

**Oral History Interview**  
**Mary Anna Collins Paul**  
**WH110**

(Written transcript and digital audio)

On October 26, 2012 Mary Anna Paul was interviewed by Brenda Velasco at 10:15 A.M. at the Fords Library.

*Brenda Velasco:* I am here with Mary Anna Paul a resident of Iselin right now but she grew up in Keasbey and that's really what I want to find out about. I did previously interview her husband, Charles Paul II, who is a long time Woodbridge resident (Interview #58). Mary Anna has also been a nurse at Perth Amboy Hospital from 1966 to 2007; she was also involved with the AIDS education as the AIDS education coordinator at Perth Amboy Hospital.

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

*Mary Anna Paul:* My name is Mary Anna Collins Paul. I grew up in Keasbey and I was born January 6, 1945.

*Brenda Velasco:* End of World War II almost.

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

*Mary Anna Paul:* All my life.

*Brenda Velasco:* So that's quite a bit.

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

*Mary Anna Paul:* The great grandmother purchased property on St. Stephens Avenue. It was purchased from a priest from St. Stephens Church.

*Brenda Velasco:* And St. Stephens Church is located where?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Perth Amboy.

*Brenda Velasco:* So your great grandmother had the property and eventually this is where your grandmother grew up?

*Mary Anna Paul:* The whole family grew up in Keasbey. The great grandmother came there later in life. She was born in Austria, Hungary. All the children were born in Keasbey or Perth Amboy.

*Brenda Velasco:* You were born in Perth Amboy in the hospital there?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Raritan Bay

*Brenda Velasco:* Raritan Bay.

*Mary Anna Paul:* At that time it was Perth Amboy General.

*Brenda Velasco:* Right and I think I introduced it as that was where you worked and now it's Raritan Bay. I have to correct myself. So your family history; the Collins family; has a long history in Keasbey. Did your great grandfather or grandfather or father work in any of the surrounding factories there or in the clay industry?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Great grandfather I am not familiar with. The grandfather passed away very early in life. I understand he worked for the railroad. He died a few weeks before my father was born and my grandmother went to work at the Danish Home as a maid to support her son and assist in supporting her parents. That would have been in 1921.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, now where was the Danish Home located at that time?

*Mary Anna Paul:* The Danish Home was located in Piscataway that would be my best guess.

*Brenda Velasco:* I know there is one in Edison right now off of 287.

*Mary Anna Paul:* That would be it.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, the one in Edison right on Durham Road or New Durham Road.

*Mary Anna Paul:* That's correct, Durham Road.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, because we did have a big Danish population in Perth Amboy at the time and they had purchased this home for.....

*Mary Anna Paul:* Lots of community picnics there.

*Brenda Velasco:* Alright, so your grandmother went to work much sooner than she expected.....

*Mary Anna Paul:* She certainly did. When she stopped working there, she worked in a cigar factory in Perth Amboy.

*Brenda Velasco:* How did she get to all these places?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Bus.

*Brenda Velasco:* And the buses ran from Perth Amboy to.....

*Mary Anna Paul:* I recall buses going to some areas every fifteen minutes to others every half hour and to others every hour.

*Brenda Velasco:* Do you remember how much it was at that time?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Fifteen cents or a quarter. You always had to have change and the bus stop was right on the corner of our street.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay and you lived on St. Stephens.....

*Mary Anna Paul:* St. Stephens Avenue so it was the corner of St. Stephens and I believe its Florida Grove Road.

*Brenda Velasco:* Do you recall the house number on St. Stephens that you lived?

*Mary Anna Paul:* 101.

*Brenda Velasco:* You have a good memory. Okay, let's go down to Question #4.

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

*Mary Anna Paul:* The most obvious is that we lost a whole street to the building of 287. Coopernick Avenue disappeared so all those people were located.

*Brenda Velasco:* So they were compensated for their homes?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Yes, since it was purchased by the state.

*Brenda Velasco:* Because you lost a lot of homes in that area.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Probably about twelve to fifteen.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, so you lost homes and you even lost streets.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Because you also had other construction going on there with the Parkway eventually, too. So Keasbey was carved up.

