, that was on New Dover and Route #27 they had a railroad station there too.

Bernice Nufrio: Yes, I took that train once and went to Philly. It was a local train and it took me I don't know how many hours.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, you mentioned there were only about two stores and you mentioned the schools.

Bernice Nufrio: That other store way down near the ice cream place.....

Brenda Velasco: Oh by **Dickert's**, the old **Dickert**?

Bernice Nufrio: Yes, that was there.

Brenda Velasco: Then on the corner of Jordan where the post office is DeRosa had the **Colonia Drugs**.

Brenda Velasco: Right.

Bernice Nufrio: Otherwise it was a gas station and the gas station was.....

Brenda Velasco: Right on Amherst, Jordan and Inman.

Bernice Nufrio: Well, two gas stations and Jerry DeRosa's place.

Brenda Velasco: How about houses of worship?

Bernice Nufrio: We had to go to St. Cecelia's. The only way you could get to St. Cecelia's you had to go down Inman Avenue to Cleveland down Cleveland and over Montrose to get over to St. Cecelia's. Then St. John's came into being (1962). We used to go to School #22 for services and another school, I don't remember the other school. At that time when the priests were here, I don't remember the street, but when you crossed over Chain O' Hills Road, they were there but now there are houses there. One of the hills or the cliffs or somewhat, where you could only make a right, right on the corner, that's where the priests lived.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so the rectory for the priests was off Chain O' Hills Road then.

Bernice Nufrio: Yes, Father Radziwon because I had to go over there. He liked it because there were empty lots and he could play ball with the kids all the time. Then where the church is that was all this land owned by **Ritchie** and the church bought it from him. So the nuns had to go too, right across from the rectory that street where it's like all walled in like big walls.

Brenda Velasco: And what was **Ritchie's** do you remember?

Bernice Nufrio: It was a nursery but it was enormous. It went from the school all the way down to the church down there.

Brenda Velasco: That was a lot of acreage because you have the chapel. That wasn't owned by the **Ritchie's** I believe that was the Colonia Chapel at one time and then it became St. John Vianney Pre-School. But Greiner Towers was part of **Ritchie's** too.

Bernice Nufrio: He was a nice guy. His daughter got killed. That's when he sold everything and left.

Brenda Velasco: How about the library? Well we're in the library now.

Bernice Nufrio: I'm trying to think what was here. I can't remember.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, and the other library, the old library in Colonia was Chain O' Hills.....

Bernice Nufrio: And Clark and etc. etc. It was a big one. I was glad to see when they built the Woodbridge one.

Brenda Velasco: How about parks? Did you have parks around here?

Bernice Nufrio: Not really. We had a lot of open land, you know, and kids played in it.

Brenda Velasco: Where did your children play? Did you have children?

Bernice Nufrio: My son played in the lot next door with the other kids from behind.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, the empty lot next door.

Bernice Nufrio: That's where they played. Joe had me crazy because he worked nights and he used to say, should those kids be out there? Don't they ever go to their own home?

Brenda Velasco: You always had your eye on your son then.

Bernice Nufrio: Yes. Behind us, all of West Street I don't think there were more than ten houses. Most of them were rented chicken coops. There was sheep behind me.

Brenda Velasco: What?

Bernice Nufrio: Sheep. When we first bought the house I said to my husband what was that noise and he'd say what noise. He knew what it was because he had seen them. Then he said sheep and I said sheep, get out of here! And he said, yes the place behind me had sheep. Then the whole street was like turkey farms and chicken farms and I don't know how many houses were on my side, the other side there were a few houses.

Brenda Velasco: This was on West Street then?

Bernice Nufrio: West Street, yes.

Brenda Velasco: Not any more.

Bernice Nufrio: No, then on Inman Avenue, where Vinnie Vaccaro had the bakery, that was Don Newcombe who lived there. He had those two stately elms in front of his house and Edward R. Morrow interviewed him on TV. My husband was all excited he said Don Newcombe lives right down the street. I said okay. He was from Elizabeth originally. (He played for Dodgers 1949-1951, 1954-1958)

Brenda Velasco: Don Newcombe?

Bernice Nufrio: Yes, he played football; I think it was for the Jets.

Brenda Velasco: Oh, okay.

Bernice Nufrio: Well anyway he got people parking on his lawn. He was telling the neighbors I have to sell the house. He said I can't live here anymore.

Brenda Velasco: He had no privacy.

Bernice Nufrio: No privacy anymore.

