

**Oral History Interview**  
**Mary Tomko and Emery Tarci**  
**WH005**

(written transcript and digital audio)

Mary and Emery were originally interviewed on May 7, 2008 at the Evergreen Center but because of technical difficulties they were interviewed a second time on May 21, 2010 at the Evergreen Center.

In the first interview at Evergreen, Mary and Emery Tarci were interviewed by Brenda Velasco and students in the Gifted and Talented Program: Julia Chavarry, Michelle Rudowsky, Anika Alam, Nazar Bedi, Samatha Mocciaro, Mallory Nathan. In the audience were Vincent Soccodatto (supervisor), Glen Lottman (G&T Program) as well as Dan D'Arcy, local historian of Colonia.

On Friday, May 21, 2010, Mary and Emery Tarci were interviewed at the Evergreen by Brenda Velasco. Participating in the interview were students from the Gifted and Talented Program: Samantha Czapik, Colonia (CMS); Madison Kaye, Colonia (CMS) and Julian Palermo, Colonia (CMS). Nancy Paugh, supervisor of the Gifted and Talented Program, also was present.

*Brenda Velasco:* Alright, Julian we're going to start off with you. You are going to ask the first question and then Mary will answer and then Emery will answer. Then after that Madison and Samantha you're the third and that's how we'll go; we'll do round robin. Then if you want to follow up with any questions you go right ahead. Okay, Julian you're on.

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

*Mary Tarci:* My name is Mrs. Mary Tarci.

*Julian:* And what is your maiden name.

*Mary Tarci:* Mary Tomko.

*Julian:* Where is the section that you live in?

*Mary Tarci:* I lived in Woodbridge Proper on Metuchen Avenue. It's right where the center is. If you walk in the center you see a ways out and you see Metuchen Avenue over one door.

*Julian:* And your date of birth.

*Mary Tarci:* October 26, 1935.

*Brenda Velasco:* Now Julian you have to get to her other half.

*Julian:* Your name and section.

*Emery Tarci:* My name is Emery Tarci.

*Julian:* What section of Woodbridge do you live?

*Emery Tarci:* Well, Woodbridge Proper.

*Julian:* And what is your date of birth?

*Emery Tarci:* 10/23/26.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, so you married a spring chick here.

*Emery Tarci:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Wow! Okay Madison we're up to you.

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

*Mary Tarci:* My mother had six children and they were all born in the same house; that same house that's still there now. They rushed my mother to the hospital since she had six children already and I was born in the hospital and brought right back home to that house, 213 Metuchen Avenue, Woodbridge, New Jersey.

*Brenda Velasco:* So you've always lived in Woodbridge?

*Mary Tarci:* Always; my whole life. We lived on Second Street after we got married and then we built our own house in Avenel.

*Brenda Velasco:* So that's about.....

*Mary Tarci:* Seventy-four and a half years.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, you're going to be seventy-five then.

*Mary Tarci:* Yes, in October.

*Brenda Velasco:* Wow, okay, Madison, the other half.

*Madison Kay:* How long have you lived in Woodbridge?

*Emery Tarci:* About seventy years.

*Mary Tarci:* Can I explain?

*Brenda Velasco:* Sure.

*Mary Tarci:* He was born in.....

*Emery Tarci:* I was born in Perth Amboy.

*Mary Tarci:* Perth Amboy but his mother took him back to Europe when he was three years old and he was raised.....

*Emery Tarci:* 1935.

*Mary Tarci:* He was raised there.

*Emery Tarci:* And I came back in 1947.

*Brenda Velasco:* I'm interested, when you went to Europe where did you return to then?

*Emery Tarci:* My father worked for the Austrian Hungarian Embassy. He was a captain there and you see when they moved in 1935, we moved. We went to England. I have one sister who was born in England..... My mother was a dancer in Europe at one time.

*Brenda Velasco:* So she was a dancer.

*Emery Tarci:* Yes.

*Mary Tarci:* And we dance.

*Brenda Velasco:* I know you both dance. These are dancers; they're dancing all the time. So that's genetic; it's genetic the dancing. Alright, so then you were in England.

*Emery Tarci:* We went all around you know. In the old times in Hungary, in 1918, you see quite a few places from the Embassy so my father went there where they started the Embassy. So you see in 1935 we went and I came back in 1947 because I didn't want to give up my citizenship. In Europe, I have to register every year, not like here you know. They used to pick me up any time when my father was rich.

*Brenda Velasco:* Oh, so you had to pay.

*Emery Tarci:* Oh, yes. My father had one thousand two hundred and thirty acres.

*Mary Tarci:* We were there for twenty-one days.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, we're going to come back to this because that's a fascinating story. Samantha, you're question Number 3.

