

**Interviewee:** Gardena Emanuel  
**Interviewer:** Ruth Terwilliger  
**Date:** September 18, 1978  
**Transcriber:** Janena Benjamin

R. Terwilliger: Tonight we are going to interview Gardena Emanuel who lives at 219 Central Avenue in Metuchen and today's date is September 19, 1978.

Gardena, were you born in Metuchen or someplace other than here?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** No, Far Rockaway, New York.

R. Terwilliger: How many children were in your family?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** My mother had eight but several of them died as infants so there were only five of us grown.

R. Terwilliger: I see. Could you break that down? How many girls and boys?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** There were just two girls and three boys.

R. Terwilliger: Far Rockaway. What was that like?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** That's the beach, it's beach.

R. Terwilliger: Did you live near the beach then?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Yes, we just lived a few blocks from the beach.

R. Terwilliger: Was it a very populated area then?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Oh yes. It's like Coney Island.

R. Terwilliger: I've never been to Far Rockaway.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** It's like Coney Island, not the attractions but the beach is like Coney Island.

R. Terwilliger: What was your mother's name?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Rose.

R. Terwilliger: And your father's name?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Edward.

R. Terwilliger: And your last name, your maiden name?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Briney.**

R. Terwilliger: What did your dad do for a living?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **He was a boatman. He worked on a boat.**

R. Terwilliger: Did you spend a lot of time down near the water or on the beaches?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Well as much as we could.**

R. Terwilliger: How long did you live in Far Rockaway?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **I lived there until I was 16 – 14 or 16.**

R. Terwilliger: Did you go to some school there?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **I went to Rockaway School.**

R. Terwilliger: Would you say your family was a close family?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Well, yes, my father died when I was quite young but we were close, we were close.**

R. Terwilliger: And your mother had to raise this family then by herself?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **By herself, yes.**

R. Terwilliger: So she also probably had to work?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **And I stopped school and went to work to help her because I was the oldest.**

R. Terwilliger: You were the oldest in this family. So you did have to help her.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Yes I had to help her.**

R. Terwilliger: Do you remember your childhood as a happy time in your life?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Yes, it was happy. We were poor but we was happy.**

R. Terwilliger: Well being poor doesn't necessarily mean being unhappy. I came from a very meager background myself.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **We were never on no welfare or anything like that. We worked for whatever we got. We worked for it.**

R. Terwilliger: Did you celebrate the normal holidays like Christmas and Thanksgiving?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Yes.**

R. Terwilliger: And it was a happy family life together?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Yes.**

R. Terwilliger: What kind of work did you do when you stopped school and went to work?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Well I babysat and washed dishes and things like that.**

R. Terwilliger: So you were a professional homemaker from way back. Whoever got you got you well trained.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Well I don't know but that's what I did.**

R. Terwilliger: Did you have to help then with taking care of your brothers and sisters?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **You mean financially?**

R. Terwilliger: No, I mean with the care of them.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Oh yes.**

R. Terwilliger: Was you mother also a domestic?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **My mother was a schoolteacher at one time. Then she had to stop when she got married and had children. Then she was a cook in a hotel. In Rockaway they had big hotels. They would come down for the summer. It's a summer resort. Far Rockaway was a summer resort place and she'd cook there in the hotels.**

R. Terwilliger: Do you remember what hotels?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **No, I don't remember now the names of them. I haven't been back there in years.**

R. Terwilliger: It's probably is so changed.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Oh I know it.**

R. Terwilliger: You wouldn't recognize it as the same place.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **No.**

R. Terwilliger: Was this an area where mostly all black people lived?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **No.**

R. Terwilliger: It was integrated?

**Mrs. Emanuel: At one time we were the only black family that lived there.**

R. Terwilliger: Is that right? Oh that's interesting to know.

**Mrs. Emanuel: At one time and then it came on just like Metuchen. Years ago there weren't many; there were very few in Metuchen. But now Metuchen is full.**

R. Terwilliger: Yes it really is. So then as a young girl you don't remember any problems about your being black? People were always kind?