Brenda Velasco: So Edward R. Morrow interviewed him right on his home on Inman Avenue.

Bernice Nufrio: Right at his home. It showed the whole picture of the front, everything. So everybody went there to see Don Newcombe.

Brenda Velasco: He lost his privacy.

Bernice Nufrio: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: What schools did your son go to then?

Bernice Nufrio: School #22. My son is adopted. We brought him over from Italy. It was one of my husband's relatives that died. So he was in third grade when he came so he went to School #22.

Brenda Velasco: Then where did he go to middle school?

Bernice Nufrio: Colonia Middle School.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, and then what high school did he go to?

Bernice Nufrio: Colonia.

Brenda Velasco: Colonia High School, okay, and he walked to all these schools?

Bernice Nufrio: Yes, I just mentioned that the other day to Ann D'Amonte. I said, you know, I always remember your two daughters because every time they used to walk up the street they used to say, hi Mrs. Nufrio. They were so cute. I said, now you don't see any kids walking. Nobody walks the kids anymore.

Brenda Velasco: That's where they formed friendships and everything, too.

Bernice Nufrio: I mean I used to walk my son to school and wait until he went in the classroom. That's how I got to know all the other mothers and the teachers. We used to work the library over there and all that.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, volunteer work.

Bernice Nufrio: They're in their cars, zip, boom.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, it's a different world which is too bad. Ours was more relaxed. Oh, the firehouse, where was the firehouse?

Bernice Nufrio: Over where the VFW hall is.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, the VFW hall is right over here, right?

Bernice Nufrio: Yes, Inman Avenue by the Chinese restaurant there. My husband was one of the charter members of the VFW and they bought that property. Well they had already started building that firehouse but that got added on too because that wasn't that big.

Brenda Velasco: So your husband was a charter member of the VFW. He was in World War II?

Bernice Nufrio: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Then they bought the property from the firehouse and the firehouse needed something much bigger so they moved down Inman closer to St. Gertrude's.

6. What did you do for recreation?

Brenda Velasco: Because you moved here in '55.

Bernice Nufrio: There was a tavern on Ellis Parkway and it was called **Gus's Rendovous** and they served food too. So we went over there and played darts and shuffleboard and whatever. Then the **Log Cabin** was over in Raritan and we used to

go dancing there. The movie theater, Iselin theatre, or the Rahway one at that time. I took my son one time to the Forum in Metuchen.

Brenda Velasco: Do you remember how much the movies used to cost you?

Bernice Nufrio: I didn't go to the movies that much with my son. I remember allowing at him because he was with two boys and those two boys were taller than him. My son is short, and they're like six something now, and they were both younger than him. I said to him tell them you're eleven but he was twelve. He wouldn't say he was eleven, he would say he was twelve.

Brenda Velasco: He was honest.

Bernice Nufrio: I had to pay a dollar for him. Otherwise I would pay like thirty-five cents. I said see you don't get any candy now.

Brenda Velasco: When did St. John's come?

Bernice Nufrio: '61 or '62.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, we just celebrated our fiftieth anniversary.

Bernice Nufrio: We did, it wasn't mentioned to me.

Brenda Velasco: Next year then.

Bernice Nufrio: The building came in '61 but we were almost two years going to the different schools or St. Cecelia's for a year and then a year in another school. So I guess around '59.

Brenda Velasco: Because I see you frequently at St. John Vianney so you're one of the early members.

Bernice Nufrio: Maybe it was 1960, it was in that area.

Brenda Velasco: Okay.

Bernice Nufrio: But the stone over there says later because that's when they built it. The parish was started much before that and then we started St. Helena's Parish then.

Brenda Velasco: Right, in Edison.

Bernice Nufrio: Yes, that came after St. John because I have friends like me who donated to St. Cecelia's you know you made a pledge and then you made a pledge to St. John. My one friend said to me what, are they crazy? I'm staying with St. John's. She lives right off Inman like but in Edison. She said I'm not going to join another church.

Brenda Velasco: Not for another pledge. Was there a civic club or anything?

Bernice Nufrio: Yes, there was a civic club but I never went to it though. I worked and didn't have time. That building that's still down there, I think they have a school or something.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, the **Alphabet Academy** now.

Bernice Nufrio: Yes, that was the civic club.

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

Brenda Velasco: What was the center at least for your family?

