

Oral History Interview
Carl and Lillian Stebbins Fleming
WH097

(written transcript and digital audio)

On December 6, 2011, Carl and Lillian Stebbins Fleming were interviewed by Brenda Velasco at 10:30 A.M. at their home on 2 Ridge Lane, Colonia. Also in the room was Dan D'Arcy, Colonia historian.

Brenda Velasco: I am fortunate to be interviewing Carl Fleming of Colonia, longtime Woodbridge resident, at his residence. Also in the room with me in this lovely kitchen are Carl and his wife Lillian; Dan D'Arcy has just dropped in. This is going to be an interesting interview.

Carl, we are going to go to the first question and before we do, for those of you who don't know, Carl has his own business, **Realty Appraisal**. He's also been involved with the Republican Party for a very long time. He's been with the Chamber of Commerce and many other facets of Woodbridge Township which I'm omitting but it's going to come out during this interview.

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

Carl Fleming: My name is Carl Fleming and I was born May 22, 1929. I think I caused the Great Depression.

Brenda Velasco: Oh, boy! Very close because it all bottomed out in November. Where did you originally live?

Carl Fleming: I was born and raised in Hunterdon County. Actually I was born in Washington, New Jersey, a small town in Warren County. At the height of the Depression, in '38, we had to move to a farm, my grandfather's farm, in a little town outside of Hampton, New Jersey which had eight hundred people and about eight thousand cows. I was born and raised on a farm in that small town in Hunterdon County.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, where the cows outnumbered the people.

Carl Fleming: Yes. We had a dairy farm of thirty cows and the four of us milked five cows every morning and night by hand and we survived the Depression by working on the farm; not very well, but we ate.

Brenda Velasco: You ate. At least you had dairy products.

Carl Fleming: We had dairy products, we had meat and we had chickens; we had all that stuff.

2. How long have you lived in Woodbridge?

Carl Fleming: Just fifty-eight years.

Brenda Velasco: Lillian, I'm going to introduce you too because I want your voice. What was your date of birth and where did you grow up?

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: I grew up in Bloomfield, New Jersey. I lived there until I came here to Colonia in December of '62.

Brenda Velasco: So Carl convinced you then.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: I met him on a blind date through my brother and sister-in-law.

Carl Fleming: They lived in Colonia.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Yes, they all lived in Colonia. Other relatives had come down here earlier.

Brenda Velasco: So from '62 then, that's quite.....

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Yes, how many years is it, forty-nine or eight or something like that.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, that's a long time

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

Brenda Velasco: Okay Carl, why did your family move to Woodbridge?

Carl Fleming: When I graduated from Rutgers in 1952, I eventually got into the real estate business in Metuchen and opened my own office in Iselin, a little house in Iselin in 1953. Then I bought a small house in Colonia on Fairview Avenue, number 25, a little carrier house, Cape Cod, and I lived there because my office was in Iselin. I really was split between both areas because I was very active in Iselin. Fireside Realty was the name of it and we sold many, many homes to people coming into the area, Iselin and Colonia.

Brenda Velasco: That was a booming area for Iselin because the Parkway had just.....(1954)

Carl Fleming: Just opened and the Turnpike. Exit 131 opened into Iselin and all the people from Essex County and Bergen County wanted to get out of the city and Iselin was booming with that development: Woodbridge Oaks, with their small Cape Cods. They sold for ten thousand five hundred dollars with a basement in the front part.

Brenda Velasco: Say that again!

Carl Fleming: Woodbridge Oaks was at the top of the hill where the airport was and this fellow, Munny, if I remember his name, built those houses and they were ten thousand five hundred dollars. For veterans there was no down and FHA five hundred dollars down. Sommer Brothers came to town and they developed off Green Street on Chain O' Hills with a development of again six hundred houses which are still there. Then after Chain O' Hills, they went to Westbury Park and they expanded that. That was three bedroom ranches with a full daylight basement for eleven seven-fifty, again no down payment. Then they moved to Menlo Park Terrace and they expanded that ranch in Westbury Park. They called it Menlo Park Terrace and they had eight hundred houses in there and they sold for fourteen two-fifty. Then they went to Fords, Lafayette Estates, which was again after Menlo Park Terrace, which was across Route 1 in Fords. They built the Lafayette Estates for fourteen eight-fifty. They had a beautiful floor plan in there which was very, very popular and financing was incredible. Then from there they went, in Fords and Colonia and Carteret, they built Shore Crest (Colonia). The first weekend in Colonia Shore Crest opened up at fifteen nine-ninety and they sold like ninety houses the first weekend.

Brenda Velasco: Wow!

Carl Fleming: They raised the price to seventeen five and sold the rest of them out in three months. So we at Fireside Realty, we knew that there would be a lot of action where a lot of people would move out from the cities because of the Parkway opening

up and the Turnpike and all this new construction. You'd get the wife out of the city, leave your apartment and have you own home and it was only ten thousand dollars. The husband would say I don't mind driving back to work as long as my children can grow up in the country. We would knock on doors and say do you want to see your house. We would canvass these neighborhoods and we would get five or six leads every time we went out because there were some people who didn't really want a house. They wanted to get back to the city, the wives missed their families, they missed their friends and the husband got tired of commuting. There was always a lot of action so we really filled that void. There were a lot of real estate offices like Don Krempa; that's what we did.

Dan D'Arcy: You were located on the corner of Correja and Oak Tree Road.

Carl Fleming: Yes, Correja and Oak Tree Road.

Brenda Velasco: Don Krempa was in that area, too?

Dan D'Arcy: A couple of doors down and in.

Carl Fleming: Three doors up. So Don did that; a lot of us did that. That was a very, very lucrative area because there was always somebody moving in and out.

Brenda Velasco: And that was because of the Parkway.

Carl Fleming: Yes, the Parkway. Transportation was there and there was.....

Brenda Velasco: And you had the railroad station, too.

Carl Fleming: The railroad station was right down here on Route 27. The post office was right next door. I bought that building. The post office was right next to the train station. That was the post office and a little newspaper store, tobacco store, on Morton Place: 1 Morton Place. We got the new post office over on Inman Avenue and that building closed up. I was trying to sell it and Lyle Reeb owned it. He lived down here at the Devon and said if I don't sell I'll buy it. So I couldn't sell it because once the train station closed up there was no business there for the other store and he got in trouble selling cigarettes to the kids going to School 2 and 16. Do you remember that?

Dan D'Arcy: Are you talking about the post office on the other side where you had the office?

Carl Fleming: No.

Dan D'Arcy: Because the original post office was right across the street.

Carl Fleming: No, that's Iselin. I'm talking about Colonia.

Brenda Velasco: Colonia off of New Dover Road?

Carl Fleming: Right across from the school, School 16.

Dan D'Arcy: Yes, the one by the Colonia train station.

Carl Fleming: Yes, the train station was there and across the street was the post office.

Dan D'Arcy: And the candy store, yes.

Carl Fleming: And candy and tobacco and newspaper store. So once the post office moved over to Inman Avenue people went down and there was nothing left there. There was a post office in Iselin right across the street from where Don was and then they built a little bigger one and then that moved down by Metro Park. Later on they closed up and then I think Frank Van Sickle bought the old post office building and put the Woodbridge Bank there because I remember that became the bank.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, now I'm going to go to your wife because you grew up on a farm and Lillian grew up in Bloomfield which was a city.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Well town, actually.

Brenda Velasco: I know it wasn't Newark but you had subways connecting you to Newark going back and the trains connecting you. You had a museum in Newark.....

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: True, that's true. We were in that stream.

Brenda Velasco: Then you met your future husband.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: On a blind date through the Jaycees.

Brenda Velasco: On a blind date.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: The Jaycees were of Woodbridge, Colonia and Iselin.

Actually my brother was president of the Jaycees that year that we met.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, what was your brother's name?

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Fred Stebbins.

Brenda Velasco: So he had moved to Colonia.....

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Right, he was the first of our family. Then I have a sister who then moved a year later down here from Bloomfield.

Brenda Velasco: From Bloomfield, because the Parkway directly connects Bloomfield.....

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Yes, absolutely, I agree with you. It just opened this whole area.

Brenda Velasco: And how did you adjust because you got married around '64 or '62?

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: December of '62.

Brenda Velasco: So you left Bloomfield with stores.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Yes, we were right in the middle of that. We were in the commercial area of Bloomfield.

Brenda Velasco: How did you adjust?

