

Oral History Interview
George Yates
WH084

(written transcript and digital audio)

On August 11, 2010, George Yates was interviewed at the Main Library in Woodbridge by Brenda Velasco at 11:00 A.M.

George is a long time resident of Avenel and he is also a former councilman from the 1960s. (He served as a councilman from 1964-1970 when Woodbridge changed its form of government under the Faulker Act).

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

George Yates: My name is George Yates. I live in the Avenel section of Woodbridge Township and my date of birth is 8/5/27.

Brenda Velasco: What is your address in Avenel now?

George Yates: 1255 Rahway Avenue, Apt. 404, Avenel 07001.

Brenda Velasco: And that's Maple Tree Manor?

George Yates: Yes it is.

Brenda Velasco: Maple Tree Manor which is one of our best senior complexes in Woodbridge Township.

Brenda Velasco: Where did you live prior to Maple Tree Manor?

George Yates: 310 Lord Street, Avenel.

Brenda Velasco: This was on the side of the firehouse of Route #1?

George Yates: Yes, ma'am.

2. How long have you lived in Woodbridge?

George Yates: Since 1957.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, so that's over fifty years that you've lived in Woodbridge.

Brenda Velasco: Because where were you originally born?

George Yates: I was born in River Plaza, New Jersey which probably one out of a million has ever heard of.

Brenda Velasco: So you're going to tell us where it is.

George Yates: It's on the edge of the beautiful Shrewsbury River.

Brenda Velasco: Is it part of Red Bank?

George Yates: No, part of Middletown.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, it's one of the sections of Middletown then. From there you also mentioned you lived in Keyport.

George Yates: Yes, ma'am.

Brenda Velasco: How long did you live in Keyport?

George Yates: Until 1957.

Brenda Velasco: Were you raised in Keyport then?

George Yates: Yes, ma'am.

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

George Yates: Well, I worked in Rahway and it was an easy commute.

Brenda Velasco: It sure was. It couldn't be closer especially Avenel. Did you move into an apartment when you moved to Avenel?

George Yates: A single family home.

Brenda Velasco: You purchased it then?

George Yates: Yes, ma'am.

Brenda Velasco: Do you remember what the price was back then?

George Yates: Thirteen thousand dollars.

Brenda Velasco: You can't even find a garage for thirteen thousand dollars and this is on Lord Street. Was it a new development, a new house?

George Yates: No, it was maybe fifteen years old.

Brenda Velasco: That was a good buy.

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: How about the houses, have there been an expansion in houses?

George Yates: The area was pretty much built up and not much change in the houses themselves. The biggest changes were in the schools, the libraries, the firehouse and the first aid squad was expanded.

Brenda Velasco: We're going into Question #5 let's go back to Question #4 were the streets paved?

George Yates: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: So you had paved streets and township services at that time. You had garbage sanitation?

George Yates: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, the town picked it up. How about the stores?

George Yates: Believe it or not, **ShopRite** was on Avenel Street.

Brenda Velasco: Wow! Where was it?

George Yates: Right across the street from School #4 and #5. Now the building is broken up into professional offices.

Brenda Velasco: Were there any other stores around?

George Yates: There was like a newspaper and candy and cigarettes and things like that on the corner across from the school called **Martha's**.

Brenda Velasco: Were there any restaurants or doctor's offices there?

George Yates: There was a doctor's office but I can't remember his name on Avenel Street. The post office was on Avenel Street.

Brenda Velasco: Where on Avenel Street?

George Yates: Across from what is today **General Dynamics** or whatever they call it today.

Brenda Velasco: It's still **General Dynamics**.

George Yates: It used to be **Security Steel**.

Brenda Velasco: How about houses of worship?

George Yates: Very close to my house, just two blocks away, St. Andrew's and the Avenel Presbyterian. A new Avenel Presbyterian Church was built but I don't remember the date. The original still exists as its offices.

Brenda Velasco: It's a wooden building.

George Yates: I'm not sure. Anyway, there's a school in there. It's called the **Little Fiddlers** and I was surprised to find out they have quite a big group of kids who go there. One of my former neighbors goes there and one of my former neighbors owns and operates it. There are quite a few kids learning to play the violin.

Brenda Velasco: Wow!

George Yates: It's important.

Brenda Velasco: That's another way to learn, music. Another way to tap in to that brain and it's very popular for preschool too. It has good ratings. Okay, so you mentioned the schools, School #4 and #5. They were already here and built by the time you moved in '57?