Bernice Nufrio: I really didn't spend much time in Colonia. We used to go to Elizabeth because our parents were all there and most of our time was spent in Elizabeth. It was right near the river and my son used to go down by the river all the time trying to fish and stuff. I used to take him out into the mountains to Watchung, they had a nice thing for kids up there, building and everything, and then Roosevelt Park had, oh I can't think of the name, I think the building is still there.

Brenda Velasco: Kiddie Keep Well.

Bernice Nufrio: Yes, but that was for older kids at that time. They used to go there and I think they had like little museums and stuff like that.

Brenda Velasco: But it was family oriented.

Bernice Nufrio: Oh, yes.

Brenda Velasco: And you were always with your son. It wasn't some organization?

Bernice Nufrio: Oh, no.

Brenda Velasco: And you still went down to Peterstown. Did you go to the feast every year? That was in August right?

Bernice Nufrio: Until they ruined it.

Brenda Velasco: And they had the market there, too.

Bernice Nufrio: They still have the market. Do your mother and father live there yet?

Brenda Velasco: No, my dad moved out when he married my mother in 1940 but he would always go back.

Bernice Nufrio: Where did you grow up? You didn't grow up there?

Brenda Velasco: No, Linden. My aunts and my father grew up there and some of my cousins but I grew up in Linden.

8. What did you like about living in Colonia?

Bernice Nufrio: Well, I had four nice neighbors let's start that way and my husband made an oven in the backyard. You asked what we did for entertainment, that was part of our entertainment, and he made pizzas. The neighbors and us would get together and my husband played the guitar and two of the neighbors were, I hate to call them hillbillies, and they had friends that played the fiddle. So that's what they did, three guys played two fiddles and the guitar and we danced in my yard and we ate pizza and that was that.

Brenda Velasco: That was great!

Bernice Nufrio: It was; it was very enjoyable. Then you got so many new neighbors and nobody wants to bother.

Brenda Velasco: You're right, it's changed. People are very busy and it's not so much a neighborhood at all. What you had was a neighborhood with your son growing up.

Bernice Nufrio: Across the street were only two houses both with older people. In those days, he came over and showed me, when they both turned sixty-five they took the school tax off their bill. I remember him coming over and say look John I turned sixty-five and I don't have to pay for those kids anymore. But they just marked it right on your bill. None of this business where they cost them a fortune sending out letters and all that.

Brenda Velasco: Anything else you liked about Colonia because you're still here?

Bernice Nufrio: I know, I can't say there's anything in specific that I like. I found the church was close and my husband worked so I could walk to church. I could do that in Elizabeth too but. In the beginning I really didn't care for it that much because I was so isolated. My husband worked shift work. I didn't have a car, we only had one car, and I couldn't do things. He had to go with me shopping and to Rahway and I didn't want to go at night by myself. That's where we did basically most of our

shopping. Then if you wanted a store Perth Amboy had **Bambergers** and **Sears** and all those stores. That's where we did our shopping.

Brenda Velasco: Did you go back to Elizabeth, Broad Street, at all for shopping?

Bernice Nufrio: Yes, Christmas shopping, because I could take the bus down to Rahway and then I would call my husband and tell him I was getting on the bus and he would be waiting for me at the corner, so I did that. Then when I drove, I went into Elizabeth. Christmas my sister wanted to go and I said okay I'll take you. I parked and I had about ten minutes on my meter yet and I came back and there was a ticket. I thought, at that time I think it was Mayor Dunn, I said I'll never shop in that town again, that's it. You just lost my business.

Brenda Velasco: That was the problem with the cities they charged you for parking with the parking meters where as when the malls came in.....

Bernice Nufrio: Yes, they lost a lot of business that's why. But yet in Perth Amboy you could shop during the season, the holiday season, and they used to have covers over the meters. You didn't have to pay to park there. They were smarter than the rest of the towns.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, they were.

Bernice Nufrio: They were because you went there and you weren't afraid of getting a ticket.

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

Brenda Velasco: You just saw the whole town take off with its gloves and construction.

Bernice Nufrio: The only thing I could remember-Plainfield riots.

Brenda Velasco: Right, that was about 1967.

