

**Oral History Interview  
Frank and Helen Jacob  
WH071**

(written transcript and digital audio)

On November 16, 2009, Frank and Helen Kane Jacob were interviewed at Evergreen by Brenda Velasco at 10 A.M. Frank also was Councilman in Woodbridge Township from 1971 until 1983, about twelve years. However the concentration for this interview though is on the physical changes that have occurred in this township. Okay, Helen you're first.

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

*Helen Jacob:* My name is Helen Jacob and I live in Iselin and my date of birth is February 18, 1923.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay and Frank.

*Frank Jacob:* My date of birth is July 23, 1923.

*Brenda Velasco:* So you're both '23 then?

*Helen and Frank Jacob:* Right.

*Brenda Velasco:* That's unusual. Okay Helen, next question.

**2. How long have you lived in Woodbridge-Iselin?**

*Helen Jacob:* I lived here since 1931.

*Brenda Velasco:* In Iselin?

*Helen Jacob:* In Iselin.

*Brenda Velasco:* So that's a long time. You've seen big changes.

*Helen Jacob:* Big, big, big changes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Not only in Iselin but all of Woodbridge Township.

*Helen Jacob:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, Frank how long have you lived in Woodbridge then?

*Frank Jacob:* 1948 till now.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, 2009.

*Frank Jacob:* Yes, and I'm still living there.

*Brenda Velasco:* And you're still living there. You haven't moved out.

*Frank Jacob:* No.

**3. Why did your family originally move to Woodbridge-Iselin?**

*Brenda Velasco:* Helen why did your family come to Woodbridge or Iselin in 1931?

*Helen Jacob:* My father worked with a man that lived in Iselin and they would come up every Saturday night to play cards. My mother and father thought it was a nice place, quiet - a nice place to bring your children to live. So that's when we moved here in January.

*Brenda Velasco:* During the winter.

*Helen Jacob:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Where did you move from then?

*Helen Jacob:* Elizabeth.

*Brenda Velasco:* So this was quite a contrast to Elizabeth at that time.

*Helen Jacob:* Definitely.

*Brenda Velasco:* Because Elizabeth was a big city even back then.

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Brenda Velasco:* It was a metropolitan area with a big shopping district.

*Helen Jacob:* Everything and we moved to the country and it was country.

*Brenda Velasco:* We're going to get into that. Okay, Frank you come in '48. Could you tell us why you moved here in 1948?

*Frank Jacob:* Because I got married.

*Brenda Velasco:* You married Helen, okay.

*Frank Jacob:* I lived up on Henry Street before that where the **Shop Rite** used to be on Oak Tree Road that little clip of homes there.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes.

*Frank Jacob:* That was Edison Township.

*Brenda Velasco:* So you didn't move too far?

*Frank Jacob:* No.

*Brenda Velasco:* Alright, so it was for marriage that you came.

**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:* Helen we're going to start off with you because you lived here since 1931 in Iselin. We're going to look at some of the physical changes that have occurred in this area. Let's start off, when you moved to Iselin in '31 where did you live?

*Helen Jacob:* On Hillcrest Avenue right off Oak Tree Road by the Parkway now.

*Brenda Velasco:* And the Parkway wasn't there.

*Helen Jacob:* No.

*Brenda Velasco:* Were there a lot of houses on Hillcrest Avenue?

*Helen Jacob:* No, the same amount that's there now.

*Brenda Velasco:* When you moved there did you have running water or well water?

*Helen Jacob:* No, we had running water: all the comforts of home.

*Brenda Velasco:* So you had all the amenities then with sewers and everything?

*Helen Jacob:* Yes, everything.

*Brenda Velasco:* This was all in at that time. Were your streets paved?

*Helen Jacob:* I can't remember because most of them weren't.

*Brenda Velasco:* Because Oak Tree Road was a main thoroughfare for you and you were right off of Oak Tree Road.

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Brenda Velasco:* So you had access.

*Helen Jacob:* But the side roads most of them were not paved.

*Brenda Velasco:* How about the stores?

*Helen Jacob:* Oak Tree Road was kind of thriving. We had **A&P**, we had a dry goods store, we had.....

*Frank Jacob:* **Tucci Metals.**

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay.

*Helen Jacob:* We had the cleaners.

*Frank Jacob:* **Petroletti's.**

*Helen Jacob:* Yes, Petroletti, even Lester is our doctor.

*Brenda Velasco:* And where was he located?

*Helen Jacob:* On the corner of Marconi and Oak Tree Road. Because there was no doctor in town. Whenever anything was wrong you went and Mr. Petroletti treated you. (According to *Then and Now of Iselin*, this was Iselin's first drug store/pharmacy)

*Brenda Velasco:* Did you have a movie house there?

*Helen Jacob:* Yes.

*Frank Jacob:* Oh, yes.

*Helen Jacob:* Right on the corner of Correja Avenue and Oak Tree Road, twenty-five cents to get in.

*Brenda Velasco:* You've got a good memory.

*Frank Jacob:* And they had dishes.