George Yates: No, School #4 was there and the balance of the kids or extra, whatever they could handle, were in wooden barracks and then when the school expansion program came in, where so many schools were built at one time, then School #5 was added and the barracks were demolished.

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

Brenda Velasco: You mentioned already, as far as the public buildings, the post office. That was on Avenel Street across from **General Dynamics** and then eventually it moved to Rahway Avenue. How about the library?

George Yates: We had a little tiny library right adjacent to School #4 and #5 which has been discontinued. First of all there was no parking and I assume that the volume wasn't there and it's not that far to this building right here.

Brenda Velasco: No, and this is a huge library because we're doing the interview at the Woodbridge Main Library.

George Yates: So that little library now is a childcare center.

Brenda Velasco: How about parks in Avenel?

George Yates: Well, we have several little playground parks or pocket parks. There is one behind **General Dynamics**, there's one on the other side of the highway and there's a ball field on the other side of the highway. Of course, Avenel Park itself, which today is Frank Pelzman Park.....

Brenda Velasco: That's right, named after our former mayor.

George Yates: Wonderful guy by the way and a good friend of mine.

Brenda Velasco: Agreed.

George Yates: I'm trying to think of the small parks.

Brenda Velasco: Were any of them put in while you were councilman or were they there already?

George Yates: The ball field on the other side of the highway was put in and the park on the other side of the highway was put in. The one behind **General Dynamics** I'm not sure about.

Brenda Velasco: Because that's one of the nice things about Woodbridge and outsider's comments: we have so many pocket parks. Not huge but they're neighborhood parks.

George Yates: There should have been one right across the street from Maple Tree Manor in that area.

Brenda Velasco: We have the Pine Oak Forest now there.

George Yates: I can't think of it now.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, and the firehouse, the firehouse on Route #1 and Avenel Street, that was there when you.....

George Yates: Oh, yes. Of course it's been modernized and expanded. Every time they buy a new truck they have to make the firehouse bigger. How about tennis courts?

Brenda Velasco: Okay, good, tennis courts.

George Yates: Tennis courts at Avenel Park.

Brenda Velasco: Okay and they're well used. Any time I go to an event there, there are always kids or adults playing there.

George Yates: Avenel Park was also available for picnics. It has bathroom facilities and fireplace facilities. At times it gets heavy use. On a regular daily basis, they get very, very little use.

Brenda Velasco: During the summer, because I'm one of these people that use the parks for my grandson, at the heat of the day you don't go but in the morning or the afternoon.....

George Yates: Or the evening.

Brenda Velasco: Or the evening: they're beautiful.

George Yates: I have to say the same thing, absolutely underutilized.

Brenda Velasco: It's a good point to make.

George Yates: I want to make another point, and I can remember this very clearly. We built a bathroom facility in the Avenel Park, this was in the '60s, it could have been '67 or '68, it wasn't there thirty days when someone dropped a cherry bomb inside the commode and it was just blown to pieces. This is very disheartening.

Brenda Velasco: The vandalism that occurs and you're right; it's not only in Avenel.....

George Yates: I'm sure it's all over.

Brenda Velasco: It is.

George Yates: All over the world and very difficult to control. You have to see the person do it.

Brenda Velasco: It's unfortunate.

George Yates: Very difficult.

Brenda Velasco: But I'm grateful for all the parks.

George Yates: Of course, for one thing I would like to see more parks simply to use the space rather than have buildings on it.

Brenda Velasco: Because I'm on the council we just created a special category for any township land that we have-not built right now and even if it's not township land and its open space. It's now going to be designated; we use that special term: it's a special zone designation and this is to preserve the greenery. (PQP-Public Quasi Public)

George Yates: We don't need more houses and we don't need more blacktop.

Brenda Velasco: And we see that with the problems we have with flooding and the crowding. Okay, I think we've covered all of Question #5. Is there anything else you'd like to add? We mentioned the post office, the library and the parks.

George Yates: You're only considering public buildings.

Brenda Velasco: In that question, yes.

George Yates: Are you interested in any big private building?

Brenda Velasco: Sure, go ahead.

George Yates: Okay, of course I don't know if you want to mention **K Mart** and **Pathmark** on St. George Avenue.

Brenda Velasco: When were they built? Were they built when you were a councilman or after?

George Yates: I think they were there already; I'm not sure.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, because that's on Route #35.

