

**Oral History Interview**  
**Nicholas Sardone**  
**WH096**

(written transcript and digital audio)

On September 29, 2011, Nicholas Sardone was interviewed by Brenda Velasco at 10:30 A.M. at the Henry Inman Library.

*Brenda Velasco:* Nicholas Sardone used to live in Colonia. He's a current resident, just over the border, Sherman Avenue in Edison. He was in the Class of 1963 and has a wealth of information about Colonia as well as the sports program and is currently the principal of Hazlet.

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

*Nicholas Sardone:* My name is Nicholas Sardone and I was born in 1945.

*Brenda Velasco:* Right after the war.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Right during the war and you grew up in Brooklyn you said.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* So this was quite a contrast from Brooklyn to come to Colonia in 1956.

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

*Brenda Velasco:* What part of Colonia were you from originally?

*Nicholas Sardone:* Where we lived was the Shore Crest development off New Dover Road right off the Garden State Parkway (Amherst /Sterling). The development was brand new back in the late '50s around 1957 or 1958. It was a large development and that's where I spent my teenage years.

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

*Brenda Velasco:* And you said you moved when you were eleven.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* What specific year did you move to Colonia, do you recall?

*Nicholas Sardone:* That would have been like 1956 because I was in sixth grade at the time and they shuttle bused us all the way over to PS 11.

*Brenda Velasco:* In Woodbridge Proper?

*Nicholas Sardone:* Yes, in Woodbridge off St. Georges Avenue (Amboy Avenue).

*Brenda Velasco:* So you came when you were eleven and how long did you live in Colonia then before you eventually left?

*Nicholas Sardone:* Well that would have been over twenty years that I lived in Colonia.

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

*Brenda Velasco:* So you saw Colonia radically change then at the same time. You came in with the wave of the suburban growth: suburbia.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Correct and, you know, it gradually became more and more crowded. I remember when the Garden State Parkway was three lanes in each direction. We had a little baseball field as sixth and seventh graders adjacent to the Garden State Parkway off Amherst Road in Colonia and every now and then a baseball, we only had one baseball, would cross over the Garden State Parkway.

*Brenda Velasco:* There were no barriers?

*Nicholas Sardone:* No. In order to continue playing we had to run across the Parkway to get our ball back and we did it. We rotated who got the assignment of making the trip to get the ball but that was the only way we could continue playing. It was kind of scary I would think but it was not five or six lanes like it is now and you could do it. None of us ever got hit fortunately.

*Brenda Velasco:* What was the exact address where you lived, do you recall?

*Nicholas Sardone:* Yes: 7 Mercury Avenue.

*Brenda Velasco:* Why did your family pick Colonia?

*Nicholas Sardone:* My father wanted to get out of Brooklyn. He had a hardware business in Newark so I think basically he just wanted to relocate the family to suburbia and he also wanted to be closer to work.

*Brenda Velasco:* Then he took the car or the train?

*Nicholas Sardone:* He would commute by car from Colonia to Newark and back. That trip would take no more than a half an hour or thirty-five minutes. It wasn't bad at all. I mean nowadays when you say you're going into Newark, you know, but back then it was very, very calm. He actually had the store there during the Newark riots.

*Brenda Velasco:* In '67?

*Nicholas Sardone:* '67 or '68. I remember walking the streets with him after the riots when the National Guard was on the roof. That was kind of a scary thing, too.

*Brenda Velasco:* What part of Newark did he have his store in?

*Nicholas Sardone:* This particular store, during that time, was located near the East Orange borderline on Orange Avenue in Newark. Fortunately we didn't get hit: maybe one slight cracked window.

*Brenda Velasco:* You were very fortunate then.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Yes, and that was it.

*Brenda Velasco:* Did he remain there?

*Nicholas Sardone:* He did until he eventually sold the store around 1970 or 1971 and I worked at the store.

*Brenda Velasco:* So you had business experience before you became a teacher then?

*Nicholas Sardone:* Right.

*Brenda Velasco:* So let's get back to Question #4. Since you moved here in '56 what changes have you noticed that occurred?

*Nicholas Sardone:* Well, obviously the school system got much bigger and schools were being built one after another eventually to the point where there became three high schools instead of one, there became five junior high schools and eventually middle schools instead of K to 8 elementary schools. So there was a burgeoning school population. Another change was just the overcrowding in the streets and in the stores. I mean back in the old days, back in the late '50s and early '60s, you didn't have the congestion that later transpired and certainly that we have now so that would be another significant change. Just an overall housing boom, I mean, where

once you saw vacant land now became stores and homes. It just seemed like every piece of vacant land was transformed into some type of structure.