*Brenda Velasco:* And dishes, okay. You have to explain about the dishes.

*Frank Jacob:* When you got an adult ticket you would get a dish because my mother got the dishes and then she'd pay another quarter for me and she got two dishes.

*Helen Jacob:* That was the way a lot of people got their dinnerware.

*Frank Jacob:* That's right.

*Helen Jacob:* You'd get a different piece each week.

*Brenda Velasco:* And you'd have a service for four or whatever you needed in a short time.

*Helen Jacob:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* And when you went to the movies how many movies did you see?

*Frank Jacob:* Two, a double feature.

*Helen Jacob:* Two plus the continuing, what was it Flash Gordon.

*Frank Jacob:* Oh, yes, the serials and the news.

*Brenda Velasco:* Newsreels.

*Frank Jacob:* Right.

*Brenda Velasco:* So this was a whole afternoon if you went.

*Helen Jacob:* Oh definitely.

*Frank Jacob:* Oh, sure.

*Helen Jacob:* You'd be getting home about four thirty or five o'clock. And we walked to the movie and home from the movie.

*Brenda Velasco:* And the movie wasn't too far then from you.

*Helen Jacob:* No.

*Brenda Velasco:* A little further for you because.....

*Frank Jacob:* I had to go up the hill.

*Brenda Velasco:* You had to go up the hill but for Helen it was quite near.

*Frank Jacob:* No, she was right around the corner.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, you were very fortunate and now it's no longer there.

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Brenda Velasco:* But the building is still there.

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Frank Jacob:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* They did save the façade. Okay, getting back to the stores, where was the **A&P** located?

*Helen Jacob:* Do you know where the **Chowpatty Restaurant** is?

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay.

*Helen Jacob:* Right there.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, the **Chowpatty Restaurant** on Oak Tree Road. Is this by St. Cecelia's, that church?

*Helen Jacob:* What is that street, Marconi right?

*Frank Jacob:* Marconi, yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* By Marconi, okay.

*Frank Jacob:* It was across the street wasn't it?

*Helen Jacob:* No.

*Frank Jacob:* I thought it was across the street where **Schlesinger** had that.

*Helen Jacob:* **Schlesinger's** had their dry goods store and the **A&P** was right next to it.

*Frank Jacob:* Yes, right.

*Brenda Velasco:* When you talk about a dry goods store what did they sell there?

*Helen Jacob:* They sold linens, fabric; they didn't sell any clothing but they did sell socks and underwear. That was about it.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, once again, that was within walking distance.

*Helen Jacob:* Everything was within walking distance, right.

*Brenda Velasco:* Did you have any buses there?

*Helen Jacob:* No.

*Frank Jacob:* No.

*Brenda Velasco:* No buses.

*Helen Jacob:* No buses.

*Frank Jacob:* We walked.

*Brenda Velasco:* How about houses of worship?

*Helen Jacob:* We had St. Cecelia's. It was a little white church at that time.

*Brenda Velasco:* Was it still located.....

*Helen Jacob:* It was right on the corner where it is now.

*Frank Jacob:* Middlesex.....

*Helen Jacob:* And there was the Presbyterian Church across the street. That was the only two.

*Brenda Velasco:* And they were sort of the religious foundation then.

*Helen Jacob:* We spent a lot of our time in church, the activities. Father Brennan, who was our first pastor, he would have dances for us and he would also put us into variety shows. And, of course, he started the fair so he had us working that. So a lot of our activity was.....

*Frank Jacob:* Church related.

*Brenda Velasco:* Church related, yes.

*Helen Jacob:* Every year he had a big May Ball for us in School #15.

*Brenda Velasco:* And we know the fair is one of the big highlights of Iselin.

*Helen Jacob:* Yes.

*Frank Jacob:* That's right.

*Brenda Velasco:* It's one of the central focal points during the summer. Was he the first pastor of that church?

*Helen Jacob:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, and then later on Father Willis came.

*Helen Jacob:* Willis, yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay.

*Helen Jacob:* Father Larkin was in between the two of them.

*Frank Jacob:* That's right, yes, Father Larkin.

*Brenda Velasco:* How about schools?

*Helen Jacob:* There was two, School No. 6 which was Green Street right near where the bank is now right next to the firehouse; and then there was School No. 15 on Pershing Avenue.

*Brenda Velasco:* Are they still in operation now?

*Helen Jacob:* No, because School No. 6 was torn down and the bank is there now.

*Frank Jacob:* That's right.

*Helen Jacob:* And School No.15 was torn down and there are houses there now.

*Brenda Velasco:* You're the first one I've interviewed that could give me the exact locations of the schools.

*Helen Jacob:* Really!

*Brenda Velasco:* Thank you.

*Frank Jacob:* Really!

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, this is important.

*Frank Jacob:* Well she went to.....

*Helen Jacob:* I went to School No. 15.

*Frank Jacob:* She went to Woodbridge High for only half a day.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay.

*Helen Jacob:* Well from School No. 15, I went to middle school in Woodbridge School No. 11.