**Mrs. Emanuel: Oh yes.**

R. Terwilliger: I can't see them being otherwise, just from the little bit I know you.

**Mrs. Emanuel: No, no we didn't have any problems.**

R. Terwilliger: And was your family the kind of family that always belonged and had close ties with your church?

**Mrs. Emanuel: Well my grandmother did. My mother, she wasn't as churchy as I am. She went when she wanted to go, you know.**

R. Terwilliger: Did your grandmother live with you?

**Mrs. Emanuel: Yes. Well my grandmother came from the South and she would come up every summer and she would work in the hotels. And in the winter she went back down South.**

R. Terwilliger: Could you tell me where she came from in the South?

**Mrs. Emanuel: She came from South Carolina.**

R. Terwilliger: I see. Can you talk a little bit then about your roots as in Alex Huxley's beautiful story on TV? Did you watch that, Gardena?

**Mrs. Emanuel: Yes I did.**

R. Terwilliger: Do you feel it was pretty truly done; that this is some of the problems that black people do have?

**Mrs. Emanuel: I feel that it is but I never experienced it.**

R. Terwilliger: How about your grandmother? Did she ever talk about her childhood?

**Mrs. Emanuel: No, no. Not as hardship.**

R. Terwilliger: Did she live on a farm or did you ever hear where she came from in the South?

**Mrs. Emanuel: Well she lived in the city, in the city.**

R. Terwilliger: Is any of your background rooted to the Old South and working on farms or anything like that?

**Mrs. Emanuel: Not that I know of.**

R. Terwilliger: Not that you can recall. So your grandmother must have married someone down there? This was Grandmother on your mother's side?

**Mrs. Emanuel: On my mother's side.**

R. Terwilliger: And how did you mother come North?

**Mrs. Emanuel: Well just like the girls come North to work. I guess that's the way she came.**

R. Terwilliger: Did she meet your father up here?

**Mrs. Emanuel: Yes, he was from Philadelphia. And then she never went back.**

R. Terwilliger: She never did.

**Mrs. Emanuel: And that's why we never went there so therefore I know nothing about it.**

R. Terwilliger: You know nothing about the South then? You never visited with your grandmother in the South?

**Mrs. Emanuel: Nope. I went there when she died and I was there for about a week, just when she died. And then I've never been back.**

R. Terwilliger: Did you like the South?

**Mrs. Emanuel: Well, it was alright and you know at that time it was mourning so I didn't see it.**

R. Terwilliger: You weren't looking at it like you would on a vacation or something like that.

**Mrs. Emanuel: Oh no.**

R. Terwilliger: And then at what age... or when or how did you meet your husband?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** In New York. And then in New York we were married. And then we came to Metuchen.

R. Terwilliger: How did you decide to come to Metuchen?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** He worked in Metuchen.

R. Terwilliger: Where did he work?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** He worked at Freeman, you know the coal place. He was a driver on one of the trains.

R. Terwilliger: Where was that located, Freeman Coal?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** That was located you know right across from the Celotex.

R. Terwilliger: Oh right. It was right next to the railroad then. And that was called Freeman Coal and they delivered coal all in this area then I guess.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Freeman Coal, yes.

R. Terwilliger: Can you tell me anything about what Metuchen was like - this was about 1916, you say? Was it this house that you came to?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** No, when I came as a bride we boarded in South Metuchen with a family, the Mulligans. Do you know Percy Mulligan?

R. Terwilliger: Oh sure yes.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** His mother. And then we got a little apartment down Durham Avenue and stayed there and then my husband died. After he died I started working and then I built this house.

R. Terwilliger: You built this house? I didn't know that!

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Piece by piece!

R. Terwilliger: My gracious. That's really remarkable. But let's go back to when you were first married and lived in Metuchen. It must have been a very quiet sleepy little town.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** It was, and a very dark town too. You never went out at night.

R. Terwilliger: Really? There weren't many streetlights?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** No and there were so many trees close to the houses. We lived down in South Metuchen and that wasn't built up at all.

R. Terwilliger: Was there a lot of land around Mrs. Mulligan's house?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Yes, not so much on that street but coming towards town there was. And that was on Myrtle Avenue, a little house down Myrtle Avenue right near the playground.

R. Terwilliger: Oh yes. I know exactly where that is. And how soon after you were married did you have your first baby, your boy?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** About a little over a year.

R. Terwilliger: That's so nice and what is his name?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Alliston.

R. Terwilliger: Alliston - what a beautiful name. You have such beautiful names in your family. And what was your husband's name?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Anthony.

R. Terwilliger: Anthony Emanuel. Anthony is a little bit unusual for a black person to name a child, wasn't it?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Well they name them now all kinds of names!

