

Oral History Interview
Larry Clement
WH068

(written transcript and digital audio)

On October 29th, 2009, Larry Clement was interviewed at Town Hall on 1 Main Street, Woodbridge by Brenda Velasco at 11:00 A.M.

Brenda Velasco: I have a very unusual interview today. It's with a long time resident of Hopelawn, Larry Clement, and he's also our zoning officer. He's seen Hopelawn go from a great place to grow up in to the way it is today. So Larry, please introduce yourself.

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

Larry Clement: My name is Larry Clement and I live at 141 Warden Avenue in Hopelawn. I'm a lifelong resident and as stated I am employed by the township as a zoning official. I've been in my position approximately twenty-seven years.

Brenda Velasco: What was the year of your birth?

Larry Clement: 4/12/43.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, 1943, you're a World War II baby then.

Larry Clement: Yes, I am.

2. How long have you lived in Woodbridge?

Brenda Velasco: Have you always lived in Woodbridge then?

Larry Clement: I lived in Hopelawn approximately fifty-five years.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so you meet our criteria and you're one of the few people I'm interviewing from Hopelawn who has actually grown up there. So I'm very happy about this.

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

Brenda Velasco: Did your family always live in Hopelawn or Woodbridge or did they move here from another area?

Larry Clement: My parents were from Perth Amboy. However my grandparents had a chicken farm in Hopelawn before the highway systems were even here: the Parkway, Route #9 and the other things.

Brenda Velasco: Before the spaghetti network I call it.

Larry Clement: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so even though your parents came from Perth Amboy they had some connection to Hopelawn.

Larry Clement: Yes, they did.

Brenda Velasco: And where was this chicken farm in Hopelawn?

Larry Clement: It was approximately on New Brunswick Avenue and Jersey Avenue.

Brenda Velasco: Hopelawn at that time, when they had the chicken farm, was it rural or.....

Larry Clement: Very, very rural.

Brenda Velasco: And that's why they came out from Perth Amboy then, your grandparents.

Larry Clement: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Because Perth Amboy was the center of Middlesex County.

Larry Clement: Hopelawn was the closest thing to urbanization that existed then.

Brenda Velasco: Did they sell chickens or did they raise them for themselves?

Larry Clement: I believe they may have done some business. I'm really not that fluent when it comes to exactly what they did with their business.

Brenda Velasco: Because there was a big market in Perth Amboy that sold live chickens.

Larry Clement: Yes, there was. There were several chicken businesses there that I can recall in my days as a youth. The Farmer's Market etc. etc. There were numerous ones.

Brenda Velasco: So you always had chickens and eggs.

Larry Clement: Chickens were always available.

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

Brenda Velasco: We're going to concentrate on Hopelawn but I know as the zoning officer in Woodbridge Township you could mention all of Woodbridge but we want to concentrate on Hopelawn.

Larry Clement: I could go on forever with the changes that I'm aware of that took place in Hopelawn. The main affect and impact were the sectioning of the town by the highway systems as they came through. Route #9, the Garden State Parkway, Route #440 sort of intersected the town, split it up a little bit and took out a lot of commercial uses that were there: small time mom and pop things.

Brenda Velasco: When did these highways come about?

Larry Clement: The Parkway came in approximately 1960ish.

Brenda Velasco: So you had grown up before Hopelawn.

Larry Clement: I was a youth and the Parkway was under construction at the time that I was about ten or eleven or twelve or something like that.

Brenda Velasco: There was also a realignment with Route #9, am I correct?

Larry Clement: There was intersection roads created with Route #9 in conjunction with the Parkway but I think that was all done simultaneously.

Brenda Velasco: How about #440?

Larry Clement: #440 came in I would have to say in the '70s. It took out a nice portion of the community specifically the Florida Grove Road area in through Keasbey.

Brenda Velasco: And that really split that road.

Larry Clement: Yes, it has. In fact, they realigned Florida Grove Road to the point where they had to put a portion of it in Perth Amboy to bring it back out to the main thoroughfare, New Brunswick Avenue.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so what we're going to do is backtrack before the roads because that's when you were growing up and that's what Hopelawn was as you knew it. Have you always lived on Warden Street?

Larry Clement: No, my family moved to different locations in Hopelawn. The first home my family owned was on Warden Avenue. We were renters before that.

