

AN INTERVIEW WITH

WILLIAM DAVID OLIVO

FEBRUARY 2, 2012

FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF HAMMONTON

## INTERVIEW WITH WILLIAM DAVID OLIVO

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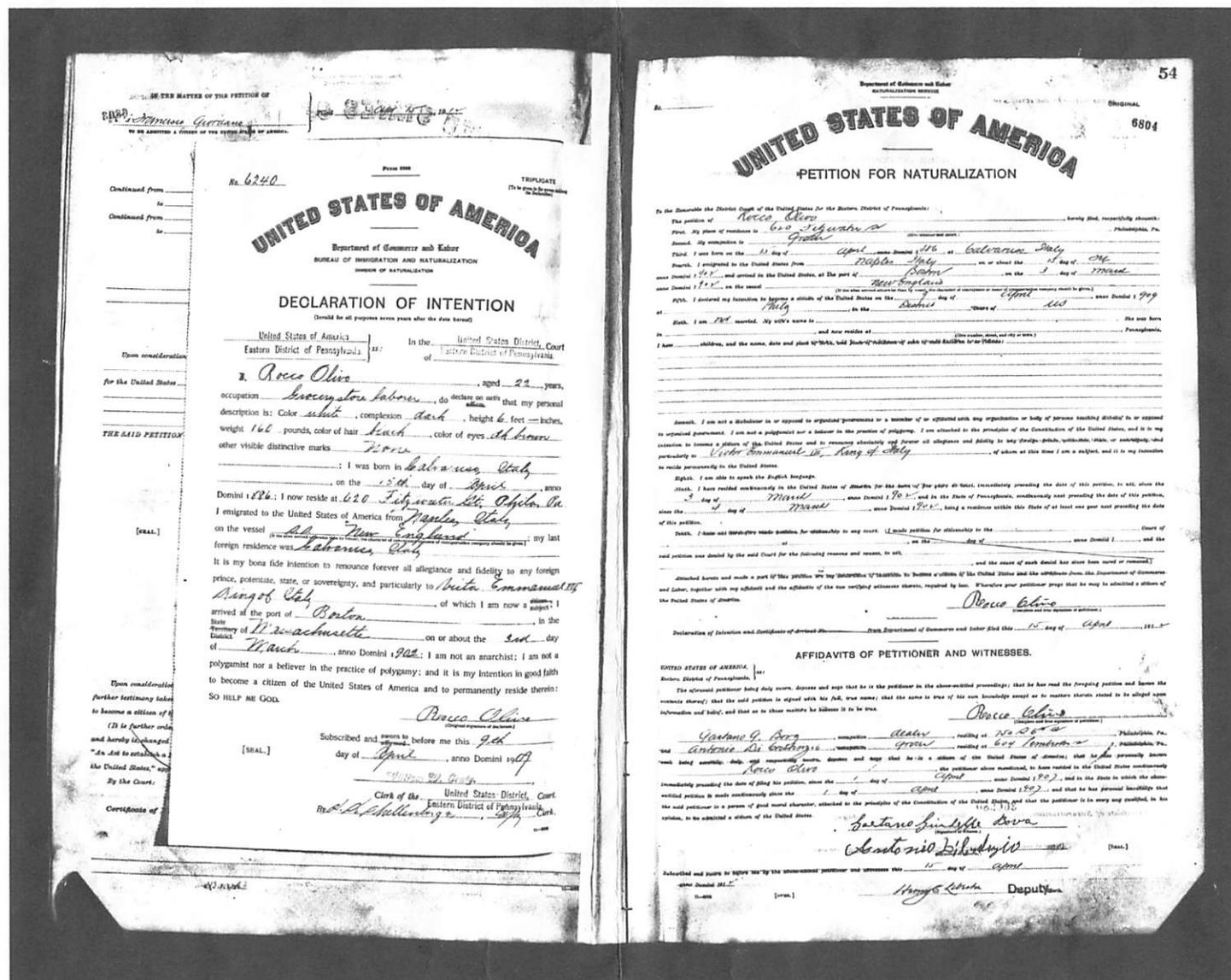
FEBRUARY 10, 2012

THIS INTERVIEW IS BEING CONDUCTED  
FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF HAMMONTON

Interviewed and Recorded by: Pat Caruso

Transcribed by: Carol Effinger

# Pennsylvania, U.S. Naturalization Originals, 1795-1930 record for Rocco Olivo



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Source Information

Bill Olivo  
Interviewed by Pat Caruso  
For the Historical Society of Hammonton  
February 10, 2012

Q: How are you today Bill?

