

Oral History Interview
Carol Bodnar Matyi
WH104

(Written transcript and digital audio)

On May 4, 2012, Carol Matyi was interviewed by Brenda Velasco at the Henry Inman Library at 12 Noon.

Brenda Velasco: Carol Matyi meets some of the criteria. She's had some experiences about the farms that existed so I wanted to include her in this oral history project and I think you'll find it fascinating.

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

Carol Matyi: My name is Carol Matyi and I live in the Menlo Park section of Woodbridge Township. I was born August 2, 1944.

Brenda Velasco: Right during the war then.

Carol Matyi: Yes.

2. How long have you lived in Woodbridge?

Brenda Velasco: Now we know you've had wandering feet; you're a wanderer. You were born in Edison though am I correct?

Carol Matyi: No, I was born in Perth Amboy General Hospital and at the time my mother's residency was Bonhamtown, New Jersey.

Brenda Velasco: Now you're going to have to define where Bonhamtown, New Jersey was.

Carol Matyi: Bonhamtown, New Jersey is an extension of Metuchen. It goes from Main Street in Metuchen all the way to Main Street in Bonhamtown towards the Raritan Arsenal. It extends north and south of the Raritan Arsenal.

Brenda Velasco: And if you live in Menlo Park Terrace today, your mailing address is still Metuchen.

Carol Matyi: Yes it is.

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

Brenda Velasco: So you really haven't moved too far.

Carol Matyi: No.

Brenda Velasco: Then where did you grow up?

Carol Matyi: I grew up in Bonhamtown.

Brenda Velasco: I've never heard it referred to as Bonhamtown. Okay, so that was Metuchen the.....

Carol Matyi: And parts of Edison.

Brenda Velasco: Then from there where did you go?

Carol Matyi: I worked for a while and then I got my first business, then my second business and then my third business. Then I went back to work for a corporation.

Brenda Velasco: And that was all in Bonhamtown?

Carol Matyi: No, I lived in Bloomfield for several years before moving back to Woodbridge Township in 1980.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so in 1980 you're in Woodbridge.

Carol Matyi: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: What was your maiden name?

Carol Matyi: Bodnar.

Brenda Velasco: Because we're going to talk about that family later and some of the property they owned. Why did your mom move to Bonhamtown?

Carol Matyi: My grandfather worked for the railroad and he came over from Hungary and that's where they settled. It was a large Hungarian community.

Brenda Velasco: As well as in Bonhamtown. I know in Fords you had a large Hungarian.....

Carol Matyi: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Did your mom always live in Bonhamtown?

Carol Matyi: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: So she was permanent and you were moving all over and eventually you ended up in Menlo Park Terrace.

Carol Matyi: I moved just from '70 to '80.

Brenda Velasco: That was in to Bloomfield then?

Carol Matyi: Yes, I lived in Bonhamtown all the time before that. Only ten years I lived out of this area.

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

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so you were right next to Fords and Woodbridge?

Carol Matyi: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: So you saw a lot of what was going on in that community as well.

Carol Matyi: Yes, I saw **Two Guys** be born and gone. (Route 9 North, Hopelawn)

Brenda Velasco: Okay, **Two Guys**, so tell us where that was located.

Carol Matyi: It was located where the **Walmart** is now today.

Brenda Velasco: That was one of the first **Two Guys** I think.

Carol Matyi: Yes, it was.

Brenda Velasco: Where did your mom do a lot of her shopping then living in Bonhamtown?

Carol Matyi: Well everybody went to Perth Amboy to the **Farmer's Market** on Saturdays but we didn't have to do too much shopping because my grandfather owned a butcher shop.

Brenda Velasco: Where did your grandfather own the butcher shop?

Carol Matyi: In Perth Amboy on Amboy Avenue.

Brenda Velasco: What was the name of it, do you remember?

Carol Matyi: **Bodnar's**.

Brenda Velasco: How long did it take you to get from Bonhamtown to Perth Amboy?

Carol Matyi: It seemed like an eternity.

Brenda Velasco: Well, you were a child then.

Carol Matyi: It seemed like hours but I bet you it was forty-five minutes.

Brenda Velasco: And that was by car or bus?

Carol Matyi: By car. My aunt Mamie owned a car and she would drive us back and forth. As a matter of fact my aunt Mamie married Mr. Mayer who at one time owned **Strawberry's Pub**.

Brenda Velasco: Wow!

Carol Matyi: It was **Mayer's Tavern** back then and St. Joseph's was an orphanage back then.

Brenda Velasco: So you've seen a lot of changes. So St. Joe's was an orphanage back then. So we're dealing with the '40s and the '50s. What about some of the other changes that you've seen? We're going to concentrate more on Woodbridge which is where the way we're going in right now. What do you remember about the streets? Did you ever go into Woodbridge from Bonhamtown?