*Samantha Kapik:* Before I ask them a question I was wondering how you guys met?

*Mary Tarci:* They used to have picnics like in Fords; there was Varady's Grove and Pfeiffer's Grove. We met at a picnic at a Hungarian dance. They played the cimbalom. My parents were Hungarian and they raised us Hungarian. My father was born in Europe in Nagymanyok in Hungary and my mother was born in New York.

*Brenda Velasco:* That was upstate New York then but your father was born in Hungary.

*Mary Tarci:* Yes, he came here when he was three years old and they lived in Strawberry Hill.

*Brenda Velasco:* Oh my goodness!

*Mary Tarci:* And they were the first people to get married in Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in 1922. That's where we were married.

*Brenda Velasco:* Good question Samantha. Okay, now we're going to go to question number 3.

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

*Mary Tarci:* That's where my parents were. My grandmother worked for the priest and when she could no longer do that I guess they migrated to Woodbridge. Then my mother and grandmother moved to Strawberry Hill and she married my father.

*Brenda Velasco:* Which parish?

*Mary Tarci:* Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, that was the priest.

*Mary Tarci:* Yes, Father, oh what was his name? I knew him good and he knew my older brother very well. My older brother he passed away.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay.

*Samantha Czapik:* Mr. Tarci why did you or your family move to Woodbridge?

*Emery Tarci:* When I came back my family stayed in Europe. They were too old to come here.

*Brenda Velasco:* Why did you come back because you didn't know your wife yet?

*Emery Tarci:* When I came back I came back because I didn't want to give my citizenship up. At that time the Russians were over there, the Russian citizens.

*Mary Tarci:* His brother was in Siberia.

*Brenda Velasco:* Alright, so you were coming for political freedom?

*Emery Tarci:* No, I just came back as an American.

*Brenda Velasco:* Alright, you were an American citizen and you wanted to come back to America.

*Emery Tarci:* I lived with the visa and each time you had to renew the visa they stamped it.

*Brenda Velasco:* If you were an American in Hungary with the Russians taking over at that time, this is the Cold War we're talking about, you would not have had such good experiences.

*Emery Tarci:* No.

*Brenda Velasco:* No, right.

*Mary Tarci:* His brother was in Siberia because he didn't want to join the Russian Army.

*Emery Tarci:* My brother went on vacation and the Hungarians fought over there with the Russians. He had to dress up and they gave him back to the Embassy. It's not so easy like here.

*Brenda Velasco:* Let's go on. Julian you're next.

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

*Mary Tarci:* Oh my goodness, many changes. Like I say Woodbridge Center wasn't here. All we had was a little store that we walked through the woods and they only had a little tiny meat counter like that maybe with beef and pork and you know there were no big businesses or nothing. In Perth Amboy, it was pretty big. We would go there and buy clothing and in those stores when you didn't have any money they took out a little like cardboard book and they put your name down and you paid when you could. You didn't have to have a credit card or nothing like that. They would just put your name down, like my mother Mrs. Tomko she owes fifty dollars. That's how we got our clothes to go to school. They trusted you. And then my mother went back, we went on the bus, the bus stopped in front of St. James Church, and she would pay the bill after my father got paid. There were no big stores like today; nothing like that. That was the stores that was, that was a change, and there was a bus. You could get on a lot of buses. There were buses going to Newark. My girlfriend and I used to get on a bus in front of what used to be **Jackson's Drug Store** on the corner where that flower shop is now (**Floral Expressions**). We would get on a bus and go to Newark and it was beautiful. The dresses were two or three dollars. We would shop for dresses. We were in high school. My mother would give us a couple of bucks and we went and St. James Church was just a very small church. There was green siding on it and then they built a bigger church. There was a bank on Main Street, a small bank with a big clock in front of it. We used to go to the bank. There were a lot of changes. When my husband first came, there was a trolley car on Main Street too and trolley tracks.

*Emery Tarci:* It went from Newark all the way down to Brunswick.

*Mary Tarci:* And there was a fire department, a small fire department, and my brother was a paid fireman.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, there was a paid fire department in Woodbridge.

*Mary Tarci:* Yes there was, definitely, and my other brother worked for the township and my father worked for the township, Road Department.

*Brenda Velasco:* How about the houses on Metuchen Avenue.

*Mary Tarci:* There were only two houses. There was Mrs. Cosnadiak's corner and we were all the way down, you'd pass Route #1 and #9 going over. We used to find her and sit on the edge and watch the traffic when we were kids. That was part of our fun. For fun my father would climb up a tree and tie a heavy rope and put on tire on it. We'd find an old tire in the dump and we'd swing on that tire. We didn't have any recreation centers like you have now, Community Center, nothing like that.

