

Oral History Interview
Rose Anne Gallo Pelo
WH091

(written transcript and digital audio)

On November 5, 2010, Rose Anne Gallo Pelo was interviewed at the Maple Tree Manor by Brenda Velasco at 10:00 A.M.

Brenda Velasco: Rose Anne is a former resident of Iselin and Avenel, actually a longtime resident except for her first three months in life.

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

Rose Anne Pelo: My name is Rose Anne Gallo Pelo. Right now I'm living in Port Reading and my date of birth is 10/21/48.

Brenda Velasco: So we just passed your birthday?

Rose Anne Pelo: Yes. I'm actually a senior; I'm sixty-two.

Brenda Velasco: You're a little bit younger than whom I've interviewed but you have a wealth of information about Iselin and I'm looking forward to hearing about it.

2. How long have you lived in Woodbridge?

Rose Anne Pelo: Since I was between three and four months old.

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

Rose Anne Pelo: I was born in Brooklyn and had relatives living in Avenel so I presume that they wanted to get out of the city.

Brenda Velasco: And this was in 1948.

Rose Anne Pelo: The beginning of 1949 we moved to Avenel.

Brenda Velasco: Where did you live in Avenel?

Rose Anne Pelo: Oak Street and Jensen Avenue.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, and then after, you lived there only a little while.

Rose Anne Pelo: Right, and then my family moved to Iselin. We then had a house fire and moved back to Avenel. And then after awhile my mother and father purchased the house in Iselin. I was around four or five when they purchased that house.

Brenda Velasco: Where was it in Iselin?

Rose Anne Pelo: Lincoln Highway, Route #27.

Brenda Velasco: Where was the first place you lived in Iselin, do you recall, the house that burned down?

Rose Anne Pelo: Back then it was called Poor Farm Road and now it's called Gills Lane.

Brenda Velasco: So you go way back when there were no stores or anything there. Okay, we're going to concentrate on Iselin because that's where you spent so much of your early years even though you flitted between Avenel and Iselin. *(There were some stores there at the time)*

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

Brenda Velasco: Do you remember anything on Poor Farm Road which is now Gills Lane?

Rose Anne Pelo: There were a lot of fields and a lot of woods in that area and very few homes back then.

Brenda Velasco: So no apartments and no townhouses, nothing.

Rose Anne Pelo: No.

Brenda Velasco: Was it farm land or.....?

Rose Anne Pelo: **Cooper's Dairy** was in town and on Middlesex Turnpike there was a dairy and right down the road was all of these cornfields. His house was in the middle of the fields all the way in the back. Right now it's where **Englehardt** is, **Metro Park** entrance to all the side roads and they have **Prudential** back there.

Brenda Velasco: Did you ever play in that area?

Rose Anne Pelo: Yes. (Later Rose Anne stated no)

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so that's why you know it's wooded.

Rose Anne Pelo: I went to school with the owner, Frank Cooper. His grandfather owned the dairy.

Brenda Velasco: And the man who owned the property where **Englehardt** and Metro Park and **Prudential** what was his name? Do you remember? Was that Cooper?

Rose Anne Pelo: He owned that whole land because there was all cornfields back there.

Brenda Velasco: So that was Cooper then.

Rose Anne Pelo: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: That was **Cooper Dairy** all over there. So you had a great time growing up then.

Rose Anne Pelo: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: That was your park.

Rose Anne Pelo: Right.

Brenda Velasco: Was your street paved?

Rose Anne Pelo: That I don't remember.

Brenda Velasco: How about stores?

Rose Anne Pelo: In Iselin we had a **Choper's** store. I used to buy my own gym uniforms from there. Then right down the road, it was on Oak Tree Road but a little bit further down there was **Mary's Dress Shop**. Across from there was the bakery and the post office was there.

Brenda Velasco: Where was the post office?

Rose Anne Pelo: Right on Oak Tree Road.

Brenda Velasco: Then **Mary's** was on Oak Tree Road?

Rose Anne Pelo: That was across the street like where the ground goes down a little bit. That's where the dress shop was.

Brenda Velasco: Where was that bakery then, on Oak Tree Road?