*Brenda Velasco:* Let's go back to School No. 15. What grades did you attend there then?

*Helen Jacob:* When I came here I was in third grade, I can from a Catholic school.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay.

*Helen Jacob:* I was too advanced so I went to fifth grade.

*Brenda Velasco:* Wow!

*Helen Jacob:* And I was still too advanced so I went to seventh grade.

*Brenda Velasco:* You married a genius then.

*Frank Jacob:* I know.

*Helen Jacob:* Then I went to School No. 11.

*Brenda Velasco:* For eighth grade?

*Helen Jacob:* Yes, and then went to Barron Avenue.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, for the high school?

*Helen Jacob:* Yes, half day.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, they were on split sessions.

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Brenda Velasco:* And what year was your graduating class from?

*Helen Jacob:* 1940.

*Brenda Velasco:* 1940, just before the war broke out then.  
*Helen Jacob:* Right.  
*Brenda Velasco:* Frank, you want to join in because we are still on Question #4 and I know the focal point has been Helen with this question because.....  
*Frank Jacob:* She's the oldest.  
*Brenda Velasco:* She's the oldest?  
*Frank Jacob:* She is.  
*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, and you didn't attend the schools.  
*Frank Jacob:* I went to Edison.  
*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, you went to Edison.  
*Frank Jacob:* I went to Oak Tree School to the eighth grade and then I went to Clara Barton to the ninth grade.  
*Brenda Velasco:* You had to travel then.  
*Frank Jacob:* And yes I went by bus.  
*Brenda Velasco:* Did you go by public bus or school bus?  
*Frank Jacob:* School bus and then from tenth grade to twelfth grade I went to Metuchen High.  
*Brenda Velasco:* Edison didn't have a high school then.  
*Frank Jacob:* No, we didn't have a high school.  
*Brenda Velasco:* Now they have two high schools.  
*Frank Jacob:* I know.  
*Brenda Velasco:* What graduating class?  
*Frank Jacob:* I didn't graduate I went to the CCC's.  
*Brenda Velasco:* Civilian Conservation Corp.  
*Frank Jacob:* Yes, for a year.  
*Brenda Velasco:* Because this was also the time of the Depression.  
*Frank Jacob:* Yes.  
*Helen Jacob:* Right.  
*Brenda Velasco:* So both of you were in school at tough, tough times.  
*Frank Jacob:* Oh, yes.  
*Helen Jacob:* Very.  
*Brenda Velasco:* You both had to cope with the Depression. You are the children of the Depression.  
*Helen Jacob:* Right.  
*Frank Jacob:* Oh, yes.  
*Brenda Velasco:* So you know how to save.  
*Helen Jacob:* No, just the opposite.  
*Frank Jacob:* Spend.  
*Brenda Velasco:* Good because you can't take it with you.  
*Frank Jacob:* That's true.  
*Brenda Velasco:* Then if you feel we've answered enough on Question #4 let's go to Question #5. Once again we're going to start off with Helen. Oh, one thing I wanted to ask you Helen was, how did you get to School #11 for eighth grade?  
*Helen Jacob:* Bus.  
*Brenda Velasco:* Was it a school bus?  
*Helen Jacob:* Yes, Raphael's.

*Brenda Velasco:* Raphael's school bus, okay.

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

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, where was the post office?

*Helen Jacob:* It was on the corner of Correja and Oak Tree Road across the street from the movies.

*Brenda Velasco:* And since then it's moved.

*Frank Jacob:* Yes.

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Brenda Velasco:* It's on Middlesex/Essex Turnpike.

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Frank Jacob:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Closer to the train station as well.

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Brenda Velasco:* How about the library?

*Helen Jacob:* The library was on Middlesex Avenue. Is that still there?

*Frank Jacob:* Yes, the building is, yes. I don't know whether they use it as a library now.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, Middlesex Avenue?

*Helen Jacob:* It's right near Route #27.

*Frank Jacob:* Right off Route #27.

*Brenda Velasco:* I think they use it for storage equipment or something.

*Helen Jacob:* Is that what it's used for?

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, and it's near the parking lot for the shoppers now.

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, it is a township building. And that was run by the township then?

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Brenda Velasco:* So once again you could walk to the library, Helen, from where you lived.

*Helen Jacob:* Really everybody walked no matter what part of Iselin you lived. You always walked.

*Frank Jacob:* Because you didn't have any money for gas.

*Helen Jacob:* As a matter of fact we used to walk all the way up to Freeman's Lake (Pond) to go ice skating.

*Brenda Velasco:* Which is on New Dover Road?

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Frank Jacob:* Middlesex.

*Helen Jacob:* Yes, Middlesex and New Dover.

*Brenda Velasco:* I'm coming from Colonia so it's New Dover. You're going down Middlesex.

*Helen Jacob:* There would be gangs of us that would walk all the way up there to go ice skating.

*Brenda Velasco:* How about parks?

*Helen Jacob:* There weren't any.

*Frank Jacob:* None.

*Brenda Velasco:* Did you have Merrill Park?

