

AN INTERVIEW WITH
VIRGINIA (BELEK) BALITA



JANUARY 18, 2011

FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF HAMMONTON

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Ginny Balita

Interviewed by Ellen Aiello

For the Historical Society of Hammonton, New Jersey

January 18, 2011

Q: What is your full name?

A: Virginia Ruth Belek Balita

Q: Please state today's date.

A: Today is January 16, 2011

Q: What is your age?

A: I'm 73 years old.

Q: What is your date of birth?

A: September 8, 1937.

Q: Where were you born?

A: I was born in Irwin Sanitarium Hospital in Queens, New York by a physician. This was a private hospital where mothers in that day went to have their children.

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

A: No. I did not. We lived in Queens for awhile where I was born. Then we moved to Flushing, New York and I lived at 7641 142nd St. in Queens. We bought this house in 1941 and we were the first people to move away from Queens.

Q: When you were a teenager where did everyone gather for entertainment?

A: Well, when I was a teenager we had a roller skating rink, ice skating rink and we would most likely go there or we went to games , we stayed at school and due to the

proximity of New York we used to take the buses and subways in and go to the museum. We didn't do things at home. We did things in the neighborhood with our friends in the neighborhood.

Q: What would have been considered wild clothes or hair in those days?

A: Let's see, when I was a teenager? It was the boys thought they were like Elvis with the leather jackets and the hair all combed back. We wore mainly poodle skirts and crinolines and sweater sets and little collars. I remember I had a collection of little collars to put on my sweater sets. I think we were very conventional. We didn't have any outlandish clothing.

Q: Are you married or have you been married?

A: I am married currently married for 53 years.

Q: What is your spouse's name?

A: His name is Engracio Balita.

Q: Where was he born?

A: He was born in the Phillipines.

Q: As a couple what kinds of places did you go for social life?

A: Well, since we were so poor we mainly did everything free. The first years of our marriage we did everything free. Free park, museums. Everything that was free we did. We would socialize with other friends and they would come with us. Whatever it was that didn't cost any money we did.

Q: Did you know each other a long time before you got married?

A: No we didn't. We just knew each other about 8 months.

Q: How old were you?

A: I was 20 years old.

Q: How old was he?

A: He was 30 years old.

Q: What religion are you?

A: I am Catholic.

Q: Have you always followed this religion?

A: No. I haven't.

Q: Do you have any children?

A: Yes. I have two children.

Q: What are their names and birth dates?

A: Susan Elizabeth Balita Fox. She was born March 13, 1959. Katherine Ann Balita Bencevenga. She was born February 1, 1962 in Vineland.

Q: What was your mother's maiden name?

A: My mother's maiden was Ruth Cecelia Fields.

Q: When and where was your mother born?

A: My mother was born in Brooklyn. She was born September 1, 1913.

Q: Do you know when and where your mother's mother was born. The maternal grandmother?

A: Yes. She was born in New York. Her name was Sarah Dingedine. She was born in the city of New York.

Q: Do you have a family bible that records this?

A: We have a distant cousin that has been recording all the generations through the years. I do not have one personally.

Q: Do you know where your mother's ancestors came from?

A: Well originally they came from England, Iceland and Germany. Three different parts of Europe and Ireland.

Q: What was your mother's father's name?

A: Michael Silvester Fields.

Q: Do you know where and when he was born?

A: He was born in Brooklyn.

Q: Do you know where your mother's father's ancestors came from?

A: They were from Ireland.

Q: Do you know any stories about your mom's ancestors?

A: I know lots of stories. When they originally came in she has ancestors going way back on her mother's side that did muster in the Revolutionary War. We traced the generations down and so between then and when the Dinkledines came into the picture they became quite wealthy in the city of New York and when the stock market crashed they lost all of their money. The Dinkledines for whatever reason changed their name to Birdsall. So we have the Birdsall side and the Dinkledine side. Unfortunately, the Birdsall's never, as time went on, never corresponded with the Dinkledine side until about 20 years ago when the Birdsalls thought they were Birdsalls. They didn't know that they were the Dinkledines.