*Mary Anna Paul:* It certainly was.

*Brenda Velasco:* Because it wasn't just 287/Rt.440 it was.....

*Mary Anna Paul:* Well, you had the Garden State Parkway coming through, you had bridges being built, the arsenal being rehabilitated into Raritan Center, Keasbey was

involved with part of the arsenal, some property was made into chemical dumps and the other was just refuse from the community; it was dumped in Keasbey also.

*Brenda Velasco:* And I know we have our Public Works garage right now located in Keasbey.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* But prior to that you also had one of the brick manufacturers located there.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Well you had **General Ceramics** and **Carborundum**. **General Ceramics** was involved with computer work, memory cores they made, which would be added into computers. I'm not exactly sure what **Carborundum** did. (Formerly Raritan Hollow and Porous Brick Company; it was a refractory manufacturing plant)

*Brenda Velasco:* But it was industry.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Yes, they were two of the biggest employers in the area at the time. We also had a sewage department in Keasbey which is still there and don't forget the railroad.

*Brenda Velasco:* Alright, so this was heavy industry with residential homes at one time.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, so we've seen the streets. Is your house still existing?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, your house is one of those.

*Mary Anna Paul:* One of those. I'll have to tell you my great grandparents built that house. It was originally a one floor wooden building and then they decided they needed more room so they lifted the wooden structure up and built a cement building underneath of it. I have no idea how they did that. They also had another building in the back, a small building, which I suspect at one time they only cooked in.

*Brenda Velasco:* That still exists, too?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* How about stores? Did you have stores?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Oh, sure we did. Right on the corner was **Wagonhoffer's** store.

*Brenda Velasco:* And what did they sell?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Well, they sold canned goods, fruits and vegetables and fresh meats. They had the biggest freezer I ever saw with a glass window and a door. I never forgot that and a big metallic door that they would pull open: big handle.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, what were some of the other stores that you had?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Well there was **Mitoses Meat Market** which was down in the loop section of Keasbey. Of course I wasn't in that section so we didn't shop there quite as often as we did at **Wagenhoffer's**. My father used to tell me that when he was very young he would go there, he only spoke Slovak until he was four years old, and get something for his grandmother from **Wagenhoffer's**. He said thank God they understood Slovak.

*Brenda Velasco:* So that was at **Wagenhoffer's**.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay.

*Mary Anna Paul:* And they had **Fees**.

*Brenda Velasco:* And what was **Fees**? That was a general store?

*Mary Anna Paul:* It was a small store and it also served sandwiches. You could get something to eat and some soda. I don't remember if there was ice cream. I know there was candy.

*Brenda Velasco:* It was like a candy store then?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Yeah.

*Brenda Velasco:* And how far was that from your house then?

*Mary Anna Paul:* They built a sidewalk that went around a giant clay pit that was in Keasbey and it went along Florida Grove Road. If you went direct it was probably a quarter of a mile but going around the circle to go around the clay pit, which they later dumped chemicals in, is probably about a half of mile.

*Brenda Velasco:* But you could get candy there.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Oh, yeah. And just up the street even closer, right on the border of Keasbey and Fords was **Mezzo's**. They also had a great freezer with meats and canned goods.

*Brenda Velasco:* They had a lot of meat stores there.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Yes, fresh meat. Good quality.

*Brenda Velasco:* And all of this is gone now.

*Mary Anna Paul:* All of its gone and all the people who owned the stores were also butchers. Everybody knew how to carve meat because they didn't get it carved that got the whole.....

*Brenda Velasco:* They got the hanging carcass probably right from the railroads coming in or the trucks because they weren't too far from Route 35 at all.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Not at all.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, did you have houses of worship there?

*Mary Anna Paul:* There was one house of worship near **Fee's** store but it already gone out of commission by the time I came around. That was the only one I remembered. Most of us either went to Our Lady of Peace in Fords or St. Michael's Byzantine in Perth Amboy.

*Brenda Velasco:* And how did you get there then walk or.....