George Yates: Now Woodbine Avenue we have Avenel Middle School, School #23 and directly across the street a huge plant it was first **RCA**, then **Emerson Quiet Cool Air Conditioner** and today it's called **VONAGE**. There is not much on that side of Route #1. It's primarily housing. Over here you've got **Burger King** and **McDonald's**; all commercial. Route #1 is all commercial. This is where the action is on the other side of Route #1. Well, of course, we have the State prison.

Brenda Velasco: That's over a hundred years old.

George Yates: Yes, and we have a sex offender unit there. The **New Jersey Inspection Station** which is just being rebuilt. Are you aware of the **Shell** track?

Brenda Velasco: No.

George Yates: Oh, I got something.

Brenda Velasco: Okay George let's hear about it.

George Yates: The **Shell** track consisted of nine hundred acres which bordered on Rahway Avenue and Randolph Avenue which is the dividing line to Rahway, Randolph Avenue, and the Carteret line. Now, the shell track, during the Depression. **Shell** bought this vacant township property and the money was used to pay school teachers and policemen. Now this nine hundred acres today- Zirpolo twisted **Shell's** arm and insisted they develop the land. **Shell** was just sitting on it because it would become more valuable every day. So eventually Zirpolo got **Shell** to move on developing the nine hundred acres which in turn, when it was fully developed, tremendous big warehouses: **Alcoa Aluminum**, **Snapple** and many, many small warehouses maybe twenty or twenty-five smaller warehouses. This stabilized Woodbridge's tax rate for a couple of years. It was Zirpolo's idea. Okay, let's see, there's an industry, **Philadelphia Quartz** called **PQ**. It's been there for many, many years. It's off Rahway Avenue. In fact, my son once worked there. They've been there many, many years. Okay, behind **Maple Tree Manor** was formerly a wonderful picnic grove that the Pichalski family owned and there was a big, pretty good sized, closed wooden floor for dancing but completely opened on the sides. So, in case it rained, the whole picnic went inside.

Brenda Velasco: That was great, especially with New Jersey weather.

George Yates: That part of the **Maple Tree** property was purchased by the State of New Jersey to build the State School which is right behind **Maple Tree**.

Brenda Velasco: So you saw that going up because **Maple Tree Tavern** was a very popular area at one time.

George Yates: It was a dive but the same clientele, guys, would stop after work and have a couple of beers. Ann Pichalski made the best kielbasa sandwich in New Jersey, kielbasa with sauerkraut, and the Avenel Democratic Club used to meet in the back room. Dominic Pichalski, Ann's husband, was very, very active in politics. He

was the president of the fire company's commissioners and he was never a fireman. Something unusual because they are very clandestine; the fireman only vote for another fireman and Dominic was not a fireman, he was the president.

Brenda Velasco: That was quite an achievement then.

George Yates: Quite a guy.

Brenda Velasco: So was Ann. Okay, so we're back to Rahway Avenue. We got **Maple Tree**.....

George Yates: The firehouse, Presbyterian Church, St. Andrew's, you have School#4 and #5 on Avenel Street near the underpass, Avenel VFW which is near the Avenel Park and let's see what else. **Premier Digesting** is across from **Maple Tree**; it's been there for a long, long time. **Avenel Pharmacy** is on the corner of Avenel Street and Rahway Avenue. Ideal Trailer Park.....

Brenda Velasco: Was that there before you came?

George Yates: Yes, but it was expanded; hundreds and hundreds of trailers anyway. The guy is a multi-millionaire because of it. The carwash on Rahway Avenue is in the 1st Ward.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so that's Woodbridge.

George Yates: That's in the 1st Ward. On Blair Road **White Rose** is a grocery distribution center: a big, big place. Here's another one you never heard of, Tent City.

Brenda Velasco: What is it?

George Yates: Tent City was a large piece of township property bordered by Homestead Avenue and Blair Road and it was mostly just a wooded area. First of all, I can remember this clearly, the reason we went for it was that this guy was going to put in sewers and water and Tent City was to accommodate people for the World's Fair. They would come in travel trailers and tents and set up their units here and just hop over to New York.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, we're talking the World's Fair in 1964?

George Yates: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Okay.

George Yates: Anyway, it was maybe sixty percent I could say popular or whatever. It was never filled totally. But anyway the reason we went for it was because the guy put in a water line and a sewer line and we knew he would only be there a short time and then it's our property again.

Brenda Velasco: Right.

