

Oral History Interview
Beverly McDaniel Webb
WH051

(written transcript and digital audio)

On June 20, 2009, Beverly McDaniel Webb was interviewed at the Independent Club of Colonia by Brenda Velasco at 12:45 P.M.

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

My name is Beverly McDaniel, now Webb. I was born August 16, 1956 and I grew up in the Colonia section of Woodbridge.

Brenda Velasco: What street did you live on?

Beverly Webb: East Pine Street.

2. How long did you live in Colonia?

I lived in Colonia for about thirty-six years. We moved from Orange when I was about two.

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

My father wanted to bring the family into a better environment for the children to grow up in.

Brenda Velasco: How many children did your mom and dad have?

Beverly Webb: There were a total of eight children. Two died when they were very young, the oldest two. A boy and a girl died when they were very young so there was six of us left, five girls and one boy.

Brenda Velasco: Did you have other family members here at the time?

Beverly Webb: I really think they chose this area because my grandparents did live here and I'm thinking that that's one reason why they came to this area.

Brenda Velasco: And your grandparents also lived on the same street?

Beverly Webb: Yes, they lived next door on East Pine Street.

Brenda Velasco: Did you have any other relatives living here at that time?

Beverly Webb: My uncle, who is really my father's uncle, lived on the corner of Willow Street and Delaware Avenue on the left side of the street.

Brenda Velasco: Did he move here before your father moved here?

Beverly Webb: I think he was here before my father.

Brenda Velasco: This was the uncle that had built the house?

Beverly Webb: Yes, my uncle Jack (Billups), he built our house that we were in. He had lived there previously and the house on the corner of Delaware Avenue and Willow Street in Colonia.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, if you were born in 1956, by the early '60s you were probably aware of some the things that were happening in Colonia.

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

Well, I saw a lot of things being built like different homes being built because there were very few homes on our street and behind us it was just a wooded area what is now Maple Street and Walnut Street. There were wooded areas around there.

Brenda Velasco: They had a lot of area to play in?

Beverly Webb: We climbed a lot of trees and played in a lot of dirt.

Brenda Velasco: All good things. Were the streets paved at that time?

Beverly Webb: No, they were all gravel.

Brenda Velasco: How about Inman Avenue?

Beverly Webb: Inman Avenue I can't remember. I don't remember if it was paved or not.

Brenda Velasco: How about the services from the township. Did you have any services such as garbage pickup at that time?

Beverly Webb: I don't recall; I just remember my fun time.

Brenda Velasco: Which was a happy time?

Beverly Webb: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: How about the stores?

Beverly Webb: The stores I remember there being a **Drug Fair** where there's a liquor store now by **Ace Hardware** which prior to **Ace Hardware** was the **A&P**. The only thing I remember about the **A&P** is the dancers with the kilts that were always out there dancing. I remember that about the **A&P**. They gave the S&H Green Stamps right?

Brenda Velasco: Yes.

Beverly Webb: And they had dancers with kilts on out there, I remember that.

Brenda Velasco: And that wasn't too far from your home either.

Beverly Webb: No, it was right on the next street. Then where the **Exxon Gas Station** is there was a little farmer's market called Pete's and we used to go in there and buy the little butter cookies for a penny and the candy necklaces. That was good times. Every time you'd get a little change we'd go in there and buy little things.

Brenda Velasco: Once again that wasn't far from your house either.

Beverly Webb: No, it was right on the next street.

Brenda Velasco: You had spent a lot of time there.

Beverly Webb: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: How about houses of worship?

Beverly Webb: Well, really the main one we would go to is the First Baptist Church on Walnut Street, which is still there. My mother was the secretary. Me and my sisters and my brother were the little choir, the children's choir.

Brenda Velasco: Once again that was just down the street for you too.

Beverly Webb: Then we used to go over here, I think the church is still here by **Foodtown**, we used to go there and I remember we'd be in Bible School and other programs over there.

Brenda Velasco: Okay and that became St. John Vianney preschool but I forgot what it was called prior to that.

Beverly Webb: But there was something, a little brick school or church or something, that's over there.

Brenda Velasco: Yes.

Beverly Webb: We used to go there. I remember making the walnut turtles.

Brenda Velasco: Then when you started school what schools did you attend?

Beverly Webb: I first started in School #20 (Claremont Avenue School). I think it's called Hoffman Avenue now in Colonia. That was prior to School #27 being built.

Brenda Velasco: Did you attend School #27? (Pennsylvania Avenue School)

Beverly Webb: I think I went there in fifth and sixth grade. I don't remember when it was built, it could have been later. (1964)

Brenda Velasco: Then you had to come over the bridge.

Beverly Webb: Yes into Colonia Middle School and then Colonia High School.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, so you did attend Colonia High School. That was fairly new then at that time. (1967)

Beverly Webb: I graduated in '75.