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Well, I mean really, it was lovely.

Brenda Velasco: You liked it here.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Yes, we bought a house right away on Stafford Road right on the bend so that was my first house.

Brenda Velasco: But you didn't have the stores that you had in Bloomfield.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: No, we were out here in a nice residential area.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, it was very quiet. You couldn't even walk to a store.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Right, not from here. This was right around the corner where we lived.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, on Stafford Road.

Dan D'Arcy: Which one on Stafford?

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: The one right at the bend on the left.

Carl Fleming: 159.

Dan D'Arcy: The ranch?

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: The second one in.

Carl Fleming: Same model as yours.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Yes, same as yours.

Dan D'Arcy: Okay.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: They used to call it a raised ranch.

Dan D'Arcy: Okay, yes.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so let's get back to Carl then. So you're at the height of the real estate market in this area, it's a big boom, that gets us to Question 4.

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

Carl Fleming: I think the biggest change was with the boom came many, many changes. Back then, when I first came to town, the government was strong council, weak mayor. Augie Greiner had been mayor for many years, a Republican, and he started getting elected as a Republican mayor but with a completely Democratic council (1934-1951). I think the last time he got elected, and I met him a couple of times but he was retiring when I just came to this town, he said if you re-elect me without a Republican slate I'm going to resign; which he did. There's a picture here in one of these books of Hugh Quigley (1952-1959). He became mayor upon Augie retiring and Freddie Adams became a Republican mayor (1960-1961). I was very fond of Freddie, and he was a true renaissance man. Freddie was a graduate of Harvard University, an attorney and just a terrific guy. He was very popular in town but he really had no power even with the five Wards. The Republicans took power at that time and he was elected mayor. There was a guy named Ed Kenny who had a tavern in Iselin. Ed Kenny ran as an independent and he split the vote in Iselin in that Ward, and he was a good friend of Freddie Adams. (The former) was a tavern owner, big Irishman very friendly. And low and behold that little Republican guy, Davy Nicola, got elected by nine votes. Of course Ed Kenny got his nose out of joint because he did all the work. He split the vote and, of course, little Davy Nicola became the councilman. He was at a loss; he had no idea what was going on. At that time Walter Zirpolo was a local businessman, I don't know what his background was, but he decided to become the Democratic candidate against Freddie Adams. That's when I got involved. Somebody came to me and said would you run for Council in the 4th Ward and I said well I'm a Republican, I don't know it seems to me that it's kind of, I was single then, being a Protestant in the 4th Ward. Father Wilus was the priest and he pretty much controlled the 4th Ward as much as he wanted. We worked very hard and had a tremendous campaign. Walter came to me and said, I wish you were on my side you're running a fantastic campaign and I know you're going to lose. I said no I'm going to win and so on and so forth. I remember Menlo Park Terrace had a lot of my stickers running for council in the windows and we took a motorcade through Menlo Park Terrace and all my signs were down and Barone's signs were up. They said that Sunday Father Wilus went to mass and he had Ralph stand up along side of him, who was in the choir, collecting the money. And he said if you don't vote for Ralph Barone on Tuesday, don't come back to church.

Dan D'Arcy: Really!

Carl Fleming: That's what somebody told me. But I got to know Walter very well and he definitely had a program...he even beat Freddie. I know I lost a thousand dollar bet with Tommy Molino, who was the Democratic chairman that I would win. I was going to bet five thousand that Freddie would beat Walter and Tommy was afraid to take the bet. Thank God! I was happy I only lost a thousand. Walter then

had a mandate and he decided to change the form of government and the following year he ran again. They got Freddie at the last minute to run against him and it was another wipeout. It was even stronger so that shifted the whole balance of power from the council to the mayor, strong mayor form of government, and they changed the form of government (Faulkner Act, 1964). That was very important.

Brenda Velasco: That was nine council people?

Carl Fleming: It had to be '61 or '62 and they had the two elections in a row.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, because that's when Jack Fay came in and some other people.....

Carl Fleming: Yes, Jack Fay made it and all those guys.

Brenda Velasco: Yates?

Carl Fleming: Trezella was one.

Brenda Velasco: Okay Trezella and there had to be somebody from the 3rd Ward.

Carl Fleming: Third, Alibani. No, that was before that. I'm trying to think, 3rd Ward after John Hughes, who was a Republican, he was in the 3rd Ward. I'm trying to think who came in there. 3rd Ward, a Democrat. First there was a little Italian guy, our buddy what's his name, Vinnie Martino.

Brenda Velasco: Vinnie Martino goes back to that time.

Carl Fleming: He came in as a Democrat and then he switched.

Brenda Velasco: Right and then he was an independent.

Carl Fleming: Independent, yes. I think it was Vinnie but it could have been somebody else between that time.

Brenda Velasco: So now we have Walter Zirpolo elected and we have a strong mayor, there are nine council people, five Wards, so you saw the reconfiguration of the Wards because in our previous conversation you said that you only had three Wards under.....

Carl Fleming: Three Wards. Yes, only three I'd been told. Just before that, when Freddie got in, they had Colonia. Dave Miller got in first, that was Colonia, and that was the 5th Ward. That went Republican and that was a big breakthrough. Then the next year, the 4th Ward, Davy Nicola got in because it was a split vote and they elected a 1st Ward councilman, Maynard Ferguson, very good candidate and John Hughes was in the 3rd Ward. They only had Tommy Costello in the 4th Ward because that's all Democrat. He's still around. I have to think of some of the other people and Fords always had all Democrats, Joe Nemyo, I believe, at that time.

Brenda Velasco: Then later on they have Frank Jacob (1971-1983).

Carl Fleming: Frank from Iselin, yes, for years.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so let's go to the physical changes such as the houses that were..... when you first moved to Iselin.....

Carl Fleming: Yes, Iselin and then Colonia.

Brenda Velasco: Then Colonia. In Iselin were new houses going up when you moved there?

Carl Fleming: Oh, yes. That whole boom kept on going. All these developments I mentioned were one after the other so there was a big boom in real estate.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, and off Fairview Avenue you lived by School No. 2 and.....

Carl Fleming: 2 and 16, just in one block we could walk to the school.

Brenda Velasco: And they were still open then. What was the name of that development over there? Was that a development or spot housing?

Carl Fleming: No, where I live?

Brenda Velasco: Yes.

Carl Fleming: Frank Harrigan was a local builder and he built several homes on West Hill Road; up on the hill he built these little Cape Cods and he built several there on Fairview but there were older homes there so there was a mixture. It was some sort of spot building.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, spot housing. Okay streets, because if you're having all these new homes what's the impact on the township then with streets, services.....

Carl Fleming: Schools, I mean we built so many schools. At that time I did some part-time teaching at the Barron Avenue High School. For two years I taught English there and we had split sessions at the Barron Avenue High School. I taught the last year there and then they built the new Woodbridge High School because there just was no room so I taught the first year in the new high school (1956). It was quite a thing to see the logistics which I guess they had gotten from Barron Avenue. The buses would bring in the freshman and sophomores in the afternoon, put them in the auditorium and the seniors would file out and get in the buses and take them home. Then my students would get in and come back to the classroom. Really it was quite well organized. It had to be because of the tremendous number of students. Then shortly after that they built JFK High School (1964) and then they built Colonia High School (1967). At that point I don't believe there was a junior high school system. I think that came into effect at the same time. Then they built Fords Junior High (1960).....

Dan D'Arcy: I think they built all the middle schools at the same time because once they went to the high school they were using Barron Avenue as the middle school for the township and then they built the junior high schools.

Carl Fleming: Barron Avenue is still a junior high school.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, we call it middle school.

Carl Fleming: There was a tremendous part of bonding that we had to go through while they were building schools.

Brenda Velasco: Okay and that was in the 1960s then.

Carl Fleming: That would be in the '60s, yes.

Brenda Velasco: Probably the end of the '50s.

Dan D'Arcy: '60, '61 or '62 was when Colonia was built: '61. St. John's was in '62.

Carl Fleming: And then the Parkway and the Turnpike came in so we became really kind of a hub. Then Metro Park was built.

Brenda Velasco: Right, and when Metro Park was built.....

