

AN INTERVIEW WITH
SARAH (AQUINO) DeCICCO



APRIL 5, 2013

FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF HAMMONTON

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Interviewed and Recorded by: Anne DeCicco

Transcribed by: Carol Effinger

SARAH (AQUINO) DeCICCO

Receiving Chamber of Commerce Award



Sarah Nancy DeCicco
Interviewed by Anne DeCicco
For the Historical Society of Hammonton, New Jersey
April 5, 2013

Q: What is your full name including your maiden name?

A: Sarah Nancy DeCicco Aquino.

Q: What date and where were you born?

A: Born in Winslow, New Jersey, on January 23, 1927.

Q: Where you born in a hospital or at home?

A: Born at home, Dr. Bitler.

Q: Did you grow up in the town where you were born?

A: Yes.

Q: Tell me about your surroundings as a child.

A: It was a very small town, in fact even today people don't know there is a town of Winslow. They only know Winslow Township. They do not know there is a town in the mist of all this with maybe five or six hundred people and that is where I grew up.

Q: What was your address?

A: Albertson Rd. in Winslow. We didn't have house numbers. We had a post office box.

Q: How did you get to school?

A: I only lived five houses from the school so I walked. I was very close.

Q: Do you remember the names of some of your teachers and some of your friends?

A: It was a four room school, two classes in each room, kindergarden, first, second. The teacher was Mrs. Wade, Miss was three and four and Mrs. Conrad was our seventh and eighth grade and when she left her daughter took over, Mrs. Warner and that was at the four room school.

Q: Did you like school?

A: Yes.

Q: Who were your best friends during your school years?

A: My best friends were Dot Sutts, Jackie Stewart, Harry O'Neill, Eleanor Brigandi. They were my, you know closest classmates. In fact we still get together but we are a

very few left use Jack Stewart, Harry O'Neil and Celina Pierson, I think we are the only three that are left out of the class.

Q: How far up did the school go? Then you went to ...

A: Eighth grade. Then Lower Camden County Regional, all the way up to Lindenwold.

Q: Tell me about that.

A: That was a large school, about a block long and you changed classes, two floors.

So we went from a four room school to this monster school and it was the scariest thing in the world. It really was but we got used to it. We had a lot of fun.

Q: Did you get involved?

A: Not too much because we were so far away and we didn't get involved. It was a very large school and it was so far away.

Q: How long was your bus ride?

A: It must have been ...well we had to pick up students along the way ..and we had left very early in the morning. We got home ... it was a long, long ride.

Q: Did you have snow days?

A: We were four miles from Hammonton and we went eighteen or twenty miles maybe more to go to school but it was different counties so we had to go that way but before that school was built they came to Hammonton.

Q: Do you remember snow days?

A: No. We didn't go to school on snow days.

Q: Do you remember the clothing that they wore?

A: Yes. We had sweaters, skirts. No dungarees, no pants. No one ever wore pants or dungarees or anything. I could remember we used to wear button down sweaters.

They would button down the front. We would button them down the back. I don't know why but...It was a trend. I told one of my nieces and she said why did you do that? I said because it was a trend and we did it.

Q: What would you consider in those days wild clothing?

A: Nothing too wild because it was sort of strict in school then. You didn't get away with much. I don't remember anybody dressing real wild like they do today.

Q: What did you do for activities as a teen ager?

A: Activities when I was a kid..... we all got together in our little town of Winslow at night and we would be at somebody's house, my house or something and we had the radio on and dance around or play games or just do that because we didn't have anything else to do.

Q: Do you remember when you got your television?

A: I can remember .. I was married when we got television. That was 1946 and we had a seven inch screen and that was that.

Q: What was the name of your spouse and tell be about how you met and what his name is?

A: His name is Joseph DeCicco and he was from Hammonton. I met him ..I was living temporarily at a place and I met him and then we got married June 8, 1946.