Q: Okay. Any other stories?

A: Well. One branch of the family went off to make silver, a silversmith down in St. Louis. People that know sterling silver will probably know Otto Dinkledine. We found each other through , there was an obituary about twenty years ago about a little baby

that died. Her name was Sarah Birdsall. The list of survivors were people that my mother knew. She just happened to be sitting on the porch reading the paper. She was reading this obituary of this poor infant that died. She recognized some names that were cousins of hers, actually first cousins. So she and her sister were brave enough to go knock on their door. They only lived around the corner and low and behold they were all reunited, all the cousins were reunited after many years of animosity and we all liked each other. The irony of the whole thing is that one of the Birdsall men, a young man, was in the CIA and he was working in secret covert operation and they called him up and said your name isn't Birdsall, it is Dingleline, he nearly had a heart attack because he had been researched so much and they never picked that up. He had to go with the new papers and he had to have his name put in the records. It was a big uproar in the family.

Q: Did your father have a nickname?

A: Whitey because his hair was very white when he was a child.

Q: Where was your father from?

A: My father was actually born in Brooklyn. His mother and father immigrated on the President Lincoln. They came from Lithuania, Austria. They came over on the President Lincoln in 1913. I have these documents here that my grandfather would no longer pledge allegiance to the emperor of Austria and the king of Hungary. He would no longer adhere to their policies. He was willing to become a United States citizen.

Q: Do you know your father's mother's maiden name?

A: It was Rosie Pitiak.

Q: Where was she born?

A: Well we think she was born in Lithuania, Austria or Romania but when we went back to find all the records everything during the war had been lost in the fires.

Q: Do you remember stories about your ancestors when they were young?

A: Unfortunately my grandmother on my father's side came to this country not speaking English and she had to go to work in a doll factory. So we were not really close. She had to go to work every day, she had to put her children in orphanages. My grandmother on my mother's side died when I was four so unfortunately I didn't have, I had aunts tell me stories but not grandparents.

Q: What was your father's father's name?

A: John. His last name, we have had many different spellings. It was Bilak. That is what he came to the United States with. We also have papers where it is spelled Biellek. Either they shortened it at Ellis Island or he decided to shorten it.

Q: Do you know where he was born?

A: He said he was born in Buckowina, Austria but through history we found out that really could be Romania but all during the wars the countries you know.

Q: Did your parents ever tell you how they met and fell in love?

A: Yes. My parents met at a party and since my father was technically and my grandfather. My mother was one of five children. My grandfather was very protective. When she fell in love with my father who she met at the party my grandfather became enraged. He chased my father down the street. He ran after him for blocks and never caught my father. So my mother and father snuck around until my mother went to my grandfather and she was the fourth girl to get married. They all got married. My grandfather did not like any of them.

Q: Where did your mother grow up?

A: Actually my mother grew up in Brooklyn.

Q: Where did you father grow up?

A: Actually he grew up in the Oddfellows Orphanage which was in New York. He really didn't have a permanent home. He was transferred back and forth to an elderly aunt and eventually got married. He had a bad life. My father wrote to the Oddfellows Orphanage as an adult trying to find out why he was living there because he didn't have a father. They never came up with an explanation as to why and how long he stayed there. So my father didn't speak, he had an unhappy childhood and his mother remarried when he was fifteen. His stepfather took him to the Bell Telephone laboratory where he became a janitor, he swept the floors, he was fifteen. Even though he went to school and at night that was his job, he swept the floors. Someone must have noticed some intelligence in him so he was taken under some people's wings and they sent him to school at night. He worked for the telephone company for 45 years and he made many patents. If you google his name, Emil Belek you will see his patents. He was very intelligent.

Q: How many brothers and sisters did he have?