*Frank Jacob:* Roosevelt Park, we had.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, Roosevelt Park.

*Helen Jacob:* That was it. No, Merrill Park wasn't there yet.

*Frank Jacob:* Merrill Park wasn't there yet.

*Helen Jacob:* That was a farm.

*Brenda Velasco:* Do you recall who owned the farm?

*Helen Jacob:* Berger.

*Frank Jacob:* Berger.

*Brenda Velasco:* Berger?

*Helen Jacob:* Yes.

*Frank Jacob:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* What type of farm did he own?

*Helen Jacob:* Cows.

*Frank Jacob:* Cows.

*Brenda Velasco:* Dairy.

*Frank Jacob:* A dairy farm, that's right.

*Helen Jacob:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* I wasn't aware of that. How about the firehouse?

*Frank Jacob:* Firehouse, that was on Harding Avenue.

*Helen Jacob:* Harding Avenue. The one on Green Street was always there and the other one was on Harding Avenue and then they built the one on, what is that Dow?

*Frank Jacob:* On Dow, yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Dow and Auth.

*Frank Jacob:* Yes, Dow and Auth.

*Brenda Velasco:* So they moved the one from Harding Avenue?

*Helen Jacob:* To Dow, yes.

*Frank Jacob:* To Dow, right.

*Brenda Velasco:* I mean you have two firehouses very close by, do you recall why you have two firehouses?

*Helen Jacob:* No.

*Brenda Velasco:* From what I was told it was because it was grade level crossing for the train.

*Helen Jacob:* It was.

*Frank Jacob:* Oh, yes, that's right.

*Helen Jacob:* That was a big day in Iselin when they moved the bridge in place.

*Brenda Velasco:* We're going to save that one.

*Helen Jacob:* Okay.

*Brenda Velasco:* That comes down later for Question #9. Then we mentioned the schools in the other question and as I said you were the first who knew the locations and could recall the locations so that was great. Did you have emergency services like first aid squads?

*Helen Jacob:* No.

*Frank Jacob:* No, with the Petroletti's.



*Brenda Velasco:* You just went to that doctor. (Mr. Petroletti was a pharmacist)

*Helen Jacob:* Yes, I got bit by a dog one time and that's where I went to be taken care of.

*Brenda Velasco:* And he took care of you. No insurance back then either.

*Frank Jacob:* No.

*Helen Jacob:* Right, cauterized the wound and that was it.

## **6. What did you do for recreation?**

*Helen Jacob:* Well, we had the recreation hall on Oak Tree Road that was run by Vince Grogan.

*Brenda Velasco:* Vince Grogan?

*Helen Jacob:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay.

*Helen Jacob:* And he had us playing softball, volleyball and basketball.

*Brenda Velasco:* Was he from the township?

*Helen Jacob:* He lived in Iselin but he was employed by the township.

*Brenda Velasco:* Where was the hall exactly on Oak Tree Road? Do you recall?

*Frank Jacob:* Next to Oliver's Tavern. It was a store.

*Helen Jacob:* And I remember once a year the whole township would have an Olympic Day and we would go over and there would be like softball pitching and track and all of that and they would give you a plaque that was made out of plaster of paris. Is that what you call it?

*Brenda Velasco:* Paris, plaster of paris. Was that for all the participants?

*Helen Jacob:* Just the ones that would win first, second and third. As a matter of fact I should have went up and got one. I had won third place softball throw.

*Brenda Velasco:* Wow, don't throw it out.

*Helen Jacob:* 1937.

*Brenda Velasco:* And that was for a softball throw.

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Brenda Velasco:* Well just keep in mind the museum because that would be nice to have and show that we had a youth recreation way back then and we recognize the significance of it. Anything else about recreation?

*Helen Jacob:* Well, Father Brennan used to have us in the basement of the church. They used to come from the township and teach us tap dancing. Remember that?

*Brenda Velasco:* You also mentioned before about the church how many of the activities.....

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Frank Jacob:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Those were dances?

*Helen Jacob:* Yes and plays.

*Brenda Velasco:* And variety shows you said.

*Helen Jacob:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* And this was Father Brennan.

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Brenda Velasco:* And did you have softball leagues?

*Helen Jacob:* Yes, we used to play different sections of the township.

*Brenda Velasco:* This was when you were in high school?

*Helen Jacob:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay.

*Helen Jacob:* I think we were called the Red Devils and as a matter of fact, at the firehouse on Harding Avenue, we used to have a fife and drum band.

*Brenda Velasco:* Wow! Did you have parades?

*Helen Jacob:* I wish you could say we would be in the parade in Iselin.

*Brenda Velasco:* There was a parade in Iselin.

*Helen Jacob:* Yes, for Memorial Day.

*Brenda Velasco:* Because the parades for Memorial Day have gone by the wayside.

*Frank Jacob:* Yes.

*Helen Jacob:* I'm telling you we didn't have much money but we really used to enjoy ourselves and there was a lot of recreation for us to get. There was a case where everybody knew everybody else in town and you could walk the streets, you know. And your parents didn't worry about you because you were always with a group of people. So it was really a nice time.