*Mary Anna Paul:* The walk to Fords was no problem. You'd get an early start and it was only about a mile and a half or two miles. But to Perth Amboy usually somebody in the neighborhood had a car or took a bus.

*Brenda Velasco:* How about the schools?

*Mary Anna Paul:* We had Keasbey School #8 right across from **Fee's** store and right next to the firehouse, Keasbey Fire Department #1.

*Brenda Velasco:* And what grades did you go there?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Originally it was to eighth grade.

*Brenda Velasco:* K through 8 then.

*Mary Anna Paul:* K through 8 and then later on we had the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> so it went to 6<sup>th</sup>.

*Brenda Velasco:* Did you go K through 8 there?

*Mary Anna Paul:* No, I went through sixth grade there.

*Brenda Velasco:* Then where did you go to middle school?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Middle school was Barron Avenue, the old high school.

*Brenda Velasco:* And then from there.....

*Mary Anna Paul:* The new Woodbridge High School.

*Brenda Velasco:* Oh, okay, what class were you in?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Class of '63.

*Brenda Velasco:* Did you walk to elementary school?

*Mary Anna Paul:* I walked to Keasbey School and we took a school bus to Barron Avenue and to the high school.

*Brenda Velasco:* Do you remember any of your teachers or your principal at Keasbey School?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Oh yes. The principal was Miss Whitney Burke. My kindergarten teacher was Mrs. Spiatta. I always used to get in trouble. I didn't like taking naps.

*Brenda Velasco:* You were too active. So do you remember other teachers, too?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Oh sure.....no I guess we'll have to come back on that.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, but we had two teachers there and were your classes large?

*Mary Anna Paul:* I would say for that time they were. We ran more than twenty sometimes in a class so that was a pretty good size.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay and this was all coming just from Keasbey?

*Mary Anna Paul:* For a long time it was Keasbey and then later on Crestview Terrace was built in Fords so we got people from Fords.

*Brenda Velasco:* And Crestview Terrace was off Florida Grove.....

*Mary Anna Paul:* Liberty.

*Brenda Velasco:* Liberty, okay gotcha. Alright, so those were nice sized classes which meant you had a nice pool of population which has since dispersed because.....

*Mary Anna Paul:* Gone.

*Brenda Velasco:* It's gone.

*Mary Anna Paul:* It's gone. We almost all knew each other, too. The families were connected by being members of the fire department or meeting each other in the stores or going to similar churches or going to the parades.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay we're going to talk about some of these topics you just brought up. That gets us to Question #5 unless you have anything to add to Question #4.

*Mary Anna Paul:* No.

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

*Brenda Velasco:* Did you have a post office in Keasbey?

*Mary Anna Paul:* We had a post office that was eliminated, then we had a second post office and now we got a third post office in Keasbey.

*Brenda Velasco:* Where was the original post office?

*Mary Anna Paul:* The original was near **Carborundum**. I can't remember the name of the street. It was down the street next to **Fees**.

*Brenda Velasco:* Next to **Fees**?

*Mary Anna Paul:* It was the road next to **Fees** that you went down the street to the post office.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, **Fees** plays a prominent role and I think a Fee was a principal of a school in Hopelawn.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Yes I believe it was.

*Brenda Velasco:* Mrs. Fee.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Yes I believe it was and the Witneybergs were related to the Fees, too somehow.

*Brenda Velasco:* Oh! Did you have any library?

*Mary Anna Paul:* No.

*Brenda Velasco:* No library, okay. How about parks, did you have any parks?

*Mary Anna Paul:* There was a park down in Keasbey Heights. It didn't amount to very much. It was a little grass and maybe a swing. It was rather small.

*Brenda Velasco:* When you say Keasbey Heights where was that in location.....

*Mary Anna Paul:* Keasbey Heights was closest to Perth Amboy and then you had Keasbey Loop which was under the loop area of the bridges, the Edison Bridge and later on the Parkway Bridge and my section they just called Keasbey.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, you were just plain old Keasbey.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Plain old Keasbey.

*Brenda Velasco:* Were you close to the park then?

