

Oral History Interview
Bob LaPenta
WH025

(written transcript and digital audio)

On January 5, 2009, Bob LaPenta was interviewed at the Henry Inman Library by Brenda Velasco at 10 A.M..

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

My name is Bob LaPenta. Right now I live in Avenel which is part of Woodbridge Township. I was born and raised in Woodbridge Proper. As a matter of fact, at the time my mother had me, she had us at home. I was actually born on 13 Gordon Street which is directly behind the Town Hall. A few years ago it used to be the police headquarters there. Ironically, I moved from across the street to the police headquarters because I became an officer which I retired from the Woodbridge Police.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, and what was your date of birth?

Bob LaPenta: 3/27/33.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so that makes you, you're in your '70s right now.

Bob LaPenta: 75 and I will be 76 in a few more months.

Brenda Velasco: That's right, in another two months or so.

2. How long have you lived in Woodbridge?

Brenda Velasco: Alright, so you've lived all your life in Woodbridge, a few different locations, 13 Gordon Street and you currently live in Avenel and you also, as you said, were a policeman.

Bob LaPenta: Right.

Brenda Velasco: How many years were you a.....

Bob LaPenta: A little over 25 years.

Brenda Velasco: And, there's another interesting aspect of your family. The LaPenta family goes back a long time in Woodbridge.

Bob LaPenta: Well, basically my parents got married in 1902. They came in from Brooklyn and resided, I believe, somewhere in Edison. My father worked for the Terra Cotta and got to know Thomas Edison himself.

Brenda Velasco: Wow!

Bob LaPenta: As a matter of fact, when Thomas Edison moved from Edison to West Orange, my mother and father took over the home he was in and were caretakers for that home; now the Edison light stands. As a matter of fact, their first child was born in that house and Thomas Edison was so proud that he sent touring cars down for my mother and father and brought them to a picnic at his home in West Orange to celebrate the new child and at that time made a promise if the child had lived the child would be educated by him. Any school she wanted to go to.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, so was this a brother that you had?

Bob LaPenta: No, it was a sister.

Brenda Velasco: A sister?

Bob LaPenta: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, is she still alive?

Bob LaPenta: No, she died at the age of 6.

Brenda Velasco: Oh, but your mom had a lot of children. You come from, not what we normally think of, as a family of two or three in 2009. How many children did your mother have?

Bob LaPenta: My mother had 18 children.

Brenda Velasco: And what were you in the lineup?

Bob LaPenta: I was next to the last. I was number 17.

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

The only thing I can think of was that my father started to work for Middlesex Water Company and the main office was in Woodbridge at that time. He was not only a foreman but also the payroll was sent to my house; my mother and father distributed the money among the men over the weekend when they would come for it.

Brenda Velasco: So they had an important role in the Water Company though?

Bob LaPenta: Right.

Brenda Velasco: Not only as foreman but the money.

Bob LaPenta: Right.

Brenda Velasco: And then they just eventually stayed in Woodbridge.

Bob LaPenta: Yes, they stayed in Woodbridge.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, I know that within Woodbridge you were on the police force and there's also the LaPenta Oil Company?

Bob LaPenta: That was originated by my oldest brother, Sam. It is now passed down to his son and his grandchildren. As a matter of fact, that business originated about the time I was born in 1933. It started off with fruits, vegetables and a nice truck and then went into oil. The oil business has been over 70 years.

Brenda Velasco: So your whole family has played an important role.....

Bob LaPenta: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: In Woodbridge history.

Bob LaPenta: Right.

Brenda Velasco: Okay and when did you join the police force?

Bob LaPenta: 1962.

Brenda Velasco: So as a result you've seen many, many physical changes that have occurred in Woodbridge Proper.

Bob LaPenta: Definitely.

4. What physical changes have occurred over the years in the area you lived?

-houses, streets, services, stores, houses of worship, schools etc.