Carol Matyi: Oh, yes.

Brenda Velasco: How did you get there?

Carol Matyi: Well, we called it the Arsenal Road but its Main Street nonetheless from Bonhamtown. We'd take Main Street to Main Street and that's how we would get into Woodbridge. Woodbridge was always an exciting thing because they had a couple of restaurants, they had stores and it was like oh boy. Until Menlo Mall came into the picture, Downtown Woodbridge was the shopping place.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so you changed venue. You went from Perth Amboy, where your grandfather had a butcher on Amboy Avenue, and then you started coming into Woodbridge as you got older.

Carol Matyi: Yes, because we still always lived in Bonhamtown. Even though we had the butcher shop in Perth Amboy; that was always the main residence.

Brenda Velasco: Then how did you get to Woodbridge-by car or by bus?

Carol Matyi: Sometimes by car; sometimes by bus.

Brenda Velasco: Do you remember what the bus was that took you there from Bonhamtown?

Carol Matyi: It was an old gray bus and to make matter worse years ago **Bond Bread** used to come door to door when we lived on Main Street. They would deliver bread and they would give out little sample packs to all the kids once in a while.

Brenda Velasco: And what were those sample packets?

Carol Matyi: They were little loaves of **Bond Bread**. Then the gas station came into Woodbridge.

Brenda Velasco: And where was that located?

Carol Matyi: It was located on Main Street.

Brenda Velasco: Was that the **Esso Gas Station**?

Carol Matyi: I think it was the **Esso**.

Brenda Velasco: I interviewed Susan Gerity Fox and she had a big picture of that **Esso Station**.

Carol Matyi: Oh boy, we both remember that. Then the churches slowly came in.

Brenda Velasco: So your education, the schools you attended were in Bonhamtown? They were part of Edison or Metuchen?

Carol Matyi: I went to Our Lady of Peace in Fords.

Brenda Velasco: Our Lady of Peace which is in Fords and part of the property is in Edison. How did you get to school then?

Carol Matyi: Back then my family used to drive us. We didn't have a school bus.

Brenda Velasco: How long did the trip take for you then?

Carol Matyi: It took a long time. I'd say a good half an hour. It was like 35 miles an hour.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, they were going slow.

Carol Matyi: Those cars were old.

Brenda Velasco: And that was K through 8th grade at Our Lady of Peace?

Carol Matyi: Correct.

Brenda Velasco: Then where did you go to high school after that?

Carol Matyi: I went to Newark. I did not live in Newark but I went to Newark.

Brenda Velasco: What high school did you graduate from then?

Carol Matyi: I graduated from Central High School in Newark, New Jersey.

Brenda Velasco: Why did you choose that high school to go to?

Carol Matyi: A family member worked there and the school was very good.

Brenda Velasco: At that time, yes, I know.

Carol Matyi: It was a very good school so we paid for me to go. At that time you could pay if you wanted to go to a school out of your district and my family paid.

Brenda Velasco: What year did you graduate from there then?

Carol Matyi: 1962.

Brenda Velasco: And then later on you get jobs and some of them are up in that area.

Carol Matyi: No, I came back to Bonhamtown once again and my family was familiar with one of the Wilentz's, I think it was David Wilentz. I got my franchise of the store called **Krauszer's Dairy**.

Brenda Velasco: And he was a lawyer then?

Carol Matyi: Yes, he lent me the money on a handshake.

Brenda Velasco: Now did your father have business with him before? Nobody knew each other beforehand?

Carol Matyi: No.

Brenda Velasco: You were just a sure bet.

Carol Matyi: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: So you had one of the first franchises for **Krauszer's** in this area?

Carol Matyi: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: And where was this store located?

Carol Matyi: On Madison Avenue in Perth Amboy. That only lasted for twenty-seven months because they bought all their franchises back.

Brenda Velasco: But then you went into another business.

Carol Matyi: Well, a few years later I got married and my husband's father owned a gas station on Clinton and Badger Avenue in Newark. We took it over after his father got older and then things got bad in Newark.

Brenda Velasco: Oh yes, '67, the riots.

Carol Matyi: We bought one on Dodge Street in East Orange and then at the same time we bought the candy store in Bloomfield.

Brenda Velasco: Were these loans that you were getting?

Carol Matyi: No, we just saved up enough money. My husband worked with his father and he saved up enough money and bought the one business. The first one was on Clinton and Badger Avenue in Newark; the second, the **Sunoco Station**, was on Dodge Street in East Orange and the candy store was at 67 Franklin Street in

Bloomfield. Then the third gas station, the **Sunoco Station**, was on Lyons Avenue in Irvington.