Carl Fleming: That was interesting because I have in my scrapbook that Ralph Barone was mayor then and he had a lot of political things against him. I know that Eddie Patten was for him. Then I formed a committee for the Metro Park and the fear was that the people coming in with the parking would just be a tremendous problem and just tie up Woodbridge Township. My thinking well the other site was there and they're going to build something; perhaps they're going to come to Woodbridge. That was a great boom starting. Then Eastern Airlines came in and bought that property and then that started that whole development and all those ratables so I thought that it

wasn't too popular at the time that say we wanted Metro Park here. Eddie Patten wanted it in Woodbridge and that's where we got, most of it.

Brenda Velasco: I remember the cattle grazing out there on the farm.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Oh, yes.

Carl Fleming: By **Cooper's Dairy**. He was our dairy man for years here.

Dan D'Arcy: Right where the exit is now, where it comes off, is where the cows were.

Brenda Velasco: And it continued to boom with Iselin. At first it was the Parkway and then it was Metro Park (1968).

Carl Fleming: Going back to Iselin, when I first moved here, in the history of Iselin, you'll see in the book that there was a newspaper called *The Newark Star Eagle* in the '30s. If you bought a subscription to that newspaper for one year they gave you a lot in Iselin as a bonus, a twenty foot lot, and then if you bought a subscription for two year you got a forty foot lot and then you could then build a house on it. Iselin became built up on forty foot lots because you could get a free lot with a subscription for two years. It's still called the Star Eagle section and then a guy named Moses Kutz came in and he had a company called **Radio Associates**. He built all these little bungalows for eight hundred dollars in the '30s. They're still there. People said they're going to fall down. They said that about Woodbridge Oaks too and Chain O' Hills, that they were awful construction. After World War II that they would fall down and you'd have to buy a new house. They're still all there.

Brenda Velasco: Yes they are and basically they're well maintained.

Carl Fleming: They're maintained and have changed hands.

Brenda Velasco: Ann Miele McGee, Joe Miele's sister, has one of the houses in that Star Eagle section. I forgot the street though.

Dan D'Arcy: There are two streets over there. One is called Star and one is called Eagle.

Brenda Velasco: Thank you Dan. Okay, how about stores?

Carl Fleming: That was interesting. Back then in Iselin, there was nothing in Colonia much and even on Inman Avenue as I remember, maybe Iselin, there was a little Army & Navy store called **Chopers**. He had a store in Woodbridge also, on Main Street, and he sold pants and shirts for a dollar or two dollars.

Brenda Velasco: He was in Iselin, too?

Carl Fleming: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: I didn't realize that.

Dan D'Arcy: What year are we talking about now?

Carl Fleming: I'm talking about when we first lived here in the '50s.

Brenda Velasco: Okay.

Carl Fleming: And there was a supermarket that closed up. The supermarket was empty for year. That's in the scrapbook here. Then Tony Salvemini came and opened up the **Oak Tree Cleaners**, made that a cleaning store.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, Tina's husband.

Carl Fleming: Yes, Tina's husband Tony.

Dan D'Arcy: Is that the one that eventually turned into **Lee's Cleaners** next to **Eagle Hardware**?

Carl Fleming: No, **Eagle Hardware** was on the corner (Correja and Oak Tree Road). This was.....

Brenda Velasco: No, this was further toward Middlesex.

Carl Fleming: That was empty when we went in there and we couldn't get a tenant. In Iselin and Colonia everybody was separate back then. It was more of a separate feeling. I lived in Iselin, you lived in Fords; you were not in the same town.

Brenda Velasco: In spite of having one high school at one time, you had a tremendous amount of separateness.

Carl Fleming: Yes, and in my scrapbook there was a big separateness movement that Sewaren and Port Reading were going to secede from the township and I fought that. I said we can't afford that, we'll go bankrupt, the rest of the town because all the industry, **Public Service** and **Hess**, was in Port Reading. I couldn't blame them because they felt that they were getting short changed. They had the railroads, all the industry, all the noise, all the trapping, all the smoke and they didn't have anything else so they didn't get that done. So that was not a popular movement for them but anyway that was a big movement so it gradually changed. Then Walter got the idea to make it an All American City in '63 and they had that done. I then became very active in the Iselin Chamber of Commerce and Lil and I started going to the U.S. Chamber meetings in Washington, D.C. I reached out to some of the top guys in the state. There was a fellow named Tom Stainback from Jersey City who was considered the top executive in the State of New Jersey and a fellow named Harry Donnhauser from Plainfield. I asked them to meet with us to talk about supporting a united Woodbridge Township Chamber of Commerce with a fellow by the name of Otto Gatti from Perth Amboy. So we sat down and, of course, Tom was the shining star. He had taken Jersey City and made it into a very powerful, very strong Chamber of Commerce. He had natural recognition and in our conversation he said, where is the center of power in Woodbridge Township? I said, what do you mean? He says, well **Merck** is the center of power in Rahway and **Johnson & Johnson** is the center of power in New Brunswick. There must be a big company or there must be somebody that has influence in Woodbridge Township. I said all the executives in Woodbridge live out of town. Bill Short, from **RCA**, was up in Clifton and everybody was out of town. That's one of the problems for getting these.....so I said the only person I know that has any power is the new mayor, Walter Zirpolo. He said, well you have to convince him to back it. If he doesn't back it you're not going to get it. It would never amount to anything. Harry Donnhauser said yes, I had the same problem in Plainfield. I have **Bamberger's** and I got **Tepper's Department Store**. He said they were all retail and the retail merchants worry about profits and getting people in. He said, you need the industry and the big shots to come in and you got to sell them on the fact that their workers, **RCA** and **Teneco Chemical** and **Hess**, that Woodbridge has the best educational system. And if they have the best roads and their workers are going to be happy, their workers are going to come to work and you're going to cut down on absenteeism. It's to their benefit to have the strong Chamber of Commerce to make Woodbridge Township a better place for them and their children, the school system and all these we can help do. So we took that to Walter and he had an office in Menlo Park Shopping Center. We went to see him and he had Herbie Rosen with him. Do you remember Herbie?

Brenda Velasco: Oh, yes. Ellen was his wife.

Carl Fleming: Yes, so Tom Stainback gave a tremendous presentation and Walter sat there with his pipe and he said to Herb, what do you think? And Herbie said, well you know mayor they're all Republicans. You might be creating a monster and they're going to throw you out of office. Walter said, if they want a new mayor let them elect one they're not going to beat me up; I'm all for it.

Brenda Velasco: Good.

Carl Fleming: So he called a meeting at the **Brass Bucket** and he paid for lunch. He invited everybody to lunch and then I saw what Tom was talking about. Everybody came. I was very naïve back then I guess but I think Walter had talked to several of the people because there was this guy from **Hess**, I forget his name. He said I'm all for this and I need your help; I automatically came here to become a charter member. They guy from **Hess** jumped up and said I pledge thirteen thousand dollars. I never heard anyone say thirteen thousand dollars back then. Then another guy jumped up and said I pledge five thousand. We didn't get all the money but we got fifty five thousand anyway.

Dan D'Arcy: You got a lot of pledges.

Carl Fleming: A lot of pledges and a lot of money. Bill Short became the president. He was with **RCA**. He was a very magnetic guy with white hair and a personnel director. Then we got Roger Johnson. It was funny, everybody came together because even though Freddie Adams had been beaten by Walter he was on the nominating committee and Freddie took a big part in it. Nick Venezia came in, took a part in it and it was really cooperative. It was amazing that everybody pulled together on this thing.

Brenda Velasco: They were working for the betterment of the township.

Carl Fleming: We didn't know how it was going to go but everybody said let's give it a try it's for the benefit, you know what I mean and that's why the Iselin Chamber and the merchants downtown are still very vibrant. That's good that happened. So the Chamber of Commerce became, from the start, very, very strong and it was all centered on "ask not what you get from the town but what can you give to the town". And these people understood that. Walter got the message through so I owed him a great debt of gratitude for what he did because if he had not supported it financially, it would have been.....and Tom said if you don't get him, don't even try. Otto Gatti from Perth Amboy said I have a very weak chamber because they have this very strong industrial commission down there. All the big executives from the refineries and the big manufacturing plants, **California Oil** and **Chevron**, have their own group. In fact our neighbor, Bill Morris, they met and they had a very powerful voice. All I had are the retail guys down on Smith Street and C Street and all they worried about was can you get me more people to come to my store. They were paying fifty dollars or a hundred dollars a year and the big guys would throw in ten thousand a year to their manufacturing association in Perth Amboy. Plainfield had the same problem. Tom said that's how I got Jersey City's successfully. He later went to Hartford or Boston because he got promoted because he'd done such a great job. You see you got the movers and shakers out because there are rich people in the industry and the mayor can do it. I learned something about power structure and **Johnson & Johnson**, when they backed New Brunswick. They'd give money to do business

with **Johnson & Johnson** but you had to join the New Brunswick Chamber of Commerce.