Well, the first supermarket to be built in Woodbridge was up on Main Street. It was an ACME market. It was almost by the corner of Main Street and Amboy Avenue. The second supermarket to be built would be the A&P which was about maybe ten doors down from the Acme and then they put in a Woolworth's store in that area also.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, was this on the side towards Perth Amboy or the side.....

Bob LaPenta: On the south side towards Perth Amboy.

Brenda Velasco: Okay and the Woolworth was right along there?

Bob LaPenta: Yes, it was in that area too. It's now a farmers market or a vegetable store.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, and that's the only fruit store or vegetable store in Woodbridge today.

Bob LaPenta: Right.

Brenda Velasco: It's a small store. But at one time Woodbridge Main Street hosted two supermarkets then.

Bob LaPenta: That's right

Brenda Velasco: And a Woolworth's. We have to go further down on Main Street to Wegmans.

Bob LaPenta: As a matter of fact, where these stores are located in that vicinity, when I was younger, were homes up there. I remember between where Woolworth's is now, and Christensen's store there were two homes there with a cobblestone driveway and I knew people in the both homes and, at that time, which was close to the '50s, they still had hand water pumps in wooden sinks in their kitchen.

Brenda Velasco: Wow! And we've seen such different changes and rapid changes on Main Street. Were there any mom and pop stores that you remember back then?

Bob LaPenta: Ah, yes, mostly they were on New Street and Fulton Street, the mom and pop stores. It was mostly an Italian area. They had the Italian stores. I'm trying to think of the names of the people now. One of the buildings on Fulton Street still bears the name. I think it's Simoni, if I'm not mistaken.

Brenda Velasco: And what did they sell?

Bob LaPenta: Canned goods and they were, more or less, like an Italian deli.

Brenda Velasco: Okay.

Bob LaPenta: You could buy the imported olives and fresh spaghetti by the pound and it wasn't wrapped like it is today.

Brenda Velasco: No.

Bob LaPenta: They would take it out and weigh it.

Brenda Velasco: Quite different than today in the box.

Bob LaPenta: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Or in cellophane. Alright, any other stores that you can recall along that area?

Bob LaPenta: Well on Main Street, we'll go to the first 5&10, I recall in Woodbridge, would be on the corner of Main and William Street and the person I remember that was the owner of that store, at the time, was, I just had it on my mind.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, I see you looking at that pamphlet that you and your brother set up for the Woodbridge Historical Downtown Walking Tour.

Bob LaPenta: The man's name was right in my head and I can't think of it now. I think it was a name like Minever or something like that. Yes, Minever: Mr. Minever.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, Mr. Minever, alright. I gather you went into his store too?

Bob LaPenta: Oh, yes, as a child.

Brenda Velasco: What did you buy?

Bob LaPenta: Just looked. We didn't have money to buy.

Brenda Velasco: Oh, you just looked, okay. Well with 18 children there wasn't that much money.

Bob LaPenta: A few doors down from him was one of the original A&Ps in Woodbridge which was just a normal little store front like any other mom and pop store. In those days the vegetables and what not were put on the sidewalk.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, now where did your mom do a lot of her grocery shopping then, right on Main Street or did she have to go to Perth Amboy?

Bob LaPenta: No, most of it was done on Main Street. As a matter of fact, she would make a list and send one of the kids out to buy the stuff. She had enough to do at home.

Brenda Velasco: Oh, I'm sure. Do you recall any of the prices back then? And I know you're the youngest, well the next to the youngest in the family.

Bob LaPenta: Not off hand but I was talking to you earlier about mom and pop stores and how they kept a book on people that would buy in their store and there's a list of somebody's groceries here. I believe it's going back into 1913. The funny thing is I was just looking at that. (This ledger was donated to archives)

Brenda Velasco: Oh, I recall.

Bob LaPenta: Alright, here it says tobacco 20 cents.

Brenda Velasco: Was that loose tobacco or.....

Bob LaPenta: Evidently so.

Brenda Velasco: Okay.

Bob LaPenta: Sugar was 30 cents, potatoes 35 cents, lard was like 45 cents.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, and now we know lard is taboo.