Brenda Velasco: So your husband wasn't from this area at all?

Carol Matyi: No, he was from (inaudible). And then we sold everything and I went into the **Eldorado Diner** as a silent partner with Mannoli and Aristotle.

Brenda Velasco: And where was that located?

Carol Matyi: On Franklin and Heller Avenue in Newark. Then I moved back from that ten year span to where I am now, McGuire Street.

Brenda Velasco: Then you moved to Menlo Park Terrace. Why did you choose Menlo Park Terrace not going back to Bonhamtown and not staying up in Essex County?

Carol Matyi: The Parkway exit and entrance for everything that I needed to do: the convenience of it. Menlo Mall was there and I always liked Menlo Mall. Then Woodbridge Center came to be and Menlo grew into a two story mall and I was in between everything. But the shopping and everything in Woodbridge just suited my needs. They had everything. They had the **Brass Bucket** which was one of the best restaurants at the time. (Woodbridge)

Brenda Velasco: That was Nick Venezia: Sal and Nick. They've never been able to establish anything there permanently. That was a good restaurant.

Carol Matyi: I don't know if anybody ever mentioned that to you but that was the **Brass Bucket**.

Brenda Velasco: Just skirted it but I remember that, that was an excellent restaurant.

Carol Matyi: Then the highways started to come in and get better and better and bridges were built and as the years went on Metro Park was a small train station and it became a bigger train station. Then we had some meetings at my house with Mayor McGreevey and they wanted to put up a tier deck and we all agreed it was necessary and that evolved.

Brenda Velasco: That was the tier deck for Metro Park?

Carol Matyi: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Because parking was just spilling all over.

Carol Matyi: People were parking on the street, getting tickets and this and that.

Brenda Velasco: So you saw Woodbridge, Iselin section and Menlo Park Terrace, as part of the Iselin section just boom. But you're one of those people who came back because of that Parkway and the exits, right?

Carol Matyi: Yes. Oh, tremendous benefit. Even to this day because I'm always in the airport. My family has a home on Cooper Avenue, my son lives on Cooper Avenue, and they have a home in Florida. So, you know, we're back and forth. Last night my granddaughter came in from Florida so we're always at the airport. It's so convenient. The Turnpike, Exit 11, came up. On my God, that was like fabulous. It got bigger and bigger and the exits got better and better and it got easier and easier to travel. You could make it to New York in nothing flat. The train is probably the best thing that ever happened to Woodbridge because people can park for a day and they can park for a couple of days.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, at Metro Park.

Carol Matyi: And go to New York or leave for a flight or anywhere. It's the most convenient way of going from one town to another. Going from here to Newark it's

like a blessing or even to the city because you don't have to worry about parking if you take the train from Metro Park.

Brenda Velasco: Agreed; I'm on the train, too.

Carol Matyi: Oh, I love it. I love to go to the theatre and not have to worry about parking. It's like the best thing.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so location is what pulled you in.

Carol Matyi: Also the hospital was close. JFK evolved from a small hospital at the time to a much bigger entity now and it's branched out to a care center they have also.

Brenda Velasco: That's right, Hartwyck.

Carol Matyi: Yes, that's the care center and that wasn't there.

Brenda Velasco: And rehab.

Carol Matyi: Right.

Brenda Velasco: So everything sort of evolved and you've been witness to seeing it evolve and its quality care.

Carol Matyi: And Colonial Village was there and the pharmacy was there.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, let's go back to Colonial Village. Where was that for you?

Carol Matyi: About eight blocks from my house going through the back section going through Evergreen and turning that way.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, you're talking about it's a shopping area for you.

Carol Matyi: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Okay.

Carol Matyi: But Colonial Village was on the tip of Edison. Because of the convenience of the hospital and everything you could get to everything from being in Woodbridge. You could get to a doctor, you could get to a pharmacy and you could get to the hospital.

Brenda Velasco: Okay and Colonial Village is the one on Parsonage Road and Route 27?

Carol Matyi: Right.

Brenda Velasco: Which also has a good restaurant; **LouCas**.

Carol Matyi: Well it used to be the pharmacy, now its **LouCas**. But now getting back to where we're at, don't forget they expanded the Menlo Park Veterans Home which is actually in Edison but they call it Menlo Park Veterans Home.

Brenda Velasco: Let's get back to when you were growing up again away from your marriage and your businesses. What was the area surrounding you like in Bonhamtown? Let's also go to Oak Tree Road because you're familiar with Oak Tree Road.

Carol Matyi: Okay, let's go to Oak Tree Road. That was the poultry farm, then the drive-in theatre, then the supermarket and the mini-mall that it is today.