A: I'm doing well, thank you.

Q: What is your full name?

A: William David Olivo

Q: Your age?

A: Fifty-six.

Q: What is the date of your birth?

A: January 20, 1956

Q: Where were you born?

A: Philadelphia, Pa.

Q: In a hospital?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you grow up in Philadelphia or did you grow up in Hammonton?

A: All my life in Hammonton.

Q: Did you or your parents move to different houses, cities or states when you were young?

A: Never.

Q: When you were a teen ager where did you and everyone of your friends gather for entertainment?

A: Most of the time we would go to different friends at home. That is what we did most of the time unless there was a school dance, we would go to the school dance but the majority of the time we would just get together at one of our friends homes.

Q: How did you and your teen age friends dress? Were they considered wild hair or clothes in those days?

A: Back then when we were in high school, especially towards my senior year, my hair would have been on my shoulders, bell bottoms with cuffs, plaid pants. Actually we had platform shoes back then. Believe it or not, yes platform shoes back then. Actually not too far from them was the wave of the leisure suits.

Q: Are you married or have you been married?

A: Married in 1984.

Q: Your wife's name?

A: Melanie.

Q: She was a Saia?

A: Yes Melanie Saia, correct.

Q: Where was she born?

A: She was also, I think she was born in Woodbury, New Jersey.

Q: As a couple when you were going together or when you were first married what did you do for a social life?

A: Either going to the movies or going out to dinner.

Q: Had you known each other for a long time?

A: Since kindergarden.

Q: How old were you when you got married?

A: Twenty-eight

Q: Do you mind telling us what religion you are?

A: Catholic.

Q: Have you always followed this religion?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you have any children?

A: Yes. Two. Katyln who is twenty-seven and Jason who is twenty-two.

Q: What was your mother's maiden name?

A: Degillio.

Q: When and where was your mother born?

A: My mother was born in Duryea, Pennsylvania, April 16, 1927.

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

A: No. We do not.

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

A: They were both born in Italy.

Q: Their names?

A: Philomena was her mother. She was born in 1886 and Vito was her father. He was born in 1883.

Q: Do you know what part of Italy? Did they know each other at that age?

A: They must have because when I did a little bit of research they were both from the same town which was Puglia in Italy.

Q: Any stories about your mother's ancestors that you can tell?

A: I guess when, I don't know how they ended up getting married or whatever, whether they came over at the same time or did not, I never checked that history. But when my grandfather came over he was basically a farmer and that is what he did. His family, my mother grew up on a farm with her brothers and sisters.

Q: That was in Hammonton?

A: That was in Duryea, Pennsylvania.

Q: Did your father have a nickname?

A: Not that I'm aware of. Everybody always called him Frank.

Q: Where and when did he come from?

A: He was born in Hammonton in 1916 and he never left Hammonton.

Q: What did he do for a living?

A: My father was always in the grocery store. His father started the grocery store, I believe around 1912 in Hammonton and he was always in the grocery store. He graduated Hammonton High School and he never left Hammonton.

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

A: My father's mother's last name was Macri. Her first name was Camilla.

Q: Do you know where your father's mother was born?

A: I believe her and also my grandfather, Rocco, were both born in Calabria, Italy.

Q: Any stories that you can recall the family talking about?

A: I barely remember them. My grandfather died when I was eight years and my grandmother died when I was six years old. Other than that I always remember them telling me that my grandfather Rocco was very tall, would always be in the store at all

times greeting everybody. He started out I was told, basically in Philadelphia on Fitzwater St, and ending up settling in Hammonton with some of the other Italians and started selling macaroni off the back of a truck and then established this little grocery store and that is how that started.