R. Terwilliger: But mostly I've always heard these beautiful biblical names that they usually name their children. But he was Anthony Emanuel? And he was from Philadelphia?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** No. My father was from Philadelphia.

R. Terwilliger: Oh your father was from Philadelphia.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** I don't want all of my history on there. I'd rather have, you know, my background.

R. Terwilliger: Where was Anthony from?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** New York.

R. Terwilliger: And then you moved to an apartment up on Durham Avenue?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** A little house, you say apartment but it was a little house. Then they didn't have apartments out here. It was a little house, a little three-room house on Durham Avenue.

R. Terwilliger: That's very nice. Can you remember – you didn't work then when you were first married?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** No.

R. Terwilliger: You just took care of your boy and took care of home. Can you tell me what your life was like?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Well I worked afterwards.**

R. Terwilliger: I mean when you were a young girl and just had your boy. You just took care of your home.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Well my life was alright. We weren't making too much money at that time.**

R. Terwilliger: They were bad years.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **You existed though and we got along.**

R. Terwilliger: But your husband had work every day?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Yes. He worked at Freeman.**

R. Terwilliger: Did he die young?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Yes, he died young. He was a little older than I was but I'm not telling you how old he was cause then you'll know how old I am.**

R. Terwilliger: I don't really want to know that.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **But I don't even want it on the tape.**

R. Terwilliger: But he died a young man and you were left widowed?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Yes.**

R. Terwilliger: How old was your boy when he died?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **He was just under a year.**

R. Terwilliger: Oh my gracious, really? Then you've had a lot of years of being on your own. I didn't realize that, I thought you were going to say that maybe he was about 16 or 17.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Oh no. He was not quite a year old.**

R. Terwilliger: What did he die from, Gardena?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Well they said pneumonia, but in those days you didn't know. When they died you didn't know but they said pneumonia.**

R. Terwilliger: Did you have a local doctor to look after him?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **No he died in New York with his family.**

R. Terwilliger: I see.



**Mrs. Emanuel:** He was taken sick and that was a little too much for me.

R. Terwilliger: Then how long did you stay on Durham Avenue after he died?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Oh I stayed on Durham Avenue for I guess about nine years.

R. Terwilliger: Do you think his death could be at all be linked to the fact that he worked with coal and that coal dust got into his lungs?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Well that I don't know. I just couldn't say.

R. Terwilliger: But it was a respiratory thing that he died of?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** That's what they told me.

R. Terwilliger: What did you do then after he died with this little infant son?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Well I went to work.

R. Terwilliger: You started to work. Do you remember any of the families you worked for?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Well I did day's work so I worked for different families. I worked for the Robins and I worked for Chief Hutchinson.

R. Terwilliger: Oh sure I know them.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** One to another. I worked for the Littersts.

R. Terwilliger: The Litterst sisters? I just interviewed them not too long ago. They're in a nursing home.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** I know. I worked for them for years and years and they had the tearoom. I ran the tearoom for them.

R. Terwilliger: Up at the Ramble Inn! I lived right near there.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** You did?

R. Terwilliger: I lived right down toward Metuchen in the old Ten Eyck house. I don't know whether you know Russell Ten Eyck?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Oh yes, right there at the railroad. Oh yes I know that.

R. Terwilliger: When I came to Metuchen my dad bought that house from Mr. Ten Eyck in 1939. And I worked up in the tearoom as a teenager.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** You did – in the tearoom? Then I don't see why you didn't know me.

R. Terwilliger: I only worked there for a short while. I worked maybe for about a year after school. But I probably do because I remember seeing a black woman up there.

**Mrs. Emanuel: They had another one but not in the tearoom. Ida White, she was a laundress, you know, she did the housework. I went up and I did the ironing and then I helped in the tearoom. And when they went on a vacation I ran it for them.**

R. Terwilliger: That's wonderful. It was a nice place wasn't it?

**Mrs. Emanuel: It was nice yes.**

R. Terwilliger: But you probably worked very hard. They were quite busy.

**Mrs. Emanuel: It was hard and especially when they was away because I had all of it to do alone you see. When they were there, they were the two of them and I would go up and help wait.**

R. Terwilliger: And the served lunch?

**Mrs. Emanuel: No, they started with tea and then they went into lunch and then they went into dinner.**

R. Terwilliger: Oh my goodness, I never realized that.

**Mrs. Emanuel: Oh yes, they had that and they had parties.**

R. Terwilliger: And a lot of people in town came there to have lunch and dinner?

**Mrs. Emanuel: Oh yes, and parties. A lot of people had their bridge clubs there.**

R. Terwilliger: Do you remember the names of any people that you met through working there that were old Metuchen families.