*Mary Anna Paul:* No, I could never walk to that park. Nobody would let us walk that far.

*Brenda Velasco:* How about the firehouse?

*Mary Anna Paul:* The firehouse was the hub of the community. They had dances and the most memorable Memorial Day parade. The parade would start at 7:00 A.M. and draw the politicians' right in. That would begin their day on that day and then after the parade they would have a breakfast at the firehouse.

*Brenda Velasco:* So this was quite a gathering place then.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Oh, a big thing. Then of course there were all the other parades- locally usually in Fords- that the fire department participated in. The fire department also sponsored a picnic.

*Brenda Velasco:* Keasbey Fire Department?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Keasbey Fire Department.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, that was during the summer obviously.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* And they hosted it right at the firehouse?

*Mary Anna Paul:* And dances in the school auditorium.

*Brenda Velasco:* So they were quite active.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Yes, they were and it was a large fire department.

*Brenda Velasco:* Because you not only had the residencies but you also had the industry.

*Mary Anna Paul:* The original Keasbey Fire Department was destroyed by fire and that was when they had a horse and fire engine. Then the second one was also damaged by an electrical fire which led to the brand new one they have now.

*Brenda Velasco:* Were they all in the same location?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Yes, between what used to be Smith Street and the clay pit behind them.

*Brenda Velasco:* And you know what, it's rather ironic that the two times they were destroyed by fire.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Well the second time they weren't destroyed by it but they were seriously damaged. Because I remember the firemen took responsibility for holding fire department property in their homes until the place was built. Awards, trophies, pictures and things like that were temporarily stored at the firemen's houses until the fire department was repaired.

*Brenda Velasco:* Was anybody in your family a fireman?

*Mary Anna Paul:* My father for over fifty years.

*Brenda Velasco:* Wow!

*Mary Anna Paul:* He was their chief for their fiftieth anniversary and my mother was in the Ladies Auxiliary for probably about forty-eight years. She was their president for more times than I could count.

*Brenda Velasco:* So your family was actively involved.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Actively involved in the community. Okay, do you have anything else to add for Question #5? We've already covered schools.

*Mary Anna Paul:* There was also the **Raritan Arsenal** as part of Keasbey. I don't know if I mentioned that. Occasionally they would find some live ammunition for entertainment. Speaking about live ammunition when we were cleaning out my parent's estate in the garage, my husband found an unusual object which looked remarkably like a bomb. So he pulls it out of the rafters and says to me: Mary Ann, what do you think this is? I said it looks like a bomb to me. He says: yeah it does to me, too. So we called the police and the two policemen who came were too young to identify the object but agreed it looked like a bomb. They called the Army and they came in and they said yes it's a World War I practice bomb which they used to throw out of airplanes. They cordoned off the neighborhood, blocked the traffic and took it away.

*Brenda Velasco:* And it was at that house the whole time?

*Mary Anna Paul:* The rafters of my father's garage.

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

*Mary Anna Paul:* We had the Keasbey Fire Department who had dances and picnics and parades. We had the St. Stephen's Cemetery where they had military funerals that we got to watch first hand. The military people played taps and it didn't seem like much at the time but it was entertainment. Halloween maybe somebody would sit on a tombstone with a sheet over their head and a flashlight in there and somebody would always call the police. There were the railroad tracks. It was not uncommon to see families, a mother or a father walk the tracks because along the sides of the tracks they had like little swampy streams and you could always find pollywogs and frogs. The railroad was also important because it went over the bridge that was over the Parkway. We would go there and watch the cars heading south. We didn't care about the ones going north but the ones heading south.

*Brenda Velasco:* Because that's the shore area.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Yes, so we would sit there for maybe twenty or thirty minutes and just watch the traffic.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, but you had no organized recreation.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Organized recreation: Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts but that was through Our Lady of Peace Church. I was a Brownie and my mother was a Girl Scout leader. Helen Irollo was my Brownie leader. What else did we do? We went to the fields and picked blackberries and ice skated on the ponds.

*Brenda Velasco:* Where were the ponds?