Brenda Velasco: How many homes are there now? Have you seen an increase in the number of residencies on your street?

Larry Clement: I'd say there has been appreciable growth in the number of dwelling units only because of the capacity to subdivide and have variances granted throughout the years. It's still relatively, although densely populated because the building lots are only required to be fifty feet in width. It's still pretty much of a rural type of environment.

Brenda Velasco: How about, when you were growing up, what were the main streets in Hopelawn?

Larry Clement: That's a great question because when I first moved into our new home which built in 1954, a good portion of the streets in Hopelawn were not through streets. There is a brook that intersects the entire town. Back in the '50s the brook was an open brook. Over the years it was piped and closed off; and hence the roads that did not go through became through roads. There was approximately a twelve foot diameter pipe running from, it starts at Fords Park and continues all the way down through Hopelawn through Keasbey and down to the river.

Brenda Velasco: So it empties into the Raritan River.

Larry Clement: It is a tributary and it is a real stream.

Brenda Velasco: And it's underground.

Larry Clement: Yes, it is.

Brenda Velasco: So people have to be careful in the utilities.

Larry Clement: I live right next to one of the easements for that brook. I grew up frolicking in that brook.

Brenda Velasco: And it's disappeared. It's underground now.

Larry Clement: It's underground. It's all piped down now.

Brenda Velasco: Has this created any problems with flooding or anything?

Larry Clement: To the contrary. I think it was meant to alleviate some flooding problems and it seems to have been successful. Ironically, when the brook was piped my father was a superintendent of Public Works and headed up the project.

Brenda Velasco: And you know all the details.

Larry Clement: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Because a newcomer to Hopelawn would not be familiar with this at all.

Larry Clement: No.

Brenda Velasco: This is some hidden new information here. Were the streets paved then?

Larry Clement: The street I lived on, in our new home again on Warden Avenue, was yellow stone; loose yellow polished stone.

Brenda Velasco: Wow! So when did it finally.....

Larry Clement: The first paved street, if it were to be called that, was a gravel tar type of street, not black top, going back to the old loose gravel and tar. That was the first pavement, per say, bituminous pavement that was ever in place there. We had two concrete streets in Hopelawn. One was Luther Avenue and one was Howard Street. Those were the only through streets before the brook was piped.

Brenda Velasco: I know I'm hearing this constantly when people were growing up that they would spread that oil to keep the dust down.

Larry Clement: Calcium chloride was used as a dust retardant.

Brenda Velasco: And this was during the spring and summer?

Larry Clement: Whenever necessary.

Brenda Velasco: Growing up then was quite different from growing up now.

Larry Clement: Oh yes.

Brenda Velasco: Well if your dad worked for Public Works you had public services.

Larry Clement: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so garbage collection.

Larry Clement: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Did you have city water as well?

Larry Clement: We had city water. The Runyon Reservoir was right up the street, Perth Amboy. I believe at one time they were the supplier for Hopelawn and then it switched to **Middlesex Water**. **PSE&G** was always the utility.

Brenda Velasco: Did you have sewers?

Larry Clement: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Because certain areas of Colonia did not have sewers when they first started.

Larry Clement: I remember taking rides with my father to the pump houses up there in the middle of the night when things were going wrong on Lake Avenue. (Colonia)

Brenda Velasco: Yes, and sometimes we still have problems with that pump house on Lake Avenue. Certain things don't change do they? How about stores?

Larry Clement: Gosh, there were a plethora of little mom and pop shops. Mostly all purpose type stores that pretty much sold everything. There were soda fountains, several of those: there was a slaughter house on Florida Grove Road which was called **Shines** and it was also a market. I'd estimate there probably were, on a confectionary type store, maybe six or seven of those throughout the town.

Brenda Velasco: Were they close to you?

Larry Clement: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Because Hopelawn isn't that big anyhow.

Larry Clement: Little corner in the middle of the block kind of stores that were run by folks that lived in the same building. You went and got your cold cuts, you went and got your notions and you went and got whatever they sold. We had two ice cream soda fountains in Hopelawn. One was a place on Florida Grove Road again, it was called **Lefties**, and then there was another one on West Pond Road which was owned by the Roman family who owned that area right there where **Mama Lina's Restaurant** is right now. It was called **Jay's** I believe, and it was a soda fountain so there were two. If you liked ice cream you knew where to go.