A: He had a sister Anna. She was put in the girls orphanage. She, for some reason there was bad blood between them, between the brother and the sister. They never bonded even though they grew up together. She went her way and he went his way.

Q: That is all there was?

A: That's all there was but she had a daughter, June who, I would say about 20 years ago, as an adult came looking for us. We communicated. She is in the Jewish religion

in fact she just got back from Israel. She had three lovely children and we are at the point as adults we are trading pictures, lot of e-mails.

Q: What is her name?

A: June Burkowitz. That is her married name. It was June Rupp. She had a stepfather so June Rupp Radcliff Burkowitz. She said she had a very sad childhood because she thought we had a happy childhood which we did. She only knew what her mother would tell her. It was the flu epidemic. My grandfather had died. My grandmother had three children. She couldn't take care of them. There was no Medicaid.

Q: What happened to her husband?

A: He died. She lost her husband and her son within a year. She didn't speak English so she had two more children so they went to orphanages or homes whatever they called them.

Q: Did your mother work before or after marriage?

A: My mother worked when I started high school. She went to work as a bookkeeper. Then she was a stay at home mom. She worked at Macy's. Eventually she joined my father when they moved to New Jersey, in the Bell Telephone Company. She loved it. She ran off copies, whatever.

Q: Was your mother married before she married your father?

A: No.

Q: How about your father, was he married?

A: No.

Q: What did your mom look like?

A: Actually my mom looked a lot like I look. She was smaller than I was. She was very petite. She had blonde hair. Very pretty nice teeth, white teeth, beautiful teeth which I didn't inherit. Beautiful teeth until the day she died she had all of her teeth.

Q: Describe your father to me.

A: My father was a little tall, 5-8-5-9, a little stocky. He lost all his hair. His eyes were brown. I thought like my father. I had my mother's body and my father's brain. I like to say that. He was very good at math, handling money. He liked saving. He saved coins, stamps. I would sit with him for hours putting stamps in books and coins in books.

Q: Tell me a story about your mother, her likes, her dislikes, hobbies? Was she a good cook?

A: My mother wasn't a great cook. I think that is the Irish in her. We just have

Q: What was her favorite meal?

A: Anything that went in the oven. I took after her. A rump roast or a roast or a leg of lamb. On Friday we had potato pancakes. She would grate the potatoes over the grater and ruin my knuckles every Friday.

Q: What did she make that was your favorite?

A: I think the borsch soup with sour cream for my father. My father being dramatic.

Q: Did your father cook?

A: No never.

Q: Were either of your parents actively involved in the community? Did they belong to organizations or clubs?

A: No. They just stayed at home, play cards.

Q: Did either ever run for office?

A: No.

Q: Can you tell me a story about your father? His likes, dislikes?

A: Well aside from being a collector my father used to build things. He was always in the process of inventing something. Something that would roll up your toothpaste or something that would make your ironing time cut down. He always had this stuff all over the house. He was inventing all these things.

Q: Was he artistic? Did he have any hobbies, musical handy with tools?

A: He built things. He built the basement. He finished the whole basement. My father and I did that. We went down and I held the boards up. We finished the whole basement, my father and I.

Ellen: He just learned it?

Ginny: He just learned it. If we made a mistake we would tear down the wall. We put in a bathroom. We even put in a bar to stand behind.

Q: Did he place chess or cards?

A: Cards

Q: Did he have a garden or raise animals?

A: We didn't have animals but when my family were older and they had more time they did alot of gardening. Then they became fanatical about their lawn. They even had Chem-Lawn come if there was a weed. I would have to go out when I was a kid with a basket and go out on the front lawn and pick out weeds and I hated it. That memory just came back to me. We moved from Flushing to Long Island when I was thirteen. It was nice. We had more room. We were down the street from the potato farms. That is when my mother and father moved to Florida. Then they came with the palm trees.

Q: What skills or talents did you learn from your mother and father?