Q: What was the location of the first grocery store?

A: Where it was for all those years, Central Ave.

Pat: It became the famous Olivo's Market. Everybody in Hammonton shopped there. It was a great store.

Bill: Yes.

Q: Tell me about your parents.

A: My mother was born in Duryea, Pennsylvania in 1922. She had three sisters and eight brothers. She grew up on a family farm and as far as I know she stayed there until she met my father and they settled in Hammonton. My father was born in Hammonton, never left Hammonton, graduated like I said from Hammonton High and basically his life was the grocery store. He used to like his time off three months out of the year when they used to go down to Florida. The rest of the time he was in the store. Usually from 8:00 in the morning until 10:00 at night and that is how I remember it when I was growing up.

Q: Did your family ever get together to celebrate parties or holidays or that kind of thing? Your parents and their sisters and brothers?

A: It didn't seem that that happened that often where we would say on my dad's side where the most part we would celebrate holidays together or birthdays together. That just never seemed to happen. My mom's side, however, seemed we would always go there for Christmas Eve or Christmas Day and they would come down here once a year for Thanksgiving.

Q: Do you know how your mother and father met?

A: That I do. My father was in the Navy and of all places stationed in Cape May so he really never went out of New Jersey in the Navy. One of his best friends was a person by the name of William Degillio which happened to be my mother's brother. So they met on the Naval Base in Cape May. So one day as the story was said to me. He and his girlfriend, which was my uncle's girlfriend, was coming down from the Duryea area

and said to his friend Frank, "listen my girlfriend's coming down and I would like you to meet my sister and go out on a blind date. They came down from Pennsylvania and went down to Cape May and that is how they basically met. What happened from that I don't know. That is how the story goes.

Q: Where either your mom or your dad married before they were married to each other?

A: No.

Q: What did your mother look like?

A: Tiny woman all of five foot if that, blondish hair kind of -----, I just kind of resembles --- in stature and everything like that. She was a pretty woman.

Q: Describe your father for me?

A: My dad was probably around five-nine, five-ten, a little stocky. Not really overweight or anything like that, bald, lost his hair young. I remember his hair being grey on the sides. That is how I remember him.

Q: Did your mother have any hobbies, did she like to cook?

A: She liked to cook and bake. That was her life. She really never got into anything else. I remember in the early days she used to take on the responsibility of being involved in the PTA. She used to like to do that. She liked to cook for the priests. She had them over the house quite often. That was one of her things. That was her passion ... what could I cook, what could I make."

Q: *Did she ever* work outside the home?

A: No she didn't.

Q: Her favorite meal or your favorite meal, can you remember?

A: I thought about that. I don't know if she ever had a favorite meal that I could remember. My favorite meal was when she would make the home made's and the sauce. That was, I don't think there was anything better for me. When she would make the home made's with the wire and roll them and the dough. She used to put the Ricotta in the dough. That was probably the favorite thing that I think she made.

Q: Was that by any chance your father's favorite meal too because it was so good?

A: I think my father's favorite meal was probably

Q: Did he cook?

A: Yes. He did cook. He would cook also because, actually, one of his roles in the Navy was a cook so he got a pretty cush job there ~~where~~ he was actually serving all the higher ranking officers, so he would get the best food and cook the best meals for all the officers. I guess, I don't know if that is where it started but he used to like to cook mostly in our house.

Q: Your mother was not involved in the community apparently other than the PTA but was your dad?

A: No. My dad was involved only as far as a club was the Kiwanis. Beyond that, the Knights of Columbus too, but he really never got involved in political things of that nature and one of his reasons all the time he would always say his theory was the store. He never wanted to get on any side of an issue because he had both sides and all sides walking into the store. That was his theory. They asked him many times to get involved with the council side, board of education side but that is one thing he never did. Him or his brothers. They always thought that they had to stay kind of neutral on an issue.

Q: Was your dad artistic or did he have any hobbies, was he musical?