*Brenda Velasco:* There went your fields for baseball.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Yes, and subsequently the fields. We were constantly getting chased as kids and even as teenagers. We couldn't find a really good place to play. Another thing that changed, from a sporting standpoint, was when I first came here there really were no recreational leagues for young kids to play in. Colonia finally established or organized the Little Fellows League of Colonia which I think my group was the first group to play in. Our first field was right over here where the **Getty Gulf Station** is (corner of Amherst and Inman).

*Brenda Velasco:* So that was your playing field?

*Nicholas Sardone:* That was our first field that we played on as sixth graders in the first Little Fellows League of Colonia. All you had to do to hit a home run was hit the ball over the creek which was maybe two hundred feet at most. Not even that, I don't even think it was two hundred feet. But we had uniforms and a lot of us played. Then in seventh, eighth and ninth grades they built the fields off Pennsylvania Avenue and that was like a pony league field for kids that were slightly older. I remember playing baseball games on that particular field. Then after that, after I left, they built I think two little league fields way in the back and that is the current stature of the Little Fellow League of Colonia now.

*Brenda Velasco:* And they're still in existence and they still have the parade in the spring for opening day.

*Nicholas Sardone:* We were the forerunners. My group was the forerunners of those leagues. Another thing I remember, from a basketball standpoint, I had mentioned this earlier when we first started the interview, was that the town did develop a recreation program for middle school and high school kids that wanted to play basketball. We were in an organized league, the Woodbridge Recreation League, and we played a lot of our games at local schools such as the very old elementary schools in Iselin, that are now closed, off Correja Avenue, Our Lady of Peace, St. James Elementary School and St Andrew's Church in Avenel. That gym is no longer in existence. Like I said earlier, I remember playing in Hopelawn and Fords at the old schools there. Then also eventually St. John Vianney Church joined the Middlesex County CYO Basketball League so now we were not only playing recreation basketball in the Woodbridge Township League we were also playing in the Sunday CYO League through Middlesex County.

*Brenda Velasco:* This was a great thing for you.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Absolutely.

*Brenda Velasco:* But it was for boys.

*Nicholas Sardone:* It was for boys; there were no girl's sports.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, I just wanted to clarify that.

*Nicholas Sardone:* I remember going into Perth Amboy and playing in St. Stephen's and I remember going into South Amboy and playing in St. Mary's and of course St. Andrew's in Avenel. I would say that they were the primary locations where we played our games because St. John Vianney did not have a gym at that point.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Now my son and my daughter have since played in the St. John Vianney gym when they were playing basketball. So, you know, we had plenty of athletic opportunities as kids in addition to, of course, the high school and playing sports at the high school level.

*Brenda Velasco:* So this is a good town then?

*Nicholas Sardone:* Absolutely. Then I remember in the wintertime, as a kid, snow sledding and going down the hills. I remember ice skating on Freeman's Pond in Colonia. You can't do that now.

*Brenda Velasco:* When you're saying all these activities how did you get from your house on Mercury to all these locations?

*Nicholas Sardone:* We were ushered in, transported by the coaches and by our parents on a rotating basis. By the time we were seniors in high school we had our licenses so we did our own driving at that point but prior to that.....

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, but when you were in sixth grade when you first came here, because you came from Brooklyn, did your mom or parent.....

*Nicholas Sardone:* My mom didn't drive. She didn't get her license for a few years. She went into Perth Amboy by bus, she went into Plainfield by bus and she went into Woodbridge Township Main Street by bus. My father was the only one in the family that drove.

*Brenda Velasco:* Then I imagine you had to walk to a lot of these places in Colonia.

*Nicholas Sardone:* We did a lot of walking.

*Brenda Velasco:* Rather healthy.

*Nicholas Sardone:* And certainly not dangerous. Nowadays parents are afraid to let their kids get away. I mean even in Brooklyn I was walking three, four, five, six, seven blocks away from my house as a nine year old and that was not dangerous either. Now that's another difference as to how the township has changed and how society has changed.

*Brenda Velasco:* True. Okay, I want to get back to Question #4. What about the stores? Do you recall any stores that were here at that time?

