

Oral History Interview

Emily Lee

WH070

(written transcript and digital audio)

On November 13, 2009, Emily Lee was interviewed at her home at 460 Gorman Avenue, Woodbridge by Brenda Velasco at 11:00 A.M. Present in the room was Emily Lee's older sister, Margaret Lee.

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

Emily Lee: My name is Emily Helen Lee. My date of birth is September 18, 1917. I have lived in Woodbridge Proper my entire life. I was born right in Woodbridge Proper on Amboy Avenue in a home. In those days our mothers did not go to hospital. I believe all babies were delivered at home. (Later the interviewee recalled that the house was on the corner of Grove and Amboy. There were four other houses plus a store on the corner of Main Street. All of these buildings were demolished to clear land to build the present St. James Catholic Church).

Brenda Velasco: Most were.

2. How long have you lived in Woodbridge?

Emily Lee: Ninety-two years.

Brenda Velasco: Ninety-two years.

Emily Lee: I live here with my sister, Margaret, and she just had a birthday the 1st of October, 1915, which makes her ninety-four years old. She also has lived in Woodbridge Proper all of her life.

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

Emily Lee: Well our entire family, both my mother's side and father's side have been here since the 1600's.

Brenda Velasco: Wow!

Emily Lee: So evidently it must have been the farmlands or the waterways that were visible or maybe they even noticed the clay that was possible but they came here and they stayed.

Brenda Velasco: And you continue the tradition.

Emily Lee: Yes, why bother to move. If there is green grass, stay there.

Brenda Velasco: And I know you were recommended to be interviewed because you're a member of the First Presbyterian Church.

Emily Lee: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: So you'll give us some insight in that as we go through the interview.

Emily Lee: I have loved that church.

Brenda Velasco: It's been an important part of your life.

Emily Lee: It has been a very important part of my life because that was really our social life. You pulled in religion but you had a great social life: Strawberry Festivals and pancake suppers.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so the Strawberry Festivals must have been in the late spring or early summer?

Emily Lee: Yes, spring, because they are usually in May and June.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, for New Jersey.

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

Brenda Velasco: What changes have you seen in your ninety-two years in Woodbridge Township?

Emily Lee: Not so much the township because we stayed in Woodbridge, there was no reason to go to Keasbey. Whoever heard of Keasbey or even Hopelawn? It was always Woodbridge with us.

Brenda Velasco: Then when did you leave Amboy Avenue and move to Gorman? Because right now we're on the Martool and Laurel side.

Emily Lee: From Amboy Avenue, that would be 1921, I was four years old, we moved to High Street in Woodbridge. It was an ideal place to raise children. My mother must have seen that right away how important it was. It was a short street with Barron Avenue at one end and Linden Avenue at the other end. On our side of the street, there were five houses. Now every single lot is taken. On the other side of the street there were about five or six houses also which left play area. It was also a dirt street. In those days, you couldn't roller skate; but on Barron Avenue you could roller skate.

Brenda Velasco: So Barron Avenue was paved then?

Emily Lee: Yes, it was paved.

Brenda Velasco: Okay.

Emily Lee: No, it was concrete.

Brenda Velasco: So you had a lot of play area then.

Emily Lee: Oh, did we ever! In the fields that we had we flew kites, we played baseball and football, all kinds of things. We'd make big circles for the marbles. We were fortunate. We had a big yard of our own so we stayed home a lot just playing hide and seek or tag or anything of that nature: any lively run around type of thing, exercise.

Brenda Velasco: You had a lot. There were no computers back then and no TV so you had your street with the fields and your backyard.

Emily Lee: And the few people that lived on the street seemed to gather at our house because our yard was larger than others. There was empty land where anybody could play but an established yard was more fun.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so we've got the yards and the streets. How about services? Did you have well water or regular water?

Emily Lee: Regular water.

Brenda Velasco: How about the stores?

Emily Lee: We had mom and pop stores and we could walk to those stores. There was no fear of crossing the road and being run over. They were all on Main Street

except a few on Amboy Avenue and it was a grocery store owned by Mr. Joseph Andrascik. He came from Perth Amboy and opened that store and that was a god send because he realized that we were a big family and we needed help and he was there for us.

