

Oral History Interview
Hank D'Angelo
WH112

(Written transcript and digital audio)

On Thursday, January 3, 2013 Hank D'Angelo was interviewed by Brenda Velasco at 10:30 A.M. in the Woodbridge Main Library.

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

Hank D'Angelo: My name is Hank D'Angelo. I grew up in Woodbridge.....born in Port Reading. I moved to Woodbridge perhaps when I was ten and I've lived here the rest of my life, primarily in the Grove Avenue section close to what used to be the high school in those days.

Brenda Velasco: What year were you born in then?

Hank D'Angelo: 1930.

Brenda Velasco: Right during the Depression.

Hank D'Angelo: Right during the Depression.

Brenda Velasco: In the smack of it.

2. How long have you lived in Woodbridge?

Brenda Velasco: So you said you've lived here about eighty-two years.

Hank D'Angelo: Yup.

Brenda Velasco: A little bit in Port Reading, ten years in Port Reading, and then the rest of the time, seventy-two, in Woodbridge Proper. Where did you move? Was it on Grove Avenue when you moved from Port Reading?

Hank D'Angelo: No, the first home we had was 516 Amboy Avenue.

Brenda Velasco: Wow! You've got a good memory.

Hank D'Angelo: Yup. We lived there for a couple of years and then bought a house at 556 Myrtle Avenue which was three blocks down from where we were. I lived there with mom and dad until I got married.

Brenda Velasco: And you never moved out of Woodbridge?

Hank D'Angelo: Never moved out of Woodbridge.

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

Brenda Velasco: Why did your family move to Port Reading originally?

Hank D'Angelo: Mom was from Port Reading.

Brenda Velasco: What was her maiden name?

Hank D'Angelo: Jennie D'Orsi.

Brenda Velasco: Is that related to the **D'Orsi Bakery**?

Hank D'Angelo: Right, her brother was that guy. Dad came from New York City after he immigrated to the U.S. and whatever the courtship was, however it wound up.....

Brenda Velasco: It ended up in Port Reading.

Hank D'Angelo: It ended up in Port Reading and we were probably there for maybe ten years.

Brenda Velasco: Now where did your dad immigrate from?

Hank D'Angelo: Ascoli, Italy.

Brenda Velasco: Was that southern Italy?

Hank D'Angelo: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Because I know many of the people from Port Reading came from a small community, Pietrastornina; and they actually came from that village to Port Reading.

Hank D'Angelo: Of course they were sponsored by somebody to get them here to begin with but in those days most of the villages in that part of Italy were very, very small including the village that my dad came from.

Brenda Velasco: Did your dad work in Port Reading, too?

Hank D'Angelo: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Was it on the railroad?

Hank D'Angelo: No, he worked in the bakery.

Brenda Velasco: And this is the famous **D'Orsi Bakery**.

Hank D'Angelo: No, when he came up it was **D'Angelo's Bakery**.

Brenda Velasco: Oh, I didn't know that.

Hank D'Angelo: D'Orsi came many, many years later.

Brenda Velasco: And the D'Angelo was the part that was related to you that was your dad's.....

Hank D'Angelo: Yup, my dad was D'Angelo and my mom was D'Orsi.

Brenda Velasco: So originally it was **D'Angelo's Bakery** and then it became **D'Orsi's Bakery**?

Hank D'Angelo: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Wow! Didn't know that but that is one of the iconic buildings in.....

Hank D'Angelo: Yeah, Dad's business expanded and the facilities that we had in Port Reading were too small so we moved out; and as my uncle got older he worked for a couple of bakers in Carteret, as I recall. After we moved out, he decided he'd try it on his own and that was primarily the beginning of **D'Orsi's Bakery**.

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

Brenda Velasco: We can do a little of Port Reading if you feel comfortable with that.

Hank D'Angelo: Yeah, sure. I can't attest to many changes that may have occurred in Port Reading because I was there for such a short time. I can only tell you that the streets, for the most part, off the main street were all dirt roads.

Brenda Velasco: And the main street is Port Reading.

Hank D'Angelo: The main street was Port Reading Avenue.

Brenda Velasco: Was the church there?