Rose Anne Pelo: Right on Oak Tree Road across from **Mary's**, it was near the post office. Then later on a music store was there and a travel agency.

Brenda Velasco: What part of Oak Tree Road was this by, past the railroad tracks as you're heading towards Edison?

Rose Anne Pelo: From Route #27 all the way before the bridge.

Brenda Velasco: You're talking about the Parkway bridge?

Rose Anne Pelo: Right, then over the Parkway bridge was **ShopRite**. There were no other stores up in that area. Across the street were the gasoline stations.

Brenda Velasco: So you had pretty much a self-contained community there then?

Rose Anne Pelo: Right, that was the main part of the town. Then across the tracks underneath the bridge you had the firehouse on the left, Charlie's little grocery store on the corner, a candy store. Then there was like a sweet shop across the street and the pharmacy.

Brenda Velasco: Which pharmacy are we talking about?

Rose Anne Pelo: **Iselin Pharmacy** that's been there in town for quite a few years.

Brenda Velasco: With the services did you have buses?

Rose Anne Pelo: The train station was there. On the northbound lane you were able to go inside the train station and buy your tickets. It was all enclosed. But on the left side going south, going to New Brunswick, it was only like three sided. It was very cold especially on a windy day. It wasn't insulated like the main train station where you had to buy your tickets.

Brenda Velasco: And we're talking the train station, not Metro Park now.

Rose Anne Pelo: Yes, it was right off Route #27 by the train trestle when you go underneath the bridge.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, right off Green Street then.

Rose Anne Pelo: Right, Middlesex Turnpike. It was around by where the Noll Brothers are a little bit further down.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, and Social Security.

Rose Anne Pelo: A little bit before that was the main train station. Talking about the train station, me and my brother used to count the cars when we lived on Route #27. You had the trains with the cows on, horse, the coal.....

Brenda Velasco: The freight trains?

Rose Anne Pelo: Right. You actually saw the cows because it was like half way opened to cars. The cars were like old fashioned, like a deep red.

Brenda Velasco: And they had slats on them. You had slats that you could see the cattle through them?

Rose Anne Pelo: Yes, and trains used to be between a hundred and a hundred and ten cars because we used to count the cars. We were right across the street from the train station and everything there was opened. I remember there was a hot dog stand across the street and the lady used to give all the kids credit so whenever the parents went there they were shocked to find out how much she owed the lady.

Brenda Velasco: A rude awakening. How about houses of worship?

Rose Anne Pelo: There was St. Cecelia's which was one of the main churches. There was the Presbyterian Church that was like right off Oak Tree Road. All the towns around and the people used to go there to worship.

Brenda Velasco: So you had a lot of people coming into Iselin?

Rose Anne Pelo: Right, for these churches. Then there was another church in Iselin by Cooper Avenue. I don't quite remember when that church was built. There used

to be like a Jewish synagogue and now I think it's Korean. I'm not too sure because I don't go down there quite often. Now there is an Assembly of God Church in town; again I don't quite remember when that was built.

Brenda Velasco: That's just in back of, sort of, **Costello's Funeral Home**.

Rose Anne Pelo: Right.

Brenda Velasco: How about schools?

Rose Anne Pelo: I went to School #6 right on Green Street which is closed now and then School #15.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, where is School #15?

Rose Anne Pelo: On Pershing Avenue. That's like all the way in the back of town. There was only one high school at that time, Woodbridge High School. It was split session. Seniors and half the juniors went in the morning. Other juniors and sophomores went in the afternoon. So at five after five in the afternoon when it was dark I was in typing class. We would be going to school and all the kids would tease us that they were going down the shore because they got out like ten to twelve.

Brenda Velasco: The upperclassmen, yes. Okay, when you were in School #6 did you go to kindergarten there?

Rose Anne Pelo: I didn't go to kindergarten. I went the first two years in St. Cecelia's.

Brenda Velasco: So St. Cecelia's also had a school.

Rose Anne Pelo: Back then they didn't have no kindergarten.

Brenda Velasco: So what grades did you attend in.....

Rose Anne Pelo: One and two.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, grades one and two in St. Cecelia's and then.....