Brenda Velasco: When you say a big family, you have to elaborate on that.

Emily Lee: Okay, it was my mother and father when we first came to High Street; and, well, in our first move there were four children. And then we became seven children on High School.

Brenda Velasco: You did have a big family.

Emily Lee: We had a big family, yes. Then in time, unfortunately, my mother and father divorced and it was very difficult for my mother because she had no help from our father. In my little notes I say, in this day and age, he would be called a deadbeat father. In those days there was so much pride you didn't publicize your problems.

Brenda Velasco: So she had a difficult time with seven....

Emily Lee: Very difficult time.

Brenda Velasco: Did she work?

Emily Lee: No, she did not work. She luckily had a mother and father who lived on Green Street. And while my grandmother lived, there was some help from her but after she passed away, which was in 1923 which was a long time ago, the help came from my grandfather. But that was limited help. So it was a struggle and the Depression came.

Brenda Velasco: Right and that was right after 1929 until 1939 where your mom basically had a tough time.

Emily Lee: You can't believe how hard it was for us. I'll tell you a few things. It was a coal furnace in the house so when the coal was delivered we would go out into the driveway and pick up all the coal that did not go down into the bin.

Brenda Velasco: Then with Mr. Andrascik and the grocery store you had help.

Emily Lee: He helped us; he gave us credit. There were other grocery stores on Main Street like the old **Butler** and **A&P** but those were chain stores and you didn't go for credit in a chain store.

Brenda Velasco: Then she still had the mortgage to pay on the house and everything.

Emily Lee: Yes, she did. And my oldest brother, George, he was a godsend too because he was of an age where he could go and work in the summertime. But in those days his work was helping to dig the clay at the clay banks. Our family, indirectly, was part of it so he got a job there. Of course salaries were very low. But whatever he had, he gave to his mother to help take care of all of us. It was a big sacrifice for him, a very big sacrifice.

Brenda Velasco: He was a good older brother.

Emily Lee: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, you said, indirectly, your family had ties to the clay.....

Emily Lee: Well, you see the clay banks were owned by the Cutters and my grandmother was one of the Cutters so her brother was the owner.

Brenda Velasco: But as you said there was a lot of pride in that period of time.

Emily Lee: Absolutely, you just didn't air your problems.

Brenda Velasco: No there were no survival or no realty TV shows at that time.

Emily Lee: Even today, this has nothing to do with that, but in our church every Sunday there is a request from the minister on the pulpit asking if there are any requests for prayers and concerns. Here and there an arm comes up and they would ask, would you pray for my brother he is ill with this? Would you pray for this person, he's losing his job? We didn't do things like that. You just kept everything quiet and lived with it.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so houses of worship, First Presbyterian was very important to you and it was right down Green Street.

Emily Lee: No, it was right where it is now on Rahway Avenue so we would, from High Street walk right down Freeman Street right to the church. That was easy. I want to tell you when we were on changes in the houses and streets, I don't know when this all happened, but all this empty land somebody came along and put it into streets and blocks but there was no plan like today you have to a certain footage and all these qualifications. There wasn't any of that then so you have one whole street and every house is identical. It's a pity to continue with houses like that, twenty-five foot lots, every house identical. And that's different places like over near St. James. There are a couple of streets like that, up on Church Street it's like that, Grove Avenue it's like that, the other side of the railroad, every house was alike, pitiful.

Brenda Velasco: There was no planning or zoning back then and now we have it and we try.....

Emily Lee: Thank heaven we have it.

Brenda Velasco: So that's one of the positive changes. Okay, were there any other houses of worship besides First Presbyterian Church?

Emily Lee: Yes, there was the Congregational Church on Barron Avenue and Grove Avenue. By the way, I don't think people realize that there's a Grove Avenue and a Grove Street. And every once in a while I pick up something that the township printed and it says Grove Street and they're referring to Grove Avenue. I wonder, why don't they get out and learn that there are two.

Brenda Velasco: They're not ninety-two years old with that long history of Woodbridge Township.

Emily Lee: Then there was the Methodist Church on Main Street. Outside of that, there were no other Protestant Churches in Woodbridge. In time a church was developed up on Ridgedale Avenue and Prospect Street. What is that church called?