George Yates: Now we look for a developer and we find **Economic Labs**. It was a pretty good sized factory and it employed quite a few people. That in turn was torn down. Today it's a huge warehouse occupied by **Ho Row Trucking**. It's a very, very big warehouse. It has railway access and everything. And on the opposite side of Homestead, between Homestead and Omar the **Pathmark** complex, are the warehouses. Now these are very good ratables.

Brenda Velasco: They sure are.

George Yates: Now I would say there's not a vacant piece of land in that **Shell** track. Every piece has been developed. There's one big huge warehouse, I can't think of the name of it, but it's a book distributor. It's a very big place. I can't think of the

name and there are about nine acres which I'm sure is totally, totally developed. And it's clean and quiet, very little traffic, light industry.

Brenda Velasco: And it also has access to Route #1 or the Turnpike.

George Yates: That's the whole idea. Randolph Avenue now, since you built the new road between Route #1 and Rahway Avenue, is a continuation of Randolph and of course that goes right to the Turnpike and it goes right along the **Shell** track. All this area is just picked up. Okay, here's a big one.

Brenda Velasco: Okay.

George Yates: Now this is a big, big hot potato politically, **Colonial Tanks**.

Brenda Velasco: Is that the Colonial Pipeline?

George Yates: Yes. Can I quote a very good friend who is deceased?

Brenda Velasco: Go ahead.

George Yates: Bob Jacks, "tanks no tanks". "Tanks no tanks" within or near a residential area.

Brenda Velasco: Yes.

George Yates: It was a very hot potato. No so much for the people in Avenel because we had all this other land between us and most of the residential is up here.

Brenda Velasco: Right.

George Yates: A hot potato, Port Reading which was just across the Turnpike, won the election anyway. It had to be between '64 and '70.

Brenda Velasco: You were on the Council then?

George Yates: Yes ma'am.

Brenda Velasco: And what do you recall?

George Yates: Joe Galassi was the police director. He issued each councilman a riot helmet, that's exactly the way I felt, plus a pistol. (Joe Galassi, Director of the Police Department: 1964-1973)

Brenda Velasco: Did you know how to shoot?

George Yates: Well I had just gotten out of the Army and I was an officer in the Army and I carried a pistol anyway. At the time my son was four or five or six years old and I told Joe Galassi there will not be a pistol in my house with this little boy because he's into everything. Now I was the only councilman who refused to take a pistol; I took the riot gear. But let me tell you this off the record, riot I'm going to Atlantic City not to prison, I'm not going toward it. Anyway here's part of the story, you can't put it on record. Many, many years later Chief Tony O'Brien (1974-1991).....

Brenda Velasco: And Tony is from Avenel.

George Yates: Yes, he called me into his office and he wanted to discuss this pistol situation. It seems that there was one unaccounted for. Now since everybody had to sign for them and since he did not have my signature there was no problem. He just wanted to know maybe if I knew who had made it.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so we ran out of buildings in Avenel so we're going to go down to Question #6 then.

6. What did you do for recreation?

George Yates: Bowling and fishing. I've always been a fisherman and I've always had a boat. I've had six boats in my lifetime.

Brenda Velasco: That's quite a bit.

George Yates: Three of them were sailboats and I loved sailing.

Brenda Velasco: Where did you do the sailing?

George Yates: I kept the boats in Sewaren.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, within the township.

George Yates: Yes. Of course in those days we had black and white TV. We usually took a shore vacation every year, Cape May. And in the wintertime, because Joann and I were both working, we were able to afford to go on vacation and in the wintertime several times we went on a cruise: three or four times.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, now when you mention your wife Joann let's mention what was her position? Where did she work, Joann your wife?

George Yates: When I met her she was the executive secretary to the director of the Garden State Parkway whose name was D. Louis Tonti (1954-1971) who at one time ran for governor (1969). He attended our wedding. Anyway, she left the Parkway after we moved to Avenel and she worked for a short time at **M&T Chemical** and then she became Zirpolo's secretary.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, highly qualified because she was the executive secretary.

George Yates: Oh yes, she was a shorthand expert and typist of course and she became Barone's secretary. According to what she told me one day she just got fed up. And oh, she used to volunteer on weekends at Rahway Hospital in the emergency room.

Brenda Velasco: She was a busy lady.