Brenda Velasco: And look at what New Brunswick has become.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Yes.

Carl Fleming: Yes, the town became the County Chamber. Back then it was nothing.

Brenda Velasco: No, it's fantastic once you have the right people behind you.

Carl Fleming: Once you've got the power and you know who it is and you can convince them to support it.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so let's look at the houses of worship when you moved here.

Carl Fleming: Well, again in the Iselin book you'll see the Quonset hut. St. Cecelia's started with the Quonset hut. Father Lewis built it up when he came to Iselin. I married Lillian, who was a Catholic, so we joined the Catholic Church and we supported it. I can remember when we first came to Iselin and Father Moran built the new church (1989).

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Right, well we used to go in the school, down below, where we had our church where the mass was held.

Dan D'Arcy: For St. John's you mean?

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: No, St. Cecelia's.

Brenda Velasco: No, St. Cecelia's. We didn't have a church for a long time at St. Cecelia's.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Oh right, right, I forgot that.

Carl Fleming: I remember they built the new church and we donated that.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: He went door to door to get money.

Dan D'Arcy: What year was that? See this was the original church here.

Carl Fleming: Is that it?

Dan D'Arcy: Yes, I see the Quonset hut behind here.

Carl Fleming: There's the Quonset hut.

Dan D'Arcy: This is the church that came from the Army hospital years and years and years before that.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: How old is that picture do you think, do you know?

Dan D'Arcy: This picture was if I'm looking at it you can see the old railroad station; you can see the taxi stand at the corner of Green Street and Oak Tree Road before the diner was there.

Carl Fleming: Is there a big Victorian mansion there? There's the mansion. That's where the nuns stayed. There's a big Victorian house there. You had the Quonset hut and lot of people that came in, most of them were from Hudson and Essex County, were Catholic. We had a great influx of Roman Catholics so the Green Church was built. That was there then in the '60s and they had quite a few people there. The White Church was up in Edison here on New Dover Road.

Brenda Velasco: Right, the White Methodist.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: United Methodist?

Carl Fleming: You know Al Tyrrell is a member of the Woodbridge Methodist Church for years and years. That's where the LaPentas belong. I was born a Methodist. We went to Sunday school but on Sundays you worked in the fields you didn't go.....

Dan D'Arcy: Frank LaPenta goes to.....

Carl Fleming: Methodist Church I believe. Frank and Audrey are Methodist so.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, that's where they're members and we're using the Methodist Church in Woodbridge as part of our Wednesday music concerts so they're getting some income that way.

Carl Fleming: The White Church in Woodbridge that's been there how many years?

Brenda Velasco: Oh.....

Carl Fleming: That's was funny because back in the '50s the little high school I went to in Hampton had six boys graduate in the class and one of them was a kid from Bloomsbury name Alex Nemeth and he was very religious and he went to Lafayette and then he went to Princeton Seminary to become a Presbyterian minister. I was just starting my business in Iselin when he became the pastor of the Woodbridge Presbyterian Church. I only saw him a couple of times because I didn't go there but it was a small town of six guys in this little town and he winds up in Woodbridge with me. Unfortunately he got cancer early and he was transferred to Chicago I think to a desk job and he died very young. We still have our old high school reunion every year now at the Bloomsbury Firehouse and his kid sister still goes there so every once in awhile I see her. Her name is Marion.

Brenda Velasco: That's a beautiful part of New Jersey.

Carl Fleming: Isn't that beautiful? We go there every year now.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: He has relatives still out there.

Carl Fleming: The whole family is out there and the Musconetcong River runs through the center of the town and there's a big band there. We sit by there for half an hour before we go to the firehouse.

Dan D'Arcy: That's where they stock the trout right there.

Carl Fleming: Yes, they stock the trout and the old mill is there and still standing but it's all run down. We enjoy that on a nice summer day.

Beverly Velasco: Okay, so we mentioned the schools. Let's go down to Question #5.

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

Beverly Velasco: You mentioned that the post office was moved a couple of times in Iselin, we're going to concentrate on Iselin, okay?

Carl Fleming: Okay, sure, but we have a lot in Colonia and Dan has done a lot of work on that.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so when you think back.....oh, we forgot the airport and we have right with us that picture of the airport. Could you just comment was the airport still opened?

Carl Fleming: I remember that. Dan bought the book.

Dan D'Arcy: It's right there.

Carl Fleming: I think Sam Foster's wife was one of the first women to ride in an airplane and there's a big article here about the airport.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, in Tex Perry's book that you're referring to.

Carl Fleming: Yes, it's in the book *Perrytown, Uniontown, Iselin*.

Dan D'Arcy: I don't remember seeing a picture of the airport in here.

Carl Fleming: You didn't see it?

Dan D'Arcy: No.

Carl Fleming: Iselin Airport, okay, Page.....

Brenda Velasco: But it was still here when you moved here.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: No.

Brenda Velasco: Oh, no. It had closed by that time?

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Then **ShopRite** came in.

Dan D'Arcy: Can you confirm that the original **ShopRite** was a hangar for the airport?

Carl Fleming: Here it is.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: You mean the building itself, the **ShopRite** building?

Dan D'Arcy: Yes, and this would be it.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, Dan.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Oh, I never heard that.

Dan D'Arcy: Yes, I don't know if this is the exact building but the building where the Parkway goes next to that was ShopRite. That was this hangar.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Oh, okay, so they kept the hangar and they didn't knock it down and they built the **ShopRite**?

Dan D'Arcy: Yes, and that was the hangar for the airport.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, page 35 in Tex Perry's book on the history of Iselin would indicate that and once again that whole onslaught of people moving in the fifties you needed the food places and other department stores.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Absolutely.

Carl Fleming: The runway, where Woodbridge Oaks is, that development became Woodbridge Oaks.

Dan D'Arcy: Yes, right between Wood Avenue and.....

Carl Fleming: New Dover Road.

Dan D'Arcy: Well New Dover Road it didn't go down that far because it goes downhill. You have two sections of Woodbridge Oaks.

Carl Fleming: The back half is all sand.

Dan D'Arcy: Yes, and it goes downhill so they couldn't use that.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, interesting. Let's get back to the post office then, we got sidetracked but that was interesting about the airport. The post office when you first moved here.....

Carl Fleming: There was one there before my time that Dan has in the book and the first post office he has in Iselin was where **Joe's Cozy Corner** was.

Dan D'Arcy: Yes, that was one of the original post offices.

Carl Fleming: That was on.....

Dan D'Arcy: Diagonal from the old **Iselin Theatre** (corner of Correja and Oak Tree Road).

Brenda Velasco: Okay.

Carl Fleming: There's a picture of it there and that building is still there. I kind of think Lou Resko had it; he's been gone for years. I don't know who's in there now. It's all Indians now I guess. There are apartments on the second floor. I had my first office, **Fireside Realty**, in 1953 and we moved up there on the second floor for about a year. It was eighty-five dollars a month and then I bought the corner. We still own

that house on the corner. So that was the first post office. Then when I came to town they built the post office across the street in a nice brick building.

Brenda Velasco: By **Eagle Hardware** then?

Carl Fleming: Well, by the movies.

Brenda Velasco: By the movies.

Carl Fleming: The movie theatre was on the corner, **Eagle Hardware** was here and it was next to the movie. There was a forty foot lot between it and that was the only parking lot in Iselin at that time.

Dan D'Arcy: Yes, I remember that.

Carl Fleming: There was a little brick building there which was the post office and Frank Mastrangelo was the postmaster and that's in the book.

Dan D'Arcy: Did you work with Joe Manzione at all?

Carl Fleming: Did I?

Dan D'Arcy: Yes.

Carl Fleming: Yes a lot. A matter of a fact I had lunch with him last month.

Dan D'Arcy: Oh, did you really.

Carl Fleming: He's eighty-nine and he moved to Hackettstown in an assisted living facility with his wife. We meet in Chester twice a year. He's still in pretty good shape.

Dan D'Arcy: Yes, we played racket ball together for years.

Carl Fleming: Did you?

Dan D'Arcy: Yes.