*Emery Tarci:* No television.

*Mary Tarci:* No television.

*Emery Tarci:* Just only a radio.

*Mary Tarci:* Just a big, big radio.

*Emery Tarci:* Or a record player.

*Mary Tarci:* We used to hover around it and listen to *The Shadow*. My road, at that time, was just a mud and dirt road.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, so it wasn't a paved road?

*Mary Tarci:* No way.

*Brenda Velasco:* Did you have sidewalks then?

*Mary Tarci:* Never, I used to put old rubber boots on and at the corner we'd get to the end of Metuchen Avenue and I'd hide them behind the bush because nobody had muddy shoes but us and then I'd walk to St. James Church. We had no paved roads either. You kids have it good today.

*Brenda Velasco:* Different. Okay, anything else we can ask? Julian this was your question. Did they cover everything in Question #4?

*Julian:* Yes, I think so.

*Brenda Velasco:* Schools, Julian.

*Julian:* What schools.....

*Mary Tarci:* Well we had St. James School. It looks almost the same. I went to St. James School and we had all nuns. Do you know what nuns are? Do they know what nuns are?

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, we still have a few.

*Mary Tarci:* Okay, we had all nuns.

*Brenda Velasco:* So you attended St. James?

*Mary Tarci:* Oh yes, all my family did. My whole family went to St. James and St. James Church. We're all Roman Catholic.

*John Eberhardt:* Hi!

*Brenda Velasco:* That was John Eberhardt that just came in. He's the Director of Recreation. Thank you, John.

*Mary Tarci:* He makes soup for us sometimes.

*John Eberhardt:* It's here today.

*Mary Tarci:* Oh, okay. Save me some.

*Brenda Velasco:* You've got a nice lunch then people if you like soup.

*Student:* Cool.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, so you went to St. James School?

*Mary Tarci:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Did they have kindergarten back then?

*Mary Tarci:* No, we started in first grade and I was seven years old when we started.

*Brenda Velasco:* Wow!

*Mary Tarsi:* We didn't have to go until then and I didn't even like going then. I missed my mom.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, and then you went to eighth grade there.

*Mary Tarsi:* Yes, I graduated eighth grade in the church, we had graduation in St. James Church and I won five dollars for the highest mark in mathematics. I still got the five dollars. That was our big winnings, five dollars. That was a lot of money. I wouldn't dare spend it. I just looked at it once in a while because I never saw five dollars.

*Emery Tarci:* Even in the '50s when you buy a *Tastykake* it used to be very popular. The big ones like that, four of them, were three cents.

*Brenda Velasco:* Oh boy!

*Emery Tarci:* Four of them for three cents.

*Brenda Velasco:* Not today.

*Emery Tarci:* You could have chocolate and everyone was filled up; chocolate or whatever.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, so you had *Tastykake* back then?

*Emery Tarci:* Oh, yes.

*Madison:* Today they would be like a dollar each.

*Emery Tarci:* They were very tasty.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, Madison how much are they now?

*Madison:* Like a dollar or a dollar and fifty cents.

*Brenda Velasco:* Wow!

*Emery Tarci:* I used to take them just for lunch.

*Brenda Velasco:* That was a good lunch.

*Mary Tarci:* Oh, I almost forgot about **BJ's** that's another big change.

*Brenda Velasco:* Right, discount houses like **BJ's**.

*Mary Tarci:* You have to pay the dues for **BJ's** don't you?

*Student:* Yes.

*Mary Tarci:* Yes, you have to pay to belong. If you don't belong you're not getting that for that price.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, let's go to the other half now, Mr. Tarsi, for Question #4.

*Julian:* What physical changes have you seen over the years?

*Emery Tarci:* Well, when I came back here there was horse and buggy. Do you know what the horse and buggy did? In Woodbridge, too, you know where (inaudible) where the restaurant is now there used to be a stable over there. You could rent a horse there and ride the horse.

*Brenda Velasco:* Is that on Route #9?

*Mary Tarci:* No, that was like on Main Street.

*Emery Tarci:* Main Street over there next to U.S. Route #1. There was a restaurant there and where you could get the propane gas; across the street. It used to be a stable.

*Mary Tarci:* It was upper Main Street.

*Brenda Velasco:* Oh, it was upper Main Street across from the lanes, the bowling lanes.

*Mary Tarci:* There were no bowling lanes there it was all woods and there were beautiful blackberries. We picked blackberries, my mother cooked them and we ate them. We ate them right off the bush. There was no pollution because there were no factories, no big industries until later on.

*Brenda Velasco:* Where you lived.

*Mary Tarci:* Where I lived.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes.