A: No. He never really did. His life was the store. He never got involved in golf. He never got involved in sporting events, that was just not him.

Q: Did he have a garden or any animals?

A: No.

Q: What skills or talents did you learn from your mom and dad?

A: I think from my dad is probably any kind of thing that had to do with any kind of a retail end of a business because that is all he really was involved in so any aspect of the grocery store whether it be from breaking down to ordering and all the issues that had to do with that. That is probably what I learned from my dad. That comes into my role now as far as the retail end. That is my life. Then on my mom's side, basically cooking. So I still like to cook and think of her.

Q: Did your mom or dad have a good sense of humor?

A: Yes. They both did. They used to like to be with their friends. I think that changed after they got older. Back then they used to like to go out with their friends at once a weekend and socialize. Many times we used to have friends come over the house and maybe play cards or just sit around the kitchen table.

Q: What is the saddest event you could remember?

A: I don't know of one other than the fact that obviously my parents passing away.

Q: Do you feel that you inherited more traits from your mother or your father?

A: I would say that it was probably pretty even.

Q: How was your parent's health?

A: They were pretty healthy most of their life up until near the end. It was kind of a short lived experience for both of them at the end of life. But for the seventy-five years that they were with us they were both pretty healthy.

Q: What was the religion of your mother and father?

A: My father was a Catholic and my mom was Protestant.

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

A: They were pretty easy as far as watching how things changed. They never turned around, that I could remember, they would go with the changes.

Q: When did your mother pass?

A: In 1999.

Q: How about your dad?

A: 1993.

Q: They are buried here in Hammonton?

A: Yes.

Q: How about their education. Did either of them have education beyond....?

A: Not beyond high school. Both of them graduated from high school.

Q: Your dad attend school here?

A:Yes.

Q: What about your mom?

A: Upper .....high school.

Q: Your dad was in the military you mentioned ...

A: He was in the navy. He served I don't know how many years in the Navy. He was stationed in Cape May.

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

A: No.

Q: Was your father or his father particularly physically strong?

A: My grandfather. They always referred to him as... his name was Rocco and they always called him "rock" because he was a big man over 6 ft.. He had a big stature and he did physical work at that time. My dad also in his day he used to be able to move around sides of beef and things like that so --not that they went to the gym they just physically worked hard.

Q: Did your dad like to fish or hunt?

A:No. His life was the store, outside of vacation. When he vacationed down in Florida (it took him many years before he got to that point) but they when he went on vacation his hobby was trying to relax and figure out where the next meal of the day would be and that was.. he just enjoyed his friends because he had a group of friends down in Florida. It was like he shut down for those three months. The other nine months of the year it was nothing but work.

Q: Did they like to have lots of people around?

A: I believe they did. I remember when we were growing up there were always alot of people at the house. It seemed that they had a core of maybe three or four other couples that they tended to be with alot. My mom loved having everybody over. As far as cooking, that was her thing. She would be disappointed if people could not come over.

Q: What did they teach you that you could remember?

A: I think my dad was pretty much on the fact that everybody was pretty much equal. My dad never looked upon people for anything whether it be economical, race or anything to that nature. My dad treated everyone the same and I think that he really instilled that in me to view that no one is any different than anyone else. My dad whether he could help anyone in the store, because they could not afford food. My dad was always that way. He never downed anybody for any reason what-so-ever and there were times I remember back growing up if there was people that looked at other races as opposed to why are they here. As terrible as that may sound .. back in 1960 when you look ahead it was kind of like...it was never that way. My dad was never like that absolutely anybody that walked in the store he treated absolutely the same way. It got to the point that I ended up going to Philadelphia ... and me too, the neighborhoods I lived in Philadelphia when I was in college... to me no one was any

different. That was my dad's way of life and I guess that is how he was brought up himself and I think that is one thing that always stayed with me and my mom's side .. traits -- my mom liked to have fun, cook and things of that nature. I think that is part of why I like to have people around. It seems that I say what are you doing, come over, I'm going to cook. That came from her.

Q: How many children did your mother have?