Brenda Velasco: Did you have relatives in that area?

Carol Matyi: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: The poultry farm most people called it a turkey farm I know when I've interviewed them. Where was that exactly located?

Carol Matyi: Where Hill Top Garden Apartments was down to where the drive-in was and back to like where **US Skates** was, around there. It was very deep. There was a paint store across the street and a little supermarket across the street from it on Oak Tree Road. Oak Tree Road coming down towards those garden apartments and

developments of houses there was the theatre in Iselin (Embassy Theatre and later Iselin Theatre). There were a lot of businesses there at the time. There was a dentist and **Iselin Veterinarian Hospital** was on Oak Tree Road before it moved to.....(Route 27)

Brenda Velasco: Oh, where was it on Oak Tree?

Carol Matyi: It's the little white house on the right side going up Oak Tree Road. Next to them was Dr. Stewart Mozlin, he was a dentist.

Brenda Velasco: What street are we talking about, Correja?

Carol Matyi: Oak Tree Road. Correja is near it.

Brenda Velasco: Because Correja had the movie theatre. So it was quite close to there then, on the same side of the theatre?

Carol Matyi: No, on the opposite side of the theatre. That's how Oak Tree Road started to evolve into Iselin and going down Green Street.

Brenda Velasco: Green Street past the railroad tracks, right?

Carol Matyi: Yes. The theatre was there and there were some stores there at the time. There was a little deli there.

Brenda Velasco: So Iselin had some things there already but just beyond where the drive-in was and that was more or less in Edison but that was the turkey farm that a lot of the.....

Carol Matyi: Correct, that was the turkey farm: **Dayton Brothers Poultry Farm.**

Brenda Velasco: Did you go there for turkeys?

Carol Matyi: We lived on the property.

Brenda Velasco: So you left Bonhamtown and moved there?

Carol Matyi: Well, we lived there for about a year. They were rebuilding the house that we were in or fixing it up, so we went to stay with them.

Brenda Velasco: Were they related to you?

Carol Matyi: They say yes. We called them Uncle Jack and Uncle Sid and you know my name is Bodnar and their name is Dayton. The relationship I don't remember as a child how it evolved.

Brenda Velasco: Now did you have other relatives living in the area at that time?

Carol Matyi: Oh yes. My Aunt Mamie lived at the Bonhamtown residency and like I said her and her husband owned **Mayer's Tavern**. Then it became something else and something else and now it's **Strawberry's Pub**. My Uncle John Bodnar lived in a very big house. It was one of these old fashioned families. All of the children of the parents lived with their spouses on the second floor and all the children lived on the third floor. So cousins lived with cousins and my sister-in-law and brother-in-laws lived.....

Brenda Velasco: Where was this house?

Carol Matyi: On Main Street in Bonhamtown.

Brenda Velasco: So you had a lot of family surrounding you?

Carol Matyi: I still have family around me. Mr. Decibus is my family: Francis Decibus.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, yes, yes. He lives in Woodbridge Proper though, right?

Carol Matyi: Correct and I have my sister-in-law, Lil Smith and Bill Smith living on Broad Street in Sewaren. I have another one living on Nancy Court in Woodbridge and my son and his wife own a house on Cooper Avenue in Iselin.

Brenda Velasco: So you still have a lot of family around.

Carol Matyi: And my family, Giordano, used to live in Sewaren; Eleanor and Matt Giordano.

Brenda Velasco: Was that you maternal.....

Carol Matyi: No, that's my husband's family but you know we're married and I've known him like so many years, like twenty-seven years.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so they live in Sewaren then.

Carol Matyi: So I do have a lot of reason for staying here.

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

Brenda Velasco: When you moved to Menlo Park Terrace you didn't have a firehouse there.

Carol Matyi: No we didn't.

Brenda Velasco: That's what I want to concentrate on.

Carol Matyi: We didn't have a firehouse and after many tragedies early in my moving there something had to be done and Woodbridge Township built a firehouse on Kelly Street and we have a fire chief I think that lives in Menlo Park Terrace, also.

Brenda Velasco: I know Ed Mullen lives there also. Do you remember some of the tragedies that occurred?

Carol Matyi: When I first moved there.....

Brenda Velasco: That's 1980 we're talking about?

Carol Matyi: Yes, in '80 or '81 there was a fire I think exactly where the fireman just died on that street. (Bruce Turcotte, 2012)

Brenda Velasco: Oh!

Carol Matyi: The brother died there in that fire.

Brenda Velasco: What was the street, do you recall?

Carol Matyi: It's got to be Jefferson and Menlo because it's behind me.

Brenda Velasco: You had somebody die there then?