Bernice Nufrio: Yes, that's the only ones I know, the riots. St. John's used to have a fight every time they brought the fair in. I wouldn't work the late shift because of that. I worked six to eight thirty and I told the priest get rid of the darn beer because the kids couldn't drink it but their friends would get it for them. At that time, it was like eighteen years old and these kids thirteen and fourteen were drinking. I remember the CYO, I think it was Father Strano then; he had the biggest amount of people in the CYO. The seams were popping open because they couldn't fit all these kids in there. One day he looked at a name and he saw Levy, Brad Levy lived up the street from us, and he called him up and said, are you catholic? He said heck no, I'm Jewish. So he started going down and I think he eliminated them. They were non-Catholics. He said don't you understand this is the Catholic Youth Organization.

Brenda Velasco: But it was the only place for young people to go.

Bernice Nufrio: I know but, hey, that was the Catholic school.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, they didn't provide anything at that time and right now at Evergreen in the evenings it will be open to middle school children.

Bernice Nufrio: Really.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, the Colonia Middle School maybe three to seven or eight a few nights a week. So any new equipment that they're getting in now for Evergreen for the young people, will also be able to be used by the senior citizens during the

day. So you're having a better utilization of the building because Evergreen shuts down at night.

Bernice Nufrio: I know.

Brenda Velasco: It shuts down in the afternoon.

Bernice Nufrio: She used to have to get permission because originally we used to have our Christmas party at night.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, well you'll still have the Christmas party.

Bernice Nufrio: You can't have it at night though.

Brenda Velasco: Oh.

Bernice Nufrio: She was having it in the daytime because a lot of people.....

Brenda Velasco: They don't want to drive. The Christmas tree lighting we still have it every Christmas.

Bernice Nufrio: I was going to say, are they open now?

Brenda Velasco: Evergreen?

Bernice Nufrio: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Yes.

Bernice Nufrio: Because the way George spoke at the last meeting.....

Brenda Velasco: They're open. They've got some renovation work going on in other rooms but the main room.....

Bernice Nufrio: I didn't even check to see if they had the luncheon today because....

Brenda Velasco: I will check.

Bernice Nufrio: I'll ask Phyllis.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, she would know. So you saw your house and you saw beyond Amherst when they opened the gates that whole development.

Bernice Nufrio: That's a funny story. There are two Piersons that live on the street, they were cousins. They were the ones that used to come to our pizza parties, and they were married to sisters, so when Howard built his house he put a mailbox there. We didn't have mail delivery to the house, we had a post office box, and it was always empty. He said to the postman how come you don't deliver mail to me you keep sending it to my cousin. He said because your house doesn't exist on my map. He said what are you talking about it's there can't you see it? He said no it's not on our map. He called up the post office and they told him the same thing, you're not on any map. He had to move his mailbox in front of his cousin's house in order to get his mail.

Brenda Velasco: Wow! What street did Howard live on-Amherst, too?

Bernice Nufrio: Yes that last house right before the development. There's a long ranch there and his cousin had the older house at the end of Inwood, you could see it. They had chickens. There were more chickens in that area.

Brenda Velasco: A lot of fresh eggs then.

Bernice Nufrio: Yes. I swear when they ran out of food they just opened up the gates and let the chickens out. My nephew came up, he was about three, and he said oh Aunt Bernice you got chickens. I said what? He said they're all on your steps. I go out there and I'm shooing these things and there's this guy behind just sending them out.

Brenda Velasco: And they were scavengers, they scavenge.

10. What do you like about Woodbridge today?

Brenda Velasco: Or Colonia.

Bernice Nufrio: I don't know what to tell you on that.

Brenda Velasco: You're still here.

Bernice Nufrio: I know and my taxes are now almost six thousand. I don't know, what can I say? It's just home that's all.

Brenda Velasco: You have a lot of friends here.

Bernice Nufrio: Oh, yes.

Brenda Velasco: And a network.

Bernice Nufrio: I have a lot of friends. I'm in the Colonia Seniors and I'm going to be in AARP soon because the new president works with me at the hospital.

Brenda Velasco: Who's the new president?

Bernice Nufrio: Ann Veranda and she's trying to clean it up and straighten it out and all that. So she asked me if I would be interested and I said yes, sure why not. What are you doing? Then after I joined she said you'll be a hostess right. There was this big paperwork with a sign for me to wear with my name and hostess. I can't believe it but I also belong to St. Johns Seniors, I belong to the Widows and Widowers and we meet at the library. I run our school lunches from when I graduated high school yet. What year did you get out of there? Did you go to Batton?

Brenda Velasco: No, no, no I went to Linden. So what year did you graduate from Batton?

Bernice Nufrio: '47.

Brenda Velasco: Right after the war then.