Rose Anne Pelo: Then I went to public school.

Brenda Velasco: Then public school and School #6 which is now closed what grades.....

Rose Anne Pelo: I went from third to fifth and then they changed the boundary lines in Iselin because I lived across the tracks. Then I went one year to School #15. Then seventh, eighth and ninth was Iselin Junior High which is now called the Middle School, Iselin Middle.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so that was seventh, eighth and ninth.

Rose Anne Pelo: Right.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, that was Iselin Middle School.

Rose Anne Pelo: Tenth grade was Woodbridge High School in the afternoon and then they built Kennedy High School (1964). It was supposed to be called Iselin High but then when the president was assassinated they made it JFK. That was for eleventh grade and twelfth grade.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so grade ten then was at the Woodbridge High School.

Rose Anne Pelo: Afternoon session.

Brenda Velasco: Then 1963 when JFK was killed you switched over to JFK.

Rose Anne Pelo: Right, from '64 to '65 and then '65 to '66.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so you graduated in what year?

Rose Anne Pelo: Iselin Junior High in '63 and then JFK in '66.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so you're the Class of 1966 JFK.

Rose Anne Pelo: We're the ones that voted the colors green and white and the mustang being the symbol of the school.

Brenda Velasco: Wow! So we can blame you. You went all the way with the Irish then after JFK. Oh, one thing we want to mention your dad worked on Oak Tree Road in Iselin, right?

Rose Anne Pelo: At the **V & P**.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, **V & P**, Oak Tree Road and where approximately was that, on what street? It was on the corner of.....

Rose Anne Pelo: It was on the left side of Oak Tree Road before Correja Avenue.

Brenda Velasco: And what's so interesting was that my father-in-law owned **V & P**.

Rose Anne Pelo: Right.

Brenda Velasco: Which we weren't aware of until we started talking the other week. So you not only had a bakery, a dress shop and **Choper's** you said.

Rose Anne Pelo: The **Purpose Butcher Shop and Delicatessen**, a big farm market, a very huge hardware store on the corner.....

Brenda Velasco: **Eagle**.

Rose Anne Pelo: **Eagle Hardware**, movies we had (on the corner of Correja). I remember it used to be thirty-five cents and fifteen cents for a box of candy. The first time I saw Elvis Presley in the movies there was a line going all around the building. We had to go back two times to try to get in. I remember that because my mother was mad because every time we went there was a line of people to see Elvis Presley.

Brenda Velasco: You've got a good memory.

Rose Anne Pelo: Then on the corner we had a taxicab and he owned like a coffee shop with sandwiches and his wife had a little dress shop next door for stockings, blouses and slips.

Brenda Velasco: Lingerie then.

Rose Anne Pelo: Right. Then there were a couple of town bars.

Brenda Velasco: What was the most famous one?

Rose Anne Pelo: There was **Oliver's** and **Hank's**. We had a barbershop, there was an Italian deli, a store where they fixed upholstery, and it was on the left.

Brenda Velasco: All on Oak Tree Road.

Rose Anne Pelo: Right.

Brenda Velasco: So this was like a main street with all mom and pop stores except the **ShopRite** was over the Parkway Bridge.

Rose Anne Pelo: And back then you couldn't buy stockings on Sunday.

Brenda Velasco: Oh, okay, the stores weren't opened.

Rose Anne Pelo: Right, even at the drug store you could not buy the stockings. Then there was like another corner where they used to sell a lot of ice cream, **Petroletti's Drug Store**. You had like the counter there like you see on TV to buy ice cream sodas or ice cream. There was a 5&10 called **Klein's**. That was on the corner of Middlesex Turnpike and Oak Tree Road, Harry Klein's. All the kids used to ride the ponies out front. Back then it was a dime.

Brenda Velasco: These were the stationary ponies.

Rose Anne Pelo: Right.

Brenda Velasco: So this was a fun place to shop. Did your mother drive?

Rose Anne Pelo: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: But you could walk to a lot of these stores.

Rose Anne Pelo: Right. Back then if you went to the store yourself, when I was like about eight or nine, you weren't afraid to go by yourself. There were more kids out on the street riding their bikes. Then we had the **Good Humor** truck coming around.