Hank D'Angelo: The church was there, yes. It's been moved over slightly to the right. It was more across the street from the Zullo family who lived on the corner which would be opposite from where Vinnie Martino lives now. There was a family living next door by the name of McFinsky and if I recall correctly he was a policeman in Carteret. He had three boys and they all went to school in Port Reading and Woodbridge. Larry was the youngest and then, of course, the church itself was right next door. It was a rather small structure.

Brenda Velasco: And wooden?

Hank D'Angelo: St. Anthony's.

Brenda Velasco: And it was wooden at that time or brick?

Hank D'Angelo: I never remember it being wood, I always remembered it being brick but I think you're right. I think that it was wooden at one time and they may have added the brick many, many years later.

Brenda Velasco: Where exactly did you live in Port Reading then?

Hank D'Angelo: On B Street which would have been one block away from the church.

Brenda Velasco: Did you have any stores there that you recall?

Hank D'Angelo: **Gurka's** was a food store on Sewaren Road. Louie Martino had a store many years later about where **D'Orsi's Bakery** is today.

Brenda Velasco: What did Louie Martino sell then?

Hank D'Angelo: Canned goods.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, it was a dry goods store then.

Hank D'Angelo: Yeah, for the most part.

Brenda Velasco: And what did **Gurka's Food Store** sell?

Hank D'Angelo: **Gurka's** had all the supplies and condiments necessary for the home, meat, cold cuts and everything. Further down the street from Louie was a cigar store, I guess for the want of a better word....candy store they used to call them in those days. The family's name, if I recall correctly, was Murchello. Maybe that was his nickname I can't even remember. He used to sell cigarettes for a penny apiece.

Brenda Velasco: Oh, my gosh!

Hank D'Angelo: And if you bought five you'd get two for a penny. The cigarette brand he used to sell was *Marvel*.

Brenda Velasco: I never even heard of them.

Hank D'Angelo: Of course not, you're too young.

Brenda Velasco: Wow, and cigarette smoking was very popular back then.

Hank D'Angelo: Absolutely.

Brenda Velasco: How about social clubs? Were there any social clubs for the.....

Hank D'Angelo: Up in that area, no.

Brenda Velasco: I know I interviewed Albina D'Alessio a while back. Her parents had a store somewhere too.

Hank D'Angelo: Yes they did. Over the railroad track a block before Tappen Street. I can't remember what the name of the street was there.

Brenda Velasco: Did you go to Albina's store? (Interview #59)

Hank D'Angelo: Sure, absolutely.

Brenda Velasco: How was it different from some of these other stores?

Hank D'Angelo: Her dad was a baker and they had their own bakery down there. He had all of the necessary items for running your home kitchen like canned foods, meats and vegetables.

Brenda Velasco: But he also had eels.

Hank D'Angelo: Oh yeah, all of these things would come in.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, most stores didn't have eels.

Hank D'Angelo: We had a guy who used to come in I think it was every Wednesday or Thursday, probably Thursday, from New York City. He used to ride in on the train

and he used to take a hamper type basket with him, maybe two of them, and they'd be in the baggage car of the train. When the train got to Port Reading he would take this wicker basket off the train and walk down to the center of Port Reading, so to speak. The women would come out and buy fish from him. This was fresh fish he brought in from New York. So you talk about eels and whatever kind of fish would be for sale that day and this is what he did on a Thursday or Friday. I can't remember what day that would be. Every week this guy came down.

Brenda Velasco: Wow!

Hank D'Angelo: And he carried a basket on his shoulder.

Brenda Velasco: And your mom would buy the fish, too.

Hank D'Angelo: Oh yeah, sure, everybody bought fish from him.

Brenda Velasco: It was probably Thursday or Friday because if you were Catholic at that time...

Hank D'Angelo: Friday was the big day. (Pre Vatican II Catholics abstained from meat on Fridays)

Brenda Velasco: Friday was the big day.

Hank D'Angelo: Now it could have been Friday morning, I'm not sure.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, now you mentioned something because you're mentioning about the trains so Port Reading had a train stop then.

Hank D'Angelo: Oh absolutely, yeah.

Brenda Velasco: That's no longer there for passenger trains.