Carol Matyi: Yes and then.....

Brenda Velasco: What accounts for that death?

Carol Matyi: Smoke inhalation.

Brenda Velasco: And your main fire station was on Green Street, No. 9, and they couldn't make it there?

Carol Matyi: And then there was another one, I think, that was on Jefferson Street too but in the opposite direction going towards Maryknoll a few years later. Two people died in that one and that's when we got the firehouse.

Brenda Velasco: So you had about three deaths then in a very short period of time.

Carol Matyi: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Then the firehouse was built on Kelly Street. (House 2 was placed into service on October 1, 1983).

Carol Matyi: And it's been a lifesaver ever since.

Brenda Velasco: And you have people who are in the department living right in Menlo Park Terrace so they don't have to travel that far. What about parks when you were growing up? Did you come to Woodbridge at all to use any of the parks like Varady's Grove?

Carol Matyi: Well, we used Varady's Grove and we used the waterfront area which was very popular with my family.

Brenda Velasco: Explain what waterfront area you're talking about.

Carol Matyi: The Sewaren waterfront. We would picnic all the time down there. Boats would still be there and people would take their boats out. It was an old wooden boardwalk and boat dock at the time but it was like a very safe area because it was really inland.

Brenda Velasco: So this was in the 1940s early 1950s while you were growing up?

Carol Matyi: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Can you think of anything else that you used when you lived in Bonhamtown out of Woodbridge? You mentioned some of the stores.

Carol Matyi: Oh yeah, we used the stores and there was a ball field that my brother used to like. But I can't remember where it was because he was a stickball player and at that time stickball was better than baseball. We used to come to Woodbridge because he'd pay stickball games all the time with this group of kids.

Brenda Velasco: Did he go to Our Lady of Peace?

Carol Matyi: Yes, he did.

Brenda Velasco: So it may have been in Fords then?

Carol Matyi: Maybe. I know Fords Park came to be and it evolved also as time went on. I remember in Keasbey that there was a Hungarian butcher we used to go to for kielbasa because my grandfather never smoked kielbasa. He went to this gentleman in Keasbey for kielbasa and he always used to make us go there. He'd make a deal; I'll trade you this for that and they would barter. Everybody would pay money but not us. We would barter for the kielbasa and the bacon.

Brenda Velasco: And your grandfather would give him something instead.

Carol Matyi: Cows or some cow manure or something. I remember that man had lambs too somewhere near that bridge.

Brenda Velasco: Well, Keasbey has changed a lot. A lot of those homes and that butcher store.....there was a **Matusz Butcher**. I could see it if I go over the bridge from Keasbey to Sayreville.

Carol Matyi: Keasbey grew up. Remember Keasbey was a scanty town and look at it now. I mean really, let's face it, it was not what it is today and it evolved into like nicer homes and a better area than it was. And now it's an industrial area.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, heavy industry.

Carol Matyi: Oh, I do remember a lot about this area then.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, see.

Carol Matyi: And I remember now they put in that extension road to 287 and 440 in through the Keasbey area; that's something I remember, too.

Brenda Velasco: Because Woodbridge is the crossroads of New Jersey with all the roads coming into it.

Carol Matyi: That's why I moved here; that's exactly why I moved here. It's so convenient.

6. What did you do for recreation?

Carol Matyi: Every Sunday was spent in church and then you'd come home and have your big meal. If it was a Saturday night and they got done with the butcher

shop, we would come into Perth Amboy to Our Lady of Hungary Church and they would have church socials and things like that. We would go there for those things.

Brenda Velasco: Where is that church located in Perth Amboy?

Carol Matyi: I can't remember but it's in the Hungarian section. I know it's near Hall Avenue.

Brenda Velasco: Did you help in your grandfather's butcher shop?

Carol Matyi: No.

Brenda Velasco: You didn't have to work there?

Carol Matyi: No, kids worked there: men only.

Brenda Velasco: Typical European.

Carol Matyi: My grandmother stayed home and did all the cooking and the girls stayed home and did all the cleaning. But the property in Bonhamtown was also a farm.

Brenda Velasco: And what animals did you have?

Carol Matyi: We had pigs, cows and chickens. We grew vegetables; corn, string beans, peas, asparagus and cabbage because every Hungarian had to have cabbage. We also had strawberries and cherries, two cherry trees.

Brenda Velasco: So this was quite a farm.

Carol Matyi: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: How big was it, do you recall?

Carol Matyi: It was about a city block big.

Brenda Velasco: When did it stop being a farm?

Carol Matyi: When my grandfather died and the property was sold equally for the children's distributions.

Brenda Velasco: About what year was that?

Carol Matyi: 1954.

