

Oral History Interview
Dorothy Ruyak Pelzman
WH083

(written transcript and digital audio)

On August 4, 2010, Dorothy Pelzman was interviewed at her home on 12 Livingston Avenue, Avenel by Brenda Velasco at 11:15 A.M.

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

Dorothy Pelzman: My name is Dorothy Ruyak Pelzman. I was born on August 31, 1934.

2. How long have you lived in Woodbridge?

Dorothy Pelzman: I have lived in Woodbridge Township for seventy years. I was born in Yonkers, New York and moved to Hopelawn when I was six years old and lived there for two years. I then moved to Woodbridge when I was in the third grade and stayed there until 1967 when I moved to Avenel where my husband was raised. We built a home here and I have been here since then.

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

Dorothy Pelzman: We had relatives that lived in Hopelawn and my father came here for job opportunities. We lived in Yonkers and the time was bad, he needed a job and we knew that this was an industrial area so he moved here and found a job right away. He worked in Perth Amboy in different corporations until the day he retired.

Brenda Velasco: Where did you live in Hopelawn when you first moved there?

Dorothy Pelzman: On Loretta Street.

Brenda Velasco: And then when you lived in Woodbridge do you recall the address there?

Dorothy Pelzman: Oh yes, 321 St. James Avenue. That was one block south from Route #9. I guess that would be east.

Brenda Velasco: Then when you moved to Avenel it was 1967, am I correct on that?

Dorothy Pelzman: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: And you were married to Frank and I should say, when we talk about Frank, this is our great former mayor of Woodbridge Township; but I'm concentrating the interview on you because you traveled throughout Woodbridge.

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

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

Brenda Velasco: Where do you want to concentrate? Do you want to mention a bit of Woodbridge and/or Avenel?

Dorothy Pelzman: Well, I will just try to tell you that when we moved to Woodbridge I went to St. James School which was on Amboy Avenue in Woodbridge and right next to the school was St. James Church. It was not as I have read in some

of the reports that the old church was where the present church is now, it was not. Originally St. James Church was way up on Main Street almost near Route #9. When they built the church that this church replaced, it was on the other side of Grove Street where the schoolyard is now for St. James School. Where St. James Church is now, there were two homes.

Brenda Velasco: So you have a good memory there.

Dorothy Pelzman: Yes, I was married in the old St. James Church and it was on the other side of Grove Street, not where the church is now.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, you're saying that was the parking lot then.

Dorothy Pelzman: The schoolyard.

Brenda Velasco: The schoolyard, yes.

Dorothy Pelzman: Between the side entrance of the school and the church, there was just a driveway there.

Brenda Velasco: Do you want to talk about Woodbridge then?

Dorothy Pelzman: Yes, we can talk about Woodbridge if you want to know about Woodbridge. Let me think of some of the things. What is it?

Brenda Velasco: Well you mentioned where the new church is, St. James, there were two houses.

Dorothy Pelzman: Possibly three but I remember two houses there. Then all the property behind those houses was all school property and there was nothing but fields there until you got to Columbus Avenue which is one block beyond Amboy Avenue.

Brenda Velasco: So there were a lot of open spaces there.

Dorothy Pelzman: A lot of open space in Woodbridge.

Brenda Velasco: How about Main Street?

Dorothy Pelzman: Nothing really has changed that much on Main Street except some of the places of business. We had a national bank there which I believe now is a hardware store or auto store or something like that. We had a **Woolworths**. The post office was where it is now but it was different. The Water Company was where the Chamber of Commerce is now. Where we have some of our restaurants, we had clothing stores: little tiny department stores. Two drugstores, **Jackson's** which was on the corner of School Street and Main Street. Right across the street from that was **Publix**.

Brenda Velasco: Competition right across the street.

Dorothy Pelzman: In **Publix** Roy Doctofsky, his father, was the pharmacist and he was just a young man that worked in the drugstore. They had a soda fountain and all of the students that would walk home from school would go in there for their vanilla cokes or strawberry cokes which we would get at the time.