Carl Fleming: So there was three of us and when Bob Vogel died he had this house. I used him as our closing attorney with one of the GI deals so we became close. Joe was on the Council, remember, for a while?

Dan D'Arcy: Yes.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Dan was a little tiny baby or maybe not born.

Brenda Velasco: Dan was in diapers back then, he's so young.

Dan D'Arcy: What year was that?

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: I don't know, '50s or '60s.

Dan D'Arcy: I was born in 1950.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Oh, were you!

Dan D'Arcy: I know, it doesn't show.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: No, it doesn't show.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, how about the library, did you have a library?

Carl Fleming: Yes, I'm glad you brought that up. There was a dentist named Yegendorf. I believe his was on Oak Tree Road. There was a house and he had a dental office in the house on the first floor. **Bell Drug** store was just built and Herbie Barsman went upstairs and had a little office. Yegendorf had a nice house and he had a dental office in his house on the first floor. Next to him there was a little old, what looked like a side building, and I think he owned it and that was the Iselin Library; one floor one story and was all weather beaten. It was like old boards with a stain on it and that was the Iselin Library.

Dan D'Arcy: What street was this on?

Carl Fleming: Oak Tree Road.

Dan D'Arcy: Oak Tree Road and where is the corresponding side street?

Carl Fleming: Correja Avenue is here and here's the movie theatre and there's **Eagle Hardware**. It was right between **Eagle Hardware** and these two houses. Dobbs was in one house, **Yegendorf & Dobbs**, and then there was this little shack, you might call it a little bungalow, all beat up, then the sidewalk and that was the library.

Brenda Velasco: Was that the township library or private?

Carl Fleming: No, that was the Iselin Library and then Henry Mays had the Colonia Library down here on the corner, remember that? It's still there the little brick building. That was the Colonia Library. They built that with all the money that was donated by the Colonia people to build that little building down by the triangle.

Brenda Velasco: On Chain O' Hills?

Carl Fleming: At that time Colonia had their own library with no library system and Iselin had a little library there. Rose Perillard worked there and she was the librarian. She came to work for me on the corner as a real estate salesman.

Brenda Velasco: What was her name again?

Carl Fleming: Rose Perillard. She was the librarian; she worked there. But she didn't make any money. She saw the guys were making some money doing real estate and asked them to teach her how to sell real estate. In fact, Hank Harrigan came to work later for us and we just went to a party for him, his eightieth birthday. He was in a wheelchair and he must have had fifty women there who worked for **Raymond & Harrigan** over the years. He sat there in a chair and I sat next to him and he said, you know, the best real estate salesperson I ever met was Rose Perillard. She sold houses and she was fantastic; she just was a natural. But anyway she came from the library. Then when Walter was mayor that's when they started the library system. If I remember Colonia Library was part of it and then, I guess, they built the Inman.....(Inman, 1966)

Dan D'Arcy: Yes, they built the Inman and closed that up old Colonia Library) and transferred everything to Woodbridge.

Carl Fleming: I felt kind of bad about that because you know I know Henry and they had their heart and soul in that thing. Of course, when they changed things around.....it's still there, nice little building.

Brenda Velasco: It's used by the Iselin Pop Warner (Iselin Giants) and they just flooded awhile back. Unfortunately that was part of the problem.

Carl Fleming: Lillian, do you like Inman Avenue?

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Oh, it's easy parking and its quiet and they have a good stock of books.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, they do and they have large print books as well as DVDs.

Carl Fleming: That was part of Walter's dream to have this one big town, you know, one community.

Brenda Velasco: Well, I think his dream would have been realized by now.

Carl Fleming: Well I think what you find is that, being a Republican, I got a kick out of being an old time Republican. I brought back this many years ago, the Republican slate that ran against Hugh. Somebody convinced them that they should come out and attack the fact that the fire companies should be merged. I said to myself I can go back to 1969, every time you bring up something like that every fire commissioner goes out and gets all the people. Those are his people; he doesn't want to give up that

job. The Port Reading Fire Company, that is going to be Port Reading Fire Company as long as I'm alive.

Dan D'Arcy: Sure, you won't be saved.

Carl Fleming: And I got Sewaren Fire Company and Iselin Fire Company. In Iselin, when they assigned the streets, they all have their own turf. Just like the post office when Walter tried to get the one post office, Bill Riggy was the guy he came out and said oh you got to stop this. He said it's our post office, I'm the post master I won't have my job anymore. You got every employee in the post office, everybody had a family and Walter had to give up on that, he couldn't do it. It's still that way. It's still that strong parochial feeling.

Dan D'Arcy: They've been adding to it. They have ten opinions now instead of nine.

Brenda Velasco: And you also have the First Aid Squads, too.

Carl Fleming: Yes, they've got Menlo Park Terrace. That's eight hundred houses because they have the Metuchen Post Office and the Parkway cut them off from Iselin.

Brenda Velasco: Yes it did.

Carl Fleming: But they were always part of the 4th Ward.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, but you also have the traffic on Route 1 at times which can be horrendous so they have their own. But Iselin, the 4th Ward, has three firehouses (four firehouses). But you're right, that's a big turf battle. Carl, we're not going to go there with that.

Carl Fleming: You have to fight it every day so.....

Brenda Velasco: Okay, parks. How about parks when you moved here because Iselin.....

Carl Fleming: That was a big thing again. I was a great baseball fan. I played a lot of baseball at Rutgers and semi-pro ball and I had a Little League team. In fact, on the farm we started when I got out of the service. When I came to Iselin I said, there are no Little Leagues, there's nothing in Iselin; there are no parks or anything. Then I got involved running for council and Freddie Adams was a very nice guy. So I went to Fred I said, you know, next to **Cooper's Dairy**.....I went to Gene Tomasso who was a Democrat, Gene was there, he was a broker down the street and we went down to Elmhurst Avenue and I said look at all these fields they're owned by the town and they're sitting there. So I went to Freddie and John Zullo who was from Port Reading and was a very good guy, he was the recreation director. And I said you know what you got to campaign for re-election, let's put some ball fields in here. You only got one ball field up behind School 24, a little field, and he said okay that's a good idea. They got out there and they put those three ball fields in, I was there a couple of weeks ago, and they're still there. Then all of a sudden we had a huge Iselin Little League. Gene sponsored a team, I sponsored a team, we got **Ten Eyck Lumber** and if I remember everybody chipped in. We had a lot of kids. We had a big league in Iselin and that started that.

Brenda Velasco: All those little homes, we had a population boom.

Carl Fleming: I guess there were TVs just coming out but all the kids wanted to play baseball. Again that didn't help him much in the campaign because (inaudible) became sophisticated as an appraiser but I think that when Freddie was mayor S. Buddy Harris, who was supposedly a very brilliant guy, came up with the idea to

have a reevaluation to make everybody equal. Of course what happened was, and I'm not sure if it happened during his term, they put the reevaluation through and everybody's taxes went up. I remember I spent seven thousand dollars on the campaign; I had big brochures going out. If you'd look at the record of all the ball fields we put in and all the stuff that Freddie Adams and the administration did. Walter put out one flyer that said look at your tax bill, doubled. That was the end of that campaign.

Brenda Velasco: That's part of the thing with campaigns, one item and its taxes; I know.

Dan D'Arcy: When you were setting up the Little League did you have any contact with any of the other areas that were starting up the Little Leagues like the Little Fellows of Colonia or the Merrill Park Association or anything like that?

Carl Fleming: I don't think they were around then; I don't think we had anything. We were kind of the first to do that and the great thing was there was a lot of interest. I remember everybody in Iselin.....there was a little guy on crutches, an Italian fellow, and he was very well liked and he became president of the Little League. He stayed there for ten years and he really built it. We used to be at **Oliver's Tavern** on the second floor every weekend. We just got tremendous interest and everybody wanted to chip in.

Dan D'Arcy: Where was **Oliver's Tavern** at?

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Was it on Oak Tree?

Dan D'Arcy: It was **Stanley's**?

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Don't know it today.

Carl Fleming: Well, let's see. Today it was a two story house. It was **Oliver's** and then it became.....

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: **Green Farms**, where they are?

Dan D'Arcy: Across the street next to the barber.

Carl Fleming: Yes, across the street. **Eddie's Tavern** was here and **Oliver's** was here.

Dan D'Arcy: BK's, PK's, something like that.

Carl Fleming: **Jack & Earl's**.