Q: What were his mother and father's names?

A: Joseph and Carolyn De Cicco.

Q: Could you name his brothers and sisters?

A: He had brothers and two sisters, Carolyn and Anntoinette. He had three brothers, Albert, Sam and Chick.

Q: How old were you when you were married?

A: I was nineteen.

Q: How old was he?

A: He was twenty one.

Q: How did you met and how long did you know him before you got married?

A: About one year.

Q: How did you meet?

A: We met where I worked at this one place.

Q: Pino's?

A: I knew him about one year. We went out with a group of people and we got married.

Q: Were you married in church?

A: Yes. St. Joseph's in Hammonton.

Q: What did you do for entertainment?

A: We liked to go to the movies. He loved to roller skate. We did a lot of roller skating back then and he was an excellent skater and we would go skating a lot and go to the

movies and he joined the fire company and then we would have affairs and so we were always with a group of people.

Q: Tell me about your family that you have.

A: My mom was Theresa Aquino, my dad was ----- . I had six sisters and two brothers. That was my family.

Q: How did your brothers treat you?

A: My one brother was kind of old when I was born. My other brother was more of my mentor, my younger brother was my mentor. He always sort of looked out for me even up to the day he died I think. He always lived in California but he would always call me. But when I was growing up he always ..." you can't go with this boy, you can't go with that boy".

Q: How about today. I know you have a lot of family.

A: Yes. A lot of nieces and nephews, great nieces and great nephews and great, great nieces and nephews.

ANNE: And they all love you very much.

Q: How has Hammonton changed since you were young?

A: When I started in Sears in 1946 it was beautiful. Friday nights was the most beautiful thing in Hammonton. Everyone came to town because you didn't have malls. You didn't go out of town shopping. You just came to town. Families came, husbands and wives. Husbands would stand on the corners and talk and then the wives would be out shopping with the kids playing. It was just beautiful. There were, like I said, there were no stores or malls to go out of town so everyone came into town. Every store in Hammonton was opened and there was someone in every store so they just shopped and it was very nice. As the malls came in and people started going out of town, our town did deteriorate and then, I could just see it as years went by everything start changing and then we started a merchant's association and we had that but then I moved to Florida for five years so I was away from it but then they started the Hammonton revitalization to bring the town back and now we have Main Street which has done a beautiful job and it is beginning to look a lot like Hammonton.

Q: What were some of your favorite stores that you shopped in when you were in town?

A: We had Miller's, we had 5&10. I went to the 5&10 every day and we met friends that worked in other stores and we would have lunch together at the 5&10. Betty made all home made food.

Q: Betty, who was Betty?

A: Betty Sacco.

Sarah: She was excellent behind there so we would all meet there and have lunch. Then Miller's and they had a beautiful children's shop. They just had a lot of The drug stores all had soda counters and it was just a lot of fun. Arlene's ... I did a lot of shopping at Arlene's and Mary's. It was just a lot of shops that you could shop in. Anything your wanted ..shoe stores anything you wanted was there.

Q: What was the major events of your life that you could remember. Like major things of news? Do you remember when the war?

A: Oh God, yes. I could remember. World War II I was in high school. I could remember being at my mom's. We were down the farm in Winslow when they had the radio on Sunday afternoon and they announced it and I could still remember that hour. The next morning when I went to school one of my friends, Louise Miauro, her brother was in Hawaii, that place and she didn't know if he was alive or dead and then she found out that he was okay. His name was Jimmy Miauro. He was okay.

Q: Tell me about your mom, her name, her maiden name.

A: Her name was Thersa_____ and she was born in Italy, in Calabria and she loved to cook, she loved to knit and crochet. She used to crochet professionally. She used to make sweaters. Mrs. Reciento used to have a business and my mother would make part of the sweater and she would take it back and I guess someone else did the other part. My mother always, up until the day she couldn't move always either crocheted or knitted. She always had a needle in her hair or something. Always knitted or crocheted.