George Yates: Sort of an adult candy striper. Anyway, her she is fed up with secretarial work and says I'm going to Middlesex County College to become a nurse. Now this put a crimp in our lifestyle because she had no more salary. But anyway, she did very well with the nursing. Since she was a volunteer for such a long time in Rahway the moment she got her RN, they hired her on the same day.

Brenda Velasco: Naturally.

George Yates: And also in the emergency room where she did all the volunteer work.

Brenda Velasco: Perfect and she enjoyed that job.

George Yates: She became the head nurse in the emergency room and then because of her secretarial skills she was often called upon to sit in and take steno and do some typing. Anyway an opening came for supervisor. Because of her background and by now she was in her forties, she was not a kid anymore, she was a supervisor on the 3:00 P.M. to 11:00 P.M. shift and she died in that job.

Brenda Velasco: As supervisor at Rahway Hospital.

George Yates: She was at work and had some kind of a stroke and she had a tumor on her brain the size of a dime. We took her to the Columbia Presbyterian Hospital in New York and of course one of the finest surgeons couldn't save her. Right after the operation, I said: what are her chances? And said we're going to lose her. Just like that. They don't beat around the bush.

Brenda Velasco: No.

George Yates: So he said if I had touched this tumor she would have died on the spot.

Brenda Velasco: She accomplished quite a bit.

George Yates: A whole year at home.

Brenda Velasco: For a very active woman that was tough.

George Yates: She couldn't talk and she couldn't walk. She had a speech therapist, Jack and Jill went up the hill. Now fortunately my mother-in-law was able to come and take care of our house and Kenny except for every Wednesday. She was a secretary in a church in Keyport and she insisted on being there. Anyway, I arranged with my boss that I could be off every Wednesday so I was home. I took her to New York for radiation every day for five weeks, all to no avail and of course chemotherapy. She was in and out of Rahway Hospital during that year a hundred and seven times. Three days here, eleven days there, fifteen days here.

Brenda Velasco: She had a tough, tough last year. It's unfortunate.

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

George Yates: It was actually the whole town. Everybody was talking about making Woodbridge a city. The first step in making Woodbridge a city, as I recall, was to change the form of government: to change from the county committee forum I think Plan F, I'm not sure Plan F was the Faulkner Act, which we have today.

Brenda Velasco: Yes.

George Yates: And it was a hot potato. There were many people who wanted to maintain the small town atmosphere and were afraid of what comes along with the big city, more population. Anyway, we moved here to get away from the big city. Of course, it was best for the town.

Brenda Velasco: Why don't you explain, you had committee people before, not council people. Did you have Wards before?

George Yates: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: How many committee people served when you were there?

George Yates: I think there were ten; I think there were two from each Ward.

Brenda Velasco: Two from each Ward, okay.

George Yates: I'm almost sure.

Brenda Velasco: Then with the Faulkner Act which passed. Did the people vote on that or it was just the committee people?

George Yates: I don't remember. It must have been just the committee people because the township was very, very strongly divided. There were a lot of people before that didn't want a city and there were people that recognized the fact that the new system was better for the community.

Brenda Velasco: By this time Woodbridge had, what was the population, because in the sixties it really expanded with all the developments.

George Yates: Sixty or seventy thousand perhaps.

Brenda Velasco: Because you had all the developments in Colonia by this time.

George Yates: This is before the multitude of apartments were built which brought in the people. There were no, well maybe Colonia, great explosion of single family houses except maybe in Colonia because Colonia has a big development.

Brenda Velasco: Several big developments.

George Yates: Right, and Avenel has a couple of developments but nothing compared to what you have in Colonia. And as an example Fords, Fords is pretty much built up. That's an old community. Iselin was pretty much built up but then along came the apartments.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, that's where you had all the additional people. Okay, so with the Faulkner system now that we're talking about you have five Wards and four at-large so you only had nine people and the four at-large ran with the mayor.

George Yates: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: And you thought that was a better system for the expanding population?

George Yates: I think so. Well, you will always have conflict between one Ward and another. Like when something big comes along, I want it.

Brenda Velasco: It's working here. When we get playground equipment you have to allocate a certain amount for each Ward and you break it down. It's not going to go in just one Ward and the council at-large are pushing that it be divided so it seems to be working. You were the one that ushered it in because by the time it was implemented in the 1960s, right?

George Yates: 1964. The day that I became a councilman, we became the new form of government.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so you laid the foundation.

George Yates: Bob Jacks used to kid me. The former salary I think was only two thousand. Bob Jacks said look here you are, the first day you got elected you got a raise.