Brenda Velasco: Is it a bible fellowship?

Emily Lee: Yes, you can call it a bible fellowship. It's been in existence for quite a while. It struggles like the churches struggle. I don't know how some of them stay alive. I don't know how they keep going. I'm so glad they are. Then there was the Jewish Church, the synagogue, on School Street and it was right across from the firehouse right next door to School No. 1 which is now the Administration Building. That, in time, was sold and torn down and rebuilt on Amboy Avenue. Then, you know, St. James was not always on Amboy Avenue.

Brenda Velasco: Where was St. James located?

Emily Lee: It was way up Main Street and they had to roll it down Main Street to Amboy Avenue.

Brenda Velasco: They rolled down a wooden structure?

Emily Lee: Yes, it was a wooden structure. No as big as what it is now.

Brenda Velasco: Did you see it being rolled down?

Emily Lee: Only near the end.

Brenda Velasco: That was quite a feat to do though.

Emily Lee: Yes, it was. It went past my father's mother and she lived on Main Street two doors from the Knights of Columbus so we saw a lot of activity when I visited there. I was very close to my father's mother.

Brenda Velasco: Oh, and schools.

Emily Lee: Yes, in Woodbridge we had School No. 1 and then we had School No 11. Kindergarten was in School No. 1 and it was in the basement and we had a very old teacher who scared me for the rest of my school years. She frightened me so. Finally I got through that and then grades one, two and three were in School No. 11 which is where it is now. Then for grade four, it was what we called chicken coops. They were a structure off to the side while a room was being made in the first building for grades fifth, six and seventh.

Brenda Velasco: It was all within the immediate area but it was School No. 1 and School No. 11.

Emily Lee: And then in eighth grade, which is still the middle school, eighth grade was in with the Barron Avenue School, the high school. So instead of being four years of high school you had four years but you also had to go through the eighth grade in that building.

Brenda Velasco: So you were actually five years.....

Emily Lee: In that one building, yes.

Brenda Velasco: And what year did you graduate?

Emily Lee: 1936.

Brenda Velasco: In the throes of the Depression then.

Emily Lee: Absolutely.

Brenda Velasco: Were you able to get a job or did you continue with your education?

Emily Lee: No, it seemed like everybody was going to **Prudential** in Newark and they were hiring everybody. So in 1937 I started working at the **Prudential** and I stayed there until 1944. I hated the train. I liked to stay in my own town.

Brenda Velasco: You had a nice town.

Emily Lee: I had a lovely town: beautiful town.

Brenda Velasco: Then after 1944.....

Emily Lee: Then I went to work at **Shell Oil Company** in Sewaren which was only two miles from my home. I soon learned that I could walk those two miles if I missed my transportation but I tried not to do it too often.

Brenda Velasco: So how did you get there then? What transportation?

Emily Lee: Well I would walk to what we called the Town Hall and a bus would go by. And then in time, after people realized they were in their car and they're driving past me they'd say, oh she works for **Shell Oil Company** too. So they would stop and pick me up.

Brenda Velasco: How long did you work in Sewaren then at **Shell Oil Company**?

Emily Lee: Forty-one years, so I retired in 1985.

Brenda Velasco: So we covered all of Question 4. Was there anything else you had to add there?

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

Brenda Velasco: So where was the Police Department?

Emily Lee: It was a little building right next to the firehouse when I was a kid growing up and then eventually it moved to where the Town Hall is.

Brenda Velasco: It was behind the Town Hall?

Emily Lee: Yes, it was behind there.

Brenda Velasco: And where was the firehouse?

Emily Lee: Always on School Street, in my time. I think it was always on School Street. But when I was in seventh grade I had sewing classes and they were held on the second floor of the firehouse. We'd walk across the street, climb the stairs and all the machines were there. We learned to sew.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so was that included in part of the school day?

Emily Lee: Yes, that was part of the school day.

Brenda Velasco: So that was part of your education. The school system was teaching you.

Emily Lee: Right.

Brenda Velasco: And they taught you on sewing machines then.

Emily Lee: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Did you have the pedal?

Emily Lee: We had the pedal.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, the pedal sewing machine probably a **Singer**?