*Brenda Velasco:* Did you have a lot of fields where you could play?

*Helen Jacob:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* I'm thinking like Kennedy School wasn't there at that time so that must have been all fields.

*Helen Jacob:* Right and Indiana Avenue School wasn't there. That was all woods.

*Frank Jacob:* That's right, yes. How about the airport?

*Helen Jacob:* Yes, that's right. That was up.....

*Brenda Velasco:* Where was the airport?

*Frank Jacob:* Where the old **Shop Rite** used to be right on Oak Tree Road there right on the other side of the Parkway. Well, that was all fields.

*Helen Jacob:* Where Woodbridge Elks is now.

*Frank Jacob:* Where Woodbridge Elks is.

*Brenda Velasco:* Do both of you recall seeing the airport?

*Frank Jacob:* Oh, yes, definitely, sure.

*Helen Jacob:* Yes, right.

*Brenda Velasco:* So that goes back to the 1930s and 1940s.

*Frank Jacob:* 40's, yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* And Woodbridge Elks wasn't there. There were no houses, nothing.

*Helen Jacob:* No, nothing. It was just empty fields.

*Frank Jacob:* We used to play football in the fields before they put in the airport.

*Brenda Velasco:* I knew you would be a treasure trove of information, both of you.

*Helen Jacob:* It's a long time.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes. And you said ice skating at Freeman's pond in the winter.

*Helen Jacob:* Yes.

*Frank Jacob:* Oh, yes.

*Helen Jacob:* And I remember when the fireman used to come on the corner of Elmhurst Avenue and Berkley Boulevard and flood the field so that we could go ice skating in the winter.

*Frank Jacob:* Oh, yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* When you're talking about Berkley that's further down isn't it?  
*Helen Jacob:* That's down where we live, yes.  
*Frank Jacob:* We live on Elmhurst.  
*Helen Jacob:* It's one of the side streets off Middlesex/Essex Turnpike.  
*Brenda Velasco:* So then you'd have ice skating there was well.  
*Helen Jacob:* Yes, they would flood the field and it would freeze and we'd go ice skating there.  
*Brenda Velasco:* So you had a lot of activity.  
*Helen Jacob:* We did.  
*Brenda Velasco:* That was inexpensive. Did you ride bikes?  
*Helen Jacob:* Right.  
*Brenda Velasco:* You had bikes, too.  
*Helen Jacob:* Yes.  
*Frank Jacob:* You didn't have one.  
*Helen Jacob:* No, I used to steal my sister's.  
*Brenda Velasco:* Until she found out.  
*Helen Jacob:* Yes.  
*Brenda Velasco:* But there wasn't that much traffic so.....  
*Helen Jacob:* No.  
*Frank Jacob:* No, that's right. Oh, we used to go sleigh riding.....  
*Helen Jacob:* Where the Parkway Bridge is now.  
*Frank Jacob:* All the way down.....  
*Helen Jacob:* Oak Tree Road.  
*Frank Jacob:* Oak Tree Road down to Route #27.  
*Brenda Velasco:* Wow!  
*Helen Jacob:* Because it was a big hill.  
*Brenda Velasco:* Yes.  
*Helen Jacob:* And there were no cars.  
*Frank Jacob:* That's right you'd see three or four cars going. Now.....  
*Brenda Velasco:* Right, you didn't have Cooper Towers.  
*Frank Jacob:* No, that was all empty fields.  
*Brenda Velasco:* So it was perfect.  
*Helen Jacob:* Yes.  
*Frank Jacob:* Yes.  
*Brenda Velasco:* Anything else we can mention? Did you have bowling alleys or anything?  
*Helen Jacob:* No.  
*Frank Jacob:* No.  
*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, then let's go on to the next question.

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

*Helen Jacob:* Church.  
*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, that's what I was getting to with all the activities that they had. Now did you send your children to St. Cecelia's?  
*Helen Jacob:* Yes.  
*Brenda Velasco:* Which meant you were even more involved.

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Frank Jacob:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* And how many children?

*Helen Jacob:* Two.

*Frank Jacob:* A boy and a girl.

*Brenda Velasco:* One of each.

*Helen Jacob:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* And we went over all the activities that the church fostered so that would be your focal point.

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

*Helen Jacob:* I think the small town affect it had. Everything was close together and everybody knew each other.

*Frank Jacob:* That's right. You'd walk down the street and you'd see all the people you knew.

*Brenda Velasco:* You moved here in '48?

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Brenda Velasco:* And you felt it was the same Frank?

*Frank Jacob:* Oh, yes, same atmosphere.

*Helen Jacob:* Well he was in with the whole group here in Iselin.

*Frank Jacob:* Yes, I used to walk down from.....

*Brenda Velasco:* They allowed you in.

*Frank Jacob:* Yes, they allowed me in.

*Brenda Velasco:* So you knew about Iselin and everything else.