Bob LaPenta: Right. A dozen eggs 26 cents and it goes on from there right on through a whole grocery list. Onions, they sold them by the quart for 5 cents.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, 5 cents for a quart of onions. Wow! Prices have really changed.

Bob LaPenta: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: So have salaries, I know that too. So, okay, basically the same streets were there, were they paved?

Bob LaPenta: Yes, they were.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, and what about the houses of worship in that area?

Bob LaPenta: Well, the Methodist church was there at the time. St. James was in the parking lot of where the school stands now. It was a wooden structure. Evidently, that was up on Main Street across from St. James Avenue at one time and then moved from there down to the property they bought where the school is. The White Church (First Presbyterian) was always there and the Trinity. Most of the churches were still there. They're older churches in our town.

Brenda Velasco: Right and two of them have received designation on the National Registry.

Bob LaPenta: Right.

Brenda Velasco: Trinity and the White Presbyterian Church. Alright, were there bus lines around there?

Bob LaPenta: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: How did you move from one town to another town?

Bob LaPenta: Well we had several buses that came through Woodbridge. One would use the route along Rahway Avenue from Avenel down into Sewaren into Perth Amboy. I believe that was the 54 line. The 46 line came from Perth Amboy down Amboy Avenue down Main Street and down Port Reading Avenue into Carteret. There was a 48 line which was strictly used from Perth Amboy. It would come down through Convery Boulevard on to Amboy Avenue and go down through Avenel and Rahway.

Brenda Velasco: And then we also had the train station.

Bob LaPenta: Yes, the train station. I remember when that was at ground level and when they were building it, you know when they raised it up. A lot of work was done by Almasi with his dump trucks which were the old Mack chained drive at the time.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, were you a policeman at that time?

Bob LaPenta: No, no.

Brenda Velasco: No, you were still too young.

Bob LaPenta: Too young.

Brenda Velasco: You were still too young, okay.

Bob LaPenta: As a matter of fact, one of the reasons they raised the railroad because Main Street used to flood in severe weather, severe rain storms, so they got the trains above the flooding conditions.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, so we had a flooding problem on Main Street going way back.

Bob LaPenta: Correct, that would be between William Street and Rahway Avenue. One time I remember my older brothers had a boat rowing around Main Street.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, and what schools did you attend?

Bob LaPenta: I attended No. 1 on School Street, No. 11 which was behind it and then Woodbridge High School.

Brenda Velasco: And where was Woodbridge High School at this time?

Bob LaPenta: At that time it was on Barron Avenue; it's now a middle school, and they had split sessions there. The upper grades went in the morning and the lower grades went in the afternoon.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, so when you were a senior then, you finished school quite early.

Bob LaPenta: I left school to join the service.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, like many others I've interviewed. At what age, did you join the service then?

Bob LaPenta: I joined the service, well, I was becoming 18 and my mother quite objected to it.

Brenda Velasco: You were one of her youngest.

Bob LaPenta: Yes, that was during the Korean War though.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, and that war was from '50 to about '53 I think it was concluded in.

Bob LaPenta: Right.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, you left school in spite of your mother's objections....

Bob LaPenta: I went in.

Brenda Velasco: And you went in and how long were you away from Woodbridge then?

Bob LaPenta: Well about a little over three years.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, where were you stationed?

Bob LaPenta: I ended up being stationed in Riverside, California.

Brenda Velasco: Not bad.

Bob LaPenta: No.

Brenda Velasco: Not bad. Alright, and then when you came back did you notice any changes?

Bob LaPenta: Oh, yes, I could hardly recognize the town after a couple of years.

Brenda Velasco: Alright.

Bob LaPenta: They started development of homes and what not during the time I was gone.

Brenda Velasco: Alright and this is that post-World War II era which would take in part of the Korean War, too.

Bob LaPenta: Right.

Brenda Velasco: So, where did you recall that some of those homes were going up?