Dan D'Arcy: **Jack & Earl's**.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Oh, **Jack & Earl's**. Wow, you're reaching way back.

Carl Fleming: They were on the other side of the street.

Dan D'Arcy: **Jack & Earl's** and **Hank's** was on the other side.

Carl Fleming: Tony Oliver was there and he said you can use my place for the Little League any time you want. We were always up on the second floor. This guy, Sal, really ran it.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Well he managed with his.....

Carl Fleming: I don't know. He could walk with crutches but I know he had something. He was devoted to it and he was well liked. I didn't know him that well but I mean.....

Brenda Velasco: He got it going. He had the time and the stamina.

Carl Fleming: He had the time and the interest and the respect of everybody. He could get people to do things so that became very successful. Then they started the Iselin Giants; that was Frank Pulidore. And then St. Cecelia's came in with the

Golden Knights. I didn't do too much with that but I helped support it financially with the Iselin Giants. They're still going, right?

Dan D'Arcy: Well I get them mixed up myself. The Iselin Giants now are located in the old Colonia Library.

Brenda Velasco: And Kyle Anderson is one of the.....

Carl Fleming: Is he?

Brenda Velasco: He's a councilman.

Carl Fleming: I met him at the Kiwanis thing.

Dan D'Arcy: He just took a job at **Johnson & Johnson**.

Carl Fleming: Did he?

Brenda Velasco: Yes, and the Iselin Golden Knights they've won several awards so you were in the forefront of that. About what year are we talking 1950?

Carl Fleming: It was in the early '50s. I was not involved in politics then.

Dan D'Arcy: That was '53/'54.

Carl Fleming: '53/'54 is when that all happened? Yes, maybe a little later because Freddie was mayor and that would have been in '58, right? He was in there for two years so that would be '57/'58 (1960-1961).

Brenda Velasco: Okay, we've mentioned the firehouse briefly that Iselin, the 4th Ward including Menlo Park Terrace, has three firehouses (4).

Carl Fleming: Three of them. The one in Menlo Park is where they put a substation.

Dan D'Arcy: They have four. There's one on New Dover Road.

Brenda Velasco: Oh yes, one on New Dover Road, right.

Dan D'Arcy: They're within spitting distance of each other.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, but the one on New Dover Road also takes in Sterling and part of Amherst which is rather odd.

Dan D'Arcy: Well, the Iselin Fire Department takes care of this section of Colonia.

Carl Fleming: Yes, that's right. We're Iselin here. I think its No. 11.

Dan D'Arcy: From Dow Avenue.

Carl Fleming: I think, as I remember, Dan you might know better, the railroad track was a big thing. Green Street had No. 9 and No. 11.

Dan D'Arcy: That's why, because we're very close to each other.

Carl Fleming: But they were worried about getting the fire trucks through the.....

Brenda Velasco: It was a grade crossing at one time and then in the late '30s the overpass was built. Okay, let's go to Question #6.

6. What did you do for recreation?

Brenda Velasco: When you guys came out you mentioned the sports that you started, Little League. We can look at it from the adult viewpoint or from the children's viewpoint because you had children, you raised them here.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Yes, right. Well we actually joined Springwood, the swimming club over there in Colonia, or we'd go to the shore. There wasn't much here. Our first house was right on Stafford Road and it was quiet there but it had a lot of kids. Other than going to the shore we really didn't have much recreation. We didn't go anywhere locally. We had some picnics in Merrill Park.

Carl Fleming: Yes, we had our ups and downs starting the business and then selling real estate in Iselin so I worked a lot and on weekends. We went to New York once in awhile and we did some dining.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Oh, you mean as adults.

Carl Fleming: Yes.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: I thought this was children.

Brenda Velasco: It could be either.

Carl Fleming: The kids played Little League, didn't they?

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: They weren't really much into organized sports, they were not. They didn't take after you, you did all that.

7. What was the focal point of your community?

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Survival actually. They were hard times.

Brenda Velasco: Well you were a young family.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Right, there were four children in five and a half years so that was a big financial deal aside from the emotional and all the rest that goes with that.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, but you were involved with the church, St. Cecelia's, because you said.....

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: I did very little with that. I was really busy with the family. I'm really more of a family person.

Brenda Velasco: When you have four children.....

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Yes, right, and this house is huge; I mean it's really large.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, so you were mostly family oriented.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Yes, definitely.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, Carl, the other part of the significant couple here. What was the focal point for you?

Carl Fleming: I guess it was really the business because in real estate we had our ups and downs. I was always the main matter, I guess, being the bread winner supporting the family and building the business.

Brenda Velasco: Okay and this is an offshoot of what you originally started, the appraisal.

Carl Fleming: What actually happened was, I was very fortunate in 1970, I dropped out of politics after the election. I voted but I got a call in 1970 from the local chairman from Fords and he was very upset. We lived on Stafford Road and he said, can I talk to you and I said yes. He said I want to show you a letter so I said okay. It was a letter from two Republicans. They had had a bitter primary and a congressman named Cahill, who was from South Jersey. He was chairman of the Woodbridge people. The mayor of Paterson, I think, was in it and five different people were in it. I didn't get involved in it because I knew two of the people who were from Philipsburg, Somerset County and Warren County. Anyway the letter was to Cahill. Cahill won (1970-1974). I thought that Bob Meyner was going to win in a landslide because he was former governor, two terms and then he had to drop out. Then Hughes was governor for two terms (1962-1970) and Meyner came back, won the primary, but apparently made a lot of enemies in the Democratic Party. And out of the clear blue sky comes Cahill and nobody knew who he was, he was a congressman

in South Jersey. And this guy shows me the letter saying that they were in Colonia, they should meet the chairman because this guy was a no good bum; he endorsed somebody else. He had tears in his eyes. He said they're insulting my family. He said would you do me a favor? You're the only Republican I know that never got involved in this thing. Would you become chairman for Cahill for governor? So I had an empty store in Iselin and I said okay I'll do that. I figured he's not going to win anyway. So in the campaign Cahill apparently went to Perth Amboy and then on his way to a football game in Rutgers, he said I want to see a local Cahill headquarters.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Like a rally.

Carl Fleming: So we had this big store and we had posters of Nixon and Agnew, the president and vice president, and all the young Republicans from the Rutgers University there. We got like fifty people out. We had soda. We had, you know, a big party with a band and he came in with a big motorcade and he saw this thing. I thought he was going to start yelling and he was looking around and he said I can't believe they got this kind of thing in Iselin for the Republicans. I said it just had happened, I had the empty store. So after the election this guy, Bob Lenjeski, who was the chairman, called me and said the governor called me; he wanted to know if you want anything. I said no I don't want anything. I said well you know there's a thing called the Real Estate Commission in New Jersey and I think they could use some fresh blood in it, you know, for years and he said I'll put your name in. I said okay and so he put my name in. I talked to Bob Vogel then who owned this house. He was a Democratic councilman, my lawyer, and a good friend before Joe Manzione. Bob said that's a great job, you got to take that, I got to fight for that. I said, why and he said well I'll tell you what's going to happen because everybody wants that job. He said the governor asked you if you wanted it and he's telling you something. He said I'll tell you right now if you don't fight for it and don't get some support you're going to get a call saying we had to go with somebody else or we're going to give you something else instead. I said what should I do? He says I'm going to call Hap Farley. I said who's Hap Farley? And he said he's a Republican chairman in Atlantic County. He's a state senator and very powerful. I said, well how's he going to help me? I said you're a Democrat and he said yes but my Uncle Bernie was a judge and they're buddies in the Senate. So he called Hap Farley and Hap Farley said I got my own guy but I'll support Carl. So he said I called every Republican chairman that I knew in Monmouth County and Ocean County and everybody had a nominee for that Real Estate Commission. So I said, but could I be second and he said yes you can be second. Lo and behold, sure enough, I heard later on that the incumbent was a Democrat and was offered the chair with a ten thousand donation to the Republican Party to keep the job. He said it was too late, Fleming has too much support. So I got to be president of the Real Estate Commission in 1970 and I didn't know much about it except I learned.....

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: You were 43, the youngest ever.

Carl Fleming: 41, wasn't it.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: I thought it was 43 but.....