Hank D'Angelo: That's right. The stop was manned by gates and there was a gatekeeper there and across the street was **McGettigan's Store** and they sold newspaper, candy, tobacco and cigarettes, that sort of thing. So if you'd go to the post office which was on the other side of the railroad tracks down almost around where Albina's father was, you'd stop there and get cigarettes or whatever. That's how that all worked out; so that was kind of the center for rail transportation, the train stop. The gates would go down, people would get off and if you wanted something from **Line Peter's**, newspapers or cigarettes, you would get it and then the train went on.

Brenda Velasco: Okay and this train was at grade crossing?

Hank D'Angelo: Grade Crossing, absolutely right. They had a gate tender there.

Brenda Velasco: Because now we have the overpass but this was grade crossing and you didn't have many cars back then either.

Hank D'Angelo: Oh no, but enough where the gates had to come down and he had to come out.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, so we have houses of worships and the only one was St. Anthony's back then.

Hank D'Angelo: Yeah, in Port Reading.

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

Brenda Velasco: Alright, how about schools? Where did you go to school?

Hank D'Angelo: No. 9 School which was on the corner of Sewaren Road and School Street. That would be diagonally across the street from where Hess has an office

today or used to have an office anyway. I think that building just gave it to the church because I think they have some kind of facility there.

Brenda Velasco: What grades did you attend there, do you remember?

Hank D'Angelo: If there was a kindergarten, I went to kindergarten up and I think including perhaps 3rd grade.

Brenda Velasco: Where did you go after that time?

Hank D'Angelo: Don't you want to know about the auto gyro that landed in the schoolyard?

Brenda Velasco: Yeah, okay, say that over again. What landed?

Hank D'Angelo: An auto gyro.

Brenda Velasco: An auto gyro?

Hank D'Angelo: Right, you don't even know what that is.

Brenda Velasco: No.

Hank D'Angelo: It's a prop driven airplane, conventional motor and then it had a propeller perpendicular to the fuselage that they used to use for landing and he landed in the schoolyard.

Brenda Velasco: Oh my gosh! What excitement for your guys.

Hank D'Angelo: Oh, absolutely!

Brenda Velasco: That was the highlight of the whole school year.

Hank D'Angelo: We could have graduated from there.

Brenda Velasco: But nobody was hurt.

Hank D'Angelo: No, no. I don't want to say he did it purposely but he did it under controlled circumstances.

Brenda Velasco: Did you know the pilot?

Hank D'Angelo: No, we never knew him and never saw him again. He had to do something mechanical on it and got in and got out a couple of hours later.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, never heard of that.

Hank D'Angelo: Sure.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, so you were up to 3rd grade so it was in the 1930s that this occurred.

Hank D'Angelo: Oh absolutely. Yeah, sure.

Brenda Velasco: Probably between '35 and '38, something like that maybe.

Hank D'Angelo: Yeah, perhaps.

Brenda Velasco: So after that school where did you go from School 9 because that only went up to.....

Hank D'Angelo: No. 11.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, No. 11 in Woodbridge Proper. Okay, that's the Ross Street School. So 4th Grade up to what did you go to School 11.

Hank D'Angelo: I was there up to 8th grade there.

Brenda Velasco: To 8th grade and then from there you went to.....

Hank D'Angelo: Barron Avenue.

Brenda Velasco: And that was the high school at that time so it was a four year high school that you attended. What year did you graduate?

Hank D'Angelo: '48.

Brenda Velasco: Right after the war so you've lived through two events: major, major events in American History. (Depression and World War II)

Hank D'Angelo: Sure, yeah.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, we mentioned the post office. Did you have a library? Where was the library that you went?

Hank D'Angelo: Rahway Avenue and Port Reading Road where the traffic light is now where you make the right hand turn to go to Port Reading that was the Barron Library.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so that was your library.

Hank D'Angelo: Heaven help you if you made any noise.

Brenda Velasco: Do you remember the name of the librarian?

Hank D'Angelo: No.

Brenda Velasco: But you weren't allowed to talk. Were you downstairs in that library or were you upstairs? Where were the books for the children at the time?

Hank D'Angelo: Downstairs, first floor they used to say.

Brenda Velasco: How about parks, where did you play when you were growing up?