Brenda Velasco: When we look at schools today the vending machines are inside the school with the soda whereas they were the meeting places after school; your sodas were outside of the school.

Dorothy Pelzman: There was a stationery store midway from School Street to Main Street. There was also **Handrahan's Fish Market** and then up by Amboy Avenue and Main Street there was **Caeser's Store** which was another stationery newspaper store. Behind that on Amboy Avenue was the **Reo Diner**, it's still there, which was the meeting place after our Friday night school dances.

Brenda Velasco: So you had regular school dances?

Dorothy Pelzman: Oh, school dances every Friday night and we would all stop in there and have French fries because Catholics couldn't eat meat on Friday. So we would sit there and have French fries until midnight when we'd order our meat. So the only thing we could have was French fries and coke.

Brenda Velasco: So everything was in walking distance for you.

Dorothy Pelzman: Everything was in walking distance.

Brenda Velasco: And you lived in Woodbridge.

Dorothy Pelzman: I lived in Woodbridge, yes, and I walked to the Barron Arts Center which was the Woodbridge Library at that time which was quite a trek. I would walk there a couple of times a week. Even as a young girl, we didn't have to worry about walking the streets.

Brenda Velasco: It was safe.

Dorothy Pelzman: It was safe. Oh, I will tell you one other interesting thing.

Brenda Velasco: Go ahead.

Dorothy Pelzman: Behind Columbus Avenue up to St. James where I lived there were no other streets. There was just Columbus Avenue and St. James and in between were fields. There was no De Sota Avenue and no De Kalb Avenue; it was all fields, all open space. Every summer the circus would come and we would have a circus in that area.

Brenda Velasco: Who sponsored the circus?

Dorothy Pelzman: I don't really remember.

Brenda Velasco: That was close to your home.

Dorothy Pelzman: Yes, close to my home. Another thing is if you walked from Bergen Street down to St. James Avenue, St. James became a dead end; it didn't go into Oak. At the end of St. James was a farm house. The people's name was Simon and they owned all that property and sold our street to a builder and there might have been about ten to eleven houses on my street and it was a dead end right to their property. Every fall they would kill a pig and have a pig roast for all the neighbors.

Brenda Velasco: Wow!

Dorothy Pelzman: Almost everybody had chickens in their yard, a chicken coop with chickens.

Brenda Velasco: Did you mom and dad have that, too?

Dorothy Pelzman: Oh, yes, a chicken coop with chickens.

Brenda Velasco: And yet you were right off Main Street basically.

Dorothy Pelzman: Yes, it was a few blocks. Like I said there were not too many blocks. In fact, even today, after Amboy Avenue there's Columbus Avenue and then the next street is St. James. There's a long stretch. Now on the right side of Main Street there's Metuchen Avenue. Now Metuchen Avenue was also a dead end street that went into the Maple Tree farm.

Brenda Velasco: Which is now Woodbridge Center.

Dorothy Pelzman: And we would go there and pick blueberries and all the kinds of berries that grew there wild along the roadside.

Brenda Velasco: This was like living in a farm area but having the convenience of stores right down the block.

Dorothy Pelzman: Yes, it was. No big things; there were just mom and pop stores and it was a very happy easy going way of living.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, now you said you went to St. James School and you went to St. James Church, where did you go to high school then?

Dorothy Pelzman: Woodbridge High School.

Brenda Velasco: So you went to St. James kindergarten through

Dorothy Pelzman: Through eighth.

Brenda Velasco: Okay.

Dorothy Pelzman: Many of my classmates went to St. Mary's in Perth Amboy but my father did not want me to ride the public service bus. At that time we had no school buses. Although I will say that the pastor, who was later a monsignor, Monsignor McCorristin, paid the tuition which at that time was thirty dollars per person to go from St. James to St. Mary's.

Brenda Velasco: That's unbelievable.

Dorothy Pelzman: My father said no he didn't want me on the bus so I had to go to Woodbridge High. At that time, there were double sessions.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, you started as a freshman then.....