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

Brenda Velasco: Do you recall the post office?

Beverly Webb: I do recall the post office. The library, I don't think the library, I can't remember how long the library has been there but I think we always used to go to Woodbridge.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, Woodbridge had a main library. How about the parks?

Beverly Webb: The parks, we would mainly go to right here where the Evergreen Senior Center is now near School #17, we used to always go to the park there. Then when they built the park on the other side of the bridge by School #27 we would go there. It was one of the two parks.

Brenda Velasco: How about the firehouse?

Beverly Webb: The firehouse, I remember the firehouse when it was the little white stone brick building and we used to always go there when they had the wet downs and everything. We would go there and have hot dogs and just get all wet and just have a good time.

Brenda Velasco: And since it's expanded greatly.

Beverly Webb: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Was the Independent Club here at that time?

Beverly Webb: Yes, the Independent Club, as far as I know, all my life. It was founded back in '49.

6. What did you do for recreation?

Brenda Velasco: And that's going to get us in recreation too, okay. We'll go to recreation but let's dwell on the Independent Club and then we could cover some other areas. Now your grandfather played a role.

Beverly Webb: Yes, my grandfather, Thomas McDaniel, was one of the founders.

Brenda Velasco: And were your parents members too?

Beverly Webb: I haven't seen my mother's name out on anything but I know my father was very involved in the Independent Club. As a matter of fact, my mother passed away in 1966 so that's probably one reason why her name isn't there. You know, she had passed.

My father, yes, he was always all about the children. Whatever you could do for the children, he wanted to be involved. I think it was every Friday night, he was an Army

man, so we would have canteens and we would come into the Independent Club and have hotdogs and hamburgers and soda and play music and play games, you know, anything to keep us, you know, off the street and give us something to do.

Brenda Velasco: That was great.

Beverly Webb: Yes, everyone decided we would like to get that started again. So that's one of the fun things we did. He was like the event planner at the clubhouse. Also, we would give parties here, you know, for one or two years. I don't even know if they charged us anything but we would have parties. I think we had a birthday party one year or just a party, we would have parties here, and people from different towns would come, Edison, Rahway, Roselle, just anybody around, you know. There was always an adult here, you know, to keep everything in order.

Brenda Velasco: So there was adult supervision?

Beverly Webb: Yes, yes, always. We always had a good time. And anybody could just walk in as long as they knew how to conduct themselves. We had a good time here.

Brenda Velasco: What are some other things that you did for recreation? This was like when you were a teenager and a little bit older.

Beverly Webb: What we used to do was play a lot of basketball. If we didn't play over on School #27 basketball court we would be over here on School #17, they had the basketball court over here. We'd play basketball and listen to music or just swing on the swings at the court. Also, we'd play a lot of four squares. A lot of people don't remember that but we did.

Brenda Velasco: Well you explain what four squares are, okay.

Beverly Webb: Four squares is a game we played on the street or in the parking lot where you take chalk and you draw a big square and divide it into four. Everybody gets into a square and you have to hit the ball back and forth without, almost like I guess tennis with a big ball; you hit the ball back and forth without it going out of bounds and stuff. It kept us moving. So we had a good time with that.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, did you have a bike?

Beverly Webb: I didn't have a bike but we borrowed bikes a lot.

Brenda Velasco: From your older sister?

Beverly Webb: Well, from anybody in the neighborhood that we could borrow one from and a lot of us would go bike riding. We'd ride on the horse path going along the side of the Parkway behind the streets. I don't know if they had one on the west side but on the east side there was a big horse path where horses would ride and we would go on there and ride until we couldn't ride anymore to wherever it took us, Rahway or whatever. We'd just ride around and we used to make go-carts and ride down the hill on Arcangela Avenue and roller skate, street skate.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so you had a lot of alternatives.

Beverly Webb: Yes, we did a lot.

Brenda Velasco: Not very expensive.

Beverly Webb: The other thing is we used to take any cardboard boxes we could find and slide down the hill beside the Parkway on the grass. That was fun. So we made a lot of our own activities, we did a lot.

Brenda Velasco: You sure did.

Beverly Webb: A bunch of us.

Brenda Velasco: And you had a lot of kids in the neighborhood too at that time.

Beverly Webb: Yes, one family they had sixteen children, I think sixteen children, the Wilsons. They were all like different ages and we all hung out together and the Jackson family. There were a lot of different families. We hung with the Sadlers, the DuPrees and the Jennings, just everybody. We would all just get together and just have a good time.

Brenda Velasco: How many people did the Jackson's have, do you remember?

Beverly Webb: The Jackson family I think there were like eight or nine of those.

Brenda Velasco: Because there were a lot of kids in this area.

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

Brenda Velasco: Where did you spend time mostly, was it the church or the Independent Club?

Beverly Webb: Mainly it was the Independent Club or either at the parks or basketball courts.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, you mentioned with the Independent Club there was canteen night on a Friday night. Were there any other activities here that were provided to the young people?