A: My mother had two. Just myself and my brother Frank.

Q: Your birthdates?

A: My brother was born January 18, 1950.

Q: Frank is older than you?

A: Yes. He is now sixty-two.

Q: Do you look like your brother?

A: A lot of people say it and I believe we do, pretty much.

Q: You both look like who, your parents or an aunt or uncle?

A: I think we resemble more of the Degillio side, my mother's side than my father's side.

Q: Did your parents have a favorite son?

A: Of course I would say it's my brother. My brother would always say it's me.

Q: What kind of person was your grandmother, your mother's mother?

A: My mother's mother was ... she is probably the one I remember the most because she lived *till* second grade which would have .... I remember my grandmother because we used to spend a lot of the summers up there with her and she was a tiny lady and she was another one that used to like to cook. I guess that is where my mother picked that up from. She raised eleven, she actually had twelve children, one of them passed away as a child (I think it was three years old) so she basically raised eleven kids and like I say... she was the one that never left that farm from when she was married and raised her family, never left that farm. She used to like to cook for her two remaining sons that never left the house and she was just one of those other kind of people, loving all the time, cooking all the times and just happy, very pleasant woman and all of maybe four ft, nine in stature, tiny lady.

Q: How about your father's mother?

A: My father's mother, I barely remember. She was after they, I believe they grew up on Fairview Ave. in Hammonton where they raised their family. I should say they grew up in Italy but... I guess when they came to Hammonton they were on Fairview Ave. for awhile where they raised their family and, eventually, I guess, they got to the point where they went on their own with their children, they ended up living on top of the store and I barely rarely remember her. There are not a lot stories I even asked by dad about his mother unfortunately.

Q: Do you remember what your father's mother's personality was?

A: I remember her always being, according to my dad, she was always pleasant woman. I remember my mother always saying that too but beyond there, unfortunately, I never knew her.

Q: Tell me about your mother's mother's education.

A: That I don't know.

Q: OK. How about your father's mother's education.

A: I don't know that one either.

Q: How many children did your father's mother have?

A: My father's mother had a total of four children, my dad, Frank, had two brothers and one sister.

Q: Where your grandparents buried in Hammonton?

A: Yes they are.

Q: Did your grandmothers do any kind of work to make money for the family?

A: Neither one of them as far as I know worked.

Q: What kind of person was your grandfather, your mother's father?

A: There is another one that I really didn't know. He passed away in 1949. So obviously it was before I was ever born. So he was someone that I never knew nor did my brother know so there was never a time we talked about that with my brother. He was another one .. a large stature of a man who basically raised his eleven children on a farm. A farm that had just tomatoes, cabbage, corn, that type of a farm. He would sell his goods to a local market and things like that. He came over to this country, I believe the year was about 1902, and established himself, and unfortunately died at an early age.

Q: Your father had two brothers that was Jack and.....

A: Jack and Joe and their sister was Grace.

Q: Could you give me your maternal grandmother's siblings names?

A: She had eight boys and four girls and their names are Nicholas, John, George, William, Fred, Vince, Albert and Lerman and she had four girls and one of which is my mother Ester, Rosemary, Eleanor and Ann which unfortunately died by the ...outbreak.

Q: Are any of these siblings living?

A: I have one uncle still alive, his name is Fred and he lives out in Michigan. He is in his 90's now so that is pretty well.

Q: Do you have any family heirlooms or pictures that you are fond of or allow us to copy?

A: I have to look back to see if we do have any pictures. I never thought about looking back to see if there is anything in some of the boxes that are still downstairs. I would be happy to look and get back to you with that.

Q: Anything else you can remember about your grandparents?

A: Unfortunately, No.

Q: Your surroundings when you were a child? Can you describe them?