*Emery Tarci:* Well Main Street only had a road and had a sidewalk but you see it didn't have sewer or water. There used to be a flood where the parking lot is now across the street from the Town Hall. You see there was a big ditch over there.

When heavy rain would come, it used to get all flooded and everything. You can't even go.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, this is all the spill-over from Heards Creek.

*Emery Tarci:* If you go down Rahway Avenue when there was heavy rain it was always flooded.

*Brenda Velasco:* That has improved.

*Emery Tarci:* Yes, going to Perth Amboy too there's always floods where the Girl's Vocational School is.

*Emery Tarci:* I remember when I was young and we lived in Amboy at that time and my father went to Carteret and he had an old Buick and you know the road he slid off from the side and needed a horse to pull him out.

*Brenda Velasco:* So you still had the horses around then.

*Emery Tarci:* Yes, in those days yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay.

*Student:* Had there had been changes from like when you left to go to Europe and then when you came back?

*Emery Tarci:* Yes, a lot of changes because wartime they fixed it all up.

*Mary Tarci:* My father worked for the WPA.

*Brenda Velasco:* As a result of the Depression.....

*Mary Tarci:* Exactly, yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* You had.....

*Mary Tarci:* My father worked for eight dollars a week.

*Brenda Velasco:* Wow!

*Mary Tarci:* Yes, eight dollars a week and he gave my mother six.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, this was during the 1930s with the Depression.

*Mary Tarci:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* And by that time you had left, Mr. Tarci, you'd gone back to Europe so Mary you were here.

*Mary Tarci:* During the Depression my father and mother remember people jumping out of houses because they lost everything. On Main Street they were jumping out to kill themselves. They lost all their money; all their belongings. They lost their house. It was very, very hard times then and we were lucky that we had chickens and we grew our own chickens. Where my niece has her house now, on the same property, we had a big garden. We grew our own vegetables, our corn and our string beans. We had peach trees and we had pear trees. We lived off the land. We didn't have to go to the store. We didn't have money anyway.

*Brenda Velasco:* So that's what got you through the Depression.

*Mary Tarci:* Yes, definitely.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, Madison I think we're going to go to Question #5.

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

*Mary Tarci:* There was Woodbridge Park. My nephew used to skate on the ice there, ice skate, and there was a post office, not like today but it was a small post office.

*Brenda Velasco:* Where was it located, on Main Street still?

*Mary Tarci:* Yes it was on Main Street and the houses, like I said, on Metuchen Avenue it was only Mrs. Tusnotti all the way up the corner then it was us and then it was the **Maple Home Dairy Farm**. My father worked there some time. He would bring home the milk in the big pitchers right from the cow, the big silver cans for us because there were eleven of us.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, the **Maple Home Dairy Farm** was on Woodbridge Center Drive across from Woodbridge Center.

*Emery Tarci:* Next to the cemetery.

*Brenda Velasco:* Next to the cemetery.

*Mary Tarci:* You know now my niece works for Mount Lebanon for twelve years now.

*Emery Tarci:* You know at that time the cemetery was big because they cut from U.S. #1 and they took a lot of land and they sold something for a cemetery.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, at that time going back to the early twentieth century Jews couldn't be buried in the property for the cemeteries in the major cities so that's way they chose the suburbs. Okay, so anything else Madison there?

*Emery Tarci:* The hospital, Perth Amboy Hospital, was very, very small. It was like a one little house and now look at- it it's half of Perth Amboy.

*Brenda Velasco:* How about the library?

*Mary Tarci:* I don't think we had a library there. It was all the way down on Barron Avenue.

*Brenda Velasco:* The Barron Cultural Arts Center.

*Mary Tarci:* Right.

*Brenda Velasco:* That's what we were looking at before.

*Mary Tarci:* And I went to school, high school there. I didn't go to St. Mary's; my sister did. I went to Woodbridge High all the way down on Barron Avenue. I walked from Metuchen Avenue where the center is all the way down even in the dark.

*Emery Tarci:* There were no buses.

*Mary Tarci:* There were no school buses, everybody hiked and we were all happy.

*Brenda Velasco:* What was your year of graduation?

*Mary Tarci:* 1954 I graduated. I got married in 1955.

*Brenda Velasco:* And Emery your education was in New York so we're not going to concentrate on that, we're concentrating on you Mary. Alright, so Madison let's look at that Question #5. We did the post office.

*Madison:* Firehouse.

*Mary Tarci:* Firehouse, the parks, the firehouse, the schools that's what I remember. There was one public school. We didn't have a lot of public schools. Oh, in our high school we had two sessions when I went in the morning and in the afternoon. I went in the morning because I worked. I worked a whole four years in high school. First I sold tickets in that movie, I sold candy in that little movie that was there. Then when I was a senior they gave me a job in **Gerber Plumbing** and I worked there; I wrote out payroll checks with pen and ink. We had a little tiny adding and subtracting machine because I was so good in math but then after that I got married and my husband got sick. Then I worked for **RCA**. There was a big **RCA**. Do you know where **K Mart** is? (Avenel)



*Student:* Yes.