Bob LaPenta: Let's see, during that time they were building up Port Reading and over on the Sewaren/Port Reading boundary line they had these little temporary homes built for the fellows that got out of the service from World War II. That was all lined up along where the Turnpike is and Matthew Jago School. They were little four room homes that they built there.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, any other areas that you remember?

Bob LaPenta: No, well, the area I lived in, like, if there was an empty lot a house got built. It wasn't big projects, you know, at that time.

Brenda Velasco: It wasn't developments; it was just spot housing, okay.

Bob LaPenta: Right.

Brenda Velasco: Because you lived in Woodbridge Proper.

Bob LaPenta: Right.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, did you want to add anything else to Question 4 about the physical changes?

Bob LaPenta: No.

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

The post office, itself, as a matter of fact, since I was a child, it was where it is today. From there they had moved it down to Pearl Street, right across from the VFW. It was in there for a while. Then they rebuilt the post office where it is today and where the post office is today and their parking lot, there was an old wooden home there with a wooden fence around it owned by the Drake family.

Brenda Velasco: Do they still live in Woodbridge?

Bob LaPenta: No, not that I know of.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, alright, how about the library?

Bob LaPenta: The only library we had in the whole township, at that time, was what they call the Barron Arts Center today. That was the only library and they were very strict in there. If you breathed too loud you were told to leave, let alone talk.

Brenda Velasco: Quite different from what it is today.

Bob LaPenta: Right.

Brenda Velasco: The rules and regulations. Alright, and how about some of the parks?

Bob LaPenta: Well Woodbridge Park was there and Avenel Park but they were much smaller at that time. The outlying towns, I don't recall the parks there. But you had very little, you know, for recreation of that type, you know, for children.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, and getting to the firehouse.

Bob LaPenta: Well, the firehouse in Woodbridge was where it was today. It was a very small building. I remember they had the old LaSalle fire trucks in there with the steering wheels on the right hand side. They had solid rubber wheels on them. Hook and ladder had all wooden ladders on it and when it went to the scene of a fire I think it got there long after the fire was out, it moved so slow.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, and the schools you did talk about. No. 1 School was there on School Street. Well, today we know that's the Board of Ed, the Administration.

Bob LaPenta: Right, that's the Board of Ed.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, alright, but School 11 is still there.

Bob LaPenta: Yes, that was there then.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, so what grade did you go up to in School 11?

Bob LaPenta: It was 8th grade at School 11.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, 8th grade in School 11 and in School 1, what grade?

Bob LaPenta: It was from 1 to 4.

Brenda Velasco: 1 to 4, okay, so then 5 through 8 would be at School 11.

Bob LaPenta: Right.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, was there kindergarten?

Bob LaPenta: No, not when I started school. That started a few years later.

Brenda Velasco: Right, and then it became mandatory in New Jersey. Okay, and then the high school which was on Barron Avenue that was grades.....

Bob LaPenta: Right, it was the only township school, the only township high school.

Brenda Velasco: And today we have three high schools.

Bob LaPenta: Right, plus junior highs.

Brenda Velasco: Right, well, we call them middle schools now.

Bob LaPenta: Right.

Brenda Velasco: We use that term for them and that's always in flux with the grades there.

6. What did you do for recreation?

Well, there wasn't much to do around town and with the family I come from we were taught to work more than anything. If you did something around the house you had to be useful with your time, not waste it. That's what I was brought up under with my parents.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, were there fields around your house? Fields, open fields or were you all built up?

Bob LaPenta: No, there were fields but maybe only about two or three lots like over there right off Main and School Streets. The Busy Bee was there. There was an open lot there that went back into New Street. There was a house there in between the house and where the A&P or CVS, whatever it is today. That was an open field with one house that housed about four families in it. As a matter of fact, after Christmas, we used to gather the Christmas trees and take them over in that field and set them on fire. That was our big deal for the year.

Brenda Velasco: That was your big bonfire: your big celebration.

Bob LaPenta: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Did you have a bike or anything?

Bob LaPenta: No, we had maybe one bike for the whole family.

Brenda Velasco: Were there any picnics that you went on?