Hank D'Angelo: In the parks, Woodbridge Park. We played a lot on Grove Avenue. Up where the high school is today we used to play ball over there. The racetrack used to be here.

Brenda Velasco: Did you visit the racetrack?

Hank D'Angelo: No, I was not allowed to go to the racetrack. But after they closed the track down, we would come over there and race the dickens and play ball over here and this and that and the other thing.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, did you play football?

Hank D'Angelo: Sure.

Brenda Velasco: Did you have a bike?

Hank D'Angelo: I did.

6. What did you do for recreation?

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so you also had a bike. I'm getting into Question #6 for recreation. Did you ever go back to Port Reading once you moved out of there?

Hank D'Angelo: Yeah, my grandparents were there.

Brenda Velasco: So you could ride your bike then.

Hank D'Angelo: No, I couldn't go that far. Are you kidding? If we went around the corner, my mother wanted to know where we were.

Brenda Velasco: She kept an eye on you guys. And your grandparents lived in the house that you had left when you moved out of Port Reading?

Hank D'Angelo: They lived next door.

Brenda Velasco: Did your mom work, too?

Hank D'Angelo: No.

Brenda Velasco: That was the pattern back then.

Hank D'Angelo: Absolutely.

Brenda Velasco: Now you also mentioned something, before we had the interview, about a social club for the men down in Port Reading.

Hank D'Angelo: That's the one I was telling you about before with the cloud of smoke.

Brenda Velasco: Was this the Sons of Italy or something?

Hank D'Angelo: I don't remember what the name of the club was but you know the Italians used to say *Associazione*; that means "the society". Now what the society was, I don't recall. Maybe Albina might remember that.

Brenda Velasco: You know Albina might; she knows everything. Her mind is sharp. Where was that located? (Sons of Italy Society met at Columbus Hall)

Hank D'Angelo: In those days, next door to her father's store. Now when I say next door it may have been a hundred or two hundred feet up the street but there was nothing between that building and her dad's place.

Brenda Velasco: Because we're both of Italian background you have men congregating. What are they doing for recreation usually?

Hank D'Angelo: They're playing cards.

Brenda Velasco: They're playing cards, right.

Hank D'Angelo: And smoking Di Nobili cigars.

Brenda Velasco: And you were too young for this obviously.

Hank D'Angelo: Absolutely.

Brenda Velasco: But you knew.

Hank D'Angelo: Sure, a lot of times I was the messenger.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, you were the messenger to get somebody home because dinner was ready waiting for them.

Hank D'Angelo: That's right or lunch, whatever the case happened to be.

Brenda Velasco: And no wife would walk in. That would be humiliating for her and for her husband. Did you have any clubs while you were in Port Reading up until age 10?

Hank D'Angelo: Clubs?

Brenda Velasco: Yeah, for you.

Hank D'Angelo: No.

Brenda Velasco: Did you have a lot of houses back then or were they.....

Hank D'Angelo: No, relatively speaking a few houses, very few.

Brenda Velasco: Then you had the fields to play in.

Hank D'Angelo: Oh God, yeah. Sure, that was another problem. When the railroad used to come down hauling the coal from Pennsylvania the engine, if they were pouring coal on, it would pop coal into the fields and the fields would catch fire. If we were there, and the fields were burning, of course as kids we'd run to the field fire. When I'd go home my mother would say were you at a fire? I'd say, no mom I wasn't at a fire. But she knew, because you could smell it.

Brenda Velasco: And mothers have great noses.

Hank D'Angelo: Absolutely.

Brenda Velasco: So this is how they had the field fires -there. You played in the fields because you didn't have any parks down in Port Reading, did you?

Hank D'Angelo: No.

Brenda Velasco: That was your play area, anything else that you can think of for recreation that you did either in Port Reading or Woodbridge Proper?

Hank D'Angelo: Well, recreational things here in Woodbridge... there was the **Craftsmen's Club**, the dances on Friday night which they used to call the Rat Races. Other things I used to do I used to go to, you know but I wouldn't want to call it

recreational, I had several Jewish friends, the Hutt Boys, we were absent with several other people and I used to go to a Shul with them on a Friday night.

Brenda Velasco: And where was the Shul?