Carl Fleming: 41. So I found out there's a thing called Interstate Land Sales and Stanley Mann, who had left town, he was my attorney before, he called me from

Florida and he said are you the new Real Estate Commissioner and I said yes. He said did you ever hear of Interstate Land Sales and I said no, what's that? He said, well you control it. He says I'm in Florida and I'm acquiring land to build a new city for ITT. It's with Levitt, a paper company, and we had this huge forest and I'm getting the land to go out to the ocean. We're going to build a new city called Palm Coast; this was in 1970. I said well what do I have to do with that? He says well the largest market for lot buyers in the United States is New Jersey and you can buy a lot in Florida with fifty dollars down and ten dollars a month. He said there are all kinds of scams going on but in order to sell the lot we have to be approved by you. He says what are you and Lillian doing over the weekend? I said I don't know. So I asked Lillian and if she can we get a babysitter; yes, my mother. So he said we're going to go to Freeport in the Bahamas to have a meeting. So he comes in by helicopter to our house and plays with the kids. Then we go to Newark airport and take a helicopter ride over to LaGuardia. Then we take a plane down to Miami, get on another plane, and hop over to Freeport. There we meet these ten or twelve guys starting this new thing going (inaudible). I found out that that was a very prestigious job. Everybody was calling me when I got to be national president in '78. I was testifying before the Senate. Senate Bill Proxmire was great. I said, well the Poconos was a mess because they were selling all this stuff. Some stuff was good and some stuff was bad. You know we had to have roads, you had to have your bonds in place and there were guys out there selling stuff with possible producing lots. We didn't have that much staff to do it so we had to go running around to check these things and try to do it all. We were all over the place doing this stuff. I guess being president of the Real Estate Commission was quite a deal. There was a big agency called the **Berg Agency** in Metuchen which split up and Lenny started a new public company called **Investors General Everest International** and he called me and said I want you to come with me. I want you to be on the Board of Directors, we're going public. I took the public and the Vancouver Stock Exchange and the opening stock was two dollars. They said they were going to give me two hundred thousand shares which they guaranteed would be ten dollars in two years. That was in '73. I didn't know there was a recession going on.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: I don't think anybody did.

Dan D'Arcy: By the interest rates you knew there was.

Carl Fleming: Well twenty-five percent for construction loans. Jimmy Carter got killed, you know. I guess they were trying to do him in. I always liked him. So I said okay and then of course two years later he went broke. I gave him all my money everything but the real estate in Iselin. I went in and said I have to get out of here because I'm president of the Real Estate Commission and I know you said you got a million dollars, our budget on the Board was a million dollars a year, and it doesn't look good. Even now it's been two years so that means you're a million dollars in debt. I had the strong suspicion that you're raiding your trust account. Me being president it's not so good so I left. Of course we were wiped out so we had to start over. So I said let's start doing an appraisal business out of the house and see how it goes and forget about commissions because we can't have a real estate office in the house so that's how we got into this thing.

Dan D'Arcy: Is that the same time they built the Berg building there by the Parkway?

Carl Fleming: Yes, he bought that. That was a little.....he put the trucks in there and I think Kenny and Lenny had started that. They bought it for a hundred thousand dollars and they were renegeing on the contract. I knew the guy from **Fireside Realty** then and I said I'll buy it for a hundred thousand dollars I'll put **Fireside Realty** out there.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: The ice place, the little ice house.

Dan D'Arcy: On that was further down.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Oh, the next block?

Dan D'Arcy: Yes, the one in Edison.

Carl Fleming: When Kenny found out that I had offered to buy it he closed right away. And then he put up that office building which was kind of a problem getting in and out of.

Dan D'Arcy: You have to go around it. We had our office in there for a few years.

Brenda Velasco: If you're in business, you bounce around. There are ups and downs like you said, you know that. Okay, let's go to Question #8.

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

Carl Fleming: Well, I would say that when I moved down here it was a quiet residential neighborhood and also convenient to everything. We even say today here we live, we got an acre and a half lot along side of us, and yet in two to three minutes we can be anyplace. The stores are convenient. If you need a gallon of milk you go around the corner. People move to Pennsylvania because of low taxes but where are they? They're out in the Poconos. You got a long way to go. So when you look at the fact that we keep that neighborhood with a small town feeling, Colonia has it, Sewaren has it, Port Reading has it, Fords has it, we have a lot of conveniences. I mean I stay here a lot. I don't go out much anymore. I mean I can't beat this.

Dan D'Arcy: Sit on your deck at night and watch the deer walk by.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Exactly.

Carl Fleming: Yes, they walk by in front of you and don't even have an idea.

Brenda Velasco: And you feel the same way.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: I do, yes.

Brenda Velasco: Because you moved from Bloomfield but he was out with the cows and you weren't.

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

Brenda Velasco: We mentioned the impact of the Parkway, we mentioned the growth of all the housing developments, is there anything else?

Carl Fleming: Yes, we mentioned Metro Park. That was a big thing; that's what made us a hub. You go to Metro Park and you could go to New York City or Philadelphia or any place you want.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Washington, D.C.

Brenda Velasco: Yes.

Carl Fleming: And Walter had a great vision for Woodbridge Center. I remember when Ray Cosgrove came right after they were building it and he said, where's those

clay pits? They're dug out, they're below grade, and he saw that this could be the Woodbridge Shopping Center.

Dan D'Arcy: As long as you had good money then.

Carl Fleming: So that had a big impact, I think, on the shopping center. And what happened was the Woodbridge downtown merchants were scared to death in the beginning and we were all nervous. We figured everybody was going to go because they had parking and we didn't in Woodbridge. They got some parking lots on Main Street in the back there, right?

Brenda Velasco: Yes.

Carl Fleming: Iselin never got them. Fords, I remember I was the assessor in '93 or '94 and Jim McGreevey was mayor. He hired a guy named Patrick Henry to do a study in Fords of redeveloping the Fords area, New Brunswick Avenue. This guy, I don't know where he was from I think out of state, so he said we have time why don't we go and do the survey. I said okay so I had this huge map and the one thing I noticed about Fords is that it never changed. Their zoning on New Brunswick Avenue has very deep lots, some are two to three foot deep. There were a lot of properties there and I had it all done in color and I had the vacant lots and the ones with houses on it and I said, you know because of the zoning you could buy a little house with a hundred by two hundred foot lot and there are all kinds of possibilities there to develop that. I don't have the expertise to keep it from being a strip mall, which it still is, but I had it under my bed for like ten years and I thought I threw it out because nobody ever did anything with it. Then Jim left to become governor. So that was always a tremendous potential there in Fords because of the zoning.

Dan D'Arcy: Over there they had that moratorium on construction; they were splitting up the lots. And what they were doing was is people like on Lillian Street they would have a house and it would go back to the next street. And they started building houses on the next street but they were only forty feet wide some of them. You would know more about that than me.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, right now what we did do for Fords is to put it into redevelopment along New Brunswick Avenue and King Georges Road redevelopment and rehab. So therefore future construction can be restricted far more to avoid what happened in Iselin.

Carl Fleming: Are you finding that that's true that there is a lot of potential there for redevelopment?

Brenda Velasco: Yes, especially the Hopelawn area going down New Brunswick Avenue.

Carl Fleming: And you could acquire that land, I think, reasonably because.....

Brenda Velasco: Yes, we've had some people move from Woodbridge Proper to relocate to New Brunswick Avenue.

Dan D'Arcy: I think it's a pretty strong area. You don't see any vacant buildings over there.

Brenda Velasco: It's turning around. We've got something going on the corner of King Georges Road and New Brunswick Avenue. A **7-Eleven** is going in there and there are certain things going in there.

Carl Fleming: I know that old bank building.....

Brenda Velasco: Yes, the old bank building. You got it Carl.

Carl Fleming: And there was a gas station next to it.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, some things are going in there but you had **Scooter's** move their headquarters for taxis to Fords.

Carl Fleming: You see there's still no parking I think. When I go over there I have to try to find a place to park. It's still a little difficult; it's never been developed right.

Brenda Velasco: Parking is important and not having parking meters. When Woodbridge Main Street did away with their parking meters that was a boom in competition to Perth Amboy which had.....

Carl Fleming: Did you know that Walter was mad that he had all of Iselin changed to commercial? That whole Brook area was all commercial zoned. It was from Oak Tree Road to the Parkway and Correja Avenue. Oak Tree Road was going to be, from Correja Avenue down to Middlesex or 27, a pedestrian walkway and the road came around. This was all commercial down to 27. This was going to be all redeveloped into a commercial area. My property was all commercial and then when Bob Rosa came in, he cut my lots back into residential so I had two houses still a problem try to get that. I think what happened is we got into a housing boom and those little bungalows that were selling for like fifty, sixty, seventy and eighty thousand started selling for two hundred thousand. Then nobody want them and we had to knock all these houses down that were on the forty foot lots to redevelop that into a shopping center area and then it got too expensive. It's still that same problem now. If you want to buy a little bungalow, even though things are down, they're still going for a hundred and fifty or a hundred and eighty.