*Nicholas Sardone:* Well, the Colonia Post Office was not here in the late '50s. I don't remember exactly when it was built. I'm going to say around 1960 or 1961. **Foodtown** had a much smaller store across the street from where it is now and then they moved across the street to where it is now. **Vaccaro's Bakery** was a landmark and had existed here for many, many years starting in the '50s until just about five years ago when the owners decided to sell off and just keep the one location in Clark. We used to visit **Vaccaro's Bakery** at least once a week on a Sunday morning and get our rolls and bagels and brownies and cupcakes and jelly donuts: all that sugary stuff.

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes, many people visited it.

*Nicholas Sardone:* It was a landmark, it really was. It was a shame that they chose to close it. The interesting thing over there is now they haven't even inhabited that store yet.

*Brenda Velasco:* No, it's still empty.

*Nicholas Sardone:* I don't know what the problem is. They can't seem to rent it. I don't even know if they know what they want to do with it.

*Brenda Velasco:* And you have **Dunkin Donuts** right next to it but it's been missed by many people. How about houses of worship?

*Nicholas Sardone:* St. John Vianney became the ultimate destination. That's where I got married. But if you wanted to go to church in the last '50s and very early '60s you had to go over to St. Cecelia's.

*Brenda Velasco:* This was the mission church. St. John Vianney was an off shoot of St. Cecelia's.

*Nicholas Sardone:* And I remember, on a Sunday morning, walking to St. Cecelia's because I couldn't get a ride.

*Brenda Velasco:* That's quite a walk.

*Nicholas Sardone:* It was about two miles, I guess, or maybe a little more. That became the hangout. Every now and then too, on a Friday night, there would be a dance for upper elementary or younger high school students at St. Cecelia's. Then of course St. John Vianney also had dances when they finally came into existence.

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

*Nicholas Sardone:* Well the first Colonia Library was the little library building on Chain O Hills Road and New Dover Road and a lot of twists and turns, of course, on New Dover. Then eventually that library closed and this library (Henry Inman) opened sometime in the '60s (1966). Then eventually the Woodbridge Main Library opened (1974). I always found the Woodbridge Main Library to be helpful to me as I was doing high school and college and graduate level work. It was a good place. I spent a lot of time using microfilm at the time. You know we didn't have computers back then so if you wanted to find ancient history in the newspapers and things like that, the *New York Times*, or the local papers you had to use microfilm. They still have microfilm.

*Brenda Velasco:* They have a lot that we can now tap into at home as well as this interview. You'll be able to tap into the local history archives, all the old papers, from home by computer network.

*Nicholas Sardone:* The old *Woodbridge Independent Leader* is there on microfilm and so is the *Fords Beacon*. Those were excellent little newspapers. It's a shame that they went out of existence but they had a big fire where the *Woodbridge Independent Leader* building used to be (1973). I don't even think you can get archives over there anymore because I think much of that building is destroyed.

*Brenda Velasco:* Too bad, it was a treasure then of Woodbridge history. Okay, now you mentioned about schools before and I want to go into when you moved here in 1956, what school did you have to attend?

*Nicholas Sardone:* They transported the Colonia kids over to PS 11 off of St. Georges Avenue right next to Woodbridge Park.

*Brenda Velasco:* What grade were you in there?

*Nicholas Sardone:* Sixth grade.

*Brenda Velasco:* You took a private bus or a school bus?

*Nicholas Sardone:* School bus. The Board of Education provided the bus.

*Brenda Velasco:* Colonia was building up at this time, you moved here in '56, so you must have had like a group of about thirty or forty go.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Yeah, there was a good sized group. I'm not going to say necessarily that my development filled up the bus but you know it certainly filled half of it.

*Brenda Velasco:* Do you recall how many kids were in your class back then?

*Nicholas Sardone:* I'd say at least twenty-five possibly closer to thirty. That was on full session by the way, that was not split session. Then seven and eighth grade was spent at Barron Avenue.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, that was the Middle School?

*Nicholas Sardone:* And Barron Avenue used to be the former Woodbridge High School.

*Brenda Velasco:* Right, but when you went there it was a Middle School by that time.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Correct.