Dorothy Pelzman: Which went in the afternoon. I'm not sure of the exact time but I think it was something like maybe 12:30 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. That was freshman and sophomore and the juniors and seniors were like from 7:00 or 7:30 A.M. to 12 Noon. There were no buses, not for me anyway. There might have been buses that came from Avenel and maybe Hopelawn but if you lived in Woodbridge you walked.

Brenda Velasco: I still can't get over thirty dollars for St. Mary's High School. What year did you graduate from high school?

Dorothy Pelzman: 1952.

Brenda Velasco: Is that where you met your husband?

Dorothy Pelzman: He also was in the same year but I didn't know him until the summer at the tennis courts behind the Woodbridge Firehouse on School Street. They had block dances on a Friday night during the summer and all of us kids would congregate there and that's where I met Frank and a bunch of his buddies from Avenel.

Brenda Velasco: How about houses of worship other than St. James? Where there other houses of worship?

Dorothy Pelzman: The same ones we have now: Our Lady of Mount Carmel on Amboy Avenue, the Hungarian Reformed Church on School Street, the temple/ the synagogue was also on School Street where the parking lot for the Board of Education lot is now, right next to the creek. **A.B. Neese** who was a contractor donated the land on Amboy Avenue for the temple. Then they had the Congregational Church on, I don't even know what the name of that street is where the Woodbridge Middle School is right across the street.

Brenda Velasco: Around Barron Avenue.

Dorothy Pelzman: Yes, and they also had the Methodist and the White Church and the Trinity Church; the same ones they have now. They also had another church up on Ridgedale Avenue but I think that was a Baptist church.

Brenda Velasco: So there was quite a diversity of religions here?

Dorothy Pelzman: Oh, yes.

Brenda Velasco: They were all represented basically.....

Dorothy Pelzman: They all were.

Brenda Velasco: As far as Christianity goes and you had a synagogue as well.

Dorothy Pelzman: Yes, a very active synagogue.

Brenda Velasco: Now we know that all the synagogues have closed.

Dorothy Pelzman: Yes, and in fact I'll even tell you the name of the Rabbi from that Synagogue. It was Rabbi Neuberger who had a son who became a teacher in the Woodbridge School District, Morton.

Brenda Velasco: Good memory. Okay, anything else you want to add to Question #4? Do you want to mention Avenel? Was Avenel built up at this time when you moved in '67?

Dorothy Pelzman: When we lived in Woodbridge we very seldom went north; we all went south to Perth Amboy. We did our shopping in Perth Amboy and our buses took us to Perth Amboy, everything that went on in my time. Frank lived in Avenel and they all went to Rahway. They did their shopping in Rahway. I wasn't too familiar with Rahway at all. I never had the opportunity to go to Rahway as a child, as a youngster.

Brenda Velasco: Perth Amboy was much bigger than Rahway anyhow. Perth Amboy was a mecca.

Dorothy Pelzman: Much more. I mean everything was there, our banking, if we didn't go to the National Bank in Woodbridge. There were savings banks in Perth Amboy. We did almost everything in Perth Amboy. We paid our utility bills there.

Brenda Velasco: And this is the time where people would go to the company.....

Dorothy Pelzman: They would go right to the office.

Brenda Velasco: Right, instead of writing a check and mailing it.

Dorothy Pelzman: Oh, there were no checking accounts. There were no credit cards. The only one who had a credit card was, I think, a department store in Perth Amboy which was the first one I remember where they put it into a little cylinder and ran it through a tube to somewhere. We never had one; my family had neither one. We paid everything in cash or bought things from the corner grocery store "on the book".

Brenda Velasco: Right.

Dorothy Pelzman: You took the book and they marked it in there and you paid it when you got pay day. We were allowed to go as kids; we never had to worry about money. We'd go to the store and buy a half of pound of bologna and never had to worry paying for it until our father got paid and he went and paid for it.

Brenda Velasco: It was quite a different era.

Dorothy Pelzman: Very, very much so.

Brenda Velasco: Because you were geared towards Woodbridge.....

Dorothy Pelzman: But I could tell you something.