A: I grew up on Liberty St. in Hammonton. Pretty much our town of Hammonton, I never wanted to leave and I never did. I went to St. Joe, all thirteen years from kindergarten through high school, graduated from there. Back then my dad had me in the store at a pretty early age, bagging groceries and then putting stuff on the shelves and my dad taught me everything and anything that was needed to be done in the store and it was my responsibility to learn it. I went to college in Philadelphia, the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy at the time with the intention of graduating from pharmacy school and becoming a pharmacist and putting a pharmacy in the grocery store and that was the intention. I think my dad didn't want me to work all those hours in the grocery store that he was accustomed to. He thought that maybe that might not be the best idea maybe would be if I opened a pharmacy I would not have to work that many hours. The pharmacy or a grocery store you are still going to work a lot of hours. The disappointment I guess I had with any of that was that somehow we never worked it out that I was able to take that store over because that would have been my dream

job. Doing the pharmacy end of it and also doing dealing with the ..... bubble gum, prosciutto and everything else that goes with it.

Q: did you have a favorite cousin?

A: Probably the closest one I had was my cousin Lois which was my Aunt Rosemary's daughter which is up in Duryea, Pennsylvania. For the most part when I was young we used to spend a lot of the summers together. She was one of the ones that was closest in age to me and also and I think that she was my closet relatives on my mother's side. My dad's side I don't really think I had one closer relative on my dad's side. Just probably on my mom's side.

Q: Do you remember any of the names of your teachers at school, the nuns in your case?

A: I probably remember them for the most part from kindergarten with Sister Nicolina, I remember Sister Vincencina in second grade, we had a Miss Noto in fourth grade, I think I had Sister Nicolina again in third grade, first grade was Miss Montecalvo, fifth grade Sister Rose. Those were some of the teachers I remember.

Q:How did you get to school?

A: My dad always took me to school. My dad would always take me to school, drop me off in the morning and then when school got done I would walk to the grocery store. Then my dad would have either himself take me home or one of his drivers would bring me home.

Q: Do you remember who your best friends were during your school years?

A: Yes I do. I'm still friendly with them today. I grew up with Paul Sacco who still is in Hammonton, Joe Linstrom who is down in Bethesda, Maryland now, back then Frank Pino who now lives in Linwood, New Jersey, Donald Esposito who is still in Hammonton. That was probably my closest group of friends.

Q: What has changed most about Hammonton from when you were a kid?

A: I think it seems that Hammonton has gotten a little bit more diverse as far as ethnic backgrounds. I think back then to me it seems like everyone was Italian when we were growing up. I think that has changed a little bit. You see different nationalities here in town. We have more people from Puerto Rico, we have Mexicans in town. I think that kind of into town. Hammonton still has a lot of the same things that it did

back when I was growing up for the most part, other than it seems that the downtown is kind of revitalizing itself a little bit which is a wonderful thing. Of course I don't think we could do everything we did back then like walking in and buying, shopping with my mom at Malinsky's, going across the street and buying my shoes at Brita's. It is not quite that but I don't know if that will ever happen again. But it seems that the downtown area has definitely developed for the better. It is just nice that you could go down there now and see that and that is.. I remember that part of town, that part of Hammonton and naturally back then when I was growing up there wasn't really anything on the White Horse Pike and that has developed. But a lot of the people that I always remember seeing seem the same from when we were growing. Obviously the generation changed. It's the older generation that I remember as I am growing into that older generation. I miss seeing people when I was in Bellevue Drug working back in Hammonton. I think not being there now is the hardest part for me is not seeing the people I grew up with and the people I always remember and that part just seems like it never changed.

Pat: I might mention at this point that Bill has been very successful as a pharmacist. His brother is equally successful. He is an attorney and practices locally.

Q: What was one of your favorite places in Hammonton that is no longer here other than the store?

A: the best part is some of the things we used to do. After school dances we would end up at Bruni's and Bruni's is still here. It is still the same. There were places we used to go after school. I would ask my dad if I could go to Joann's and get a cherry coke and french fries. That's one thing I would like to do. There is one thing in Hammonton that I remember back in the day that is not here today. I really don't remember any.

Q: Was the movies still open then?

A: No. I never remember seeing the movies. The only movies I remember back a little bit was the Circus Drive In that we used to go to. Other than that I don't remember anything that I miss completely. I do miss the store.