Hank D'Angelo: The Shul was directly across the street from the firehouse on the corner where you make the right hand turn to go to No. 11 School.

Brenda Velasco: So that originally was the Shul and then they moved.....

Hank D'Angelo: The Shul and the Jewish.....

Brenda Velasco: Recreational center.

Hank D'Angelo: And church, yes, absolutely.

Brenda Velasco: So then it became a church and then the Shul moved to Amboy Avenue.

Hank D'Angelo: Many, many years later when Rabbi Mort Neuberger, his son just called me the other night. His dad was the rabbi at the time they built the church where the cat hospital is now and Mort lived across the street at the corner house.

Brenda Velasco: And you didn't live far from him then either because.....

Hank D'Angelo: He lived on Amboy Avenue right where the brook is and I lived over on Myrtle Avenue at that time, just a couple of doors away from the high school.

Brenda Velasco: So you had far more opportunity living in Woodbridge Proper.

Hank D'Angelo: Absolutely.

Brenda Velasco: The rabbi's son grew up in Woodbridge, too, then right?

Hank D'Angelo: Sure, he went to school here. Mort and I used to play together. He played piano and I played clarinet. We used to play duets and he spent a lot of time at my house because I had a piano and other instruments. It got to the point where we spent so much time together that his mother told him don't spend so much time with me because it didn't look good for his father.

Brenda Velasco: Oh right, the father was a rabbi.

Hank D'Angelo: But what kept us together was music and the fact that we went to the same school. He was years later in school than I but music was the anchor there.

Brenda Velasco: Did you play in the high school then?

Hank D'Angelo: Yeah, sure. I played in the band and the orchestra.

Brenda Velasco: And I think Frank LaPenta played in the.....

Hank D'Angelo: Donnie. (Interview #109)

Brenda Velasco: Donnie, okay, one of the LaPentas and Donnie had his own small group. And there was another person I interviewed, Frank Kreisel..... (Interview #23)

Hank D'Angelo: Oh, Frankie Kreisel. He lives at 414 Elmwood Avenue.

Brenda Velasco: By Emma Aaroe. (Interview #29)

Hank D'Angelo: Yes, down the street from Todd Howell (Interview #7). I went to school with his sister and I occasionally played with her once in awhile. But he had his own group and he lives in Marvin Friedman's house. 414 is Kreisel's house and incidentally Marvin Friedman died last week. Marvin's sister, Helen, went to school with us, with me and the Hutt boys. Her dad ran the.....I can't think of the name of the outfit that he ran in Perth Amboy. He was a sign painter.

Brenda Velasco: It'll come to you later tonight. So you had a whole group of friends and everything in Woodbridge Proper.

Hank D'Angelo: Absolutely.

Brenda Velasco: And you graduated in '48 you said. Unless you can think of anything else for Recreation let's go down to Question #7.

Hank D'Angelo: We had, and I can't really remember the year but close to the time we were either out of high school, a community orchestra here conducted by Anna Fraser. Anna C. Fraser was a music teacher in the high school. Her instrument was violin and she went and taught to all of the schools in town: grade school as well as high school. She was the director and conductor for the orchestra. Pat Russo played in the orchestra, Norma Baumgartner, the English teacher, played and Mort Neuberger played.

Brenda Velasco: This was quite big then.

Hank D'Angelo: Oh, yeah, it was a big orchestra.

Brenda Velasco: So this was about 1946, '47 or '48.

Hank D'Angelo: Maybe even a little bit later than that. We rehearsed in the back room of the Congregational Church which is on Grove Avenue and Barron Avenue. Elizabeth Baumgartner was a member there and that's how we got that facility. Did you know her brother's built fire trucks?

Brenda Velasco: No. Okay, this is Norma Baumgartner?

Hank D'Angelo: Charlie Trautwein.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, I know the name from fire trucks.

Hank D'Angelo: He built fire trucks and he built a couple for Woodbridge. His shop was on Amboy Avenue right where John's barbershop is now.

Brenda Velasco: Where **Mr. John's** was.

Hank D'Angelo: Right.

Brenda Velasco: Is.

Hank D'Angelo: Is, right. They were her brothers.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, you gave me a lot of fascinating information. Alright, so let's go down to Question 7.