Bob LaPenta: No.

Brenda Velasco: Did your mom and dad have a car?

Bob LaPenta: Nope.

Brenda Velasco: Okay and that would be hard to take, two parents and 18 children.

Bob LaPenta: Well, my father built a wooden wagon and when he had to take us we'd be sitting in the wagon, the ones that were too small to walk, and the rest that could walk would walk behind them.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, anything else that you could think of that you did for recreation. Was there swimming around here? Was there a swimming hole?

Bob LaPenta: No swimming holes. The only thing was in Woodbridge Park. They had what was like a pool probably around 40 foot in diameter with a shower in the center of it. That's all you got was a shower coming out and you would run under that. Very seldom would you get a foot of water in there.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, so everything was local. Did you have a movie house?

Bob LaPenta: Yes, the theatre was over where the Quick Chek is right now on Main and Eleanor Streets. It was the State Theatre. My mother and father managed to get us out of the house for a couple of hours on Sundays. It cost about a nickel or something for the movies.

Brenda Velasco: A nickel for a movie?

Bob LaPenta: Right.

Brenda Velasco: And those were your Sunday afternoons then.

Bob LaPenta: Yes.

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

Like I said, I didn't get involved in any of the activities. The Town Hall was always in the area it is now. As a matter of fact, the people built that, I believe, after World War I.

Brenda Velasco: That's right it was dedicated to.....

Bob LaPenta: The men that served in the Armed Forces, right?

Brenda Velasco: Right, right. Alright, but everything was geared to Main Street.

Bob LaPenta: Right.

Brenda Velasco: As far as shopping or school, alright. And as far as any church, were there activities at the church?

Bob LaPenta: There could have been but it wasn't to my knowledge at that time.

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

Brenda Velasco: Because you left for the service and then you came back and you stayed.

Bob LaPenta: Even when I came back from out of the service, a lot of the older people were there. They were more friendly than the people today. They had time to talk; they had time to help you which was a good thing. Neighbors helped each other out a lot and they were more friendly. As a matter of fact, can I make it a little bit beyond this friendliness?

Brenda Velasco: Yes.

Bob LaPenta: I know even before I was born my mother often talked about people in Woodbridge and what not, and when you left your home you did not lock it. This is going to be a weird thing that I'm saying. If people came to visit you, they would walk in your house and there was always a pot of coffee on the stove and if they didn't have coffee it was an insult even though you weren't home.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, quite different, quite different.

Bob LaPenta: Quite different.

Brenda Velasco: Did you get many people coming into your home?

Bob LaPenta: No, we weren't out of it too much.

Brenda Velasco: And you occupied a lot of it with 18 children.

Bob LaPenta: But there were times when my mother and father used to take us for a ride out to the park or something in the little wagon and maybe somebody would come by and have a coffee and leave a note saying "I was here; thank you".

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so you didn't have this fear if you left the house; you didn't lock the door.

Bob LaPenta: Right, that's it.

Brenda Velasco: And they were welcome, they were welcome. I'm glad you told me about that because so many things have changed; not only the physical changes but the attitude of people's social interactions.

Bob LaPenta: That's correct.

Brenda Velasco: Anything else you want to add to Question #8?

Bob LaPenta: No, I think that's about it for that.

Brenda Velasco: Okay.

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

Yes, when I was about 17 we had the train wreck in Woodbridge. That was about the beginning of the Korean War. I had an old Army ambulance at the time and I got off from work. I worked at a restaurant on Main Street. I went over there to see if there was any need for any help and I took thirteen people to the hospital from that train wreck in my old Army ambulance. They were people that could sit on a bench; they weren't, you know, severely injured. (1951)

Brenda Velasco: Right, and what hospital did you take them to?

Bob LaPenta: Perth Amboy. I made two trips and the third one when I came back, they wouldn't let me anywhere near the place because they had enough emergency equipment there.

Brenda Velasco: And what was your reaction to that? You were involved with the actual help. You must have been there right away then.

Bob LaPenta: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: You were one of the first responders.