Emily Lee: There were two kinds. One had a chain stitch in it. I forget what it was called but the others were **Singer** sewing machines.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, we've got the firehouse and you said it's gotten bigger.

Emily Lee: The emergency squad; that started off in a small building which was built across from the firehouse. I think that was called, not Main Street. (Brook Street)

Brenda Velasco: So it's one of the side streets and it goes right into where **Sterns** is.

Emily Lee: The senior housing.

Brenda Velasco: Yes that was right next to **Sterns**.

Emily Lee: What's the name of that street?

Brenda Velasco: I forgot too.

Emily Lee: That's terrible.

Brenda Velasco: Both of us.

Emily Lee: I don't walk very often.

Brenda Velasco: Both of us have forgotten.

Emily Lee: It was a very active ambulance squad, all volunteer. Night and day you'd hear the whistle and you knew it was the ambulance. We had whistles from the firehouse. All fires had designated numbers. There was a bullhorn that would blast and say our number would be five one one. It would go five times and then pause and one and then another pause and a one. That indicated it was in our neighborhood. If there was no school it would blow four, four, four. That's how we knew there was no school. If it was the ambulance it would blow four. You had to be listening.

Brenda Velasco: Oh, yes. That's something we don't do very often now, listening skills. I'm glad you remembered that. Now how about the post office?

Emily Lee: Well the post office was many places. On Main Street there was a

drugstore called **Tommy Drake's Drugstore** and he had just a little window in it for handling the mail. Eventually, right next to it, they built a small post office, and I mean small, just one room. I can remember this Miss Kelly she was the woman at the window. I don't know who the Postmaster was but I knew Miss Kelly. There was just a little room and she was always there. Then they grew and they built a post office on Pearl Street on the corner of Pearl and James. Then eventually they came back to Main Street where it is now.

Brenda Velasco: So it moved.

Emily Lee: Yes and grew.

Brenda Velasco: How about the library?

Emily Lee: The library was where the Barron Arts Center is now. It was always the library, that's where it started.

Brenda Velasco: And that goes back to 1877, way before your time.

Emily Lee: Yes, way before. Now, when it left there a building was built up on Rahway Avenue. It's now a catering building, I don't remember what they called it, but it was just larger.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, it was the **Cameo** which is now **Arianna's**.

Emily Lee: Right.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, so that's where it was.

Emily Lee: Then from there it went over to where it is today.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, on Amboy Avenue.

Emily Lee: Now while we're under buildings, we also had the park. Right next to the firehouse they had a child's wading pool and right next to that they had the tennis courts. The tennis courts were great. In the heat of the day, we were there playing tennis and then eventually basketball courts. Then all the way out to Pearl Street they had the swings and the slides and sandbox and it was well supervised. It wasn't even fenced in. It wasn't necessary to fence in things back in those days.

Brenda Velasco: You grew up in a nice time.

Emily Lee: It was a beautiful town. Sometimes I see it and say, oh why did it change?

6. What did you do for recreation?

Emily Lee: Recreation for us was the best. We lived on a dirt road and only a few homes existed on High Street. It was a short street, we had many open lots to play on and we had a large field where we flew kites which we made out of newspaper. We played baseball, football and marbles. Our own yard was large so we also played marbles, tag, hide and seek, etc. The winter was ideal for sledding. There were never any cars to be afraid of.

Brenda Velasco: So most of your recreation was outdoors but it was your imagination. It was there for you to use but you didn't have it organized; it was all spontaneous.

Emily Lee: Right, nobody did it for us; we did it ourselves. And when we were in the house you either read a lot if you went to the library and you also played cards, simple cards. You know you would start off with the Old Maid type of thing and you would go into more developed cards. But it was all our own doing; nobody structured

it for us which is unfortunate today. Kids are not told to get up and go outside and play.

Brenda Velasco: No, you got plenty of exercise.

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

Emily Lee: The church. It really was. The church owned a parish house which was located behind the buildings that were on Rahway Avenue. There they had bowling and badminton and that type of activity. But behind the Parish House, there were open fields. So there again it was baseball, football or whatever and that went all the way back to the railroad tracks all that deep property. It was great.

Brenda Velasco: What happened to this Parish House?

