

Oral History Interview

Sophie Dobos Bader

WH006

(written transcript and cassette tape)

On May 12, 2008, Sophie Dobos Bader was interviewed at the Woodbridge Community Center by Brenda Velasco and students- Rita Nasr of School #9 (interviewer) and Srujanee Pradhan of Mawbey Street School #1 (recorder). In the audience were Vinnie Soccodatto (supervisor) and Glenn Lottman (G & T). Judy Kazimir, another interviewee, was also present. The audience also included other G&T students: Rupesh Chinta, Katherine Marciniak, Ruhy Patel, Louis Polise, Midori Yang.

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

My name is Sophie Elizabeth (Dobos) Bader and my date of birth is August 7, 1937.

Brenda Velasco: So you fit the criteria-over sixty-five years and lived in Woodbridge for fifty-five years or more?

2. How long have you lived in Woodbridge?

I was born in Woodbridge on Bergen Street, seventy years ago.

3. Why did your family move to Woodbridge?

My grandmother and grandfather came from Hungary and they settled in Woodbridge. My family has been here for over one hundred years. My grandmother and grandfather were Hungarian speaking people but they bought a grocery store in Woodbridge on Oak Avenue and Grove Street. They had the grocery store for many, many, many years.

4. What physical changes have occurred over the years in the area you lived?

-houses, streets, services, stores, houses of worship, schools, etc.

There are many, many new homes, many, many people, many, many cars but there are not enough trees. I guess that's about it. Probably that would be the physical changes.

Brenda Velasco: You've seen Woodbridge mushroom from a small community- though it was always large geographically- into the 5th largest township in the State of New Jersey with a population well over one hundred thousand

Sophie Bader: Absolutely. I remember taking the census in the 1960s or early '70s and then it was one hundred thousand or close to it. (1960-78,846 pop; 1970-98,944 pop)

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

There was the Town Hall which was a very nice building; I remember reading about it when it was built. Also there was the Post Office. I remember there was the White Church, and the Presbyterian Church. On Main Street, across from CVS, there was a bank, and now it's Woodbridge Auto Parts. But that was a beautiful building; it still has some of the marble pillars in the front. That is still there.

The Methodist Church in Woodbridge is there. On Green Street, it used to be called the Craftsman's Club... now there are offices in there and our mayor has an office there.....there was actually a bowling alley in there. Talking about bowling alleys, the bowling alley originally

wasn't there on Main Street. It was across from the Medicine Shoppe on Amboy Avenue, in the building across the street.

Brenda Velasco: So you've seen lots of changes.

Sophie Bader: Yes.

6. *What did you do for recreation?*

We played baseball. Every Sunday we would go to the State Theatre, next to Town Hall, where the Quik Check is. Every Sunday afternoon we went to the movies. During WWII we would get into the movies if we bought a piece of metal, stand in line with a piece of metal or my cousin would stand in line with metal airplanes and they would let us get in for nothing.

Brenda Velasco: This was the war effort and we needed all the metal for the planes.

Sophie Bader: Every summer my mother would buy my sister and I a piece of embroidery cloth. My neighbor next door, she was a German lady, every afternoon, would teach us how to embroider clothes and that was part of our summer recreation.

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

Probably the Church.

Brenda Velasco: Which Church?

Sophie Bader: The Hungarian Reformed Church on School Street next to the Board of Education building. We would go to Hungarian School. We would go for a couple of weeks. They would teach us how to speak Hungarian. We would do that in the summertime also.

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

The neighbors were friendly; we had a lot of happy times. We had a big garden in our yard. My mom and dad would plant tomatoes and radishes and cucumbers; it was just good. We would weed during the day; it was just a great time. It was a very nice neighborhood. Woodbridge was a great place to live. It still is.

Brenda Velasco: Did you do canning?

Sophie Bader: Yes, my mother would do the canning after we would pick all the red tomatoes off the vine, and the string beans. My mom would get the jars; it was a whole day process.

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

There is a lot. One in particular I thought about last night was when I was about seven years old. Before Woodbridge Center was there it was called the clay pits. When I was seven years old, I got an eye injury. There was a little chapel in the middle of the clay pits and people would say that miracles were performed there. So my mom and dad took me when I had this eye injury to this little chapel and just prayed. Whether it helped or not, but my eye got better. That chapel is gone. (Mrs. Kazimir and so is Mr. Glen Lottman are sitting in the back commenting)

Sophie Bader: Do you remember that? (directed to Mrs. Kazimir)

Brenda Velasco: Mrs. Kazimir is sitting here. She remembers that the chapel and the special powers it was supposed to have. Your eye was healed.

Sophie Bader: We went to the circus and years ago they sold popcorn in cones. I went like this to get the rest of it out and part of the popcorn scratched my eye and I had an ulcerated eye. They did not know if I would go blind or not...but here I am.

10. What do you like about Woodbridge today?

I like living here because I am very familiar with the surroundings and the people that live here. I have very nice neighbors and helpful neighbors. I like to see people that I grew up with. I graduated from high school in 1955 and I still see people I went to school with. I enjoy that.

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

Yes, quite a few.

Brenda Velasco: Could you elaborate because we have Rita who really wanted to interview you?

Sophie Bader: Alright. Mr. Bader, he's your principal and he is my nephew. His dad was my husband's brother, they were brothers. Do you know Mr. Bader's wife, Mrs. Bader, she is also a teacher?

Brenda Velasco: Does your daughter live in Woodbridge?

Sophie Bader: Yes my daughter lives in Woodbridge, she lives on High Street. She is the marketing director for the YMCA. My mom is 94 years old, she still lives in Woodbridge. My sister is still living here; she is a professor at Rutgers University. My other sister and her husband are real estate brokers and they had a real estate office on Green Street in Woodbridge.

Brenda Velasco: So you have a lot of family still around you.

Sophie Bader: Yes.

Brenda Velasco: You are very fortunate because some of the other people we interviewed they are the last people.....their kids have moved throughout the United States....

Sophie Bader: I am ...that is why I am still here.....

Brenda Velasco: That is one of the reasons to remain in Woodbridge. You come to the Community Center, too, right? And your daughter is right here.

Sophie Bader: Right.

Brenda Velasco: No further questions...conclude.....I did not know about the chapel

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Glenn Lottman: It was an interesting story. What was it called?

Sophie Bader: I was only 5 or 6 years old. I really didn't know. I remember my parents taking me there you know..... took a chance

Glenn Lottman: It worked ?

Sophie Bader: Maybe it was the doctor.....It was cute one of these little chapels.....

Judy Kazimir: If I could find a picture, I would give it to you....