*Mary Tarci:* Oh, it was enormous. We had thousands of people working there and I worked there until they closed down on November 18th, 1974.

*Brenda Velasco:* A lot of people were laid off.

*Mary Tarci:* Yes, before me. I was one of the last ones because I worked there for so long. I was there until the last day.

*Brenda Velasco:* That was a big employer.

*Mary Tarci:* Oh, you better believe it and we used to put the glass, I don't know if you know what a tube was, the tubes that went in the TV?

*Brenda Velasco:* Quite different.

*Mary Tarci:* Yes, but the girls that used to put that on Benson burners and they would be passing out during the day; then they had to send them home and they would close that section down of the factory. But thank God where I worked I was an inspector. I inspected the tubes and they had a few windows and they would open the windows so I never went, I stayed.

*Emery Tarci:* No air conditioning.

*Mary Tarci:* That's why my eyes are bad. I looked through a microscope with a tweezer to inspect those tubes for the TV. Well, we got our TVs cheaper because I worked there.

*Brenda Velasco:* Well that was good. You got a discount on the TVs.

*Mary Tarci:* And radios.

*Emery Tarci:* We still have them.

*Brenda Velasco:* Black and white though.

*Mary Tarci:* Yes, and the other ones.

*Emery Tarci:* We have the cable hooked up to the one that's still working.

*Mary Tarci:* A colored one though we have.

*Brenda Velasco:* Oh!

*Emery Tarci:* The first colored one.

*Mary Tarci:* On an antenna. We only had that because they were changing over so we bought those boxes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, but they're big.

*Mary Tarci:* But they're no good not for us anyway. You have to have a good antenna or else you don't get good reception.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, you're the TV lady. Alright, Madison, did we cover that question then?

*Madison:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, then we'll go to Question #6 Samantha.

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

*Mary Tarci:* Like I said, my father would hang the big rope up, a strong rope, and tie an old tire he found somewhere and we would swing on that tire. Then we had a brook, we still have a brook, do you know where Lowe's is? There's a brook there. We would catch bullfrogs. We had so much fun catching bullfrogs. We didn't hurt them we just saw them and we would get warts from them.

*Student:* That was cool.

*Mary Tarci:* It was cool; we loved it. And then we played in the woods and of course there were no houses. My brother played ball there and everything and we didn't even have to leave Metuchen Avenue. There was everything there.

*Emery Tarci:* Big empty field.

*Mary Tarci:* Yes, big empty field. We played ball there and we had races there; we did everything outside. We didn't even have to spend money. Going down Metuchen Avenue you could smell the honeysuckle. Oh it was so beautiful and the aroma. There were no factories there. Mr. Almasi was there and he built the big house. When my older sister got married she lived there, and she had her first children there but they both died. But the big yellow house was up there and they paid rent to Mr. Almasi and he had the trucking company there. Her husband, after he came out of the service, was in Camp Kilmer. He worked for Mr. Almasi driving the company truck and he died still working for him.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, you have to realize the Almasi's in Woodbridge Township are a very old name.

*Mary Tarci:* I went to school with the girls.

*Emery Tarci:* The garbage they used to pick up with horse and buggies.

*Brenda Velasco:* Before the trucking.

*Emery Tarci:* Before the trucking.

*Brenda Velasco:* Did you have a bike at all?

*Mary Tarci:* My brothers would find one that someone threw out and they would repair it and then we all fought to ride it and my older sister got double pneumonia. She almost died so my father borrowed money and bought her a three wheeler. We would want to sit on it and stand on the back but she wouldn't let us. So we used to holler and fight. But he just bought it for her because she was so sick. There were three younger than me and you know how sometimes the kids fight. You don't like people to ride your bike all the time either, right?

*Students:* No.

*Brenda Velasco:* How many kids total?

*Mary Tarci:* There were nine of us and eleven with my mother and father.

*Julian:* When I was in Florida me and my grandparents and their friends were at a different senior center and they had this pool and on the edge there's a foot of water and then there's a ledge and then it goes down. At eight o'clock at night because it's so hot frogs just jump in on the ledge and he used to like catch them.

*Mary Tarci:* Wasn't that fun? That's what we did.

*Brenda Velasco:* That's fun to you. Madison and Samantha, would you want to go swimming with the frogs?

*Julian:* I did but we weren't allowed to so we had to do it when nobody was looking.