Bob LaPenta: I only worked a couple of blocks from it.

Brenda Velasco: Okay.

Bob LaPenta: And I was right there.

Brenda Velasco: How many people, do you recall, were killed?

Bob LaPenta: I think it was about 85 or 86 people, I was told.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, because that was the largest number of deaths in any American train wreck.

Bob LaPenta: Right.

Brenda Velasco: And it's unfortunate that we still hold that. Any other significant happenings while you were here?

Bob LaPenta: Well, after I got out of the service, I belonged to the Woodbridge Emergency Squad for several years and on the corner of Main and Amboy Avenue, there was the Middlesex Hotel that was there and there was a bar there. That caught on fire and we had to remove, I think, one person from the building that died in the fire. As a matter of fact, they weren't taking care of the water lines then like they do today and the hydrant, which would be placed over by the St. James Church right now, blew up in the air when they turned it on. It was all rusted and it just burst and that delayed them from getting water on the fire for another 15 or 20 minutes.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, so that also tells us back then one of the bad features; there wasn't the maintenance of the fire hydrants.

Bob LaPenta: Right. Today they check them out constantly and every year they flush them out to make sure that the sediment doesn't sit in there and rust the pipes away.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, anything else that you can recall, construction that was going on?

Bob LaPenta: There was, you know the buildings on Main Street that were being torn down and replaced and what not, and they decided to put another supermarket in Woodbridge which was put in on Rahway Avenue at the corner of Main and Berry Streets. That was called The Finest. That was there for several years and I did a lot of shopping in that store. As a matter of fact, when they remodeled the place, it's now a college, I think.

Brenda Velasco: Berkeley College?

Bob LaPenta: Berkeley, right. When they took the place down, somehow or another I acquired a big piece of oak that was a corner of their refrigerator in the store or the freezer. I still have it at home.

Brenda Velasco: Okay.

Bob LaPenta: Even along there, there were no buildings there but there were big homes between there and Moore Avenue and I had one of my sisters living in one of those homes at one time.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, those homes are gone now?

Bob LaPenta: Right.

Brenda Velasco: Unfortunately. Okay, alright, anything else that you could think of for that question?

Bob LaPenta: No.

Brenda Velasco: How about as a policeman?

Bob LaPenta: As a policeman, I was just going to get into that, they were building Woodbridge Center and I worked up there off duty for their security and different companies that were coming in there to do things. I'd work off duty for them.

Brenda Velasco: Okay.

Bob LaPenta: But I'll never forget the day it opened. (Official opening date-March 4, 1971)

Brenda Velasco: What was it like?

Bob LaPenta: It was nothing but sleet and ice on the road: one of the worst days of the year. I was stationed at the first entrance to the center coming in from Route #1 and it was a hill. First five cars that went down the hill had an accident. They couldn't control themselves. So I closed the road off and the people that were in charge of the center came out and got on my butt about that, what right I had to close it down. I said "to save a life, what else". They insisted that it get opened. I said, "I'll open it under one condition, you assume responsibility for whatever happens". So I took the barricades down and the first three cars, boom, boom, boom. I said, now you go down there and tell those people you caused it and you're going to pay for it.

Brenda Velasco: And what happened?

Bob LaPenta: Needless to say, they left me alone for the rest of the day. I didn't see them anymore.

Brenda Velasco: So they opened in January with this sleet and ice?

Bob LaPenta: I forgot what day it was but all I remember is that the sleet was pounding off my face, you know. It felt like needles on it.

Brenda Velasco: What a beginning for that center and it's one of the big producers, money makers.

Bob LaPenta: I think they opened it before a holiday, before Christmas or something. I don't know. I'm not sure what day it opened.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, okay. So you've seen the traffic build up.

Bob LaPenta: Right.

10. What do you like about Woodbridge today?

Brenda Velasco: Because you're still here.

Bob LaPenta: I'm still here, right.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, you're still here. You're 75 and you're still here.