Q: What did your mom look like?

A: She was short, a little stocky, she wore her hair in a bun. She was a happy person.

Q: Do you know what her parents names were?

A: No.

Q: Did your mom talk about Italy? Did she tell you any stories ?

A: She would talk about the mountains and the olive groves and not too much. I am sorry that I didn't ask more. I wish I would have followed through. Well you just don't think of it. It bothers me more now than it did then because I never thought about it till now.

Q: She liked to cook. What were her favorite recipes?

A: We always had spaghetti. We always had a dinner on Thursday night, spaghetti. I don't know why but we did. She loved to.. she would make pancakes for breakfast out of just flour - not pancake mix, you know. We always had a lot of food. We lived on a farm so we always had .. it was almost like a store and in the Depression Era. We lived on the farm so we always had food.

Q: Did she live on the farm until she died or did she move ?

A: No. When my dad died we sold it. She came to live with me because she couldn't stay there alone. It was a two story house and she couldn't climb steps. She came to live with me.

Q: How did she feel about leaving her home?

A: You know she didn't give me a hard time and she just loved Joe. Joe could do no wrong, yeah.

Q: Tell us about your dad. What was his name and did he have a nickname?

A: No. His name was _____. He worked on the railroad all his life.

Q: What did he do on the railroad?

A: He was a track man. They took care of the tracks.

Q: Did he work out of Hammonton?

A: -----

Q: Where did your dad grow up and where was he born? What did he look like?

A: He was born in Calabria, Italy. He was about 6 foot and he had beautiful white hair and he died in 1961.

Q: Did he have any brothers or sisters?

A: Yes. He had a brother in Canada and he had a brother that was in the service in Italy but had died.

Q: How about your mother, did she have any sisters or brothers?

A: She had a sister in Buffalo and a brother that lived in Winslow but he had died early. He had a stroke.

Q: How did you father meet your mother, in Italy?

A: In a little town in Italy.

Q: Did he get to attend school of any kind?

A: In Italy they did.

Q: Do you remember any stories he told you about his childhood?

A: They didn't talk too much about their childhood and I didn't ask like an idiot.

Q: Was your dad in the military?

A: He had some kind of... we have records of some kind of service record. It is written in Italian and my nephew was supposed to get it transcribed for us and he hasn't done it. Somebody from Nino's or somebody is going to do it for us.

Q: Where are your parents buried?

A: Holy Sepulcher.

Q: You said that he was one of the first buried.

A: Yes, because the cemetery wasn't that it wasn't one of the first but it was very new.

Q: Tell me about yourself from after you graduated from high school.

A: I just went to work someplace... I think it was Frank Gazzara's I used to work and he used to make hot dogs and things and I went to help out that summer and I met Joe and then we were married in June 8, 1946 and I wasn't working so my sister-in-law was working for Sears, (Antionette Capelli) and she asked me if I would help for Christmas. I went to help for Christmas and I stayed for forty years at Sears. (That was a long Christmas). Then I worked for Sears.

Q: What was the hardest part about working there?

A: I don't know that there ever was a hardest part.

Q: What was the best part?

A: The best part, they had good management. I started just helping out for Christmas and would work certain hours and then I would go home. Then I got doing more and more and then I was working in shipping then I was made credit manager a couple of years later and then assistant manager and then I made management and I just loved it

and I had good workers most of.. 99% of the time the workers were great and management was excellent. I mean they never gave us a hard time and maybe the hours might be the worst thing because when you are management you just work hours and hours and hours especially holidays. They were very pleasant to work for and I really enjoyed it and my employees were great. I can't say enough about them and I stayed for forty years.

Q: Tell us about all your volunteer work and what you do?