Brenda Velasco: Do you remember how much the ice cream cost back then?

Larry Clement: Every Sunday my father would send me for a quart of **Dolly Madison** and if I'm not mistaken I believe it was around two dollars.

Brenda Velasco: Did you have any hardware stores there?

Larry Clement: We had two hardware stores. One was **Guttman's** on Florida Grove Road again and the other one was right next to the sweet shop on West Pond Road also. The hardware store was owned by the Roman family.

Brenda Velasco: Do you have any hardware stores there now in Hopelawn?

Larry Clement: We have **Walmart**.

Brenda Velasco: That's a jack of all trades isn't it? So the big stores knocked out the mom and pop stores.

Larry Clement: Oh sure, a good number of years ago.

Brenda Velasco: Do you have doctor or dentist offices in Hopelawn?

Larry Clement: There are some series of physician locations on New Brunswick Avenue between the Perth Amboy line and the Fords line. There's a pediatrician and I believe there's a Wellness thing; no dentists.

Brenda Velasco: How did people get around because in 1943 you were born and

Larry Clement: Public service bus.

Brenda Velasco: So you had bus service in Hopelawn.

Larry Clement: Yes, we did. We had the No. 4 bus and we had the No. 82 bus. Both went to Perth Amboy because that's the place you went.

Brenda Velasco: Not to Woodbridge Proper but to Perth Amboy. So your whole center was geared to Perth Amboy.

Larry Clement: And if you wanted to go to Woodbridge you got a bus from Perth Amboy to Woodbridge.

Brenda Velasco: So it's amazing that Hopelawn is really part of Woodbridge and not Perth Amboy because of the whole orientation.

Larry Clement: Well it's our post office box. (08862)

Brenda Velasco: That's right.

Larry Clement: They tried to annex our sponsor but we didn't go for it.

Brenda Velasco: You're too distinct; unique. About how many people do you think, when you were growing up, lived in Hopelawn?

Larry Clement: Population at the time, this would be a guess, twenty-five hundred.

Brenda Velasco: So this is really a small community.....

Larry Clement: Very small.

Brenda Velasco: Area within Woodbridge proper.

Larry Clement: You figure properties at the time that I'm speaking there were less homes; a lot of open area.

Brenda Velasco: A lot of fields then.

Larry Clement: Yes, which was great as a kid.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, you had a lot of play area. We'll get to that in Question #5. How about houses of worship, were there any houses of worship back then when you were growing up?

Larry Clement: There was one church in Hopelawn which was a Reform Church. Denomination specifically I'm not clear on but it was on the corner of Warden Avenue and Florida Grove Road. Close by in Perth Amboy, one block in off of Florida Grove Road, was Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Church.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so it was in Perth Amboy but it bordered Hopelawn.

Larry Clement: Now in later years Holy Rosary Church was built on Florida Grove Road and Coddington Avenue which exists today. That's the biggest church in Hopelawn. I'd say that was built in the '80s.

Brenda Velasco: How about schools?

Larry Clement: One school, Clyde Avenue, kindergarten to eighth grade. It may have been School #10, I'm not sure.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, but this took in. You didn't have to go to the middle school or a junior high.

Larry Clement: No, there were no middle schools at the time.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so it was a K through 8.

Larry Clement: And the public library was in the lower floor of the school. I didn't attend any of the public schools. I attended all parochial schools.

Brenda Velasco: Which parochial schools did you attend?

Larry Clement: Our Lady of Peace in Fords and I went to St. Mary's High School in Perth Amboy.

Brenda Velasco: How did you commute there because those were distances?

Larry Clement: Public service bus. We were issued bus tickets by the school.

Brenda Velasco: So you didn't have those fleet of yellow buses?

Larry Clement: No.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so looking at Question #4 I think we've hit basically.....Let's just sum it up, the main street then for a lot of this area was Florida Grove Road.

Larry Clement: Florida Grove Road and New Brunswick Avenue.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, and then with that spaghetti network of roads that came in that's another story.

Larry Clement: Let's not forget West Pond Road however because **Two Guys from Harrison**, that location probably was the biggest commercial development; it's on the site where **Walmart** presently exists. **Vornado** was the company that owned it all; **Vornado Corporation** and I believe that was the second **Two Guys from Harrison** ever.

Brenda Velasco: Wow! The second built then.

Larry Clement: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: And it was very busy because I know we came in from Linden to shop at that **Two Guys**.