Dan D'Arcy: I would say they should just take all of Bird and Harding Street and bulldoze that down.

Carl Fleming: That was the plan.

Dan D'Arcy: Just buy it all up.

Brenda Velasco: Because we could use a pedestrian walkway. It's our busiest downtown area but it's interregional whereas Colonia is really the busiest downtown.....

Carl Fleming: Inman Avenue?

Brenda Velasco: Yes, Inman Avenue but local residents and there's a difference.

Dan D'Arcy: There's a reason for that, it's called the Garden State Parkway.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, and Metro Park.

Carl Fleming: We got St. Georges Avenue, too. Colonia is on one side and Avenel is on the other side and that's pretty busy.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, but Avenel really didn't build up their downtown area. Colonia did on Inman Avenue with adequate parking.

Carl Fleming: Yes, definitely. That's the key.

Brenda Velasco: That's always the key. Do you want to add anything else to Question #9 Carl?

Carl Fleming: No, I think that's basically it. I don't have any riots or anything. Of course, we know about the train wreck in 1950 when they had the train derail.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, 1951. Okay, so let's go to Question #10.

10. What do you like about Colonia today?

Brenda Velasco: You're still here in Colonia and you still like it for the same reasons.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Yes, more than ever because it's built up everywhere else.

Dan D'Arcy: How are your neighbors?

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Neighbors are fine; everyone's quiet.

Dan D'Arcy: Except when you come down to my house.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Well we walk past your house, I don't hear anything.

Carl Fleming: It's unique in a sense that we've come together over the years. There's more of a feeling of Woodbridge united I think that's being fostered by the former government and things that are happening yet we have our individual pride. We have individual pride in our neighborhoods yet I think we all know that what happens in Sewaren is important to what happens in Colonia and Port Reading and the industries over there and Fords. We're all in the same boat together yet we understand that and we pull together. At the same time we all like.....

Brenda Velasco: The uniqueness of each of the various communities.

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

Carl Fleming: Yes, we have Adam and Chris and our nephew Mike.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Yes, they all live.....

Brenda Velasco: All your children?

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Alison does not, that's right, she lives in Watchung.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so three of your children still live in Woodbridge.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Right.

Carl Fleming: Yes. They all work here because it's really a family business. Adam, Steve and Chris are here and Mike also.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: And Chris's house, one of our sons, is probably one of the oldest in town. It's on the corner of Chain O' Hills and McFarland.

Dan D'Arcy: The brown one?

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: No, it's a white house and sits sideways onto McFarland.

Dan D'Arcy: I know exactly where it is.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Yes, that one.

Carl Fleming: Chris had that folder he gave you about some of the old houses in town but I can't find it here.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Yes, maybe he still has it.

Carl Fleming: He said you have it he thinks.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Well I've always had it but.....

Dan D'Arcy: Yes, he gave me some maps that the Cultural Commission did remember in the tube and it was like a two or three page map.

Carl Fleming: Yes.

Dan D'Arcy: About all the buildings in town. Yes, he gave me that years ago.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: Oh, the sketches of the big home you mean that one?

Dan D'Arcy: Yes, the one with the map where all the homes are and a little synopsis of them. You might have seen that.

Brenda Velasco: No, I'm not sure I have.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: That's nice.

Carl Fleming: Do you have it?

Dan D'Arcy: The library has it.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, the library has it.

Dan D'Arcy: And the commission has it. Yes, Wendi has a copy.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, as long as Wendi has it because by giving it to the library that means the public has access to something like this.

12. Are there any other stories or events that you would like to discuss that we haven't covered that pertains to Woodbridge/Colonia/Iselin?

Carl Fleming: Not really.

Brenda Velasco: Let me just say that Carl has a notebook, not a folder, with clippings from the 1960s.

Carl Fleming: It has a thing about how Iselin got its name on the Parkway as far as anything else in here that might be helpful.

Brenda Velasco: And it goes back to your campaign as well.

Carl Fleming: Yes, and all the stuff they said. Tex Perry put this all together for me and gave it to me.

Brenda Velasco: Wow!

Carl Fleming: Jim Mitchell ran for governor and came here and then Dick Hughes beat him very badly but he (James P. Mitchell) was a labor secretary for Eisenhower (gubernatorial election of 1961). Everybody came out for a guy from Bergen County, an attorney, and then somehow Case thought he would be a better candidate. Then Freddie switched over, I was very green at this. Anyway, apparently at the beginning of the campaign he was at Spring Lake, he broke his leg and never campaigned and of course he lost it. Everybody lost that thing and here I am with Walter. We got together at this debate. I had a picture of.....all of this stuff is publicity. Here I am throwing out the first pitch for the Iselin Little League when they set the new fields up and we talked about the incinerator they were going to build at

Chopers.....

Brenda Velasco: Oh, right.

Carl Fleming: Jack Schreiber took all these pictures he was nuts and the population rise of twenty-two thousand for Iselin. Station Improvements – that was the Metro Park and I said to stop the construction on the incinerator. The succession question, he was for it because he wanted to develop which he got. There's **Joe's Cozy Corner**. That's the post office. It's all here. Before he broke his leg Mitchell came up.....these are all the candidates back then at a Republican dinner. There's Dave Miller (Council 1959-1961). It's all one sided you know.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: You know Dave Miller wrote a book, too?

Dan D'Arcy: This is Dave Miller's book (*Colonia, a Tercentenary Community, 1970*). You knew Dave Miller pretty well?

Carl Fleming: Yes, in fact he left town and he became a township clerk, I think, in Monmouth County, Howell Township; someplace down there.

Dan D'Arcy: Jackson.

Carl Fleming: Was it Jackson?

Dan D'Arcy: Yes.

Carl Fleming: He was in Jackson and it was about, I guess, twenty years ago I had an appraisal there. I called him up and I met him for lunch. We had a nice chat. Still that was quite awhile ago that he'd been gone and there are a lot of pictures in here because at that time he was a councilman and they had a strong council.

Dan D'Arcy: We've been trying to locate the family because he passed away some time ago and we've been trying to contact his son to see if we could get all his information and all that. We've got him on *Facebook*, we can't find his son. We're hoping to try to get this information so I don't know if you have any.....

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: No.

Dan D'Arcy: Somebody said his son might have passed away, too.

Carl Fleming: Could be.

Dan D'Arcy: Yes.

Carl Fleming: This was when they were worried about the atomic bomb in Russia, the Cold War. We put shelters in all the schools, bomb shelters, and radiation fallouts and all that. You look back now and it was really great.

Lillian Stebbins Fleming: I have to laugh because Carl really, well he laughs at himself as you can kind of tell, takes a lot of things seriously. But then the question was, why not Fleming? And he said I guess a lot of people said why Fleming?

Brenda Velasco: He just reversed it.

Carl Fleming: They said that was the wrong motto. But if it wasn't Bob Vogel, he was running in the 1st Ward as a Democrat, he was making these pens up and said he charged Barone for the pens but he never charged me because I was a good client. On the black pens were "Why Not Fleming" and a lot of them didn't write. He was a riot. He lived in this house and we bought the house from his widow.

Dan D'Arcy: Dave Miller lived up the street from me and there was another person who ran, I think, against him. John Cahill, were you familiar with him?

Carl Fleming: Cahill who ran against him in the 5th Ward?

Dan D'Arcy: Yes, because he lived right around the corner from me.

Carl Fleming: It could have been in the early days because I only got involved because Evanko came to see me. I'd been dating my fiancé for eight years and she married somebody else so I was kind of jilted.

Brenda Velasco: Well it worked out better for you Carl.

Carl Fleming: When he came I said let me get her off my mind, and I just jumped into this and it worked.

Brenda Velasco: Obviously it was very successful. One door closes another opens and on that note we're going to conclude the interview. Thank you both for agreeing to the interview, I've enjoyed it tremendously.

Carl Fleming: Thank you Brenda.

Brenda Velasco: I'm glad you were here too, Dan.

Dan D'Arcy: I'm glad I found out about it.