A: OK, volunteer work well..... Well when I was manager I was talked into going to a chamber meeting by Vince Giannini and I said "well you know I didn't mind going to the meeting" but then he talked me into going to a dinner and I said there are no women there. He said oh yes there are going to be women because before the chamber was strictly men. I went and Joe came with me and there were no women there. He said well there are waitresses here. I was a little upset. Then they asked me to join the board of the chamber and I did. I enjoyed it. I was on it until we moved to Florida in 1987 and I enjoyed every minute of it. In 1961 I joined the soroptimist club and I still belong to that.

Q: What do you do in soroptimist's?

A: It is a professional business club. The status of women. We give scholarships every year to one person who would like to go to college, head of a household and needs the money and each year we have one or two. We do a lot of other things. We are an international club so we sponsor .. right know they are working on the trafficking of women throughout the world which is a very serious problem, so we are into that. We do a lot of other, you know things at the time that comes up. I belong to the red cross. I do the ... I have to get the volunteers when they have the drives in this area and sometimes like right now, Cedar Creek they need help so we are going to Cedar Creek to help.

Q: What do you do? Do you keep records?

A: No. We as volunteers do the signing in of the people. After they give blood we have to see that they drink or eat something and see that they are not going to pass out and watch them. That is about it. We don't do anything with the blood or anything.

Q: You have been doing that for a long time.

A: I've done it for about 16 years. One day Mrs. Applebee called me. She said somebody told me you do volunteer work and we need someone in Hammonton to handle volunteers. I said we'll try it. So I got a bunch of girls together and I do have a good group.

Q: Who are your friends that you tend to work with?

A: People I knew and I asked them if they would like to do it and they enjoy it and they really do. In fact we are going to have a big one at the Sons of Italy on the 24th in memory of one of the fellows that died. What else ... Main Street. I started with the business women and then it went to Hammonton Revitalization and now it is Main Street and I worked on that. I loved that. I think that we did a beautiful job. I really do.

Q: Do you go to most of the meetings?

A: I go to all of the meetings, yeah. In fact, the Christmas Tree was my idea. The outside Christmas Tree with the balls.

Q: That was very nice.

A: Yeah I thought it was. That was very nice. We had a lot of fun doing that. Have you ever come down that night?

Ann: Yes. Every year.

Sarah: Last year was exceptional.

Ann: Oh. It was, the music.

Sarah: We are working on it already from now. It keeps me busy.

Q: What do you do for entertainment like just to relax?

A: Relax? Like yesterday I went out to lunch.

Q: Who are your lady friends that you like to hang with.

A: All the girls I worked with at the blood drive. We are very close. Ann Bruno, Marie Mango and people like I haven't seen in awhile will call and say lets go to lunch, some of my older friends. Right now I owe about getting together with about three people for lunch that I have to fit in sometime. But it is just busy. I like to go shopping to the mall and that is what I do with my spare time.

Q: If you wanted somebody to remember you what would you want them to say about you?

A: That is a hard one. I just hope that I was nice to everybody and did not hurt anyone. That is about it.

Q: Is there anything that we missed that you would like to say like something important about your life or your family?

A: Oh. I don't know what I would do without my family. My nieces and my nephews because they are all I have left and they are great. I have a lot of them and you are one of them.

Q: Do you have any siblings that are still alive, sisters or brother?

A: We spent five years in Florida. Joe always wanted to live in Florida when he retired so when he retired we lived in Florida for five years but then he had a heart attack and died and all my sisters were living then (most of them).... they said you have to come back you can't stay there alone. So I did. I came back and then they all died.

Q: Do you miss Florida?

A: At times I do but I missed Hammonton too. I would fly home a lot. Joe would say any time you want to go home you go home and I'd fly home and stay a couple of weeks and he would stay. Maybe once or twice a year he would come home but he just loved it. If something was going on with my nephews and nieces I would fly home and spend a couple of weeks but I don't know if my sisters hadn't hounded me I don't know what I would have done.

Interviewed by: Ann DeCicco 4/5/2013

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