7. What was the focal point of your community?

Brenda Velasco: What would you consider to have been the focal point of your community?

Hank D'Angelo: At my time in life and in my point of view, it was the facilities that were available to us which was primarily music.

Brenda Velasco: And some of that generated from school.

Hank D'Angelo: Absolutely.

Brenda Velasco: You had one high school at this time.

Hank D'Angelo: Right.

Brenda Velasco: Not like we have three high schools now so you had people coming from all throughout the township.

Hank D'Angelo: Absolutely. Buses like you can't believe.

Brenda Velasco: And you enjoyed your high school years.

Hank D'Angelo: I did.

Brenda Velasco: Now your wife moved to Woodbridge eventually.

Hank D'Angelo: No, they lived in Colonia on New Dover Road.

Brenda Velasco: Well, that is part of Woodbridge.

Hank D'Angelo: But when you say Woodbridge I'm thinking in terms of.....

Brenda Velasco: Woodbridge Proper.

Hank D'Angelo: Right. She lived there for I don't know how many years. Her dad was in the wholesale plywood business. His company was **Woodply of America** and he used to sell plywood and plywood products to just about all of the lumberyards in the state including New York and Connecticut. Augie Greiner was her uncle and Jean Greiner, his other niece, went to school with my sister and brother and she was always at our house. That was on Myrtle Avenue at the time. So that's how the Greiner's got.....

Brenda Velasco: And Augie Greiner was the mayor. (1934-1951)

Hank D'Angelo: He used to come to our house. We used to have parties at our house and he used to come to our house and play the piano. He loved to play the piano and of course I played and my brother played and my sister played so we used to have our own band when he showed up.

Brenda Velasco: You had your own entertainment.

Hank D'Angelo: Yeah.

Brenda Velasco: You didn't need to pay anybody. That was great times and that was on Myrtle Avenue.

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

Hank D'Angelo: Other than the location being very convenient for everything like transportation, school or friends it was just very convenient.

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

Brenda Velasco: Since you're 82 years old and you look great and your memory is very good do you remember any construction, accidents, sport events or.....

Hank D'Angelo: How about the railroad accident on the *Broker's Special*.

Brenda Velasco: That was in 1951. Were you able to get down there?

Hank D'Angelo: I was on the first aid squad in those days.

Brenda Velasco: The Woodbridge First Aid Squad?

Hank D'Angelo: The Woodbridge First Aid Squad. I, Louie Gardone, and Johnny Prekop, I think we were the only three on the ambulance on that day, were the first ones down to the accident. Now other people say I was the first one but I'm talking about in terms of the first aid squad and the guys got out to take care of the people very close to where we were. I was on the radio with police headquarters to tell them how bad this was and start making calls for extra assistance.

Brenda Velasco: Where was the First Aid Squad at this time?

Hank D'Angelo: Alongside the firehouse.

Brenda Velasco: On that side street. Now it's off of Route 1. It's quite different.

Hank D'Angelo: And much larger.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, well they service a much greater area now, too.

Hank D'Angelo: Sure, they do the whole township now.

Brenda Velasco: Except for Colonia because Colonia has its own and they're doing a good job. So you were young then.

Hank D'Angelo: Oh yeah sure, I was a young kid.

Brenda Velasco: You were about twenty years old.

Hank D'Angelo: I don't even think I was that old. I can't remember exactly when the accident happened. Do you have the date anywhere?

Brenda Velasco: Yeah, 1951.

Hank D'Angelo: So '51 that would have made me twenty-one.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so in that age and that's a memory that you can't forget because that was one of the worst railroad accidents.

Hank D'Angelo: Yeah, absolutely. It was a nightmare, there's no two ways about it. One of the streets that cross under the railroad track, when we got there, the trucks from one of the cars fell down onto the street and crushed a man who was walking under it at that time.

Brenda Velasco: Wow! This was by Fulton Street then.

Hank D'Angelo: Yeah.

Brenda Velasco: That was a horrific accident.

Hank D'Angelo: Yes, it was and it was all due to carelessness.

Brenda Velasco: Do you want to explain about that?