Brenda Velasco: And what did you always buy?

Rose Anne Pelo: The chocolate bar. It was chocolate on the outside and vanilla on the inside.

Brenda Velasco: Brown Cows? We called them brown cows.

Rose Anne Pelo: Okay, maybe that was it.

Brenda Velasco: How long did you live in that area of Iselin?

Rose Anne Pelo: Until I was thirty-seven and then I moved to Fords when I got married.

Brenda Velasco: So you lived in a long time in Iselin. You saw a lot of changes too.

Rose Anne Pelo: Yes.

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

Brenda Velasco: We mentioned the post office was on Oak Tree Road.

Rose Anne Pelo: And the library was off Route #27. It was a small library and then they moved to Green Street in Iselin.

Brenda Velasco: Where off of Route #27, do you remember? Was it on St. Cecelia's side or the Presbyterian Church?

Rose Anne Pelo: Behind the Presbyterian Church.

Brenda Velasco: What about parks did you have any parks?

Rose Anne Pelo: There were a lot of like fields in the town. All the kids used to go to Roosevelt Park; that was the main park growing up. Then later on they did Merrill Park. Then when they built Kennedy School #24 there's a little park back there. (1960)

Brenda Velasco: Okay, but you had the fields when you were growing up, all **Cooper Dairy** and so on. We mentioned the firehouse, you had the firehouse.

Rose Anne Pelo: Right, there was one on Green Street and then one on Route #27. Then behind Oak Tree Road was another little firehouse. That had to be the first one in town.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, the one on Auth Avenue in back of St. Cecelia's sort of?

Rose Anne Pelo: No, it was behind say the main part of Oak Tree Road like off of Middlesex Avenue there. It was in the back.

Brenda Velasco: Okay.

Rose Anne Pelo: Behind **Klein's** back in that area.

Brenda Velasco: And it's not there anymore then.

Rose Anne Pelo: I don't think so; I haven't looked.

Brenda Velasco: Do you feel we've covered enough on Question #5?

Rose Anne Pelo: There was a big lumber yard on Route #27 on the corner, **Iselin Lumber**. Then right on Route #27 was a little farm market called **John Gallo**, John Gallo was his name but no relation to our family. He used to sell fruits and vegetables. Again the kids used to go there after school to get a banana or apple and then the parents would pay him. John loved kids.

Brenda Velasco: So you ran a tab there?

Rose Anne Pelo: Right.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, anything else? If not, we'll go to Question 6.

6. What did you do for recreation?

Rose Anne Pelo: Every year they would have a circus on Gills Lane on the corner where right now they have all the apartment buildings.

Brenda Velasco: Who sponsored this circus?

Rose Anne Pelo: I don't remember.

Brenda Velasco: Okay.

Rose Anne Pelo: And then every year was the Iselin Fair on Green Street. That was the big attraction all the kids waited for.

Brenda Velasco: And that was St. Cecelia's?

Rose Anne Pelo: Right, they would run it. And growing up I remember Roy Rogers and Dale Evans being there.

Brenda Velasco: At the fair?

Rose Anne Pelo: Right, Gabby Hays because my brother pulled down on his beard. Then they used to have animals, including a bear. There were like other, you know, acts, some for the children and some for the grownups. That would be the eleven o'clock attraction.

Brenda Velasco: Was this at the circus or the Iselin Fair?

Rose Anne Pelo: No, Roy Rogers was at the Iselin Fair and the circus was on Gills Lane. They had that for a couple of years. Another main attraction was the parades for Memorial Day. All the Armed Forces were there with their tanks, the Army tanks. You'd see all the gentlemen with their Army uniforms on. They had bands. Then they used to have the Little League parade going through town and then, of course, the movies. There was a lot of bus transportation. I remember when I had to go to Perth Amboy me and my grandmother used to take two buses.

Brenda Velasco: Where did the bus take you to?

Rose Anne Pelo: We got it right by the corner where I lived on Route #27. Buses would go to New York, Rahway, Metuchen, Perth Amboy, Plainfield; those were the places I used to go with my grandmother.