Brenda Velasco: And that's right after the Parkway was coming into this area.

Carol Matyi: As a matter of fact part of our neighbor's property was bought for US 1; the Bartletts' property was bought for Route 1 to have a loop to get on and off of Main Street in Bonhamtown to get to Woodbridge.

Brenda Velasco: So this whole area has really changed for you.

Carol Matyi: Yes, the **Menlo Diner** came into existence, **Midas** came and the Menlo Mall built that bridge for traffic to travel over it.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, that overpass, right.

Carol Matyi: Then you're coming back into Fords again and got the restaurants that had come up on our side. Some have come and gone like **Captain G's**.

Brenda Velasco: Where was **Captain G's** again?

Carol Matyi: It was right where the **Vitamin Shop** is on Ford Avenue and Route 1. Then the **A&P** left. The **A&P** was there for many years and now we have a racing forum.

Brenda Velasco: **OTW**, yes.

Carol Matyi: The Lafayette Mall was built and that's Fords. There was nothing there when it came to being. Kensington Gardens.....

Brenda Velasco: Where did your kids go to school when they were growing up in Menlo Park Terrace?

Carol Matyi: My son went to Bloomfield to school for ten years. His early years were Most Holy Rosary on Penn Street in Perth Amboy until we moved to Bloomfield.

Brenda Velasco: And you moved to Bloomfield because it was more convenient for the business?

Carol Matyi: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: And your grandfather moved to Bonhamtown because there was a Hungarian community.

Carol Matyi: Yes. Saint Margaret Mary Church was in Edison at the time, it was a little tiny church, and then Our Lady of Hungary was built and you could drive to it when you had the cars coming in. Then everybody went to Perth Amboy to church even though there was the church on School Street but it was a Protestant church; it wasn't a Catholic church so that's why everybody drove all the way to Perth Amboy but you had the Protestant Hungarians on School Street. (Hungarian Reformed Church)

Brenda Velasco: And this was the time we had all the ethnic churches in Perth Amboy. Is Our Lady of Hungary in Perth Amboy still there?

Carol Matyi: Yes, but its run on a partial basis. The Diocese lets a priest go there for one mass on a Sunday.

Brenda Velasco: And that's the changing demographics and that's what happens.

7. What was the focal point of your community?

Carol Matyi: Shopping in Woodbridge. It was like a big treat to come downtown to Woodbridge. You could walk the streets back then. Women walked with their strollers and buses traveled. We saw a lot of people on buses and things but we could travel with a car because it wasn't that far.

Brenda Velasco: Was there any store in particular that you enjoyed more?

Carol Matyi: There was a children's store many years ago but I don't remember the name but my mom used to make sure that we got our clothes there. I remember they had this blue coat in the window with this hat that matched and the hat had bumblebees on it and I insisted that I have it. I drove my mother insane until she bought it for me.

Brenda Velasco: Was this **Christensen's**?

Carol Matyi: I think that might have been it; it was there a long time. That name sort of sounds familiar.

Brenda Velasco: That was the big department store and there was **Choper's** as well but I think **Christensen's** was right on Main Street.

Carol Matyi: And it was the store to go to. When you got your shoes you went to **Christensen's**. They had everything there for kids.

Brenda Velasco: Did you go to the movies there?

Carol Matyi: There was a movie but I don't remember going to the movies. My family didn't like to let us go to the movies that often. It was like taboo back then; it would corrupt us.

Brenda Velasco: Oh, if they could see it now.

Carol Matyi: The entertaining was always about family.

Brenda Velasco: That was it. It was family oriented because you mentioned Sunday dinner after church or you went somewhere with your family.

Carol Matyi: To come into Woodbridge on Sunday was nice. There was a restaurant that my family used to like to come to and I don't know if it was ethnic or what but they would meet some of their friends there. We'd go to **Mayer's Tavern**, too, because it was Hungarian and they served Hungarian food. They had a section, back then, like for families. It was different than it is today; it was like a family establishment back then. We'd have our banquets there.

Brenda Velasco: At **Mayer's**.

Carol Matyi: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: And when you say banquets like family affairs?

Carol Matyi: For like christenings and celebrations like communion. There was a wedding hall I thought many years ago in Woodbridge. Somebody had a wedding there but I don't remember if it was on Rahway Avenue.

Brenda Velasco: The old **Cameo**?

Carol Matyi: I don't remember if it goes back that many years but there was a wedding hall that we went to, I thought somewhere in Woodbridge. Somebody got married; DellaPietro got married and they were from the Fords section.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, they were.

Carol Matyi: They owned a contracting business and they worked out of their house in Fords.