Brenda Velasco: Okay.

Dorothy Pelzman: What do you want to know about Avenel?

Brenda Velasco: What about the stores when you came here because that must have been a contrast for you?

Dorothy Pelzman: When we moved here to Avenel luckily by that time, in '67, there was a **Shop Rite**; it wasn't a **Shop Rite** it was called **Al & Joe** I believe. It was a supermarket right across the street from the school and I was very lucky because I lived close by it and we would do all of our shopping there. We never had to leave Avenel.

Brenda Velasco: When you moved to Avenel, because right now I'm at 12 Livingston, where was your first house?

Dorothy Pelzman: 11 Apollo.

Brenda Velasco: Okay.

Dorothy Pelzman: We built a home at 11 Apollo which was right behind my in-law's house which was at 12 Livingston.

Brenda Velasco: So when you said you had everything right in Avenel did you have clothing stores?

Dorothy Pelzman: We did, we had Kuzniak's little store. You could buy whatever you needed there. Most of the time we went back to Woodbridge to shop at **Christensen's Department Store**; there was no Woodbridge Center then. So we still did our shopping in Woodbridge and Perth Amboy.

Brenda Velasco: Now how did you get there?

Dorothy Pelzman: There were three buses that took us: the #46, #48 and #54.

Brenda Velasco: Now they took you to.....

Dorothy Pelzman: Perth Amboy and Rahway. I don't know where they went from Rahway. Two of them went down Amboy Avenue in Woodbridge from Smith Street in Perth Amboy and the other one took you down Rahway Avenue from State Street in Perth Amboy. It was the #54.

Brenda Velasco: So you had mass transit back then.

Dorothy Pelzman: Oh, yes.

Brenda Velasco: That wasn't a problem. Okay, were there any houses of worship here when you moved in 1967?

Dorothy Pelzman: There was a synagogue, there was a temple and there was St. Andrew's Church.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, that was already built then.

Dorothy Pelzman: But not where it is now. It was built on Avenel Street where the rectory is now. It faced Avenel Street. There was the Presbyterian Church and that was on Woodbridge Avenue not on Avenel Street either.

Brenda Velasco: Where were the Synagogues?

Dorothy Pelzman: On Lord Street right off Amboy Avenue; 11 St. Georges Avenue. Amboy Avenue turned to St. Georges Avenue and it was on Lord Street where the **Comcast** is. There was also a Baptist church and that was on, I don't know the name of that street over by **McDonalds** and it's still there: **McDonalds** and **Burger King** somewhere around there somewhere.

Brenda Velasco: **Denny's** is over there in that area.

Dorothy Pelzman: No, it's a little further down. There's a Baptist church there.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, and we know the synagogue has left but the Presbyterian Church is here and the Baptist as well as St. Andrew's. Not as much a diversity though as Woodbridge.

Dorothy Pelzman: No.

Brenda Velasco: But it was a smaller population too.

Dorothy Pelzman: I don't think there were any other churches. There was also the little library. The La Bat family had a house there where the Presbyterian Church is now and they gave the land of the library next to the school on Avenel Street to build a library; specifically to be a library.

Brenda Velasco: So they donated the land.

Dorothy Pelzman: They donated the land.

Brenda Velasco: Was it their personal library?

Dorothy Pelzman: No, they gave it to Woodbridge Township. I believe the deed says for the purpose of a library.

Brenda Velasco: Now it's the child care center by the Y.

Dorothy Pelzman: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so you had all these things here. You had doctors in this area as well?

Dorothy Pelzman: We had two doctors, Dr. Ginella who was on Avenel Street near the middle school, this area, between the highway and the train station and you had Dr. Mayer's group which was over between the highway and St. George Avenue.

Brenda Velasco: On Avenel Street.

Dorothy Pelzman: Oh, did I tell you there was a big pond and lake on Clark Place right on the other side of St. Andrew's Church.

Brenda Velasco: There used to be a pond there?

Dorothy Pelzman: There was a pond and a lake there. Well this was in Frank's young age and they used to ice skate there. They had to fill that in to put the houses up.