Emily Lee: Well eventually, see, the church had its own house on Rahway Avenue. When that was sold and the Parish House was sold all the property became senior housing. I don't know the different names of the senior housing.

Brenda Velasco: Finn and Adams.

Emily Lee: And then back there was all this property there again. These houses were all built the same, everyone is the same. If you don't remember your number, you don't get home safe.

Brenda Velasco: So the Parish House was on the other side of Rahway Avenue from where the church was then?

Emily Lee: Yes, and so was the house that the ministers lived in. Our church furnished a home for the ministers. I had a great uncle who was a minister in the church. I don't remember him.

Brenda Velasco: Do you remember his name?

Emily Lee: Yes, McNulty, Benjamin McNulty.

Brenda Velasco: Was he a minister at the First Presbyterian in Woodbridge? (Pastor of First Presbyterian: 1874-1906.

Emily Lee: Yes, he was. So he lived in that house the church furnished. He was married to my grandfather's sister, Margaret Prall.

Brenda Velasco: And the Pralls are a big name in Woodbridge, too.

Emily Lee: Yes, well my mother's maiden name was Prall. Oh, for recreation also we had a theatre on Main Street. Do you know where the building is that used to be a bank? It has a clock out front. It's granite looking.

Brenda Velasco: Yes.

Emily Lee: Well, right next to it was a theatre and we could go there on Saturday afternoons for five cents a movie and on Saturday afternoon they would have a movie plus serial so you had to go every week to stay with the story. Otherwise you'd miss it. But one time, I remember, it was so frightening I started to cry and my sister had to take me outside and say, stand right here until I get back; because she wanted to see the end of the story. I couldn't stay, I was scared.

Brenda Velasco: Those are happy memories though.

Emily Lee: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: You've got a good memory, a very good memory. Anything else you want to add for Question #7?

Emily Lee: That was the church because many activities took place at the church.

Brenda Velasco: And you mentioned some of the sports and you mentioned the Strawberry Festival.

Emily Lee: Well we had a Sunday school and everybody went to Sunday school. There was no question; you just went.

Brenda Velasco: How long did it last, the Sunday school? How many hours for you?

Emily Lee: Just one hour. Sunday school first and then church right after.

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

Emily Lee: Living in Woodbridge was peaceful. In 1926, and I'm using a question mark because I'm not sure of the year, but the population for the whole township was twenty-five thousand. So for Woodbridge Proper it was small, so we knew everybody. You know, you could say hello to people. It was a nice way to live.

Brenda Velasco: And you lived on a great street. You weren't far from Main Street or the train or the bus.

Emily Lee: Or anything. We were perfectly located and it was a safe street because it was short. There was no reason for cars to go there unless they were going home or to visit. It was not a thru street, but it was great. I'll tell you, we had milk delivered every morning and we had a huckster bring fruit and vegetables by way of a wagon and horse and later off a truck. In the summertime, a hokey pokey wagon came by with ice cream, homemade ice cream. And then we had the umbrella man come up the street with his little cart and he would repair umbrellas and sharpen our knives. And guess what? We sometimes had a gypsy wagon come up the street and we were told to run home because the gypsies are going to capture you.

Brenda Velasco: Right, they would kidnap you.

Emily Lee: And then we even had the monkey grinder. Can you believe that?

Brenda Velasco: Wow!

Emily Lee: And his monkey was on his shoulder. Then with all the other food we had bakeries drive by. The Friehofer, did you ever hear of the Friehofer Bakery and the Dugan Bakery?

Brenda Velasco: Yes.

Emily Lee: They came down our street. What was the name of the man that sold the crocks of butter? Lambert's Butter and he also had rolls and liverwurst. Oh, it was so good.

Margaret, Sister of Emily Lee: Everything tasted different back then. Nothing has the flavor today as it did back then.

Brenda Velasco: No, because we have the preservatives added for safety reasons.

Margaret, Sister of Emily Lee: Right, it was different.

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

Margaret, Sister of Emily Lee: We had the car races.

Brenda Velasco: Ah, car races on Sunday and that was located.....