Bob LaPenta: Let's say I grew up with the area and I'm used to it. What I like about it is everything is close at hand, you know. You don't have to travel too far to go to some of the best restaurants or shopping or even recreation. You're right in the center of everything. Even if you have to go out of town for it, you're still in the center of it.

Brenda Velasco: You're in the center of town, in the center of Woodbridge, well you moved to Avenel, but you're still in the center.

Bob LaPenta: Right, centrally located.

Brenda Velasco: Centrally located, and you're centrally located in the State.

Bob LaPenta: Right.

Brenda Velasco: What do you do for recreation now, because you're retired?

Bob LaPenta: Now, I'm retired; but for a long time my biggest recreation was Atlantic City until I sat down one day and figured out what I was spending down there and what I was winning. I figured it was better to put it in the bank than in their pocket. I made more money that way. Other than that, I go fishing and crabbing, you know.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, where do you go fishing?

Bob LaPenta: I usually go down into the Belmar area.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so you do salt water fishing.

Bob LaPenta: Right. I do a lot of fresh water fishing too.

Brenda Velasco: And where do you go for the fresh water?

Bob LaPenta: Fresh water, off here at Roosevelt Park or I'd go up to Farrington Lake.

Brenda Velasco: Which is just down the road down Route #1.

Bob LaPenta: Right. Or I'll go up into Clinton to the water sheds up there.

Brenda Velasco: But you're not far from anything.

Bob LaPenta: Nope.

Brenda Velasco: And that's that location of Woodbridge.

Bob LaPenta: Everything, well Atlantic City is only like an hour and a half away and there's one thing I don't do is go to New York.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, okay, well you can take the train in there.

Bob LaPenta: No, I don't even want to see New York.

Brenda Velasco: You don't want to see New York?

Bob LaPenta: I've got ill feelings about it, okay, which are personal and let it stay like that.

Brenda Velasco: Okay.

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

Brenda Velasco: Because you came from a large family.

Bob LaPenta: Yes, I have nephews and nieces here. In Woodbridge Township itself, I've got one brother living here. I got my son who is living here with his family and so many others in the family, like I said before, have dual residencies here and in Florida.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, so you still have quite a bit of family here.

Bob LaPenta: Yes, well, direct descendants dwindled down from eighteen to six.

Brenda Velasco: That's still a lot of family members.

Bob LaPenta: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: That's still a lot of family members. Alright, well I thank you for this interview. Anything else you can think of?

Bob LaPenta: No, not off hand but what I'd like to say being this the township (project) and I have these old books here which date back into 1913 and 1917, I'd like to donate these to the Historical Association of Woodbridge.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, I thank you very much for the donation and this is going to go into our Historical Museum. First I'm going to drop it off with Wendy at the Woodbridge Main Library, Wendy Rottweiler, and see how we can preserve them.

Bob LaPenta: Oh, Wendy, yes. You can tell her who I am.

Brenda Velasco: Oh, she'll know who you are. She knows the LaPentas, my goodness.

Bob LaPenta: My wife worked for the library for many years.

Brenda Velasco: That's right.

Bob LaPenta: She retired from here. She worked in this department for a long time.

Brenda Velasco: Oh, Henry Inman, which was not far from your house, in Avenel.

Bob LaPenta: No, as a matter of fact, Jim Slater.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, I know Mr. Slater. He was here for a long time.

Bob LaPenta: Yes, I was wondering what happened to him.

Brenda Velasco: He retired.

Bob LaPenta: Yes, but I don't know what his status is at home. He lived in Piscataway. Nancy, I seen her a few weeks ago. She was down in Woodbridge at the Quick Chek. I only got to talk to her briefly. I knew her very well. As a matter of fact, she was a very young girl when I was on the police department and one of the things I remember about Nancy is when she worked over in the Iselin library, Friday night was pizza night with her.

Brenda Velasco: Ah, okay.

Bob LaPenta: And then every Friday night she used to invite people to go over and have pizza with her at Hank's Bar or something like that.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, alright well I thank you very much for finding the time and I enjoyed it.