Brenda Velasco: Because by the time you moved in there were a lot of houses here.

Dorothy Pelzman: Yes, just about. It was in the '50s that the houses were built.

Brenda Velasco: Right after World War II.

Dorothy Pelzman: Yes, I even think it was later than that. I don't know if those people were here that many years. Because Frank didn't move here until '40 or '41 and there was a lake there. Avenel also had a little post office on Avenel Street on the side of the underpass right near the train station across from **General Dynamics**. There was a barbershop and a little grocery store. That's Avenel.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, you covered quite a bit. How about parks?

Dorothy Pelzman: Let me think now, the only park I ever went to was the one in Woodbridge behind the firehouse. I don't remember any parks near my house at all.

Brenda Velasco: Well you had the fields with the cows and the chickens and the **Maple Dairy Farm** over here. You were like living on the farm.

Dorothy Pelzman: Really on the farms. Well I know Avenel Park which is now the Frank G. Pelzman Park. It was very big. They had a fountain there that they would turn on in the summer certain hours. You couldn't swim in it, it was just a fountain type thing where the kids would wear their bathing suits and go wading in it.

Brenda Velasco: And cool off. What part of the park was the fountain in?

Dorothy Pelzman: Right at the end of Park Avenue right where the sliding board is now just to the right of the entrance to Park Place.

Brenda Velasco: How about the firehouse in Avenel, where was it located?

Dorothy Pelzman: Right where it is that I know of. Now I don't think there was any.....well I don't know, not in my time.

Brenda Velasco: And the firehouse in Woodbridge was located.....

Dorothy Pelzman: Right where it is.

Brenda Velasco: When you moved to Avenel what about the schools?

Dorothy Pelzman: They were the way they are now. Before we moved here I know there was no #5, there was just a #4. The students went there until about, I think, fourth grade or fifth grade and then they had to go to School #11; I believe it was #11, because the Administration Building was #1. They went to School #11 for sixth, seventh and eighth grades. They had trailers later on in the parking lot at School #4 because it became too small. That was before School #5 was built. But by the time in '67, when we moved here, everything was there.

Brenda Velasco: So where did your kids go to school then?

Dorothy Pelzman: They went to School #4 and #5. Well, #4 and #5 and St. Michael's in Perth Amboy for a couple of years.

Brenda Velasco: How did they get there?

Dorothy Pelzman: School bus. By that time the township had school buses.

Brenda Velasco: Then they graduated from.....

Dorothy Pelzman: Frankie graduated from eighth grade at St. Michael's and then went to St. Joseph's in Metuchen. Ann and Patty stayed at St. Michael's until Frankie graduated and then they came back to the Woodbridge public schools. Patty went to School #4 and #5 and Ann over the Avenel Middle.

6. What did you do for recreation?

Dorothy Pelzman: We had lots of things to do. We had, like I said, the parks to go to, we went swimming in the Rahway Pool; there was a pool in Rahway. We took the public service bus to the pool in Rahway and we had the block dances. And as kids we all congregated outside and played games.

Brenda Velasco: What were some of the games you played?

Dorothy Pelzman: We used to play hide and seek in the fields because no one ever cut the grass. It was real high and we were able to hide there. There were a lot of places to hide, we had trees. And at that time, you know, the girls played jacks and rope, we jumped rope. The boys all had their little baseball and softball games, I guess, whatever they played, I never played that.

Brenda Velasco: So there were quite a few things.

Dorothy Pelzman: A lot of kids playing together, neighborhood children, all the kids played together.

Brenda Velasco: You didn't have to have play dates did you?

Dorothy Pelzman: No.

Brenda Velasco: How about the movies?

Dorothy Pelzman: Yes, we had a movie in Woodbridge right next to where **J.J.**

Bitings is now. That was another thing about the stores on Main Street we had the **Bitings Coal**, we had **Kleins Feed Store** across the street where that little strip mall is now, and we had **Woodbridge Monument Works**.

Brenda Velasco: That's still there isn't it?