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

Brenda Velasco: You grew up in Bonhamtown but you didn't come back to Bonhamtown you came back to Menlo Park Terrace. I think you alluded to that before.

Carol Matyi: Yes, why I live where I am is because it's so convenient to this day. I could have went anywhere in town but I decided I liked the convenience of Route 1, the Parkway, the highway and close to like 18; it's like so convenient to everything...to the airport. Who would ever think that it would come to be such a wonderful town?

Brenda Velasco: You lucked out. So did I.

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

Brenda Velasco: You were in Bonhamtown and then you came to Menlo Park Terrace.

Carol Matyi: I remember when Route I was a one lane highway. Then it got to be a two lane highway and more recently it became a three lane highway but it used to be a one lane highway and there were very few lights in between. It took forever to get to Trenton from this area because Route 1 was so slow and the Turnpike wasn't that big of a road. Then the Parkway came and it made life so much easier.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, except going to Trenton still isn't a direct route. It's like the Turnpike will take us to Philadelphia and the Parkway will take us down the shore but forget about Trenton.

Carol Matyi: Right. Route 1 was the best way to get to Trenton back then. I remember that and I remember how Route 1 evolved from a few paint stores on Route 1 going into the Avenel section where it changed. New hotels were built and that was like industry at the time. Some gas stations and diners, **Mom's Diner**, was there forever and ever and people forget by Ray Catena there was another **Mom's Diner** in Edison. They used to get the one from Avenel mixed up with the one in Edison. The one in Avenel served a lot of truck drivers.

Brenda Velasco: You could get a good meal there for truck drivers: home cooked meals.

Carol Matyi: It served a big amount of truck drivers back then. Route 1 from Avenel to like Woodbridge to like to Menlo Park Terrace changed dramatically with gas stations coming and going and businesses coming and going, some stores and some restaurants. Then **Bud's Hut** came in to being. I remember in Avenel on Avenel Street the bridge used to flood out and somebody drowned there and then they dug it out so that it would be much more convenient. Then you had **General Dynamics** come and go. You had some bars in Avenel off Avenel Street, the bridge sort of like blocked them off from.....

Brenda Velasco: Yes, **Margeez's Bar** is over there still.

Carol Matyi: Then I remember the firehouse being built on Route 1 to the new modern one that it is. I remember how Avenel Street had more houses than businesses. Now it's got more businesses than homes. St. George Avenue had **RCA** on it.

Brenda Velasco: That's right. That's by **K-Mart** right?

Carol Matyi: Yes. That was a factory that brought a lot of jobs into Woodbridge and then it left. Then St. Georges Avenue started to build up. You had some gas stations and you had some restaurants. Then eventually fast food chains like **McDonalds** started to come in and **Denny's** and through the years it evolved to what it is today. Coming into Metuchen I remember where the **ShopRite** was. I remember **Pier One** was on St. Georges Avenue and now Mocchi is building a new mall there. **Eastern Dental** was a little patch of farmland and a couple of houses in front of it and then they built **Eastern Dental** there. **Harry's**, I remember that gas station being there for a long time.

Brenda Velasco: **Harry's**? (N. Washington Avenue and Route 35)

Carol Matyi: I mean **Harry's**. Then coming into Route 1 there used to be a **Bond Bread**.

Brenda Velasco: Where was that Carol?

Carol Matyi: I think if I'm not mistaken it was between Avenel and Woodbridge.

Brenda Velasco: On Route 1?

Carol Matyi: Yes, that's what I remember.

Brenda Velasco: What about **Raritan Arsenal**? Because going back and I know that's in Edison but it wasn't far from the Fords area at all.

Carol Matyi: A lot of people that lived in Fords and Woodbridge and Metuchen and Avenel; that maintained a lot of families. They gave them a lot of jobs because of Woodbridge Township being so close to it; and it having bus service a lot of people from Woodbridge Township worked at the **Raritan Arsenal**. It was where they

made ammunition. They had bunkers and everything. It was convenient because the water way was there and there was **Carborundum** down by the.....

Brenda Velasco: That was in Keasbey which is by the Raritan.....

Carol Matyi: Waterfront. It still goes to that same.....

Brenda Velasco: Yes, the water played a role.

Carol Matyi: Yes, and water was a big thing. That's why Woodbridge is so convenient even today because it's like the hub area for everybody else. You can go from Woodbridge to practically any place in the state. You can catch public transportation, you can go super highways and you can get there.

Brenda Velasco: Do you have anything else you want to mention about Route 9?

Carol Matyi: Route 9 was a one lane highway and now look at it today; its two lanes (north and south lanes separated by a divider). It was like 15 miles an hour and now.....

Brenda Velasco: Watch out.