Brenda Velasco: So you had a lot of mass transit to take you places?

Rose Anne Pelo: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: And your grandmother moved to Iselin with you, too?

Rose Anne Pelo: Yes. Then there were taxicabs around. Then on the corner of Route #27 there used to be a diner. There used to be a taxicab there and then it was a diner and then later on it became a car place to buy car parts, an auto store. Then **Maglione's** had his lemon ice store on Route #27. Then when I was little **Miele's**, I think it was **Miele's**, had pony rides for the kids, where the West Berry section is now.

Brenda Velasco: So you had a lot of activity here. Did you have a bike?

Rose Anne Pelo: No, I never liked bikes. I was always one for walking.

Brenda Velasco: Well you had a lot to see in Iselin. You had the trains, you had movies, you had pony rides, you had a lot of area and a lot of things to do here. If you feel we've finished with Question #6 let's go to Question #7.

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

Rose Anne Pelo: Well I guess the convenience. If you needed groceries or a drug store a lot of it was in walking distance.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, so that whole Oak Tree Road that's where you purchased it.

Rose Anne Pelo: Anything you wanted, right.

Brenda Velasco: That was the main part of everything, okay. Did you do things with your family?

Rose Anne Pelo: Like?

Brenda Velasco: Did you have picnics with your family?

Rose Anne Pelo: My father was really working a lot so I didn't really go on any picnics. If I did, it was quite a few with my uncles.

Brenda Velasco: Where did your uncles live?

Rose Anne Pelo: One lived in Port Reading and then one lived in Avenel.

Brenda Velasco: So your whole family moved out of Brooklyn basically.

Rose Anne Pelo: Right. Then our biggest vacation was when I went to Italy.

Brenda Velasco: Wow!

Rose Anne Pelo: That was 1960.

Brenda Velasco: That was while you were in middle school then when you went to Italy.

Rose Anne Pelo: Right and I lost like five weeks of school but then I had to make up all the work. I remember exactly, August 27th we left, because that was my aunt's birthday; that's why I remember the date. Then we came back the middle of October.

Brenda Velasco: Wow, you missed the whole beginning of school then.

Rose Anne Pelo: Right.

Brenda Velasco: And where did you go in Italy?

Rose Anne Pelo: Well Naples was the main town, Naples is like Woodbridge, and then we were like mostly in Torre Annunziante, that was like my father's hometown. It's like Iselin is part of Woodbridge and Port Reading, his hometown was part of Naples. We did a lot of traveling.

Brenda Velasco: With your family.

Rose Anne Pelo: We went by plane and then we came back by boat; the old fashioned Italian liners.

Brenda Velasco: How many went with you?

Rose Anne Pelo: It was the four of us, mother, father, my brother and myself.

Brenda Velasco: Your aunts and uncles didn't go with you?

Rose Anne Pelo: No, they went at different times my aunt and uncle went.

Brenda Velasco: That was quite an experience for somebody in middle school.

Rose Anne Pelo: I really remember quite a bit of it.

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

Rose Anne Pelo: Like I said, you weren't afraid to walk at night. One of my girlfriends worked in the library so me and this other friend used to pick her up at nine o'clock and then walk home. It was a good twenty minute walk and we weren't

afraid. Even though we lived across from the railroad tracks you were not afraid at night. A lot of the neighbors knew one another. A lot of the mothers worked.

Brenda Velasco: Did your mother?

Rose Anne Pelo: No, she did not work.

Brenda Velasco: Okay.

Rose Anne Pelo: Well, we worked in the store for awhile then she was at home. Then later on she worked.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, now your father owned a fish store did she.....

Rose Anne Pelo: Yes, but that only lasted about a year because Iselin wasn't like down the shore where it was more of a fish town. But he did try, he wanted to do something different. That was called **Blue Point**.

Brenda Velasco: Where was that located?

Rose Anne Pelo: Right on Route #27 where the Italian restaurant is now.

Brenda Velasco: **Casa Guiseppe?**

Rose Anne Pelo: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: Okay.