Beverly Webb: I can't recall, I really can't recall. I'm just trying to think back because it looked like we were always in here for something but I can't recall if it was just for the teens or for just everybody coming together and then there was always food.

Brenda Velasco: Food and people, okay.

Beverly Webb: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Was there any homework or mentoring here?

Beverly Webb: At that time I don't think so.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, but it was crowded with food and people.

Beverly Webb: Yes. We always had to play in front of the clubhouse.

8. What did you like about living in your section of Colonia?

It just seemed like you were free to do things just like, you know, just always be out playing and carefree.

Brenda Velasco: It was safe.

Beverly Webb: Yes, it was safe. We didn't really have a problem where somebody was always like afraid something was going to happen to us. You know we could even be in the park until twelve or one o'clock in the morning swinging on the swings and singing. That's what we used to do, you know. Then sometimes we would play touch or flag football, whatever, until twelve or one o'clock in the morning on the grass at the school. We just hung out.

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

Construction, I was a little disappointed when all the houses were going up because it took away a lot of our play area; we used to have the trees to climb and just hang out in the woods and just be out. When they started building the houses it took a lot away from us, but I guess I felt like you do now.

Brenda Velasco: They're coming back to us.

Beverly Webb: Yes, but it brought a lot of people and a lot of friends, you know, and everything but it took away a lot of our freedom to roam.

Brenda Velasco: And the open spaces.

Beverly Webb: Yes, but that's with construction. With the accidents, the main one was, you know, my friend, Bernard Jackson, was killed on the Parkway. That was one. Then his brother drowned; I'm trying to think of his brother's name. It was maybe that same summer or maybe the summer after his brother drowned. (1972/1973)

Brenda Velasco: Poor family.

Beverly Webb: Yes, I think it was down the shore somewhere, Seaside or something. But I think, all in all, we did pretty good.

Brenda Velasco: Did you stay here after you got married?

Beverly Webb: I moved out of Colonia before I got married. I moved out in '92, I think. About '92 I moved to Rahway. But I'd been out here all my life and I figured I needed a change so I did move out. I was in Rahway until 2004 and then I moved to Plainfield in 2005.

Brenda Velasco: But you still come back because your sister is here.

Beverly Webb: Yes, I have family here still and I'm involved with the Independent Club because it was part of my history and I would like to see it booming again.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, anything else? How about discrimination or sporting events?

Beverly Webb: Discrimination, I can't really say that I did, off the top of my head.

10. Do you have family members still living in Colonia?

Brenda Velasco: Family members, you have a brother?

Beverly Webb: Yes.

Beverly Velasco: And is he still living in.....

Beverly Webb: My brother lives in Plainfield.

Brenda Velasco: And your sister, Juanita, lives in.....

Beverly Webb: Colonia.

Brenda Velasco: Anybody else? Any of your uncle's family or?

Beverly Webb: Living here, in Colonia?

Brenda Velasco: Yes.

Beverly Webb: No.

Brenda Velasco: Then it's just Juanita.

Beverly Webb: Yes, in Colonia. I'm trying to think, yes.

Brenda Velasco: That is it and your grandfather played a very prominent role. He founded the Independent Club of Colonia.

Beverly Webb: Yes. As a matter of fact, I was looking at who signed the deed to the property. (Her grandfather, Thomas McDaniel, was one of the signatures on the deed)

Brenda Velasco: And it became a community center for this surrounding environment. Alright, anything else you can think of? Anything we haven't covered?

Beverly Webb: No, not really, I think we covered everything. I am the vice-president now of the Independent Club.

Brenda Velasco: Oh, okay.

Beverly Webb: And I, along with the other officers and members, like I said, we are trying to get the Independent Club back up and running fully because we do have our younger people in the community that need to take over when we're gone. So we have to

get it restructured so that they could take it over and also we want people to know what we're about.

Brenda Velasco: Well, that's why we're doing the oral history project. So the interview as well as the transcript will be in the main library and future historical museum and so we have two areas that people can do research on. One of the things that inspired me to include the Independent Club of Colonia was they're constantly getting questions about it in the main library.

Beverly Webb: Oh, okay.

Brenda Velasco: So you've got a lot of education to do.

Beverly Webb: Yes, and we also want to get ourselves more visible to the community, you know, so that they'll know who we are, what we are about and we need to reach out. You know, we plan to reach out to the other organizations and people to help them because, you know, you had suggested the *Tooling Around* for us which was great. We appreciate it, and we want to give back so we want to get involved.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, we got you for next year then.

Beverly Webb: Well, any programs that are happening before next year we need to find out about them and get involved.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, very good.

Beverly Webb: I think that is it.

Brenda Velasco: I think that is it so I thank you very much Beverly for the time and for helping me set up all the interviews. Thank you very much.