*Brenda Velasco:* So then you're the Class of 1963 from Woodbridge High School so you spent four years in Woodbridge High School.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* And we talked about this previously but you were on split session.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Yes, ninth grade and tenth grade in the PM. We'd get into school around twelve o'clock. We would not get out until about five. I remember sitting in biology class and my stomach would be growling for food because by the time we were dismissed, by the time we would get home from the bus ride, it would be about a quarter to six or six o'clock. Now if you were in the AM session, which I was in my junior and senior year, we were in school by 7:15 A.M.

*Brenda Velasco:* Which was rather early.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Yes.

*Brenda Velasco:* And then what time did you finish?

*Nicholas Sardone:* Roughly twelve o'clock and what they did was, because they couldn't accommodate all the students, the PM group would wait in the auditorium of Woodbridge High School, that's where your morning exercises were conducted and I think even attendance taken. When the AM session evacuated the building, then the PM students went to their classes.

*Brenda Velasco:* So it was rather organized for a large mass of people that the building couldn't accommodate at that time.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Very organized. Those were the days when school discipline was very firm, very structured. Drugs were certainly not rampant at the time; cigarette smoking was. You could go into a boy's room on any floor and have to fight off the smoke. Why that was not squashed, I'm not sure. They had to know that it was going on but that was about the only thing that I recall. I don't recall a lot of fights. I just don't recall a lot of incidents, negative incidents.

*Brenda Velasco:* Well that was good.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Yeah, absolutely. I think the high school was very, very orderly considering it was so large. You know the parents were much more involved back then and if you got out of line and it got back to your parents they gave you no right. The school was right and you were wrong. So if the school didn't call your home, you didn't dare tell your parents that you got in trouble.

*Brenda Velasco:* Because you'd have double punishment.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Absolutely.

*Brenda Velasco:* Now with split session, were you able to get involved in after school activities?

*Nicholas Sardone:* I remember being in the senior class play. It was called *The Boyfriend*. It was very, very successful. I was in the various choirs at the school. As a matter of fact our music teacher, what a lady, you might have read about it Brenda in the newspaper, Mrs. Musacchia passed away. She was in her nineties and she just passed away a couple of weeks ago. She was quite a lady, quite, quite a lady. Very, very firm but also very gentle and very helpful and she did a lot of the music situations. Prior to that she was an English teacher at the high school and prior to that she was in World War II.

*Brenda Velasco:* She had an interesting past.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Absolutely.

*Brenda Velasco:* Lucky to have someone like that.

*Nicholas Sardone:* She was a very skilled lady, very knowledgeable; she was an important influence on me in high school. My high school guidance counselor, Mr. Blaska, also played a roll. He was the one responsible for getting me into college. I went to Jersey City State College. He said, Nick do you know what you want to do with your life and I said no Mr. Blaska I don't, maybe I'll go work for my father. He said, look, I think you would make a good teacher. Why don't you fill out an application for Jersey City State College which is what I did. I went up there for an interview. I was interviewed by the admissions director and thanks to Mr. Blaska I think I was admitted to Jersey City State College.

*Brenda Velasco:* So you had some good experiences in the school system.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Yeah, I don't recall any negative experiences really. I mean I could have done better in high school academically.

*Brenda Velasco:* Oh, we all could have.

*Nicholas Sardone:* I took a lot for granted unfortunately and I didn't wake up until my junior year. My junior year I started getting good grades and that's what gave me, I think, the confidence to think that I could do college level work and I did; it paid off. Then I ended up getting a Master's Degree from Seton Hall and a Doctorate in Education from Fordham. So it paid off but the roots came from Woodbridge Township.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, how about the firehouse? I'm going back to Question #5.

*Nicholas Sardone:* The Colonia Firehouse on Inman Avenue?

*Brenda Velasco:* Yes. Was it always there?

*Nicholas Sardone:* I can't say that I have a vivid memory of the firehouse back in the '50s or '60s.

*Brenda Velasco:* Because your dad wasn't involved with that as a volunteer organization?

*Nicholas Sardone:* No, not at all.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay and parks were there parks around?

*Nicholas Sardone:* Well certainly you had the park in Woodbridge Proper and Merrill Park in Colonia but back then it was not as developed as it is now. They didn't have the walking paths, they didn't have the circular track, they didn't have the petting zoo like they have now and they didn't have the playground for the younger

children to enjoy. It was just really open fields back then which they later transformed into the things that I just mentioned: soccer fields and baseball fields. So we really didn't use Merrill Park all that much as a place. As I said earlier our primary field was not the parks it was whatever lot or area we could play on. That included the streets. Our baseball courts were on the streets.