Rose Anne Pelo: And also years ago there was a flower shop on Route #27, back in the mid-'80s. Then **Iselin Transmission** was there for years. There was a car dealer on Route #27 where we lived. **Ciccione's Welding** has been there for quite a long time.

Brenda Velasco: What was your address on Route #27?

Rose Anne Pelo: 2527. Then there was a bridal shop right down the road going towards Rahway.

Brenda Velasco: Is that bridal shop there anymore?

Rose Anne Pelo: No. That was back in the '70s and '80s. The biggest attraction was **Robert Hall** because back then there used to be a big circle in Iselin. All the kids used to buy their school clothes there. Then around the circle was a hot dog stand, I think it was **John's Hot Dogs**. I'm not too sure of the correct name. Right before the apartments was **Klein's**. It was off of Route #1 off Gills Lane.

Brenda Velasco: Right. Right across from Woodbridge Center.

Rose Anne Pelo: Right.

Brenda Velasco: That's right, I remember **Klein's** was there and now it's **BoneFish** and **Toy R Us** and all over there.

Rose Anne Pelo: Then Woodbridge Center was built in 1971 and then years later they built the extra wing.

Brenda Velasco: So you had everything close by?

Rose Anne Pelo: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: And you could choose to walk or choose bus transportation. If you wanted to go to New York you had the bus or you had the train. It was a great location.

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

Rose Anne Pelo: More apartments came to the town. A lot of the old stores went away like the movies, extra drug store, clothing store and the bakery.

Brenda Velasco: Why do you think that happened because **V&P** went out, too?

Rose Anne Pelo: It just that there were more people coming to the town with different nationalities. Then once the Indian people came into town and they opened up a store and then later on one store opened up and another one, their jewelry stores, their food stores.

Brenda Velasco: It was changing demographics. So you saw a lot of apartments going up with the construction. How about developments because you moved here in '49?

Rose Anne Pelo: **West Berry Sweet Shop** there were very few homes there and then they all started like in the '50s.

Brenda Velasco: And off of Plymouth you got that whole development.

Rose Anne Pelo: Right, and then I heard from somebody that there used to be an airport in Iselin back in the '40s I heard.

Brenda Velasco: That was off Correja or somewhere in that area.

Rose Anne Pelo: And where I lived there was like all woods back there and then they built the homes. When I grew up, we had all woods.

Brenda Velasco: So you saw a lot of the expansion with all the developments coming in.

Rose Anne Pelo: Then Metro Park opened up and then they closed the regular Iselin train station. The candy stores where the kids used to hang out after school disappeared. They built more grammar schools and changed the boundary lines.

Brenda Velasco: So you captured Iselin before the population explosion, during the population explosion and then the change in demographics because you had the whole business section catering now to the Asian/Indians.

Rose Anne Pelo: I remember they had the fire at St. Cecelia's and then they redid the church.

Brenda Velasco: Was anybody hurt in that fire?

Rose Anne Pelo: No, I don't think so. Then they had, they called it a Quonset Hut. It was in one of the parking lots. I went to second grade there; they had a lot of their classes there. They had that for a couple of years.

Brenda Velasco: That was at St. Cecelia's?

Rose Anne Pelo: Right, and then the nuns used to live off Green Street before they built their new building.

Brenda Velasco: Before the convent.

Rose Anne Pelo: Well, the convent was there but it was the old convent on the fairgrounds.

Brenda Velasco: Oh, okay.

Rose Anne Pelo: It was all the way in the back. Then they built a new building where the nuns were.

Brenda Velasco: Then they tore that old convent down and that became the fairgrounds.

Rose Anne Pelo: Right, it was more property.

Brenda Velasco: Yes, now it's a bunch of houses.

Rose Anne Pelo: I still can't believe they built so many of them on that property.

Brenda Velasco: Right. Okay, anything else-any sporting events or accidents that you saw?

Rose Anne Pelo: Just fender benders, nothing to mention.

Brenda Velasco: Alright, but your house burned down.

Rose Anne Pelo: Part of the house burned down.

Brenda Velasco: And what was that address?