*Mary Tarci:* We used to go swimming when it was raining in our underwear. When it would rain the clay pits would fill up; my sister almost drowned there. That's what we did for recreation.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, and the clay pits, once again, was where Woodbridge Center is now so that's where they went swimming.

*Mary Tarci:* It was right by my house.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, okay Julian we're back to you, Question #7.

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

*Mary Tarci:* Well we mostly did church things. You know, the church, and we had stuff there you know when it was Communion and Confirmation and things like that. We had parties in the yard and we all would dress up. I have pictures of that. But, you know, it was trying to earn a living. We didn't do much. We were such a big family. We just stayed in our yard.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, the family was the center.

*Mary Tarci:* Exactly.

*Brenda Velasco:* Family and church back then.

*Mary Tarci:* Go to school; do your homework. I had to hide in the corner to do my homework. My mother needed so much help with the kids. I did my homework though. I did get the best grade in math.

*Brenda Velasco:* That was great.

*Mary Tarci:* I loved to do my homework; I loved to study.

*Emery Tarci:* I was an A student.

*Mary Tarci:* Nobody ever mentioned college to me. I would have went. My mother didn't have any money.

*Brenda Velasco:* Well, you had nine kids.

*Mary Tarci:* I know. The nun took my sister to be a nun but she didn't stay; but that's what they were mostly focused on, you know, the religion.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, who's next?

*Students:* Madison.

*Brenda Velasco:* Madison then.

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

*Mary Tarci:* It was very quiet except when Mr. Almasi had the trucks up and down. But we walked. It was close to the stores. We had **A&P**. I worked in **Woolworth's**, too, you know on Main Street in the toy department. I worked the whole four years in high school because we had no money. I bought my first dress, my first fancy dress, out of my own money. It was quiet in our neighborhood and we all knew the neighbors. I remember Mrs. Carmondy was there and she had a dog and my mother sent me up there with tomatoes and she was supposed to give us honey and the dog bit me. I didn't even go to the doctor. My mother just wrapped it up when I got home. She put Vaseline or something on it that she had at home. I never went up that way again.

*Brenda Velasco:* No, I think that would be a good deterrent; you learn very quickly. And you're still in Woodbridge.

*Mary Tarci:* Oh yes, I live in Avenel, 22 Apollo Avenue in Avenel.

*Emery Tarci:* When you go and live in Woodbridge it just sinks in your blood. Take it or leave it.

*Brenda Velasco:* Well, you came back.

*Emery Tarci:* I live here all my life really. When I came back I never forget it. When I bought a car in 1948, I had a Ford, you know which was jet back, and I went down the street and nobody had a car. Gas was a nickel a gallon.

*Brenda Velasco:* A nickel a gallon?

*Emery Tarci:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* This is in 1948?

*Emery Tarci:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, people do you know what it cost a gallon today?

*Students:* Three dollars.

*Brenda Velasco:* It's almost three dollars. A nickel a gallon? Tell your mom that Julian.

*Mary Tarci:* When we got married we had a 1946 Plymouth with a rumble seat. Do they know what a rumble seat is?

*Julian:* Is it the one that.....

*Mary Tarci:* Yes, in the back it comes down.

*Julian:* Yes.

*Mary Tarci:* Yes, we had a rumble seat in the back and when my husband got sick they had to take him from the back and put him in Perth Amboy Hospital.

*Emery Tarci:* I had blood poisoning.

*Mary Tarci:* Yes, he hit his finger with a hammer and they didn't do nothing.

*Emery Tarci:* I hit that one you see. The doctor, this is a true story, I went on my left arm and the doctor said we have to cut your left arm off. I asked the doctor a simple question and he said, don't worry, I'm a doctor. I said why don't I just fire you? He said you can't fire me and I said what do you think, who's going to pay the bill? So I called Wilentz up.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, the lawyer. (There was also a Dr. Wilentz, Emery's family doctor, but unsure if related to the members of the law firm.)

*Emery Tarci:* I called my factory doctor. Dr. Wilentz come here I have a doctor who wants to cut my arms and he said no problem. He just cut it here and there was a piece of bone I lost here and drained it..... I just soaked it in Epson Salt and a week later it was good. I showed it to them and said you see you didn't have to cut it at all I can bend it.

*Brenda Velasco:* That was a close call.

*Mary Tarci:* Then he got penicillin poisoning. He didn't really know he was allergic. We were home and his tongue started swelling and his face got all red and I'm putting cold compresses on it. I didn't know what to do. And I said to my mother, come with me. She said okay and I took him to the hospital. They had the circle in Perth Amboy and coming back my car started smoking and my mother started yelling, "Mary, the car's on fire".

*Brenda Velasco:* What a day!