Larry Clement: It had a liquor store; it had a drug store; it had everything.

Brenda Velasco: Predecessor of way back to a **Walmart**. Except **Walmart** doesn't have liquor, it has everything else.

Larry Clement: After **Two Guys**, it became **Bradlees** and there was also a supermarket at the end of it, **Finast**, and then it became the **A&P**.

Brenda Velasco: So you've seen a lot of changes in Hopelawn.

Larry Clement: Oh yes.

Brenda Velasco: Quite a difference from when you were growing up.

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

Brenda Velasco: Post office did you have a post office?

Larry Clement: Hopelawn did not have a post office. We were a Perth Amboy post office box or service spot.

Brenda Velasco: The library you mentioned was in.....

Larry Clement: The Hopelawn School, lower level, was the public library. Parks-adjacent to Hopelawn School was a big park area still operated by the township Recreation Department. It was recently redone and rededicated a year ago.

Brenda Velasco: This is the Clyde.....

Larry Clement: Yes, Clyde Avenue and that was the only park that we knew. As kids we played ball there, did the whole thing.

Brenda Velasco: So they had ball fields there then too?

Larry Clement: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: And they were maintained by the township?

Larry Clement: They were maintained by the township in conjunction with an association by several of the citizens of the town called HYO, Hopelawn Youth Organization.

Brenda Velasco: I think I interviewed a Barbara White.

Larry Clement: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Her husband was.....

Larry Clement: Former student. Joseph DeAngelo was the person who began it along with my dad.

Brenda Velasco: Oh, I'm so glad you're mentioning these people because they're deceased now but they played a very important role.

Larry Clement: He was the only person at the time to see the kids had balls and bats and stuff and went to my father. My father went to the Recreation Department and got him a couple of things and whatever they needed.

Brenda Velasco: I'm so glad you're mentioning this because I remember him way, way back and they had dances.

Larry Clement: He lived on Clyde Avenue. He also chaperoned and headed up the school dances on Friday nights at Hopelawn School for the teens.

Brenda Velasco: He was very involved and he just died within the past ten years I think.

Larry Clement: Yes, approximately ten years.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so how about the firehouse.

Larry Clement: There was a Hopelawn firehouse on the corner of Charles and May and that was relocated; a new firehouse was built on Loretta Street.

Brenda Velasco: And this was volunteer?

Larry Clement: Volunteer and across the street from the original firehouse they built a first aid squad, since debunked, no longer in operation. They're trying to market the building right now.

Brenda Velasco: Okay and this is a problem we're having with a lot of our volunteers (emergency services) because these were all volunteer throughout the township.

Larry Clement: We had no regulars at all in Hopelawn.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, it was all volunteer so you had a really tight community here.

Larry Clement: St. John's was the closest thing to Fords with regular members.

Brenda Velasco: Okay and we mentioned the school on Clyde Avenue.

Larry Clement: The principal there was Mary Fee. In fact she was there so long they named the street next to the school after her, Mary Fee Lane.

Brenda Velasco: But once again you went to the parochial schools and that's where you went for kindergarten as well.

Larry Clement: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Okay.

Larry Clement: But all my friends went to Hopelawn School.

Brenda Velasco: So you were the outsider there.

6. What did you do for recreation?

Larry Clement: Alluding to what I discussed before about Mr. DeAngelo he ran sports programs for the youth. Other than that, I participated in school sports.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, when you say the sports program that Mr. DeAngelo ran and provided, what sports are we talking about?

Larry Clement: Baseball primarily and basketball: mainly those two.

Brenda Velasco: Then you were involved with your own school.

Larry Clement: Yes, high school sports.

Brenda Velasco: And St. Mary's had baseball again.

Larry Clement: Baseball and basketball.

Brenda Velasco: How about when you were real young: '43 to another five or eight years?

Larry Clement: Do you expect me to remember?

Brenda Velasco: Did you have a bike?

Larry Clement: Oh, sure I had a bike. Many times I wished I had a bike. I got one for Christmas a couple of times. I got one for Christmas once and I got for my confirmation. Those are the biggest days that I can remember.

Brenda Velasco: And you had no trouble riding around Hopelawn.

Larry Clement: Absolutely not. It was my life.

Brenda Velasco: Where else did you play because you had only that Clyde Avenue Park.