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

*Helen Jacob:* Like I said before, the putting in place of that railroad bridge. That was a big to do at that time. (In 1937, the State agreed to build an underpass on Green Street at Green Street in Iselin. On October 14, 1938, the *Woodbridge Independent* stated: "that the completion of the underpass at the Iselin crossing has brought that community into a closer relationship with Woodbridge, which as it should be. Iselin is a progressive settlement constantly increasing in size and importance")

*Brenda Velasco:* And that was on Oak Tree Road?

*Helen Jacob:* Green Street.

*Brenda Velasco:* Green Street.

*Helen Jacob:* It did away with the railroad crossing.

*Brenda Velasco:* The grade level crossing.

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Frank Jacob:* Yes.

*Helen Jacob:* And I guess everybody remembers the train wreck in Woodbridge.

*Frank Jacob:* Oh, yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* And that was in 1951.

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Frank Jacob:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Were you involved in the train wreck?

*Helen Jacob:* No.

*Brenda Velasco:* You didn't go down.....

*Helen Jacob:* We went down to see it.

*Brenda Velasco:* And what was your reaction?

*Frank Jacob:* Awful.

*Helen Jacob:* You just couldn't believe what you saw.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, now when they built the railroad trestle over Green Street how long did that take because you had traffic that was stopped?

*Helen Jacob:* The way they had it, they just slid it in. It went in there in one day's time. I'm pretty sure it was one day's time

*Frank Jacob:* Yes, I remember that.

*Helen Jacob:* I remember we were all sitting on the hill where the fair used to be and we could see it.

*Frank Jacob:* Yes, we watched it.

*Brenda Velasco:* Were you married at the time?

*Helen Jacob:* No, I was like a teenager.

*Brenda Velasco:* Do you recall what year it happened?

*Helen Jacob:* No.

*Frank Jacob:* In the '30s it must have been.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, so it was in the 1930s.

*Frank Jacob:* Yes, early '30s.

*Brenda Velasco:* That was an amazing feat though.

*Helen Jacob:* It was.

*Frank Jacob:* Oh, yes.

*Helen Jacob:* It really was to see them just slid that thing in there.

*Brenda Velasco:* Because not only was Green Street/Oak Tree Road a main thoroughfare but that railroad line.....

*Helen Jacob:* The railroad was the main line.

*Brenda Velasco:* It was a main line to Trenton.

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Frank Jacob:* That's true, yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* So that was quite an engineering feat going back to that time.

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Brenda Velasco:* And they did a good job.

*Helen Jacob:* They did.

*Brenda Velasco:* It's still there.

*Helen Jacob:* And no problems.

*Brenda Velasco:* No. How about any other type of construction, do you recall the Parkway?

*Frank Jacob:* Oh, yes.

*Helen Jacob:* I vaguely remember it.

*Frank Jacob:* Really! Remember I worked one summer on my vacation on the Parkway.

*Brenda Velasco:* Oh!

*Helen Jacob:* Yes, because we had just gotten married and.....

*Frank Jacob:* We didn't have no money.....

*Helen Jacob:* So we couldn't go anyplace.

*Frank Jacob:* That's right.

*Brenda Velasco:* So you worked.

*Frank Jacob:* Yes, I worked on the Parkway. I think Patty Tomasso got me the job.

*Helen Jacob:* Oh, really.

*Frank Jacob:* I think so.

*Helen Jacob:* He was the only taxi driver in the town.

*Frank Jacob:* That's right.

*Brenda Velasco:* Wow!

*Frank Jacob:* Yes, in fact he took Helen the first time.....

*Helen Jacob:* To the hospital when I was pregnant because we didn't have a car.

*Frank Jacob:* We didn't have a car so we called the cab.

*Brenda Velasco:* What hospital did you go to?

*Helen Jacob:* Perth Amboy.

*Frank Jacob:* Perth Amboy.

*Brenda Velasco:* And this was **Tomasso's Taxi Service**.

*Frank Jacob:* Taxi Service, right.

*Helen Jacob:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* How about sporting events or riots or discrimination?

*Helen Jacob:* No, nothing.

*Frank Jacob:* No.

*Brenda Velasco:* Woodbridge people got along.

*Helen Jacob:* Oh, yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* And I'm finding that it was a nice town to live in.

*Helen Jacob:* Yes.

*Frank Jacob:* It was.

*Helen Jacob:* And you figure when you went to high school you went with kids from all over the township.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, from Woodbridge Proper, Fords and all over and there was only one high school back then.

*Helen Jacob:* I think I graduated with a class of three hundred and eighty-seven or something like that.

*Brenda Velasco:* And that was in 1940. So that was a big class.

*Helen Jacob:* Yes, that was from the entire township.

*Brenda Velasco:* How about other construction? We mentioned the Parkway and that was after you were married. So that was about when that that occurred?

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Brenda Velasco:* Did it have any impact on Iselin that you could see?

*Frank Jacob:* It put us on the map.

*Brenda Velasco:* That's right.

*Frank Jacob:* I worked in **Western Electric** in Kearney and the guys would say, where do you come from? And I would say, Iselin. They'd say where the hell is that? I said that's out in the boondocks.