*Mary Tarci:* No, it was the hand brake. We had hand brakes and I forgot to put the hand brake down.

*Brenda Velasco:* Oh, and you were driving.

*Mary Tarci:* I was driving sure.

*Emery Tarci:* In those days the rear axle had a brake and she didn't open it.

*Mary Tarci:* Are we talking too much?

*Brenda Velasco:* No, these students just put a key in and the car starts and you put your foot on the brake and that's it. Those cars were more complicated.

*Emery Tarci:* No air conditioning, just the radio.

*Mary Tarci:* No air conditioning and you're lucky if you had a radio. You know most On-Star.....

*Brenda Velasco:* It's just different. That's why we're doing this oral history project.

*Emery Tarci:* No electric, nothing. You shifted on the floor or a stick.

*Brenda Velasco:* It was all manual shifting guys.

*Mary Tarci:* No, we had the floor shift.

*Brenda Velasco:* Oh, you had the floor shift. That was a little bit out of date.

*Emery Tarci:* All the way up to the '60s.

*Julian:* A stick, I want to do that.

*Mary Tarci:* Well, if that's what you get you got to get a manual. That's what I learned on.

*Brenda Velasco:* And that was always easy to stall out when you are learning.

*Mary Tarci:* Oh you better believe it; they're fortunate now.

*Brenda Velasco:* Oh they're fortunate. They'll have no problems driving.

*Mary Tarci:* Do you know what I want to tell you boys and girls? Take pictures when you're young. Take pictures of your town. Take pictures not only of people but of the area because when you get to be a senior like us you have things to look back on. You know you have your memories but you do forget. You know when you're going to be in your seventies you'll see how you forget and the time went so fast before you know it you're a senior and you don't have these pictures that you wish you did.

*Madison:* Yes, my great-grandma she's 92 and she lives with my grandma in Georgia and when we go visit her she always telling us about like where she lived and like when we go out to the movies or something. She'll always say like, oh that's really a high price or something like that.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, but that's a good suggestion.

*Mary Tarci:* Keep her pictures, if she has pictures. Tell your mother to keep her pictures and some of her things. It's so nice to have something when you're young you know.

*Brenda Velasco:* Did she grow up in Georgia?

*Madison:* No she grew up in eastern Tennessee.

*Brenda Velasco:* Oh, okay.

*Mary Tarci:* My older brother lived in Texas for a long time. They were in the Air Force; he married a girl in the Air Force and he was in the Air Force .

*Emery Tarci:* In Laredo.

*Brenda Velasco:* Oh, in Laredo, Texas.

*Emery Tarci:* No, I mean Victoria by the airport.

*Mary Tarci:* Yes, they have a big air field and Camp Kilmer in New Jersey and Fort Dix

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, Question #9, Samantha.

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

*Mary Tarci:* There was a big train wreck and many got killed. That was a big thing.(1951)

*Brenda Velasco:* And that was right on Main Street.

*Mary Tarci:* Yes it was. That's where they had the train at that time. That's where **J.J. Biting** is.

*Emery Tarci:* At that time you lived on Second Street.

*Mary Tarci:* Yes, at that time I lived on Second Street. My mother, after having nine kids, worked in the pocketbook factory that was there.

*Brenda Velasco:* Do you remember the name of that pocketbook factory?

*Mary Tarci:* **Luminette.**

*Brenda Velasco:* That was on Fulton Street?

*Mary Tarci:* Yes, that's where Mr. Leskow lived. He brought our milk in the bottle. He was a dairy man; he delivered milk in those glass bottles. Do you remember glass bottles? Everything's plastic.

*Emery Tarci:* No plastic.

*Mary Tarci:* No plastic.

*Brenda Velasco:* Did you see the train wreck?

*Mary Tarci:* I was down there but I remember just a lot of confusion, a lot of first aid and a lot of fire trucks. It was full of policemen all over the area. But that's all I remember. I couldn't stay. It was too much; a lot of people lying in the street.

*Emery Tarci:* You know at that time we only had one track and they built a second one. They went too fast. In those days we had a railroad track all around.

*Mary Tarci:* We had so many trains. Trains in Port Reading, trains all over.

*Emery Tarci:* In Woodbridge, there were about thirty-two tracks.

*Mary Tarci:* And they did away with all of them.

*Emery Tarci:* There was no bridge.

*Brenda Velasco:* They were grade crossing tracks. There were no trestles over (the roads); when the train came everything stopped.

*Emery Tarci:* That's it.

*Brenda Velasco:* But in 1951 when they had this train wreck in Woodbridge on Main Street they had a temporary trestle, a wooden trestle, and the conductor was supposed to slow down, didn't do it, and this is where you had..... It was one of the worst train wrecks in the whole United States in 1951. So this is what we're referring to. How about anything else? Because Emery you came back from Europe after World War II. What did you see different in Woodbridge?