*Mary Anna Paul:* There was one across from Florida Grove Road. It wasn't very big. Some of the deeper ones the families wouldn't let us go on because they were afraid if the ice went through it would be like a bottomless pit.

*Brenda Velasco:* Were those in former clay pit area?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Yes, and there were the clay banks which we regularly roamed. You would find stones that looked like glitter. It was the iron pyrite which was very plentiful and pretty. And trick or treating in those days was a great thing. You would get homemade treats then. One of our favorite places would be the local bars.

*Brenda Velasco:* How many bars did you have in that area?

*Mary Anna Paul:* There were three and I only remember two. Underneath the bridge was **Billy Backs Inn** and then there was the **Loop Inn** which was a little further down. The only other one I remember would be **Dalina's**.

*Brenda Velasco:* On Crows Mill Road?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Crows Mill Road just over the bridge in Fords and one block further down **The Alamo**.

*Brenda Velasco:* Was that a nightclub or just a bar?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Primarily a bar attached to a furniture shop which burnt up one night. That was probably one of the best nights of entertainment around to watch all the liquor bottles floating down the sides of the road in the water used to put out the fire and seeing how many people went to rescue the liquor bottles.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, anything else for Question #6?

*Mary Anna Paul:* The other entertainment would be the **Fords Theatre**. Of course we all know the gentleman who ran that would be Mr. Lang.

*Brenda Velasco:* When did you go? Was it during the week or during the weekend?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Probably mostly on the weekends. During the day for the matinees we could walk up ourselves. In the evening a parent would walk with us.

*Brenda Velasco:* Do you remember the cost of that at all?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Well for a while there were a quarter or thirty-five cents. We're talking early 1950s, '55 maybe.

*Brenda Velasco:* What did you get to see there? Because today's movies it's one show.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Oh, two movies and a cartoon.

### **7. What was the focal point of your community?**

*Mary Anna Paul:* The fire department and the church.

*Brenda Velasco:* And your father was the chief and your mom was in the Ladies Auxiliary; so everything was geared to that. The dances, the picnics and St. Stephen's Church we're talking about or St. Michael's.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Well actually attended Our Lady of Peace and St. Michael's. They were pretty evenly divided.

*Brenda Velasco:* Where did you take your sacraments then?



*Mary Anna Paul:* Our Lady of Peace. But since my mother was one of the few women in town who had a car or our family had a car, sometimes they would alternate churches. If they needed a ride my mother would take her friends to St. Michael's and celebrate the mass with them and sometimes they would come up with us to Our Lady of Peace and celebrate the mass with us.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, so you were between both. One was in Fords and one was in Perth Amboy.

*Mary Anna Paul:* There was also the Hungarian Reformed Church.

*Brenda Velasco:* Where was that?

*Mary Anna Paul:* That was also in Perth Amboy. If I'm not mistaken it was on Kirkland Place. (331 Kirkland, Perth Amboy)

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, do we have anything else for that?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Not that I can think of.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, so what was an average Sunday?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Running behind a mosquito sprayer. Years ago they used to spray the area with DDT and there was this wonderful fog. You would find a lot of children running behind the vehicle sprayer the stuff.

*Brenda Velasco:* This was the township usually, correct?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Yes, little did we know.

*Brenda Velasco:* No, we didn't know about the dangers of DDT and Rachael Carson (author of Silent Spring) wrote about this area in the 1970s. (1962) At that time you were fully aware or you were becoming aware but you were an adult by that time.

*Mary Anna Paul:* The damage was done.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, the damage was done for all of us.

*Mary Anna Paul:* That's why I am like I am.

*Brenda Velasco:* Let's go to Question #8.

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

*Brenda Velasco:* You grew up in Keasbey and from what I'm hearing you have fond memories of Keasbey.

*Mary Anna Paul:* It was a great place to grow up. We didn't have all the amenities but we had each other. Everybody knew everybody and almost everybody's business. We could leave our doors unlocked. The neighbors shared. At holiday time, people would be bringing over cakes and cookies. Other neighbors would share traditional dishes like jellied pig's feet.