A: My mother sewed a lot. In fact she made every drapery and slip covers that were ever in our home. Her mother was a seamstress. She learned from her mother who dressed all the girls and then she would dress us and that is where I learned to sew, from my mother.

Q: Do you ever remember your mother losing her temper?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Did your father ever lose his temper?

A: Yes.

Q: Did they have a good sense of humor, your mother and father?

A: My mother had a better sense of humor than my father because she was happy as a child. She was brought up with two sisters and a brother, an Irish family. My father didn't have too much humor.

Q: Do you remember either telling jokes or funny stories?

A: The only stories I ever heard were about the depression, how poor they were. How my father had to line his shoes with paper, go to work. They were really, really poor. They were really thrifty. They never wasted anything. I remember taking my father, when Disney World first opened. We were walking around. You know how hot it gets there. We were parched and I went to get us something to drink. My father looked at the price and said I want to go where the free water is. Well the free water was about a half a mile away at the water fountain. I said "Dad, I'll pay for you. I'll buy you a coke or whatever is was". Oh no. I'm not giving them your money or my money. So he did

without. So we all got a soda. We said do want a sip. "Nope". It's the point of it he said. He never wasted a dollar. He would not let me buy him one.

Q: What is the sadist event you can remember family wise or other wise? Something that upset you and everybody?

A: The Depression was terrible. My mother losing her mother. My grandmother was only fifty-four. My mother was taken care of by her sister and we had just bought the new house in Flushing and borrowed the money from my grandmother and she died of an abcess on her liver. I remember being four years old. That whole episode. My mother getting in a limousine and going to the cemetery, the flowers, because my grandmother was viewed in the house. I had fear in the house. I could still recall that whole thing. Of course my mother leaving me and not taking me to the cemetery.

Q: How was your mother's health?

A: I would say my mother had a delicate system.

Q: How was your father's health?

A: Good.

Q: Was either parent ever severely ill or injured?

A: Only when they became older. When my mother was my age she developed macro degeneration. That's a terrible thing. Her beautiful blue eyes.

Q: What religion was your mother raised in?

A: She attended St. Cecelias RC Church.

Q: What religion was your father?

A: My father was Orthodox. When he married my mother he had to do his sacraments all over again because he was in and out of the faith. He never really went to any church. We have no documentation.

Q: What do you think your mother and father would think about today's teen agers?

A: Knowing my father he would probably disapprove but he would probably chuckle. He found that as he got older he found them amusing. I think probably because he could never do the things they do. My mother would be horrified but she would go along with it.

Q: When did your mother die?

A: My mother died in 2003. She was 90 years old. She died at Fountains in Atco. When you have macular degeneration you can see out of the corner of your eye. She went with a gentleman, Sam. They became very good friends. He lost his vision but she had her peripheral vision. She would help him walk down the hallway. They would spend about a good twelve hours a day together. She was happy at the end of her life with her companion. It turned out well. She could see him and she felt she had someone to care for.

Q: How did she die?

A: She eventually slipped into dementia. She just died of old age. My good friend Jane was with me. She was in a coma. Susan went over to my mother. She said grandmom I'm here, you can go now. Just like that my mother died. She took her last breath. It was like she was waiting. Even when she was in a coma she was waiting for everybody to come and say goodbye.

Q: When did your father die?

A: He died in 1993. He was 80.

Q: How did he die?

A: He died suddenly. He called me one night, three o'clock in the morning. We called 911. They took him in the ambulance. I held onto the phone and he said "Ruth, this is it" and he died right there.

Q: Did he have a cold or something?

A: Well he didn't take care of himself. He didn't go to the doctors. One of them. Would not go to doctors. He didn't trust them, he didn't believe them. The old timers. You know what he died suddenly and that was it.

Q: What cemetery is he buried in?

A: They are both buried in Hammonton, Holy Sepulcher, right down the road.

Q: Tell me about your parents education. Did they finish high school, did they go to college?