Rose Anne Pelo: That was the one down on Poor Farm Road; there was an electrical fire. My mother and father lost quite a bit in that fire. I remember crying for my doll and the firemen went back into the house to bring it out to me. That fireman risked his life because he thought I was so cute.

Brenda Velasco: For your doll. Do you remember what year that was in?

Rose Anne Pelo: No, because it had to be before '55.

Brenda Velasco: That was a traumatic experience, Rose Anne.

Rose Anne Pelo: A lot of our pictures were burned and the clothes.

Brenda Velasco: Yes.

Rose Anne Pelo: They lost a lot of furniture. My parents never wanted to talk about it. I found out a lot when I went to see my aunt. As I got older, I found out more but they never mentioned it.

Brenda Velasco: That's a traumatic experience not only financially but emotionally because the pictures those are mementos that can't be replaced. But nobody was hurt?

Rose Anne Pelo: No, me and my mother were coming back from the store and my brother was in the backyard on the pony rides.

Brenda Velasco: So nobody was in the house.

Rose Anne Pelo: No.

Brenda Velasco: And your dad was working probably.

Rose Anne Pelo: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: So it was during the daytime that the fire was?

Rose Anne Pelo: Yes, when he got there or when he found out I don't remember.

10. What do you like about Woodbridge today?

Brenda Velasco: You've lived in Avenel, Iselin, Fords and currently Port Reading. So you've been in quite a few sections and you're working at Maple Tree Manor as an assistant manager. You never moved out.

Rose Anne Pelo: No.

Brenda Velasco: I think you like it then. Okay, why do you still stay in Woodbridge?

Rose Anne Pelo: I have some close friends. Since 1971, all my jobs were within a five mile radius. I guess I was lucky.

Brenda Velasco: You sure were.

Rose Anne Pelo: I guess I was spoiled with the traveling.

Brenda Velasco: It's a great location.

Rose Anne Pelo: You're right near the Turnpike and the Parkway.

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

Rose Anne Pelo: No.

Brenda Velasco: All your aunts and uncles.....

Rose Anne Pelo: I have a few of them but they're not local.

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

Rose Anne Pelo: Well I just miss, as a kid, the parades because we looked forward to that every year and the Iselin Fair did change over the years. They don't have the acts anymore at eleven o'clock.

Brenda Velasco: You saw Iselin go from a small town to big.

Rose Anne Pelo: Right.

Brenda Velasco: You're one of those who witnessed this transformation and that's what I wanted to capture with this oral history project; how it was a small town at one time and now we are a big town.

Rose Anne Pelo: Everybody knew one another. A lot of the people in town were related in some way, cousins or second cousins. If you wanted to track somebody down you're able to talk to somebody that knew somebody. Not everybody had colored TV. There was one phone in the house, no microwaves and no crock pots. As I got older, all these appliances came in.

Brenda Velasco: To make life easier for us.

Rose Anne Pelo: When I went to school you had to wear skirts and dresses. Then a year after I graduated, the girls started wearing pants.

Brenda Velasco: After 1966.....

Rose Anne Pelo: I think it was 1967 or 1968 they started to change the dress code, the late '60s, and your skirt could not be more than two inches above the knee. My gym teacher, we didn't hit it off from day one, so one day she measured my skirt and it was two and a quarter inches and she sent me down to the principal's office because she didn't like me. I was the only one in the gym class that would take their uniform home every week and wash it. I used to iron it and clean my sneakers and wash my shoelaces and change my socks, the only one, and she didn't like me.

Brenda Velasco: Okay. And she got back at you too.

Rose Anne Pelo: No, I got back at her.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, how did you get back at her?

Rose Anne Pelo: I was under a lot of stress and the doctor told me I could be excused from gym at the end of my junior year and I didn't want to take gym anymore. I was under medication so I got a doctor's excuse not to go for gym and she knew it, too.

Brenda Velasco: Well in New Jersey it's mandatory that you have gym so you had a doctor's excuse and you got out of it, okay. Well if there's nothing more to mention I thank you very much. Do you have anything else you want to tell us?

Rose Anne Pelo: No, I think that's it.

Brenda Velasco: Okay, thank you very, very much. I enjoyed the interview and going back to an Iselin of long ago.