Emily Lee: Where the present high school is, Woodbridge High School is. A big track was built for them and if you lived anywhere in the neighborhood. And High Street was really in the neighborhood, because you got that droaning, droaning all afternoon. (Board track: 1928-1931; Oiled dirt track: 1932-1938)

Brenda Velasco: And this was a Sunday afternoon.

Emily Lee: It would shatter the quiet Sundays.

Brenda Velasco: When did the track go up? How old were you when that happened?

Emily Lee: About eleven. That was sad.

Brenda Velasco: But it didn't last too long?

Emily Lee: No, a couple of years. It seemed like a couple of years.

Brenda Velasco: With that noise.

Emily Lee: You know the attendance wouldn't be that much when the weather got cold but I'm sure they came back the following year, maybe two years.

Margaret, Sister of Emily Lee: Oh, yes, they were there a couple of years.

Emily Lee: It was bad. There again no building codes so nobody watched.

Brenda Velasco: No building codes, no noise ordinances, nothing.

Emily Lee: And the building was too fast. Like I keep saying they built one house after another, a lot. But we had the train wreck which was the worst disaster I would say. But in addition to that there was an explosion in Mauer which shook Woodbridge. (1912)

Brenda Velasco: Where was that explosion?

Emily Lee: Mauer, do you know where Mauer is? It's between Perth Amboy and Woodbridge.

Brenda Velasco: Oh!

Emily Lee: And then on Port Reading Road, behind our church, now what's there now, the American Hungarian Hall, there was a railroad signal plant. They manufactured signals for railroads. That had a big explosion. (1940)

Brenda Velasco: How old were you then with that?

Emily Lee: Maybe a teenager.

Brenda Velasco: Were you out of high school already?

Emily Lee: No. Oh, and there was a **Shell** oil tanker. You see, the railroad was not always elevated, the railroad was street level.

Brenda Velasco: Grade level, right.

Emily Lee: So there was a **Shell** oil truck hit by a train on Green Street right where the overhead is now. I was still in high school then because they didn't dismiss us because of the fire and the explosions. (1935)

Brenda Velasco: So you were at the Barron Avenue School when this happened?

Emily Lee: I was at the Barron Avenue School. Then there was a fire in the Methodist Church and the steeple was lost; destroyed. (The bell tower and bell caught fire and was destroyed in 1948. On November 3, 1954 the Methodist Church was totally gutted by fire and had to be rebuilt.) I was working then in **Shell Oil** so that wasn't so long ago. But it was devastating to see a church being destroyed. Also on Green Street, I was still in school; this eighteen year old beautiful girl who lived on Grove Avenue was killed by a train. She came out of the shoemaker's store and waved to some friends in a car unaware there was a train coming down. There were two tracks there for a train going south and a train going north and she was unaware of the second train and walked right into the train and was killed instantly. (1934)

Brenda Velasco: Okay and this was when you had grade level tracks.

Emily Lee: Oh that was so sad.

Brenda Velasco: How old were you then?

Emily Lee: Oh maybe sixteen or seventeen. She was a friend. She was from our church.

Brenda Velasco: Do you recall her name?

Emily Lee: Harriett Short. These things you don't forget.

Brenda Velasco: No, and I thought you would know her name that's why I asked you. She was your friend.

Emily Lee: And she had a younger sister, Margaret, who died at a very young age with pneumonia. So the mother and father were devastated and they moved: a good reason to move.

Brenda Velasco: So you saw a lot of action in Woodbridge: a lot of its history.

Emily Lee: We were aware of things. We didn't stay in the house. Not that we were out on the street because we were not allowed off the street unless we told where we were going and why we were going and who we were going to be with for sure.

Brenda Velasco: Is there anything else you wanted to add to Question #9?

Margaret, Sister of Emily Lee: That was just about enough.

Emily Lee: Riots, we didn't have any riots. There was one riot that was in Avenel at what they used to call *the Chicken Coop*. The building is still there. It was a black tavern and they had a fight going on, you could call it a riot, a fight. And Fred Lynn was a policeman and he was a bravo type of person who thought he could go in alone and take care of that situation. It was a big mistake. He almost lost his life.

Brenda Velasco: Wow!

Emily Lee: I think he lost his ability to be a policeman. It was sad. He was a nice person. He had a nice wife and a son and a daughter but he thought he could calm it and he made a big mistake. So that was the riot that I can remember.