*Brenda Velasco:* Because the exit is right there.

*Frank Jacob:* Yes.

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Brenda Velasco:* Did they have to take any homes for the Parkway or anything?

*Frank Jacob:* Oh, yes. They took what's his name, Trichala, lived on that first house, remember?

*Helen Jacob:* That's right they did up on Oak Tree Road they took homes.

*Frank Jacob:* On Oak Tree Road they took homes. On the other side, was the farm.

*Helen Jacob:* That's right.

*Brenda Velasco:* And now we know it's all homes right now. It is all built up.

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Brenda Velasco:* So you saw the post-World War II housing boom in Iselin.

*Frank Jacob:* Yes.

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Brenda Velasco:* And with the Parkway right there it was.....

*Helen Jacob:* Because where Westbury Park is now Rafael's Bus Company had a farm there plus their buses.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, so that's further down on Green Street.

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Frank Jacob:* Yes.

#### **10: What do you like about Woodbridge today?**

*Brenda Velasco:* What do you like about Iselin today because you're still there?

*Helen Jacob:* Out of necessity because I have no place else to do. I think we have the same problem as everybody else does. There are no stores for us to go to and traffic up on Oak Tree Road on the weekends is ridiculous. We don't even go near it.

*Brenda Velasco:* I don't either. I avoid it and go down New Dover Road and skirt the whole issue because of the traffic.

*Helen Jacob:* It's ridiculous, right.

*Frank Jacob:* It's crazy.

*Brenda Velasco:* But your house is paid for.

*Helen Jacob:* Definitely.

*Frank Jacob:* Oh, yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* You know what let's get back to the house that you live in right now, not where you grew up, it's on.....

*Helen Jacob:* Elmhurst.

*Brenda Velasco:* Do you recall how much you paid for that house?

*Helen Jacob:* Sixteen thousand. It's a split level, sixty by one hundred and twenty five.

*Brenda Velasco:* And you know today it's not sixteen thousand.

*Helen Jacob:* Definitely. The first house we bought was seventy-five hundred dollars.

*Brenda Velasco:* Where was that house?

*Frank Jacob:* Right up the street from where we live now.

*Helen Jacob:* On Elmhurst and we sold that for ten thousand dollars.

*Frank Jacob:* And we had an apartment upstairs. We were getting fifty dollars a month rent for that and our payment was what, forty-eight dollars?

*Helen Jacob:* Forty-seven or forty-eight dollars.

*Frank Jacob:* Forty-eight dollars a month.

*Brenda Velasco:* And that was your mortgage payment.

*Frank Jacob:* Yes.

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Brenda Velasco:* Not your taxes.

*Frank Jacob:* No.

*Helen Jacob:* No, that included the taxes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Mortgage and included taxes and this was in 1948?

*Helen Jacob:* Well as a matter of fact, when we bought this house down the street it was our mortgage, our taxes and our house insurance and we paid ninety-five dollars a month.

*Frank Jacob:* Those days are gone forever.

*Brenda Velasco:* Oh, yes. No, this is a prime area to live in and you know most of it is location.

*Frank Jacob:* Oh, yes.

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Brenda Velasco:* And we've got a lot of services and that gets us into your role as Councilmen.

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Brenda Velasco:* Because you were there for twelve years and you saw the expansion.

*Frank Jacob:* Oh, yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Think of the school system. You had a lot of schools going up.

*Helen Jacob:* Yes, right.

*Frank Jacob:* Yes that's right. They put up three high schools, didn't they? One in Colonia, one in Iselin and one in Woodbridge.

*Helen Jacob:* Not when we were there but then the one on Indiana went up, Benjamin Avenue went up and in Colonia they all went up too.

*Brenda Velasco:* Oh, yes. We've got about four or five in Colonia. So you were there with this expansion and these people coming in and demanding more and more services.

*Frank Jacob:* Oh, yes.

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Brenda Velasco:* Compared to when Helen was growing up.

*Frank Jacob:* No comparison.

## ***11. Do you have family member still living in Woodbridge?***

*Frank Jacob:* No.

*Helen Jacob:* No.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, so your children have moved out.

*Helen Jacob:* Right.

*Brenda Velasco:* And how far do they live?

*Helen Jacob:* Our son lives in Belmar and our daughter lives in Somerset.

*Brenda Velasco:* Not too far.

*Helen Jacob:* No.

*Frank Jacob:* Our son just retired from teaching.

*Brenda Velasco:* Oh, how nice for him.



*Helen Jacob:* He taught in Piscataway Vocational and he said he couldn't take it anymore.

*Frank Jacob:* He was a math teacher.

*Helen Jacob:* He was there for thirty-three years.

*Brenda Velasco:* Wow! And math is so important.

*Helen Jacob:* Yes.

*Frank Jacob:* Oh, yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* That's good.

*Helen Jacob:* Well, he's got his children through college and everything so he says now I can retire.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, and enjoy. He's not on a schedule anymore.