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

*Nicholas Sardone:* When they finally disbanded us from the streets for playing basketball we found two homes. One was Lynn Crest School in Colonia which is now a blue ribbon school.

*Brenda Velasco:* Oh, yes.

*Nicholas Sardone:* It bought tremendous honor, I think, to Woodbridge Township. But we would walk over there and we started playing full court basketball games there. Even in the middle of the winter we'd bring our snow shovels and clear the courts. Kids today would never do anything like that but we wanted to play. We were hungry to play and we would play. We would clear the courts of as much snow and ice as we possibly could and then we would play. We also played on the basketball courts at Kennedy Park School in Iselin near St. Cecelia's. I remember walking over there several times with our shovels and clearing the course. So when we couldn't get a gym, which was often, we would clear the courts and play. Now Woodbridge did not have a YMCA or a Community Center way back then so I remember going over to Rahway YMCA and playing basketball there and also swimming there in the pool occasionally.

*Brenda Velasco:* There was a bus to take you to Rahway too if you needed it.

*Nicholas Sardone:* You could. You could take the Inman Avenue bus into Rahway. But there again this is what we did, we were walking to a lot of these places and we were hitchhiking to a lot of these places. Kids today don't hitchhike, it's too dangerous.

*Brenda Velasco:* It's a different era. That's why I wanted this interview.

*Nicholas Sardone:* These are things that we did and we didn't sit home. We were not mesmerized by the computer, we were not mesmerized by Xbox and PlayStation and all these little gadgets that these kids play with today. We were out, we were throwing snowballs, we were climbing trees, we were building forts and we were in the woods grabbing frogs and little critters out of the creeks. That's the kind of stuff we did when we weren't playing sports.

*Brenda Velasco:* It wasn't a sedentary life especially for boys.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Absolutely.

*Brenda Velasco:* It was fun, it was creative fun.

*Nicholas Sardone:* We were always out gallivanting around somewhere. We didn't get into much trouble. Every now and then I remember like a broken window from a ball hitting it or something like that or being yelled at by people who didn't want us playing outside near their houses. That was about all.

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

*Nicholas Sardone:* I think the schools because if you weren't playing in your own league game whether it be basketball or baseball; soccer wasn't very big back then by



the way. So if you weren't playing in your own game, you were at the high school watching a game. I remember some big football and basketball games at Woodbridge High that we would run over. I remember a very, very big game of basketball versus Trenton High School back in 1963. I had a league game that night but as soon as our league game was over we hopped into our cars and ran over to Woodbridge. I could not get a seat in the gym. I had to sit on the floor of the gym. I did get in but I had to sit on the floor in order to view the game. The Fire Marshall, I think, would have had a fit if he had been there that night because the room, which maybe held seventeen or eighteen hundred, was overflowing. So I would say the school and if it wasn't the sports at the school it was the plays or the choirs and the bands and all of that.

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

*Nicholas Sardone:* People were friendly. We had a lot of kids in the neighborhood; you were never bored. You always had something to do or a place to go.

*Brenda Velasco:* Inexpensive.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Well for that time, compared to today, it certainly was inexpensive. I had other experiences too that I enjoyed. Our movie theatre was the **Iselin Theatre** on Oak Tree Road. We didn't have the malls. The malls were not around yet back in the late '50s or early '60s. Menlo Park Mall wasn't built yet; Woodbridge Center wasn't built yet. Then also during the summer, this is not a part of Woodbridge Township but it was close enough for us, my family joined the **Ash Brook Swim Club** off Featherbed Lane. We spent several summers there and had a tremendous time at that pool club those summers. Strangely enough **Springwood Swim Club** was built here in Colonia in 1954. We didn't even know about it; we haven't even heard of it.

*Brenda Velasco:* A well kept secret.

*Nicholas Sardone:* And it still is. My immediate family now, and my daughter is a lifeguard there now, we have been members at **Springwood** for the past twenty years. That's where they learned to swim. Well there and the Scotch Plains YMCA.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, so you still keep a foot in Colonia then.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Absolutely, all my shopping is in Colonia and several of my banks are in Colonia.

*Brenda Velasco:* You just moved across the border.

*Nicholas Sardone:* My orthodontist is in Colonia.