Larry Clement: The Clyde Avenue Park and there was a clay pit baseball field off of New Brunswick Avenue and Florida Grove Road again. It was maintained by the town I believe but it was pretty rough. Usable but it wasn't the Hopelawn School field. That was the Yankee Stadium for us and the woods, of course. We spent more time in the woods then.....

Brenda Velasco: I mentioned the woods because this is what people will not be able to understand because Hopelawn is so built up now. Where were the woods?

Larry Clement: There were two main sections. One was right behind Hopelawn School, before any development. And the other bigger section was the properties behind New Brunswick Avenue. At one time there was a lumberyard there called **Robin Rankin** and you had **Dellapietro Excavating**. You had **Pathmark**, there was a shirt factory there at one time and all the properties behind that to the railroad was solid woods with ponds and clay pits, that kind of thing. There was wildlife back there and game. It was a fun place to grow up as a kid.

Brenda Velasco: Did you do any hunting?

Larry Clement: Legally, no.

Brenda Velasco: But it was done.

Larry Clement: Yes, sure.

Brenda Velasco: And you had muskrats.
Larry Clement: Yes and I had traps and I ended up with my twenty-two. I never killed anybody. Not a problem.
Brenda Velasco: No, this was typical boy stuff growing up.
Larry Clement: Yes, of course, it was a typical thing.
Brenda Velasco: You had a lot of freedom then growing up and a lot of creativity.
Larry Clement: Oh yes. It was always dark when my mother was yelling for me.
Brenda Velasco: Poor mom, she survived you, right? You didn't have to have a lot of organized activity.
Larry Clement: Once I did my chores she didn't see me again until the sun was down.
Brenda Velasco: Okay, you mentioned you had chores.
Larry Clement: At home, sure.
Brenda Velasco: What did you have to do?
Larry Clement: Whatever she could think of- whether it would be paint the fence or rake the leaves or cut the grass or polish the furniture in the dining room or whatever.
Brenda Velasco: She was good.
Larry Clement: She was tough.
Brenda Velasco: She made you work then.
Larry Clement: I wasn't about to get out the door without, she'd stop me.
Brenda Velasco: Did you have any siblings?
Larry Clement: I had sisters, I was the only son.
Brenda Velasco: And she made you work; you weren't spoiled.
Larry Clement: No, she didn't spoil me. She was the disciplinarian and my father would just lay back and watch.
Brenda Velasco: How many sisters did you have?
Larry Clement: I had a total of three sisters. Two that lived with me and my older sister I don't recall because she had moved and went out on her own before I could really recall.
Brenda Velasco: That's unusual for a boy with all those sisters. Usually you would get away. You mom was good, she was good.

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

Brenda Velasco: The family, church.....
Larry Clement: It was very family oriented, yes. You had church which was a big element. Being rural as it was there was really no community center to speak of other than maybe the PTA with the school or something like that. The HYO program, I'm talking about organizations that come to mind, the VFW.
Brenda Velasco: Okay, right, and what street is the VFW on?
Larry Clement: James.
Brenda Velasco: Because you were also in the service too, right?
Larry Clement: Yes, I was in the Marine Corp.
Brenda Velasco: You were in the Marines. Okay, and what church.....
Larry Clement: I attended Holy Spirit as my regular church but, you know, going to St. Mary's High School I had that and going to Our Lady of Peace I had that. I did my communion in Our Lady of Peace.

Brenda Velasco: Okay.

Larry Clement: I did my confirmation in Holy Spirit and I did my novenas in St. Mary's, I had to spread it out.

Brenda Velasco: And the first Friday's probably too.

Larry Clement: Yes, had to spread it out, exactly.

Brenda Velasco: So you were all over with the churches. That sort of dominated. Sundays, how did you spend Sundays? Did you have a family dinner? Did you have to go on picnics?

Larry Clement: Sundays was punch the clock: dinner between eleven and twelve. And the menu was set; roast beef, mashed potatoes and string beans.

Brenda Velasco: Not bad.

Larry Clement: If you didn't like it, you went hungry; and if you weren't there on time you went hungry.

Brenda Velasco: No catering.

Larry Clement: From my dad. My dad bought the groceries and my mother cooked for my dad.

Brenda Velasco: So it was a traditional house, your mom stayed home?

Larry Clement: It was very traditional, yes, when it came to that.