A: My mother finished high school. My father finished high school but in bell telephone company and so he had the equivalent of a college education but all through the telephone company. He didn't get a plaque but he got recognition and they kept giving him a plaque through the telephone company which that you God. They were very good to all of us.

Q: What schools did they attend?

A: My mother went to Jamaica High School. My father I'm not so sure.

Q: Was your father ever in the military?

A: Well my father was declared 4F and he had to work at night, on the night shift. We had to be quiet because he would sleep all day. We couldn't make a sound. So we

would have to play very quietly at my neighbors and whatever all through the war because he would have to go to work at night. It was a difficult time.

Q: Have you ever heard of any ancestors that were killed in battle?

A: No.

Q: Was your father or his father physically strong?

A: We have no knowledge of my grandfather.

Q: What about your mother's father? Was he physically strong?

A: He was very strong until his wife died. He was left with a young boy to raise. He was a wood polisher in a furniture building. He made fine furniture. In fact I have a cousin that inherited that.

Q: Did any of them like working outdoors?

A: My grandfather did. My grandfather Fields. He used to raise peonies. When we graduated he would come with bouquets of peonies. I don't know how he had such good luck with them.

Q: Did any of them like to fish or hunt?

A: Not really.

Q: Did they like lots of people around?

A: My mother liked people around. My cousins, there were about thirteen of them. We would be together at Christmas, Christmas Eve and they sang. They were a family of singers, opera singers. My cousin sings in New York. My other cousin sings with the "Sweet Adelines". All my other cousins sing except me. Ask me if my father could sing?---- no.

Q:How many children did your mother have?

A:Two.

Q: Just you and your sister? What is her name?

A: Anita Jones Aaron.

Q: What is her birthday?

A: November 6,1936.

Q: Do you look like your sister?

A: There are similarities but we are definitely not twins.

Q: Does your sister look like anyone else in the family perhaps your parents or an aunt or an uncle.

A: She looks like my father.

Q: Is your sister still alive?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you mother and father have a favorite?

A: Well. I gave them the most trouble. It wasn't me. Anita was the good child. I was the bad child.

Q: Does she have any special talents or skills?

A: She sings. She is a teacher.

Q: Where does she live?

A: She lives in Colts Neck, New Jersey. She has two children. They are the opera singers.

Q: What are their names?

A: Nicole Wagner, Beth Digeralamo.

Q: Do they both sing opera?

A: Well. Nicole especially. She did try out on Broadway as a singer. As she got older she married. She sings and canters at church. She sings whenever she can. She sings at weddings. That is what she does. She goes to weddings.

Q: Is this part of the family that is Jewish? Because you said canters.

A: No. My father's side is Jewish. Canter at masses. At high masses.

Ellen: Oh they do this in the Catholic church? I never heard it. Yes. She sings at long masses, Easter. She is well liked, beautiful voice. You make a lot of money.

Q: Describe your surroundings when you were a child.

A: My biggest memory when I was growing up in Flushing. We lived in this little brick house that was bought. A separate house. We had steps going up the steps. Every house had steps. We always called it sitting out on the "stoop". So all the neighbors would sit out on the "stoop" when the weather was good. All the kids would play in the street. There was no air conditioning. We were out there playing. We would play so late. We would disappear even on skates, bicycles. No one thought to look for us. You could be ten blocks away. They knew we would come home. We were safe.

Q: Can you picture the kitchen in that house?

A: Yes. It was a small kitchen. It was a very small house. We went up the steps and into the house through a little foyer and a little living room on the side, a little breakfast nook and there was a kitchen. We sat against the wall near the kitchen table. Then we walked down the hall. There was one bathroom and two bedrooms. One for my mother and father and one for me and my sister. Then you walked up a flight of steps and there was an unfinished attic. There was a basement, unfinished. My father started to finish the attic for me. Eventually I got up to the attic. He did the basement also.

Q: What kind of appliances did you have in those days in the kitchen? Did you have a metal sink, ice box?