Brenda Velasco: No so bad.

George Yates: By the way he was quite a wit. Bob Jacks was a very sharp guy.

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

George Yates: Well first of all the schools were right down the street, the churches were around the corner, the firehouse was around the corner, **ShopRite** was across the street from the school, all within walking distance. For me the proximity to Route #1 is important. I worked on Route #1 in Rahway. I could jump on Route #1 and be in work in five minutes.

Brenda Velasco: So convenience of location.

George Yates: Absolutely.

Brenda Velasco: And you had everything right.....

George Yates: In one respect it could be different because of all the traffic and activity on Route #1 and everything but overall it's important to be able to jump right there and go up the street.

Brenda Velasco: Good location.

George Yates: Absolutely.

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

George Yates: Of course the prison riot was the big thing. (Thanksgiving Day, 1971)

Brenda Velasco: Okay, let's get to the prison riot. We mentioned that you had to get that gear and everything, that riot gear you refused to take a pistol. Did you ever feel your family was threatened at that time?

George Yates: No.

Brenda Velasco: How long did the riot last?

George Yates: Oh, I don't remember. Unfortunately I lived a block and a half off Route #1 and a block south of Avenel Street. At that time, and even today, it was the most dangerous intersection in Woodbridge Township, Route #1 and Avenel Street, and still is. In the summertime when our windows were opened, more than once we could hear the screech of brakes and then the crash. This was like right over there.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, and air conditioning wasn't around.

George Yates: No.

Brenda Velasco: That's why we have on Avenel and Route #1 those lights right now, the recording cameras, because that is one of the worst intersections.

George Yates: Any cop that I ever talked to over the years always had the same answer, Avenel Street and Route #1, worst intersection in town: most dangerous.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, and how about the school construction?

George Yates: Well, as I said that's when the wooden barracks were demolished in Avenel and Avenel Fire was built. Of course, I think closer to the end of my term Zirpolo was in jail and Barone was mayor. Now we had that big school expansion: nine schools in one period of time.

Brenda Velasco: And many of them have been closed. I interviewed Mr. Aaroe, he worked for the Board of Ed at that time and he oversaw all the school construction. He also said he also oversaw the sale of some of those schools and so many of them were in Colonia.

George Yates: Avenel #23 and Avenel Middle School, right. A little school right in the heart of Woodbridge, I can't think of the name of it.

Brenda Velasco: School #11.

George Yates: I don't know them by numbers. Anyway as I remember there were nine schools built simultaneously; all going on at one time.

Brenda Velasco: How did this impact your taxes?

George Yates: Naturally I would think the taxes would have to go up with an expansion of that size.

Brenda Velasco: Because you also had the two new high schools going up at that time too. Where did your son go to high school?

George Yates: Colonia.

Brenda Velasco: And that had just opened I think in the '60s (1967) but you also had industry here too. You had industry in Woodbridge at that time, a lot of industries left. Anything else you want to mention for Question #9?

George Yates: As far as discrimination is concerned I never heard of any, at least as a member of the council I had never heard anybody coming before the council. The big thing of course was racial discrimination and we had a pocket of black people right across the street from Maple Tree Manor. We never had a problem. As a matter of fact, Dominic Pichalski was friendly with every one of those people and could count on every one of them voting Democratic.

Brenda Velasco: I wasn't even aware.

George Yates: Anyway, I never recall any problem. The only one that I can remember was a man who was from Sewaren and we had the mosquito trucks going spraying, and he claimed that the mosquito trucks killed his ducks. Then his daughter died and he said the mosquito trucks killed my daughter and he was violent and his wife was just as bad. These are not dumb people. He worked for the **Bell Telephone**

Company and had been fired, for listen to this, he refused to take his shoes off in some obviously exclusive home and they fired him. I think they wanted to get rid of him anyway because he's a little kooky. Anyway his wife was a black belt in karate and she could recite the Constitution and did sometimes at the Council meetings.

Brenda Velasco: It must have been interesting.

George Yates: I'm trying to think of his name. Anyway, he was there week after week after week and the same thing over and over and over again. So what do you do with somebody like that? At the very end of the meeting, they let him go. Sooner or later he's going to run out of gas.

Brenda Velasco: It'll come eventually after you leave.

George Yates: He had a brother who was just the opposite; a very nice man and very active in the Elks Club.

10. What do you like about Woodbridge today?

Brenda Velasco: You're still in Woodbridge today.