Bernice Nufrio: Yes and I used to run the meetings but they got to be too much so they settled for dinners and they didn't want to come out at night.

Brenda Velasco: No, no, as you get older.

Bernice Nufrio: So now we're having lunches. I still have at least one year.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, but you see each other.

Bernice Nufrio: Oh, yes.

Brenda Velasco: And you've got the contacts throughout. That's great.

Bernice Nufrio: There are friends I go out with all the time that have been friends since the seventh grade.

Brenda Velasco: Do your friends live between Elizabeth and Colonia?

Bernice Nufrio: Rahway, there are quite a few in Rahway and Clark.

Brenda Velasco: So this was a good location for you after you got used to the chickens.

Bernice Nufrio: And the sheep.

Brenda Velasco: And the sheep and the well water.

Bernice Nufrio: The septic tank.

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

Bernice Nufrio: My sister.

Brenda Velasco: Your sister?

Bernice Nufrio: In-law. She lives on Jordan Road.

Brenda Velasco: Which isn't far from you at all.

Bernice Nufrio: No.

12. Are there any other stories or events that you would like to discuss?

Brenda Velasco: That I didn't ask you about.

Bernice Nufrio: No, big changes that's all. Like I said I remember when they built the first **Foodtown** I was so happy to see it there.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, for you.

Bernice Nufrio: I used to cash my check and Irwin caught me one day and he said how come you work for **FoodFair** and you shop here? I said because they don't give me a discount anyway so what's the difference.

Brenda Velasco: Where was the **FoodFair**?

Bernice Nufrio: It was on Stiles Street in Linden but a year after I moved here, I left there. It was a nice town and in back of **Benny's** store there was a phone on the wall and this Mr. Sebastian had a taxi service there. I don't know what else he did, but he had that, very cheap. You know if you had to get somewhere, he's say oh give me a dollar or whatever it was, and then through him I met other people. I started getting a ride with this other fellow because Mr. Sebastian said I went into Linden and he went into Linden. So he started taking me whenever my husband was working shift work or I didn't have the car I should say.

Brenda Velasco: So people helped out.

Bernice Nufrio: Oh, yes.

Brenda Velasco: It was really a nice area that we were in. Only one couple that was there that couldn't stand animals and I love animals so we never got along. But other than that, everybody else got along very well.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, you had a good experience then.

Bernice Nufrio: Oh yes, it really was. It was nice, everybody was friendly. As I say that Mr. Sebastian was nice and then Jake offered me these rides so I didn't have to take to bus. Yes, it was a nice area.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, well I'm glad you moved here.

Bernice Nufrio: Yes, I'm glad too.

Brenda Velasco: What a contrast from Peterstown!

Bernice Nufrio: When my husband's brother died I went back there and I said to my mother I'm going to stay overnight. The Dressing boys were across the street and I was going to yell out the window shut up. My mother said what's the matter with you? You've lived here for how many years and I said I know but it's so different here. Don't they know it's almost twelve o'clock and they're out there talking.

Brenda Velasco: But that's the way it was.

Bernice Nufrio: That's the way it was in Peterstown.

Brenda Velasco: Now you have the crickets. You got to get used to it.

Bernice Nufrio: Crickets and skunks. One incident we had, my husband and I were animal lovers. He called me to come to the house and said the skunk out here has a real shiny head and I said what are you talking about? So I go out with him and the skunk had its head caught in a baby food jar. So my husband's yelling how are we going to get him out? And I said: I don't know we'll try something. I got a real big flashlight and I put it so he wouldn't scratch me and my husband went and stood on the side and I poured oil on his neck and I pulled it right out and he walked away from us shaking his head and looking at us. That's how it was in those days. We had

possums hanging around my clothes line and all that. No fences. Everybody's backyards were open to everybody else. Then they had to after a while because they put the development behind us. They were throwing their garbage around and everything. You didn't even know them; they never even spoke to you. I had one woman across the street, they moved in there, and she left her lights on in the car and I didn't know her phone number so I went over there and knocked on the door and told her. She said oh thank you. I said how about giving me your phone number so I can call you if this ever happens. She said: Oh no, I don't give my phone number to anybody. So I told my husband that's it.

Brenda Velasco: Everybody is different.

Bernice Nufrio: I know I've seen such a change in the people here. They are nothing like before.

Brenda Velasco: But you stayed here and I thank you very, very much for agreeing to the interview. We finally got to sit down and you described the Colonia that is no longer there with the open space. But thank you.