Carol Matyi: Yes, and I remember something very, very significant about where I live in the terrace on Route 1 and Ford Avenue. Unfortunately that intersection has had several deaths; one was on a Good Friday. One young man from the terrace was hit by a truck and then there were deaths thereafter, maybe two or three more at the same intersection. Everybody has tried to correct it with the new turns and everything and now we have lights and cameras. I think since then it's been getting better.

Brenda Velasco: Have we had any accidents there that you can recall since this new loop?

Carol Matyi: Yes, I think someone has been killed there recently.

Brenda Velasco: That was down by **Staples**.

Carol Matyi: No, that was the policeman down there but I thought there was another one killed by there. I'm not sure if it was a year or so ago.

Brenda Velasco: So you've seen some improvement because with the firehouse coming in that was important for Menlo Park Terrace.

Carol Matyi: With the new roadway and the new traffic lights.

Brenda Velasco: The traffic signalization.

Carol Matyi: It's made a big impact now for the better.

Brenda Velasco: And you're still in Woodbridge and that gets back because it's so convenient, the location there.

10. What do you like about Menlo Park Terrace today?

(See previous responses in Questions 4, 8 and 9)

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

Carol Matyi: I told you my son has a house on Cooper Avenue.

Brenda Velasco: In Iselin.

Carol Matyi: My sister-in-law lives on Broad Street in Sewaren and one lives on Nancy Court in Woodbridge. And I have so many friends all over the town.

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

Carol Matyi: Well the improvements, like I said, in the Sewaren area like the park. I mean that is such a benefit to everyone now. They do so many things. It's so convenient again and the boat dock it's like where the boats come up and down it's amazing what they've done there. I like the water area and I like the safety system that they have now with **Hess Oil**. They let everybody know the 911 reverse calls; things that have changed everybody's life for the better.

Brenda Velasco: There are some things, before we started the formal interview, you mentioned **Cooper's Dairy**.

Carol Matyi: Yes, **Miele's** was above **Cooper's Dairy** and **Miele's** is like a florist or landscaping thing. By the way in Roosevelt Park there was a horse auction there, too. People probably forgot it. Bunchy Grant's first auction was right by the trestle where the apartments are now. Then he came to where Parsonage Road is where the Lombardi building is. He had a horse auction there and then he moved it behind the bowling alley in Edison but that was in this area, too.

Brenda Velasco: So we had a horse auction right off Oak Tree Road that you're saying.

Carol Matyi: Yes, the first one was right in Roosevelt Park.

Brenda Velasco: That was by the trestle where the apartments are?

Carol Matyi: Right.

Brenda Velasco: Off of Parsonage Road or Evergreen?

Carol Matyi: Off Parsonage Road.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, then the other horse action was.....

Carol Matyi: It was still owned by him and it was moved to where the Lombardi building is.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, and that's on Grove and Oak Tree Road.

Carol Matyi: No, that's the third one. The second one was on Parsonage Road across from Menlo Mall and the third one was Grove right behind the bowling aisle.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so we had horse auctions in the area, too.

Carol Matyi: Yes, and you could rent a horse from them and take it through Roosevelt Park. By Roosevelt Park, they had Roosevelt Hospital that was for tuberculosis years ago and then it evolved into a nursing home. Then the school was built over there for the handicapped children and because of Woodbridge we could get to the park because it was so convenient; it's in my backyard.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, you could even walk there if you wanted.

Carol Matyi: Yes, I did many times. When my granddaughters were growing up, I pushed them in the carriage. And the school system in Woodbridge is the best. My granddaughters went from kindergarten until graduation from high school. They went to Robert Mascenik School to Iselin Middle to JFK. And years ago Iselin had, by Cooper Avenue, the Cooper Avenue Baseball Team and Iselin came in second place in the United States and it was sponsored by the township. My granddaughter was on the team and we traveled all over. Iselin has a very good sports program for their kids. They have Buddy-Ball for handicapped kids that enhance the lives of these kids. So many things have evolved that I could go on and on.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, we have quite a bit. Most communities don't have half of it.

Carol Matyi: And the Community Center; the golf course is there now. And we always had the Army Recruiting place there.

Brenda Velasco: The Air Force right on Main Street?

Carol Matyi: Right, that's been there for oh so many years. Then the **Reo Diner** came.

Brenda Velasco: Right, and that's still there.

Carol Matyi: Oh my God, Brenda, you don't want to start me. I could go back and back.

Brenda Velasco: Well, I thank you very, very much for an informative interview on this Friday afternoon.

Carol Matyi: Well, thank you and it was nice.

.....

There was a Paradise Turkey Farm in Edison near South Plainfield border.

Dayton built the Hilltop Gardens on Oak Tree Road.