George Yates: Me.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, you live in Avenel.

George Yates: I had another experience. I don't know whether you're familiar where the football field is in Port Reading that's, I forget the name of it. Anyway there was a home way back in the swamp area there and it had a dirt road; the man that lived there, he was another wild man. Now it's quite a distance between the nearest paved road and his house and he's the only house and he wants this road paved. I'm not sure today if it's ever been paved. But the worst thing that he did was he stood up at the Council meeting and he said, you know from my house, now this is the old building, I can see these windows from my house and I have a high powered rifle.

Brenda Velasco: So he threatened you.

George Yates: So I think Galassi took him aside and had a conversation or something with him.

Brenda Velasco: Our police chief (director), okay.

George Yates: I don't remember his name either.

Brenda Velasco: Interesting Council meetings.

George Yates: Do you remember Tex Perry?

Brenda Velasco: Yes, from Iselin. I just know him as an historian of Iselin.

George Yates: By the way, he was not a trouble maker. In fact, when he got up to talk it was usually something of importance. Although he had something every meeting and of course to this day we have, what's her name?

Brenda Velasco: Barbara?

George Yates: Barbara.

Brenda Velasco: Barbara Wyatt, yes.

George Yates: I have to give Barbara Wyatt credit in this respect she has her ducks in a row.

Brenda Velasco: Oh, she's very knowledgeable.

George Yates: Absolutely.

Brenda Velasco: Informed.

George Yates: Very knowledgeable and she does not come to perpetuate her own importance. She's sincerely concerned with the town.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, she's been a lifelong resident. I interviewed her as well. I wanted to get her because she has lived here so long.

George Yates: Sometimes you know, like when she stands up, oh, oh, here it comes.

Brenda Velasco: She has some good points sometimes.

George Yates: Absolutely, I give her credit and the respect. She's intelligent and she makes her point and she sits down. Now who's that other kookoo bird that's there now?

Brenda Velasco: We're not going into that one.

George Yates: No, no, no, tell me about him. Do you know who I mean?

Brenda Velasco: Yes, I know whom you mean but we're going to avoid that.

George Yates: Comes on a bicycle or something.

Brenda Velasco: We're going to avoid that right now.

George Yates: Okay, one thing I like about Woodbridge today, the best thing for me is living at Maple Tree Manor.

Brenda Velasco: You're still in Avenel.

George Yates: I'm very fortunate. It's a beautiful place and I can afford it. It's not only beautiful but very, very well run. Runi, I don't know where she gets it but she is an absolutely wonderful administrator.

Brenda Velasco: This complex (Woodbridge Senior Housing Associates) always takes honors with Ingerman, the developer, through public housing. This is their best.

George Yates: Of course, it's a little more expensive but it's worth every penny.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, I'm glad to hear that. It's a sliding fee schedule and.....

George Yates: To begin with its' built on the garden apartment style rather than high rise which number one makes it, maybe not important, but more appealing to me. It's better than living in the big brick building.

Brenda Velasco: It's not a high rise.

George Yates: No, it's not a high rise it's more like a garden apartment.

Brenda Velasco: I'm pleased to hear that.

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

George Yates: No, I'm alone.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, no family members.

12. Is there any other story or event that we didn't mention that you would like to discuss?

George Yates: We covered so many.

Brenda Velasco: I know we covered an awful lot. If you think of anything you have my address, you just write it out. Okay, let's conclude. I want to thank you George Yates for opening my eyes to a lot of things. You laid the foundation for the type of government we have in Woodbridge Township. You were one of the first Council people with the Faulkner Act and I'm a Councilwoman so I appreciate it and it is working with the system of nine elected Council people. So I thank you for your time and I think I'm going to ask for your diagram too, but thank you.



George also relayed the story of how he became a Township councilman. His wife, Joan Yates, was Mayor Zirpolo's secretary. There was a vacancy in the Third Ward since Joe Manzione, a committeeman dropped out. The mayor phoned George asking that he take that position to avoid a primary fight. The mayor also insisted that he needed an answer "now".

When asked for her opinion, George's wife states "what do you have to lose?" George considered running but told Mayor Zirpolo that he had only 1 suit and 1 white shirt; his full time job required work clothes. Mayor Zirpolo stated that that was not a problem and invited George to his house. Walter Zirpolo gave George 3 suits and the necessary shirts. The suits were altered but the shirts were monogrammed so George never removed his jacket during that campaign.