Dorothy Pelzman: I don't know, is it? That was my first job. I worked at **Woodbridge Monument Works** after school at five o'clock. I would go over there and do some work over there. The feed store I would take my sister's baby carriage and go to buy the feed for the chickens we had and they came in different printed bags, gingham bags. My mother would send me so I could pick out the bag that I wanted that she would make a dress for me out of the feed bag. Then I would wheel

it home in my sister's baby carriage because I couldn't carry it. Yes, that was **Kleins Feed Store**, I forgot about them.

Brenda Velasco: Your memory is great.

Dorothy Pelzman: There was also, later on, another bank where it still is vacant now across from the Municipal Building, the Town Hall. That was built later. I think it was the same National Bank that went from Main Street over there. That's when the bank became vacant. That had a clock on it and everything and it worked the clock on Main Street, the bank clock. We knew what time we had to be home because we'd look at that clock.

Brenda Velasco: And it was very visible to everybody.

Dorothy Pelzman: Yes. Oh swimming, we went swimming over in Sewaren. There was sand right there, it was a regular beach and we'd walk there from my house on St. James Avenue all the way to Sewaren. We'd bring our lunch. The water was clean; we never came out of the water with anything on us.

Brenda Velasco: No tar balls or ashes or anything.

Dorothy Pelzman: I didn't swim but those that swam would swim out to something they had out in the middle of the water there and then swim back again: a buoy or something.

Brenda Velasco: So your summers were pretty well occupied. You had a lot going.

Dorothy Pelzman: We had a lot to do and it didn't cost us anything. Oh, on South Park Drive in Woodbridge, which is at the end of the Woodbridge creek the one that runs past School Street all the way down to South Park Drive, every winter it would freeze over and we would all congregate there and go ice skating right in that creek. Since we didn't have any Woodbridge Center we had a toy store, it was called **Dooley's Toy Store**, and it was located where our library is now on St. Georges Avenue. It was a long narrow store similar to like a trailer but it wasn't made of that. It was a wooden store and they sold only toys in there. That's where we bought all of the Christmas toys because they had a bigger selection because it was only toys.

Brenda Velasco: That must have been a bonanza going in there?

Dorothy Pelzman: Oh, yes.

Brenda Velasco: And they knew exactly where everything was.

Dorothy Pelzman: Oh yes, and then of course right across the street they'd sell the Christmas trees so we'd go across the street and buy our Christmas tree. There was an auto store there and I think it was called **Uncle Joe's Used Car Lot** and they'd sell Christmas trees there. There was also a garage, when it was no longer a used car lot, and they made kitchen cabinets in there.

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

Dorothy Pelzman: School and church activities, that's it. The township did some things but they didn't have the assortment that they have now. They didn't have all those wonderful things that Woodbridge has now.

Brenda Velasco: Who sponsored the block dances? Was it the township?

Dorothy Pelzman: I believe so.

Brenda Velasco: What were some of the church activities that you attended?

Dorothy Pelzman: Of course there were always basketball games even at just the school. There were different things, CYO and things like that that the kids could join.

They had dances, I don't remember what night that was over in the Trinity Episcopal Church. That was in high school. So most of them were run by the churches and the schools most of the activities.

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

Dorothy Pelzman: I just loved living in Woodbridge. It was a very pleasant and happy childhood. It was rural type living and safe.

Brenda Velasco: It was unique.

Dorothy Pelzman: Everybody got along. I mean we had very little crime. We had a happy time. Everybody was in the same situation too financially. We really didn't have any kind of a class thing. We all were the same. Even some of those people that had more money than us, we just all got along.

Brenda Velasco: You didn't have the extremes.

Dorothy Pelzman: No, there were a couple of mansions on Main Street in Woodbridge. I went to school with one of the girls that lived there. We walked back and forth every day. We became friends.

Brenda Velasco: And who was that?