*Brenda Velasco:* Was this a Slovak dish?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Slovaks did it and so did the Polacks (Polish).

*Brenda Velasco:* And so did the Italians.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Why waste anything? That was the philosophy. Head cheese had nothing to do with cheese. I don't know how it ever got that name.

*Brenda Velasco:* I don't either. Okay, now let's go to Question #9.

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

*Mary Anna Paul:* They had some wonderful fires.

*Brenda Velasco:* And your dad was involved so you were fully attuned.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Now if it was the dump which was always on fire, always smoldering where the local trash went to, we usually didn't get evacuated. But when the biometric pressure was low, you would have a lot of smoke around. If it was the dump behind the firehouse which had chemicals poured into it, (**Revlon** used to dump their and other chemical corporations used to dump there), we would get evacuated. We would leave until they had control of the fire.

*Brenda Velasco:* Was it because of the .....

*Mary Anna Paul:* Fumes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Fumes, okay.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Fumes more than just smoke. I think they were trying to tell us they didn't know what they dumped in there.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yeah and the danger, at least they realized the danger, Mary Ann, that was important. Okay, so you were attuned to a lot of the fires as you were growing up.

*Mary Anna Paul:* We also had snow in July.

*Brenda Velasco:* When was that?

*Mary Anna Paul:* The year **Hatco** erupted. There was a chemical vat and **Hatco** erupted and here comes the snow coming down in July.

*Brenda Velasco:* Wow! Did you recall the year at all?

*Mary Anna Paul:* No, I must have been in grade school so it had to be in the '50s.

*Brenda Velasco:* From '45 to early '50s. And your Dad, I'm sure, went to that fire.

*Mary Anna Paul:* I'm sure they did.

*Brenda Velasco:* Anything else? Any construction?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Construction would have been 287 and the Parkway.

*Brenda Velasco:* Were you still living there when you saw all the homes being bought up then? Were you aware of that?

*Mary Anna Paul:* You mean when we lost Coopernick Avenue?

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Did your mom lose some of her friends there?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* How about sports or anything?

*Mary Anna Paul:* I personally didn't get involved but I know there was a weightlifting program up in Keasbey Heights across from **Ratz's Garage** which I think now is **Weldon Cement (Concrete Co.)** or something like that. I understand we had a world champion there but I don't remember his name. Barbara would know his name. (Steve Stanko)

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, yeah, and I had interviewed Barbara Estok (Interview #76).

*Mary Anna Paul:* Her dad was involved with that program.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, riots or anything?

*Mary Anna Paul:* No riots.

*Brenda Velasco:* Discrimination, we had a conversation prior to this and you continue it then okay.

*Mary Anna Paul:* There were always people of one ethnic group who didn't really discriminate but were wary of or maybe didn't always trust. Sometimes Hungarians didn't always trust other people who weren't Hungarian. Sometimes people who

weren't Hungarian didn't always trust Hungarians. And the newest group for prejudice would have been the Puerto Ricans who came in. Actually they were the only group that didn't speak a language either of them could understand because most of the people could understand a little of Hungarian and the Hungarians could understand a little of Polish and the Slovaks were Austria Hungarian so they could speak a little bit or understand a little bit. But when the Hispanic people came, especially the Puerto Ricans (it wasn't Hispanic it was Puerto Ricans), they didn't speak a language that anybody could understand.

*Brenda Velasco:* So language was a barrier.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Language was a barrier and language was probably what made people suspicious.

*Brenda Velasco:* Not at ease because they couldn't understand.

*Mary Anna Paul:* And they looked a little different, different hairstyle, different clothes styles and different eating habits.

*Brenda Velasco:* Even though many were Catholic, it was a different culture. Okay, you also mentioned that blacks lived in Keasbey.

*Mary Anna Paul:* We had at least one family of blacks that I was familiar with. They were our neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Young. I don't remember their first names. I was always trained to call people by their last name, Mr. or Mrs. I would never walk up to an adult and say: hey, Anna how are you? That wasn't acceptable by my family. But they had three sons and they were our closest neighbors on one side and we really became very close friends. We exchanged different foods. Mrs. Young made an excellent fried chicken. My mother shared her stuffed cabbages and baked goods with Mrs. Young and their family and we just generally enjoyed each other.