*Brenda Velasco:* You moved a few blocks away, that was it.

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

*Nicholas Sardone:* I don't recall discrimination and my circle of friends were diverse. African American students at Woodbridge High School were treated respectfully. Jewish students, I don't recall any incidents of bigotry or discrimination from a religious standpoint. I did mention the Newark riots of 1967. That did impact, not so much here in Woodbridge Township, Plainfield tremendously. Plainfield was a common place that Woodbridge Township residents went to. First of all Muhlenberg Hospital was there and secondly it was a great shopping area. Plainfield, at that time, was a relatively affluent area.

*Brenda Velasco:* It was “the queen city”.

*Nicholas Sardone:* And the riots destroyed Plainfield or at least the downtown area. Perth Amboy was hit heavily by the riots but not as bad as Plainfield.

*Brenda Velasco:* But you also had a policeman stomped to death in Plainfield during that period of time so that had repercussions throughout this whole area of New Jersey.

*Nicholas Sardone:* As far as sporting events I mean I could talk forever about Woodbridge High and actually the other two high schools, too. When I was there Woodbridge High had an undefeated football team. That was the 1960 team coached by Nick Fresco. They had a traditional Thanksgiving rivalry with Edison. And on Thanksgiving Day in 1960 they anticipated a very, very large crowd at the game because Edison also had a very good team that year and they brought in extra bleachers to accommodate the fans. The announced crowd in the newspapers the following day was that ten thousand people viewed that game. Then several years later, in 1969, Woodbridge High had another undefeated football team coached by Sam Lupo and over seven thousand people attended that game. Fortunately Woodbridge won them both.

*Brenda Velasco:* Good.

*Nicholas Sardone:* But in the days of the one township high school it was routine for Woodbridge High, on a Saturday afternoon, to draw three or four thousand fans to a Saturday afternoon football game. It was very common. Now at the three high schools they’re all split. You know you’re kind of drawn away from one another. What the three high schools allow though is they allow more students to participate and I think that’s an important point. The teams may or may not be as successful as they used to be now but that’s debatable and arguable but more students participate. If you had a one township high school now many more students would be cut for participating in not only sports but band, drama, chorus.....

*Brenda Velasco:* So it broadens the opportunities to your students and that’s the way we have to look at that.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Yes, it absolutely does. It gives more kids the chance and the opportunity.

*Brenda Velasco:* Now you were the last class to graduate from Woodbridge High School?

*Nicholas Sardone:* No, we were not the last class prior to the splits; the Class of ’64, Harry Bernstein’s class.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay who recommended that I interview you.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Right. His class had about a thousand seniors. My class had close to eight hundred seniors. Interesting enough Woodbridge High’s enrollment right now is probably at its lowest point since perhaps the 1930s. Their enrollment right now is maybe fourteen hundred and that’s hard to believe. It really is hard to believe that the enrollment has gone down so much.

*Brenda Velasco:* With the other two high schools this is what happens.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Well all three schools were very big enrollment way back in the ‘70s but.....

*Brenda Velasco:* Suburban people having those babies.

*Nicholas Sardone:* People are not having babies anymore and the town is getting older again now. As these homes sell off and younger families move in you may see an increase again in the enrollment but right now they're on the high end. As far as parents, their children are older now and they moved out and they're just waiting to sell their homes.

*Brenda Velasco:* Waiting for the market to pick up.

*Nicholas Sardone:* And that too.

*Brenda Velasco:* And a demographic change and the families are smaller than what they were. When I moved in on Dewey Avenue it was families of five and six. You're not seeing that anymore.

*Nicholas Sardone:* No you're not, not at all.

*Brenda Velasco:* Its different demographics; different economic situations. Now we know you moved to Edison but you said you still shop in Colonia and still have ties here.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Absolutely.

***10. What do you like about Colonia today?***

*Nicholas Sardone:* Convenience. Every now and then I run into people that I enjoy talking to whether they be from the Edison side of Wood Avenue or the Colonia side of Wood Avenue. I guess that's about it, convenience, and just, you know, talking to people.

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

*Nicholas Sardone:* Unfortunately, no.

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

*Brenda Velasco:* Could you tell us about the notebook you have with you and what you brought to this interview?