Hank D'Angelo: It just so happens that the engineer who drove that train his daughter became my nephew's wife. He lived in Point Pleasant.

Brenda Velasco: Because this is the shoreline we're talking about. (Now the North Jersey Coast Line)

Hank D'Angelo: The day of the accident this man, who definitely was the driver of that train normally, took the day off and his replacement was the guy who suffered the accident. (Hank didn't want his next comments recorded so the recorder was turned off).

Brenda Velasco: I'm continuing the interview with Hank D'Angelo and we're just talking about the 1951 *Broker Express* and the horrific accident in Woodbridge. Do you remember anything else - construction, in Woodbridge?

Hank D'Angelo: I remember an explosion down where the old water company used to be and I can't remember what the cause of that was.

Brenda Velasco: This is on Port Reading Avenue.

Hank D'Angelo: Right.

Brenda Velasco: This is in the early 1940's so you were still in school. You were a young boy.

Hank D'Angelo: Yeah. I think that what was being constructed there, and I could be wrong about this, they used to make torpedoes there for the railroad, I'm not talking about torpedoes for submarines. These torpedoes were tied around a track and if they wanted to give the engineer a message for instance if they wanted him to slow down, they would tie a torpedo to the track and when he hit that torpedo, he'd run over it, it would explode. So if it was one explosion he knew he had to slow down, if it was two maybe he had to speed up, if it was three maybe he had to stop, right ever the signal was. That was what they made there and somehow that's what blew up one day. Now it was evidently the chemical or the gun powder or whatever it was to cause that.

Brenda Velasco: Was anybody killed then?

Hank D'Angelo: I don't remember but I think somebody was injured but I don't know if anybody was killed.

Brenda Velasco: Yeah, because Frank LaPenta's father was killed. That's the explosion but he was working for the water company.

Hank D'Angelo: They were right next door.

Brenda Velasco: So you were in high school then or even middle school maybe. That was 1940.

10. What do you like about Woodbridge today?

Brenda Velasco: You're still in Woodbridge today you never moved out. What do you like about Woodbridge today?

Hank D'Angelo: I like Woodbridge, you know, because I was born and raised here. I know where everything is. There are a lot of things that I don't like about Woodbridge primarily the way the kids go in and out of school and the language.

Brenda Velasco: A lot of people don't like it.

Hank D'Angelo: I'm sure. The difference is I mean it's sad if you see them walking up the street and if the mothers and fathers knew what each daughter is being subjected to it might be a different story. The language, forget about it.

Brenda Velasco: I think a lot of people share that which is unfortunate. It's unfortunate for the kids, too, because we had a much nicer upbringing.

Hank D'Angelo: Yeah, absolutely.

Brenda Velasco: But you're still here and like you said you were born and raised here but I think the convenience of the location again.

Hank D'Angelo: Very convenient, absolutely. We travel and it's easy to get in and out of the airport. It's centrally located; it's convenient.

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

Brenda Velasco: You had your grandparents many years ago in Port Reading.

Hank D'Angelo: No.

Brenda Velasco: Your sister moved out and your brother.....

Hank D'Angelo: Yup, they're all gone.

Brenda Velasco: It's just you.

Hank D'Angelo: I got a sister in Connecticut and then I'm down here. Betty (wife) doesn't have anybody here. She has a niece living in Colonia but other than that her brother passed away and so on. Her mom and dad are gone.

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

Hank D'Angelo: I can't think of anything at the moment but there's probably a lot that we couldn't get into if I could get wound up.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, so you know what you do if you remember anything or Betty remembers anything, because she wasn't able to make it. Just write it down and mail it to me and then I'll include it as an addendum but you have to do it within the next few weeks. Well, I thank you very much for the interview.

Hank D'Angelo: Quite welcome.

Brenda Velasco: It was a fascinating interview with all the information you gave me so thank you.

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After the formal interview concluded, Hank D'Angelo recalled that he learned to drive when he was eight years old. He learned to drive in his backyard where his father had many trucks.

He also mentioned that the students from Ross Street School would walk after school to St. James for catechism (religious instruction). No one would be late for fear that St. Joseph's would use a yardstick.

Hank D'Angelo still pursues his interest in music. On Sundays, he plays reeds in an orchestra in South River.