A: I know we didn't have a freezer. Just a refrigerator. We had someone deliver bread. I remember warm rolls in a warmer. I was with my granddaughter yesterday. She thought I had soda and ice cream. I said no we didn't have any of them. We had a little kitchen with a little stove. The stove was about this big. An apartment size. Those houses now which were bought for \$4,000. I looked them up because St. John's University was built in the area after we grew up. They want like \$600,000, \$700,000. People built out of the attic, this way and that way, out in the back.

Q: Tell me about your uncles or aunts.

A: My aunts - Well I had my favorite Aunt Jean. She was the oldest. She was the intellect of the family. I lived with her for awhile. She went back to school when she was in her forties. That was Regina. Sarah Fields, Genevieve Fields Gladys Fields was the other one, five sisters and then Raymond Fields came along as a big surprise. He came along as a big surprise. He is the baby. In fact he is only three years older than I am. My mother came home from school when she was sixteen in high school. She heard a baby crying. She went upstairs. No clue her mother was pregnant. She was the fourth and then there was another, younger. She had no idea that her mother was pregnant. So when my grandmother died at an early age he came to live with us. He was like my brother. He has done a lot. He went down to Florida. He has four sons. He leads a happy life.

Q: Do you know the years that they were born?

A: I know Aunt Jean was born in 1910, Sarah was born in 1913, Genevieve was born in 1911, Gladys was born in 1919. My mother was born in 1914 and Raymond wasn't born until 1928. He is the only one living. There were twins boys in between.

Q: Who were your favorite cousins?

A: All my cousins.

Q: What was Judy's last name?

A: Judy, Williams. She is the daughter of my Aunt Genevieve. That was her only child. Judy and I bonded and we grew up together.

Q: Are you in touch with any of your aunts, uncles or cousins and where do they live?

A: I am in touch with my Uncle Ray and he is in Florida. I am constantly in touch with Judy and my cousin Tina. We get together when we can as we are getting older. We always get together at weddings, funerals and things like that.

Q: What was the major news event of your life?

A: I thought about that. I think it was probably the assassination of Kennedy. It was like a shock.

Q: Do you remember what you were doing?

A: Yes. I had put Kathy down for a nap. Susan was in school, St. Joe's. I thought let me take a nap while Kathy does. My girlfriend came running over, banging on the door and telling me this terrible story. By then all the neighbors came pouring out into the street. That's a shock. It was a terrible shock. My mother panicked. She said "come home". So we got in the car. We got Eny home from the hospital. We got the girls. We got in the car. Why we had to go to Holmdel, New Jersey? She wanted us to be together. That is how we heard about Lee Oswald on the radio. Everyone went into a

panic. I remember my aunts and uncles coming and thinking terrible things were going to happen to the country, the world. Very traumatic. 911. I could say that too. I think because of my youth. I lived in a calmer society. I was more trusting. Now 911, my cousins were in New York. My cousin Jean's son was a first responder in the New York City firemen. My cousin Judy. was in the cafeteria. I thought they were all dead. I had a different reaction to the actual attack as opposed to looking for my relatives. I wasn't paying attention to the news. I couldn't get in touch with anyone. I panicked. If they don't come ... I missed that first commotion. I was so busy trying to call them.

My one niece had to be evacuated. She was pregnant. My other niece was in the tunnel which they had to get her out of the tunnel to the Jersey side. It had a lot of internal turmoil about my relatives as opposed to JFK I just fixated on that. I was younger.

Q: Where did you go to school and do you remember the names of some of your teachers?