*Emery Tarci:* Well you see only a road. You know, US #1, you come and go, that's it.

*Mary Tarci:* There weren't four lanes like now. You used it for coming and going.

*Emery Tarci:* Even at one time I ran out of gas and who comes behind me but the State Police and pushed me to a gas station. That was nice.

*Brenda Velasco:* That was very nice. You're not going to have that today.

*Emery Tarci:* You know, in the 1960s I got a speeding ticket.

*Mary Tarci:* Yes, you were a run around; a little on the wild side.

*Emery Tarci:* I get the speeding ticket and I went to Highland Park and there was a judge. I said I'm guilty and apologized for the State Police. I apologized to the State Police for the ticket and thanked them very much and I would never do it again and he marked it down. We went to court and it cost me a dollar and there was no point system in those days. He said I was a gentleman for apologizing to the judge. The judge was so old.....

*Mary Tarci:* Oh yes, he had the megaphone on his ear.

*Brenda Velasco:* This is in Highland Park?

*Emery Tarci:* Highland Park was the court. There was an old bridge over there. You know U.S. #1 you had a highway and you just crossed over.

*Mary Tarci:* I know on Route #27 I was sitting in the back of the old truck, my father would pile us in there, and when the train was going, there was still a train going on Highway #27 there, and the wind would..... See how my father built the back of the truck up because it rusted away. But there was nobody on the road; no traffic.

*Emery Tarci:* I apologized to the judge too.

*Mary Tarci:* It was quiet then, very quiet, and then the train wreck.

*Emery Tarci:* Since that, you know, I never got a ticket and I drove several years.

*Brenda Velasco:* Now guys just realize that if you're speeding now you get not only a surcharge and a fine of maybe two hundred and fifty dollars but you also have points against you as well.

*Mary Tarci:* And that will be on your record for the rest of your life.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, surcharge and your insurance.

*Mary Tarci:* And you insurance will jump sky high.

*Brenda Velasco:* You were lucky Emery, those days are gone.

*Emery Tarci:* I was even on the Grand Jury.

*Mary Tarci:* Yes, he was on the Grand Jury all summer; I think it was seven or eight weeks. I was home and I raised Terry because her mother died, that's my youngest brother he died already too. Her mother died when she was forty-one from lung cancer. So I raised her since she was seven because my brother had to go to work every day. The house is still there that she lives in the house. My brother Tommy died already, too, from stomach cancer.

*Samantha:* Did you raise children besides Terry?

*Mary Tarci:* No, we didn't have children of our own. I just raised Terry and we worked. That's all we did was work.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, Julian we're going back to you.

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

*Mary Tarci:* Today I think everything is so convenient. You know I can walk to the Center from Terry's house. The property is still there. I have the park right by me and our church, St. Andrew's, is not even a block from my house. We have a new car; it's not like the old truck. Everything is so modernized. We built our house in Avenel, my husband and I. We bought the property from John Bodnar. He had the hot house there and we bought property from him. In the 1950s, it was cheaper. I paid two thousand dollars just for the property. (They paid \$12,000 to have the house built)

*Emery Tarci:* Two thousand dollars then was big money. A brand new car I bought I think fifteen hundred.

*Brenda Velasco:* A new car?

*Emery Tarci:* Yes, now I pay thirty thousand for one.

*Mary Tarci:* We worked for it and **Carborundum** was good; they had credit unions. Their credit unions were great. They don't have that today either, credit unions. Do you know what a credit union is? No, see, they don't know.

*Brenda Velasco:* No, they're still young they're not borrowing money. Their parents are still paying for them but the teachers have a credit union in Woodbridge.....

**Because of technical difficulties, the remainder of the interview is based on notes of the interviewer, the students and the instructor.**

*Emery Tarci:* I worked for **Carborundum** for forty-three years. Back then, Keasbey was called Little Hungary or Little Budapest. The construction of Route 440 changed all that.

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

*Mary Tarci:* Just my niece, Terry and her husband. They live on the same property on Metuchen Avenue and in the house that my father built. Terry works for Mt. Lebanon cemeteries.

***12. Are there any other stories or events you would like to discuss?***

*Mary Tarci:* All my brothers were in the service. My brother, Mikey, also delivered coal on Rahway Avenue. My paternal grandmother lived in the basement. We lived with a lot of people. My mother was born in New York while my father was born in Hungary and arrived in America when he was three years old. I had nine siblings; there were eleven people in the family. The girls worked in the factories. During the summer, we slept on the front porch because of the heat and no air conditioning. We picked blackberries by the house and used punks to chase away the mosquitoes.