Dorothy Pelzman: Their last name was Kouten. I remember going on Halloween, it has to be 1948 or 1949 around there, and going to one of the houses, it wasn't the Kouten's it was the other one I don't remember those people's name. The man answered and gave us our trick or treat and said why don't you girls come in, there were three or four of us together, and he took us into a room and showed the first television set we ever saw. It had to be about six inches and it was over in the corner and we couldn't believe our eyes that we saw this picture on this little screen that was moving around. He said, did you ever see anything like that and we said no and he said that's a television. That was the first time we ever saw a television.

Brenda Velasco: And now we can't live without it.

Dorothy Pelzman: It was funny because my father was one of the first ones on our street to buy one because he loved sports so much and the screens were little but then they put that big magnifying glass in front of it to magnify it. Everything was distorted but you watched it in the dark. You had to put all the lights out and everybody would come to our house to watch Joe Lewis and Jersey Joe Walcott fight. I think that's when the boys from the park, Frank and his buddies, there were four or five of them, when they walked me home from the park that night saw the television and came every night to visit me just to watch television.

Brenda Velasco: It was the TV that did it.

Dorothy Pelzman: We were just friends for many years. We went all through high school just friends. He had other girlfriends and I had other friends.

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

Dorothy Pelzman: Oh, there was a lot of construction. The Turnpike.....

Brenda Velasco: And that was built.....

Dorothy Pelzman: I guess in the '50s, the beginning of the '50s.

Brenda Velasco: How did that impact?

Dorothy Pelzman: Well, a lot of houses had to be moved. That was an interesting thing we used to watch them putting the houses up on moving things and move them to other parts of the township. People didn't want to just sell them and some of them were brick houses. It had to be while we were in high school but I think it was finished in '52 when we graduated. The Parkway also came in and then the mall. Captain Carlson, you know about him, he was there with, what was that the *Enterprise* was it? (Flying Enterprise-1952)

Brenda Velasco: I don't recall the name of the boat but were you there for the parade?

Dorothy Pelzman: Oh yes, I was there for the parade. There was also an explosion in Hopelawn. I don't remember that too well but I do remember it.

Brenda Velasco: When did that occur?

Dorothy Pelzman: It had to be in the forties. Then, of course, the train wreck in Woodbridge.

Brenda Velasco: Right, were you able to.....

Dorothy Pelzman: I was down there sure. My father and I went down. We watched it was horrible.

Brenda Velasco: Were you able to help out?

Dorothy Pelzman: No, I was too young. I was a teenager but no.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, that was in 1951. You graduated in '52 so you were about sixteen or seventeen, right?

Dorothy Pelzman: No, I was only sixteen.

Brenda Velasco: Were the people still alive when you were there?

Dorothy Pelzman: Some were, some weren't.

Brenda Velasco: What do you most vividly recall about that?

Dorothy Pelzman: Well, I do remember bodies hanging out the windows of the train and all the confusion that there was but it was organized confused. People were helping out and the volunteers, the firemen; they were all capable of what they were doing. They had it very well organized.

Brenda Velasco: And then when your husband became mayor.

Dorothy Pelzman: What about it?

Brenda Velasco: That was a big event.

Dorothy Pelzman: Oh, yes.

Brenda Velasco: Now are you involved politically at all?

Dorothy Pelzman: Yes, my father was a county committee man in Woodbridge and, of course, I didn't even know what that was at that time. I wasn't that interested but I don't even think I could vote until I was twenty-one at that time. I don't think we voted at eighteen, it was twenty-one. However when I learned to drive, I think it was fifteen dollars a day which was a lot of money at the time, because I was only making fifty cents an hour working, I would use my car to take people who didn't have a way of getting to the vote places.....

Brenda Velasco: Okay, the polls.

Dorothy Pelzman: The polls to pick them up and take them. I was a registered Democrat as soon as I was able to become one. Who were the mayors then? We had Greiner and Hugh Quigley. Those two I remember. Greiner, I believe, was Republican (1934-1951). Hugh Quigley was Democrat (1952-1959).

Brenda Velasco: Then when you came to Avenel, were you still involved in politics?

Dorothy Pelzman: I also voted but I wasn't involved in politics. No, we weren't involved until Frank was asked if he wanted to be county committeeman and that was in, I think, '82 or eighty-something.