Brenda Velasco: Did you have a car?

Larry Clement: Oh I had a bunch of cars, junks, and things like that.

Brenda Velasco: But your dad and mom had a car too.

Larry Clement: My dad had his first car in 1954.

Brenda Velasco: Wow!

Larry Clement: As I said he worked for the town so there was a vehicle that he used for work but he bought his first car from Babe Mauro in 1954.

Brenda Velasco: On Amboy Avenue, right?

Larry Clement: Yes, a '54 Chrysler, I remember it.

Brenda Velasco: Did your mom drive too?

Larry Clement: No, my mom did not drive.

Brenda Velasco: If you feel we covered enough for Question #7, we can go to Question #8.

Larry Clement: Yes, sure.

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

Larry Clement: I think I would have to go back to the fact that the environment was very well suited for the rural type of living. Especially as a child I had a lot of options, a lot of things to do, and to be very creative without having to go out and spend money. I mean we went fishing in the ponds in the woods that we talked about with a string and a straight pin and spent the day there. Being a small town you get to know everybody. I was a paperboy too so I knew everybody.

Brenda Velasco: And Hopelawn is not that big so if you were a paperboy....

Larry Clement: I could tell you everyone's name in every house that I went by and if the paper wasn't there on time they were calling my house and they were looking for me. So yes, it was the close, close proximity to your neighbors and the familiarization.

Brenda Velasco: It was like a Mayberry but you were close to the big city all the time, just a bus ride away.

Larry Clement: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: It was a great place to grow up.

Larry Clement: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: You have good memories then of that.

Larry Clement: Yes, I do. Those are very, very good memories.

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

Larry Clement: Since I lived in Woodbridge?

Brenda Velasco: Yes, since you've lived in Hopelawn.

Larry Clement: Specifically to Hopelawn or to Woodbridge in general?

Brenda Velasco: Well let's start off with Hopelawn because you alluded to the roads, that whole road network.

Larry Clement: The infrastructure was modernized, the main corridors started to change and develop and new businesses came in and upgraded services.

Brenda Velasco: Now when you were growing up, and we're going to get back younger, in the '50s you started seeing the new construction of roads.

Larry Clement: Well, I saw the whole new housing development built in the '50s.

Brenda Velasco: And that's post-World War II suburban boom.

Larry Clement: Nine thousand dollars a house.

Brenda Velasco: Wow! Where were these at?

Larry Clement: Rural homes right down the street from the Clyde Avenue Park that whole track of homes.

Brenda Velasco: Who was the builder, do you remember?

Larry Clement: I don't know who the builder was and, in fact, the Majestic Bowling Lanes were built at the same time in 1954, David Wilentz. That's the track of houses I'm talking about. This was what was built and this is the bowling alley right here. (*Larry was showing pictures of this to Brenda*). Clembil, my father and Bill Warren they named the street after.

Brenda Velasco: Clembil.

Larry Clement: Clembil Court.

Brenda Velasco: Clembil Court named after your dad.....

Larry Clement: And Bill Warren.

Brenda Velasco: Bill Warren, wow! So you have Laurel Street here and you have Richard Avenue.

Larry Clement: Louis.

Brenda Velasco: Louis.

Larry Clement: This is Clyde that comes down. I drew this on here to show you that Pennsylvania Avenue used to go over to the highway and then they changed it because of the development. This is the brook that used to transition. This is where the town was cut off when 440 and everything came through.

Brenda Velasco: Right and this is Florida Grove Road.

Larry Clement: This was the old Florida Grove Road; this is the new Florida Grove Road.

Brenda Velasco: Florida Grove Road had to be rerouted, I know.....

Larry Clement: Here it is into Perth Amboy right by Holy Spirit Church.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, because walking the streets in that area and you do walk the streets as an elected official, all of a sudden Florida Grove Road ends. But you know there's another part of it somewhere. So they really chopped up Hopelawn over here.

Larry Clement: Yes, they sure did. And that's the other side of Hopelawn where the church is, Holy Rosary.

Brenda Velasco: And near Coddington Avenue.

Larry Clement: Right, here's Coddington up where the **Walmart** is.

Brenda Velasco: Right and Route #9 is.....

Larry Clement: Right, the car wash, Route #9, that whole thing. This is where the **7 Eleven** and the new gas station is on the corner here.

Brenda Velasco: 184.