A: I went to school in my first few years I went to 154. Then I went to Green. Miss Gump I loved. I remember her because she ... I had to sew and I made, I don't know, something and I wanted to put bells on and I remember that she gave it to me. I still have the pin. I was so in love with her and the special attention she gave to me. We had to sew by hand. We didn't have machines then. We had to put rick-rack on it. Today the kids wouldn't know what rick-rack is. A strange thing happened in seventh and eighth grade. New York was always big on regents, diplomas, and different types of diplomas so they gave us a test. I don't know what kind of test because my mother wasn't involved in school. So they said you belong not in PS154, so we are going to

put you in PS 73. That is a modern progressive educational school. My mother didn't know nothing. All I know is I was going one day to this school, another day I was going to that school. Apparently this was to stimulate my creativity. So 7th and 8th grade I was allowed to do anything I wanted to do. This was no structure. We sat at tables not desks. So I decided I wanted to paint. I remember painting, murals, whatever I wanted. I read. I didn't learn. They didn't teach me. It was so progressive we didn't learn anything. I don't think it lasted more than two years. I did have to make my graduation dress. Then from there we moved to Long Island because my mother wasn't happy with the school set up. We moved out further and I went to Mineola HS.

Q: Who were your best friends during your school years? Are you still friendly with them?

A: No I'm not. My best friend, her name is Beverly Enders, she is an only child. She had everything. A doll house with all the doll figures. I was so envious of her. She got a Sparkle Plenty doll for Christmas and I did not get one. I wanted one so badly. My mother didn't buy it. I got some ugly dolls.

Q: How did you end up in Hammonton?

A: I don't know. We needed money. He was an intern. I went back to nursing school. I was working but I was only making \$30.00 a week. That would buy . . . We just had to go where the money was. He went to all these medical lists of things and looked in journals who had a job. He found this place Ancora was paying \$3,000. a year and you had free housing. I said why don't you apply for that. I had no clue where it was. He applied, he was accepted. He came out here by himself to find it. He was interviewed. He told me, I was staying with my mother at the time, he said I got the job and we are

moving to Ancora. I remember my father getting out the map so he could find it and get to me. He said it is not on the map. You can't go where there isn't a place on the map. It wasn't on the New York map or the Jersey map. Anyhow low and behold now that we had this little house for \$28.00 a month and we were so happy. I was so happy to have this house.

Q: Did you pay for electricity?

A: No. Everything was free. Everything was free. \$28.00 a month. It was like heaven. Two bedrooms, one bathroom a little tiny living room, a tiny, tiny kitchen but a laundry room with a washer and dryer. I didn't have to go the laundry mat. I was in heaven. Down we came, my father with a U-haul truck. We had our hospital to work.

Q: How many years did he work there?

A: He worked there 35 years. I remember sitting there and there was a spot

Q: Did you do nursing there?

A: No. I did not. So anyhow that was my introduction to Hammonton. Chiafalo, Mitrovic, all the people from Hammonton worked in Ancora. Gradually because I was alone in that family. I gradually became part of the Hammonton family and I loved it. I said, "Oh this is nice."

Q: Did you send your daughters to Saint Joe? Where you at Ancora still then?

A: Yes. I sent my daughters to St. Joe. Yes, they took the bus to St. Joe's. I joined the PTA. I have to say for the record I lived here for fifty years. So when people ask me where I'm from, even though I have a New York accent, I say I'm from Hammonton. I lived my whole life here. I love it. I love the people and the area. My children have been very happy and they consider Hammonton their home. Even my husband says I

live in Hammonton. So either we adopted you or you adopted us. I think it is because you kept your nuclear family.

Q: What is one of your favorite places in Hammonton that is no longer there?

A: Jane and I would come to Hammonton together and we would eat in the luncheonette near Dr. Streitfeld's office.

Ellen: Oh, the Dairy Lunch.

Ginny: Yes. We would eat there. We treated ourselves (\$.35). That was our treat. I liked the women's dress store, Arlene's, where you would go buy a dress. Newberry's soda fountain. The stores that were there on the avenue because I didn't have a car. Jane and I would have to share a car. We would come in together. We would go up and down the street and buy what we needed. I miss those stores but they are coming back , different.

Interviewed by Ellen Aiello-- January 18, 2011

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