*Brenda Velasco:* And they went to the public schools, too?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Yes.

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

*Brenda Velasco:* You're still in Woodbridge; when did you leave Keasbey?

*Mary Anna Paul:* 1969.

*Brenda Velasco:* 1969 you leave Keasbey and why did you leave Keasbey?

*Mary Anna Paul:* I got married.

*Brenda Velasco:* And then you moved to.....

*Mary Anna Paul:* Woodbridge.

*Brenda Velasco:* Woodbridge, alright.

*Mary Anna Paul:* South Park Drive, by the lake.

*Brenda Velasco:* Oh, beautiful.

*Mary Anna Paul:* It was. It was a little group of apartments.

*Brenda Velasco:* And now you live in Iselin.

*Mary Anna Paul:* I live in Iselin. We moved to Iselin in '72. I got to tell you we moved because the rent was so outrageous. It got up to a hundred twenty dollars a month.

*Brenda Velasco:* And then you bought your own house in Iselin.

*Mary Anna Paul:* We're not going to spend money wasting on something we could never own ourselves.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, if we count rents today. What did you pay for your house in Iselin, do you remember?

*Mary Anna Paul:* Yes, \$29,900.00.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, under thirty thousand dollars.

*Mary Anna Paul:* No wait a second I'm sorry, it was \$39,900.00.

*Brenda Velasco:* \$39,900.00.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Because we were concerned our friends were getting houses for fifty-five thousand and our philosophy had always been if one of us got sick and couldn't work the other would have to have a salary that could pay for our expenses. We were lucky we got a twenty-five year mortgage. That wasn't very common then. Most people were getting thirty year mortgages. We put eleven thousand dollars down and had an outrageous mortgage of probably about a hundred and twenty dollars a month. That included taxes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Wow!

*Mary Anna Paul:* And then it gradually went up but it never got over four hundred dollars a month.

*Brenda Velasco:* You bought at a good time then. Do you realize that?

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

*Mary Anna Paul:* No, I'm pretty much the last of my line except for my son but he's been injured and he's not going to be able to live on his own.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, he's down in Long Branch, right?

*Mary Anna Paul:* He's down in Long Branch right now.

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

*Mary Anna Paul:* I'm looking for a picture of a house on the corner of New Brunswick Avenue and Florida Grove Road. It's an old Victorian house. It's no longer there and the property now has a gas station on it. It belonged to Steve and Claire Mehok.

*Brenda Velasco:* Well as you know November 10<sup>th</sup> you are going to have a bunch of people hitting Fords Library for the historic preservation to bring in photos of some of the older areas, old pictures of Fords, Keasbey and Hopelawn. Somebody may bring that in.

*Mary Anna Paul:* I'm going to be there looking for it.

*Brenda Velasco:* Good and you check your attic.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Yes, I'm going to check my attic because things were discussed.

*Brenda Velasco:* It'll be a fascinating, few hours of sharing.

*Mary Anna Paul:* That was one of the first times in my lifetime that I could relate to the word indentured servant relating to my great grandmother.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, your great grandmother. Mary Mehok was an indentured servant. As I told you before we started the interview the library just purchased, thanks to Friends of the Library, this certificate of indenturization by a resident of Woodbridge going back to about 1796.

*Mary Anna Paul:* This is about a loan for property that she had purchased. My understanding was that she would be an indentured servant until it was paid.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, and she managed to pay it off.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* They knew how to make money then and save money.

*Mary Anna Paul:* And raise a lot of chickens.

*Brenda Velasco:* Raise a lot of chickens.

*Mary Anna Paul:* Made a lot of eggs.

*Brenda Velasco:* Always a need for that isn't there?

*Mary Anna Paul:* A nutritious meal.

*Brenda Velasco:* And requires little space, too, not like cattle. That's it then. I thank you very much Mary Ann. That's it, we conclude for the day.