Larry Clement: **Mama Lena's** is right here.

Brenda Velasco: Right, West Pond Road yes.

Larry Clement: This is where the new **Hess Station** is going across the street where the car dealer was.

Brenda Velasco: Right, so it's the gas station, okay; a lot of changes.

Larry Clement: Sure is.

Brenda Velasco: It's constantly changing. What a difference from the 1940s and '50s: drastic changes. So you saw the highway construction and you saw the housing construction. Were there any accidents?

Larry Clement: I was around when, and in fact my dad was working with the town when that train was derailed in Woodbridge.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, that's in 1951 that train wreck.

Larry Clement: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Were you able to go down?

Larry Clement: No, I was too young. I just remember it. I remember the explosion in South Amboy where the ammunition barge is.

Brenda Velasco: And you were able to hear that?

Larry Clement: I was sitting in a chair and wound up on the other side of the room in Hopelawn.

Brenda Velasco: Wow, the repercussions.

Larry Clement: Oh yes, it broke windows everywhere. I don't remember the year but I'm sure that's documented. (1950)

Brenda Velasco: Oh, yes, but you were young then.

Larry Clement: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Any sporting events or anything?

Larry Clement: Sporting events?

Brenda Velasco: Yes.

Larry Clement: I don't.....

Brenda Velasco: Riots or discrimination?

Larry Clement: The firemen used to have their carnival and they used to have what they call donkey baseball where they would ride on donkeys: charity kind of thing.

Brenda Velasco: Okay and where was this?

Larry Clement: They used to have that in the Hopelawn baseball field.

Brenda Velasco: By Clyde Avenue?

Larry Clement: Yes, like a fundraiser carnival and they'd have to ride the donkeys to run the bases. It was just like entertainment. If you asked a kid that today, they would have no idea what you were talking about.

Brenda Velasco: No, that's why I'm asking you to explain it because your words are going into posterity.

Larry Clement: Hit the ball and you would have to jump on the donkey and the donkey would have to run to first base with them riding it.

Brenda Velasco: And donkeys have a mind of their own.

Larry Clement: Exactly, and that's what made it comical and normally it was the fire company that did it.

Brenda Velasco: This was done in the summer then?

Larry Clement: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Okay and fire was also a major area, focal point, in your community.

Larry Clement: Yes it was a gathering kind of a spot.

Brenda Velasco: Especially since it was depending on volunteers.

Larry Clement: Oh yes, you'd go by there and they would all be sitting out front with their seats turned around with nothing better to do but just getting away from mom I guess.

Brenda Velasco: Oh, of course they left the house and all those little chores.

Larry Clement: And the local barbershop was right next door.

Brenda Velasco: Perfect, so all the gossip was between those two buildings.

Larry Clement: Precisely.

Brenda Velasco: Terrific.

10. What do you like about Woodbridge today?

Brenda Velasco: Because you're still here.

Larry Clement: What do I like about Woodbridge?

Brenda Velasco: Yes.

Larry Clement: Probably the fact that I've been here so long and it pretty much has become part of me, it's location and I'm acclimatized.

Brenda Velasco: It's really expanded since you were growing up.

Larry Clement: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: We're over a hundred thousand now.

Larry Clement: Oh, yes.

Brenda Velasco: And the zoning officials. Did they have zoning back then?

Larry Clement: Ron Marci, who was my mentor, was zoning officer/construction official. I don't think they even issued zoning permits then but there was a title.

Brenda Velasco: When did you start being employed then?

Larry Clement: 1982.

Brenda Velasco: Now we have to get a permit for this and a permit for that.

Larry Clement: We have to get whatever the books they give us say.

Brenda Velasco: It's also for safety reasons too.

Larry Clement: All driven by good reasons, of course.

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

Larry Clement: No. I have one sister and my sole sibling and she lives in South Amboy.

Brenda Velasco: Not too far though.

Larry Clement: No.

12. Any other stories or events that you can think of?

Brenda Velasco: That we didn't cover with the questioning?

Larry Clement: I can think of a million places that are not there anymore that used to be, I know that.

Brenda Velasco: What were some of your favorite places that aren't there?

Larry Clement: Well the first is **McDonalds**, the one by Washington Park, which is right down the street of Hopelawn. But Hopelawn had a fast food hamburger place on Route 440 or West Pond Road. It was called **The Dutch Hut**. It was a windmill kind of a building.