Brenda Velasco: This *Chicken Coop*.....

Emily Lee: I don't remember the actual name of it but it was a black tavern.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, on Rahway Avenue.

Emily Lee: No, Amboy Avenue.

Brenda Velasco: Amboy Avenue, okay.

Emily Lee: It's not as far as **K Mart**, it's not that far. Oh and the police. Way back we didn't have the traffic signals; then there was no need for traffic signals. So the policeman stood in a little building, big enough to hold him, in the center of Main Street and Amboy Avenue and also on Green Street and Amboy Avenue. Now there may have been others but those are the only two I was aware of. And at night time when they went off duty, a lamplighter came and placed a kerosene lamp on that post so the people were aware of the intersection. Years later they wrote a song about a lamplighter. But in Woodbridge there are many services offered but we do not take advantage of these. We're old and just accept what it is. We do not ask for much but would certainly like lower taxes. I just feel that the lower taxes should be done for people in their nineties: reimbursement. When you read where there are people living in apartments and they get lower taxes and at motels they all get lower taxes. Here we are, all these years, have never had anything like that and we should be entitled to something.

Brenda Velasco: Did you get your property.....

Emily Lee: We don't qualify. We make too much money. But we make too much money because in the Depression we learned to save; we didn't spend the money. So

you build up something and then years later it's going to be taken away from you because you have it because you were sensible enough to save your money.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so that's your big criticism of Woodbridge and I think it's a criticism in New Jersey and it could be even nationwide too in certain areas.

Emily Lee: I know. The people who learned during the Depression.....

Margaret, Sister of Emily Lee: We saved, we didn't spend any money.

Emily Lee: No, we struggled.

Margaret, Sister of Emily Lee: That's what we did.

Brenda Velasco: And your mom had seven children.

Emily Lee: And she managed. It wasn't easy.

Margaret, Sister of Emily Lee: We had pancakes everyday for lunch.

Emily Lee: We had oatmeal for breakfast and pancakes for lunch.

Margaret, Sister of Emily Lee: And it never changed and we never had ice cream.

Brenda Velasco: And look at how old you are now: ninety-four and ninety-two. You're both healthy so it didn't hurt you.

Emily Lee: It didn't hurt us.

Brenda Velasco: No.

Margaret, Sister of Emily Lee: No it didn't hurt us.

Brenda Velasco: It wasn't that variety.

Margaret, Sister of Emily Lee: We didn't have treats.

Emily Lee: No, we didn't have treats.

Margaret, Sister of Emily Lee: We didn't know what a treat was.

Brenda Velasco: Not with seven kids. Your mom had a very, very tight budget.

Margaret, Sister of Emily Lee: Very tight.

Emily Lee: She learned to make grape jelly. We would get the grapes, do what you had to do and put them in a white bag and let it drip until all the juice was out.

10. What do you like about Woodbridge today?

Brenda Velasco: You're still here.

Emily Lee: Yes, thank God we are. I wouldn't want to live any other place, Brenda, really. I've been many, many places.

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

Emily Lee: Yes, we have a brother (Calvin L. Lee). He's eighty-four years old and he lives on Tisdale Place with his wife.

Margaret, Sister of Emily Lee: He doesn't talk to us.

Emily Lee: And he doesn't talk to us.

Brenda Velasco: That's too bad.

Emily Lee: Yes, with his wife, June, and he has a daughter, Debra Souza, who lives in our house on High Street with her three daughters.

Brenda Velasco: Wow! Okay, so the house stayed in the family then.

Emily Lee: Yes, it did.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, and then Margaret lives here too.

Emily Lee: Yes. Let me tell you, the town went broke in the '30s. We were still in school and the town did not have money to pay the teachers; they gave them script. And in order for them to get rid of their script, they would come and say: is your

mother going to pay her taxes this quarter. We'll give you the script and you give us the money. Then we would take the script to the tax office and the taxes got paid.

That was important.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, I didn't realize that. I heard about the script during the Depression.

Emily Lee: There was no money to pay the teachers.

Brenda Velasco: Your memory is fantastic. Okay, well I thank you Emily and Margaret.