*Nicholas Sardone:* Well this is all sports related. At some point in time I became fascinated with the history of sports in Woodbridge Township starting first with Woodbridge High and then JFK and then Colonia. I started maintaining my own little records, handwritten records, of various teams and the personalities involved whether they be players or coaches. Then I started putting together a scrapbook which I still do today. So I have several of these at home.

*Brenda Velasco:* And this is a big fat black notebook.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Yeah, one of several.

*Brenda Velasco:* Loaded.

*Nicholas Sardone:* It was just something that I really enjoyed doing and I maintain it to this day. I still go to the athletic events today as well as the athletic events where I work. I just like sports. I grew up with sports and I just enjoy it. It has become a hobby with me. This is a picture, an article, of Nick Fresco and this was his program when they dedicated the Woodbridge High School football stadium in his honor.

*Brenda Velasco:* Oh, wow! Could we borrow this for the Woodbridge Main Library? And if we could, scan all of this material?

*Nicholas Sardone:* Yeah, there's a lot here.

*Brenda Velasco:* I see.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Like I said I have a lot home; I do have a lot home.

*Brenda Velasco:* Because he is one of the most famous coaches.

*Nicholas Sardone:* He definitely is along with Sam Lupo who was his successor at Woodbridge. The field was dedicated to him. They had to bring him in a wheelchair because Mr. Fresco had just suffered a stroke months earlier and they weren't sure if he was even going to be able to attend. The weather was cold but it was crisp and there was sun so they wheeled him in a wheelchair and they dedicated the stadium in his honor on that day. Then JFK did the same thing for Lou Bartha in 1984.

*Brenda Velasco:* These are some of the famous coaches that made the teams powerhouses. Okay, now I also see that the Master of Ceremonies for Fresco Day was Bix Bixel.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Right.

*Brenda Velasco:* Could you mention what role he played?

*Nicholas Sardone:* Mr. Bixel was the long time voice of the Barons and he was up in the press box and he would announce everything going on during the football game including 50/50s, scores of other games and little anecdotal things that he would throw out. Mr. Bixel had a tremendous speaking voice. He came across very calmly, very naturally and in a very pleasant way. His voice was very, very appealing to the fans and he announced Woodbridge's games for fifty years.

*Brenda Velasco:* Wow!

*Nicholas Sardone:* And they named the press box in his honor so that too has been named over there at Woodbridge.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay, and Fresco Day, I'm just looking at some of the names, Tommy Thompson.

*Nicholas Sardone:* Tommy Thompson was an outstanding football player at Woodbridge High in the 1940s who went on to college fame at the College of William and Mary and then was drafted and played five years for the Cleveland Browns in the early 1950s.

*Brenda Velasco:* Okay and you also have Lou Creekmur.

*Nicholas Sardone:* He too went to the College of William and Mary. That was one of the significant characteristics about Mr. Fresco. He not only coached but he got many of his players into college and many of the players earned college degrees because of his efforts into getting them into college. If he couldn't get them into a four year college because their grades were poor he got them into places like Fork Union Prep. That was always a funny thing. If you got into Fork Union Prep it means you barely made it out of Woodbridge High but if they wanted to play college football and go to college that's what they had to do, they had to go to Fork Union Prep. So he sent a lot of his kids there first and then they eventually went on to colleges and many of them earned football scholarships or baseball scholarships for playing. But anyway getting back to Lou Creekmur, he went with Tommy Thompson over to William and Mary and eventually became an all-pro for the Detroit Lions in the 1950s. I think his years were 1950 to 1959.

*Brenda Velasco:* Wow, what a class that was then!

*Nicholas Sardone:* Then he was inducted into the pro-football Hall of Fame around fifteen years ago so when you talk Lou Creekmur, in my humble opinion, he is the most “honored and decorated athlete ever to come out of Woodbridge Township”. Because when you’re talking the pro-football Hall of Fame you’re talking the pinnacle of sports. You know, when you make the Hall of Fame you’re at the top of your profession. It took him a while to get in but he finally made it.

*Brenda Velasco:* He made it and he was from Woodbridge and he had Nick Fresco as his coach then. Quite an achievement!

*Nicholas Sardone:* A lot of people did have Nick Fresco as their coach.

*Brenda Velasco:* Well on this note we’re going to have to end because of time constraints but thank you very much. And I thank Harry Bernstein for recommending you for this interview and for you finding the time. I got you on your day off from school I know.

*Nicholas Sardone:* You’re welcome.

*Brenda Velasco:* Thank you.