Brenda Velasco: Oh, unique.

Larry Clement: And it was a fast food hamburger place. It was a drive up. Yes, we did have one and it was located where presently the carwash is on West Pond Road.

Brenda Velasco: Any other favorite buildings that aren't there?

Larry Clement: I don't remember anymore, oh gosh.

Brenda Velasco: Your woods aren't there.

Larry Clement: No, the woods are gone.

Brenda Velasco: The woods and the hunting.

Larry Clement: There were so many, I mean, I could just go down the list. I could tell you where every bar was. We had many bars in Hopelawn, I know that.

Brenda Velasco: It was also in Woodbridge Proper, too. You had bars all over.

Larry Clement: In the middle of the block there would be a bar. For the population of twelve hundred or whatever it was, we had a lot of bars. You asked about gathering places they were gathering places.

Brenda Velasco: You found out all the latest news there.

Larry Clement: I lived in an apartment once and the landlords were in the ice business and they carried blocks of ice on their back into all the bars because that's how they got their ice and a lot of people still had, not electric refrigerators they were iceboxes. A woman, both the husband and wife, carried these blocks of ice on their back. They went into so many bars during the course of the day that by the time the day was done they were asleep from that ice.

Brenda Velasco: Those were heavy blocks of ice they had to carry but I remember the iceboxes growing up too.

Larry Clement: I guess the women in those days, the breed, were tough because they came up tough.

Brenda Velasco: How many bars were in Hopelawn?

Larry Clement: At least five and a lot of them are gone now because of that taking, this here, two of them were right here.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, on New Brunswick.....

Larry Clement: New Brunswick Avenue and Florida Grove Road. When the highways came though it took that part of it.

Brenda Velasco: So you've seen some real rapid changes.

Larry Clement: Oh, yes. I thought about this and said geez where are we going to begin. I can't remember all the things there were that aren't there anymore over the course of the years.

Brenda Velasco: It's changed quite a bit.

Larry Clement: Those you can have.

Brenda Velasco: Thank you and thank you for your time. If you remember anything else you want to include, you just e-mail me.

Larry Clement: Okay.

Brenda Velasco: Thank you.

Larry Clement: If you have any other questions I'd be more than happy to try to answer them.

Brenda Velasco: Right now, no. We covered a lot and we captured Hopelawn of the 1940s and that's what I wanted to do. That was important to do.

Larry Clement: 1943 I was born so.....

Brenda Velasco: Sometimes our memories are much better when we go back to that period of time, you know, up until seven years.

Larry Clement: I can remember being a small kid when the war ended.

Brenda Velasco: Wow!

Larry Clement: I can remember people celebrating it and running in the streets.

Brenda Velasco: In Hopelawn.

Larry Clement: In Hopelawn. We lived on New Brunswick Avenue at the time and I can remember that.

Brenda Velasco: You had a radio at that time, did you have a.....

Larry Clement: No, I'm talking about standing in front of my house and watching people in the street celebrating that the war was over; I remember that with the sparklers and the things.

Brenda Velasco: And that was right on New Brunswick Avenue people celebrated.

Larry Clement: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: When did you get your first TV?

Larry Clement: 1958 I'd guess.

Brenda Velasco: You waited a long time.

Larry Clement: We weren't very well off.

Brenda Velasco: You also had ponds and everything else to get into. You didn't have to sit in front of the TV.

Larry Clement: And you had to tell what phone number you wanted, PA694. There were no dials, no nothing, just the operator.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so you had an operator.

Larry Clement: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: And you had a party line too?

Larry Clement: Party lines.

Brenda Velasco: For those people who aren't familiar with that, you want to mention what a party line was?

Larry Clement: A party line could be a number of connections on the same feed that if it were being used at the time you wanted to use it, you picked up into a conversation and people could overhear your conversation.

Brenda Velasco: So you had to be very careful.

Larry Clement: It was smart to be prudent, yes.

Brenda Velasco: Because some time people just picked up to listen.

Larry Clement: Sometimes that's what people wanted a phone for.

Brenda Velasco: Right, those were the days. Okay, I think we covered everything.

Larry Clement: I got plenty more but that's okay we'll save that for another time.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, otherwise we can go on.

Larry Clement: No, okay.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, I thank you very much and thank you for your time.

Larry Clement: My pleasure.