*Helen Jacob:* He just turned sixty.

*Brenda Velasco:* Then he's still young and healthy and that's important.

*Helen Jacob:* Oh, yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Because as you get older you don't always have the good health.

*Helen Jacob:* Right, and our daughter she's not working, she's one of those what is it unemployed, how many million?

*Brenda Velasco:* Oh, perhaps the economy will turn around.

*Helen Jacob:* That's what we're hoping.

**12. *Are there any other stories you'd like to discuss?***

*Helen Jacob:* No, that's about it. I think during the course of everything we went back and forth.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, anything as councilman that you particularly enjoyed because you saw the township from a different view as a councilman.

*Frank Jacob:* Helping people, I liked that. Do unto others as I have them do unto me.

*Brenda Velasco:* And that's part of being an elected official. It's a service industry.

*Frank Jacob:* That's right.

*Brenda Velasco:* You have to help.

*Frank Jacob:* Oh, yes, definitely.

*Brenda Velasco:* Who did you serve with when you were.....

*Frank Jacob:* Cassidy. (1972-1979)

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, he was the mayor.

*Frank Jacob:* He was the mayor for eight years and then Jo Jo for four years. (1980-1983), 1988-1991)

*Brenda Velasco:* And some of the council people you served with.

*Frank Jacob:* Oh, yes.

*Helen Jacob:* Richie Kuzniak.

*Frank Jacob:* Richie Kuzniak.

*Helen Jacob:* Joe Nemyo.

*Frank Jacob:* Joe Nemyo.

*Helen Jacob:* Phil Cerria.

*Frank Jacob:* Phil Cerria.

*Helen Jacob:* Pete Dalina.

*Frank Jacob:* Yes, Pete, big Peter and Vinnie Martino.

*Brenda Velasco:* Who have also been interviewed.  
*Helen Jacob:* Charlie Terzella.  
*Frank Jacob:* Charlie Terzella. Vinnie Londano  
*Helen Jacob:* I think that was about it.  
*Brenda Velasco:* And as I said it was 1971 to 1983.  
*Helen Jacob:* Yes.  
*Frank Jacob:* Yes.  
*Brenda Velasco:* This was the growth period.  
*Helen Jacob:* Yes.  
*Brenda Velasco:* Where we more than doubled our.....  
*Frank Jacob:* Oh, yes, population.  
*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, okay, that's it.  
*Helen Jacob:* That's it.  
*Brenda Velasco:* Anything else that you can think of?  
*Frank Jacob:* No.  
*Helen Jacob:* You got me early in the morning.  
*Brenda Velasco:* If you think of anything else write it down and just mail it to me, okay.  
*Helen Jacob:* Okay.  
*Brenda Velasco:* But I thank you both and I was glad I was able to interview both of you.  
*Helen Jacob:* I'll tell you why I was just telling everyone about this, I don't know whether it was when Jimmy McGreevey was running for, what was he running for, Assembly?  
*Frank Jacob:* Assemblyman, yes.  
*Brenda Velasco:* Assembly, yes.  
*Helen Jacob:* And he said to him, you know I want to take a picture of you and Helen, he said, I want to put it on the flyer. So I said to him, okay, so he came home and I said I don't want to do it. I just don't want to get involved. So they keep after him so we went and we did it. They took a picture of us in front of our house and they took a picture of us in our dining room. Well, the flyer came out and I went to church. We hadn't seen the flyer and somebody said to me: "Oh Helen I saw your picture and it was a very nice picture". So I said, oh thank you. The next day I got the flyer in the mail and it told how we raised our children in our home, sent them to schools and everything and that he was going to retire but now he couldn't retire because we were on the verge of losing our home because of non-payment of taxes.  
*Frank Jacob:* Isn't that something.  
*Helen Jacob:* I was so furious. I said to him don't you ever, ever get me involved in anything again.  
*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, but you got involved with this. (the interview)  
*Helen Jacob:* Right.  
*Brenda Velasco:* It wasn't that painful, was it?  
*Helen Jacob:* No.  
*Brenda Velasco:* And you gave me a wealth of information that I haven't gotten about Iselin so I thank you.  
*Helen Jacob:* Oh good.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, you and somebody else but you gave another picture of it. Did you want to talk about your CCC, the Civil Conservation Corp?

*Frank Jacob:* You signed up for six months and after the six months was up I signed up for another six months which came to a year.

*Brenda Velasco:* So you had a full year then.

*Frank Jacob:* Yes, and you made thirty dollars a day once a month and twenty-two dollars went home and they gave you eight dollars to live on for the month.

*Brenda Velasco:* Wow!

*Frank Jacob:* Because they fed you and clothed you.

*Helen Jacob:* Well, you were in the service.

*Frank Jacob:* And I went from Idaho to Oregon because they were taking all the CCC. It was rewarding in a way because I could help people, you know.

.....

After the formal interview, Frank and Helen also mentioned their military service during WWII. Frank joined the Navy and Helen also served in the Navy. Helen worked in Washington D.C. in communications-top secret.