Brenda Velasco: And then Frank was mayor in what year Dotty?

Dorothy Pelzman: 2000, what was it 2000.....

Brenda Velasco: 2002.

Dorothy Pelzman: 2006; I don't know what year he became mayor, I forgot, until 2006.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, and then he unexpectedly died. But before that, he was also elected Councilman.

Dorothy Pelzman: That's when he became Councilman, yes, in '82 I guess. He wasn't a county committee person long. As soon as he became county committee person, he says to me I think I want to be a Councilman. That was during DeMarino's administration. (1980-1983)

Brenda Velasco: And then he represented the 3rd Ward.

Dorothy Pelzman: And that was also Sewaren, Avenel, Port Reading and Sewaren.

Brenda Velasco: Now Sewaren is in the 1st Ward. Okay, anything else you want to mention about significant happenings?

Dorothy Pelzman: I can't think of any right now except that in 1955 or 1956 they then built the new St. Andrew's Church on Madison, I think that's what it is. I don't even know the name of the street the church is on.

Brenda Velasco: You know how to get there.

Dorothy Pelzman: Yes, I think it's Madison Avenue and they built the rectory on the site where the old church was. That was in '55 or '56.

10. What do you like about Woodbridge today?

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

Brenda Velasco: Now you're still living in Woodbridge.

Dorothy Pelzman: Yes, all my family.

Brenda Velasco: That right.

Dorothy Pelzman: My whole family, all my children.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, but why did you always remain in Woodbridge?

Dorothy Pelzman: We never wanted to move out, we loved it here. Frank loved it here. He loved this town very much and of course I stayed where my husband wanted me.

Brenda Velasco: And now your children.

Dorothy Pelzman: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Though some live in Avenel and some live in Colonia.

Dorothy Pelzman: Well, the only one that moved out of Avenel was Ann and she lives in Colonia.

Brenda Velasco: They're all back; you're very fortunate.

Dorothy Pelzman: Yes, they are all here right around me.

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

Dorothy Pelzman: Not really except during my husband term as mayor what an enjoyable time that was meeting all the people from the rest of the part of the town

and how wonderfully united we are. I'm a firm believer, and I know that I am one of a few, I feel that although we have all these sections of Woodbridge Township I still feel we're all Woodbridge. When anyone asks me where I live I never say Avenel I say Woodbridge. Not because I was from Woodbridge originally I just think we're all Woodbridge. To categorize them into sections somehow rubs me the wrong way.

Brenda Velasco: And I'm wondering if after the high schools were created we started to split and identify with Colonia High School, JFK as certain segments do and there's that competition because you and Frank both went to Woodbridge High School.

Dorothy Pelzman: Although Frank lived in Avenel.

Brenda Velasco: But it was one high school.

Dorothy Pelzman: I often say, just think if all of these students that go to the three high schools all went to Woodbridge High School we would take every award in every state because if you combined all those students into one school, our football teams would be the greatest; all of our teams would be the greatest. But because we are in three different schools they are split up. But I still feel we're Woodbridge.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, we are.

Dorothy Pelzman: Not sections.

Brenda Velasco: And that was one of Frank's slogans.

Dorothy Pelzman: Yes, United or something. Another thing is we always had just nine sections, now all of a sudden we have ten. We never had ten sections.

Brenda Velasco: Menlo Park Terrace.

Dorothy Pelzman: Menlo Park was not a section, it belonged to I think Iselin, didn't it?

Brenda Velasco: Yes. But if there is nothing further, I'm glad you mentioned about Woodbridge supersedes everything else. But if there is nothing else I want to thank you for giving me this interview.

Dorothy Pelzman: Oh, that's nice.

Brenda Velasco: You gave another perspective of Woodbridge.

Dorothy Pelzman: I don't know, I thought to myself you had everything all ready.

Brenda Velasco: No, I didn't have where they went ice skating. There's a lot that you complimented. So thank you very much Dorothy and we're going to conclude now.