**Mrs. Emanuel: Well you know the Halversons, and the Dupottis family, Mrs. Dupottis, the Ruegggers, the Ruttigers, Oh there was a lot of them.**

R. Terwilliger: Mrs. Buchanan.

**Mrs. Emanuel: Yes, Dolly.**

R. Terwilliger: Dolly Buchanan.

**Mrs. Emanuel: I know her well. We went to church together.**

R. Terwilliger: I know Dolly well too. My husband replaced Mr. Buchanan as borough engineer in Metuchen. I am so pleased. And it was such a nice transition because Dolly and I are good friends. As a young

girl when I was first married my husband went to work for Mr. Buchanan as a young engineer when he was still going to school. And they always had a fine relationship. But I never dreamt at that time one day he would take his place.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **That's what they do you know. You work on and finally you work yourself up and you get in.**

R. Terwilliger: Right. Well it's very nice and I hope he can do the job that Mr. Buchanan did because he was a fine engineer.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Mr. Buchanan was there for so many years.**

R. Terwilliger: What did they say, 29 years I think it was.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **I remember when they had the celebration.**

R. Terwilliger: Did you go to that, Gardena?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **No, I didn't go, I worked. You see I used to do catering work too.**

R. Terwilliger: Oh my gracious.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **And then I missed out on a lot of functions.**

R. Terwilliger: Well you look so wonderful and so young for all your years of responsibility and hard work.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Well I had responsibilities all right.**

R. Terwilliger: Did your son go to Metuchen schools?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Oh yes. He graduated all of them. Then he went to Perth Amboy Junior College and then he finished up in Pennsylvania.**

R. Terwilliger: What does he do today?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **He works for the government. He started off as a – I don't know. When he started off to work it was during the depression and he worked with the ammunition and then he got to be a foreman and then he went to Maryland. They sent him to Maryland to some college to take up more. And now he teaches. He travels; not all the time but whenever they need...**

R. Terwilliger: Somebody for instruction.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **He travels and does that. He has his own office**

R. Terwilliger: That's great. You must be very proud.

**Mrs. Emanuel: I don't see him enough to be proud of him.**

R. Terwilliger: He must know that you're a person who can really take care of herself.

**Mrs. Emanuel: Oh yes, he knows I can take care of myself.**

R. Terwilliger: He doesn't have to worry about you.

So Gardena as a young girl and a young mother and when you had your young son, where did you go shopping in Metuchen?

**Mrs. Emanuel: You mean grocery shopping?**

R. Terwilliger: Yes, grocery shopping.

**Mrs. Emanuel: The A&P.**

R. Terwilliger: The A&P was on Main Street where the bakery shop is now. Did you have a car then?

**Mrs. Emanuel: Oh no.**

R. Terwilliger: You walked everywhere you went or the neighbors helped you out?

**Mrs. Emanuel: Or a taxi. You could get a taxi for 50 cents, no 35 cents.**

R. Terwilliger: Goodness. Did you ever go out of town for any of your shopping?

**Mrs. Emanuel: Yes, I used to go to Perth Amboy. I used to take the bus and the little trolley; we used to call it the Little Dinky. We went up to catch that at Durham Avenue and then we'd get to Amboy Avenue and then we'd catch the trolley from Amboy Avenue into Perth Amboy to do our shopping. Years later we used to go to New Brunswick. Those were the only places we'd shop, but mostly I used to go to Perth Amboy.**

R. Terwilliger: That was almost the big city for Metuchen for clothing shopping and that kind of thing.

**Mrs. Emanuel: Then I used to go to the market, they used to have an open market in Perth Amboy.**

R. Terwilliger: Oh yes, I remember that.

**Mrs. Emanuel: I used to go down to that.**

R. Terwilliger: Did you work everyday at that time?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** At that time I worked everyday.

R. Terwilliger: Who took care of your son?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** I used to take him with me. If I didn't take him with me, why once in a while when the weather was bad, one of the neighbors would take him. I'd have to pay them but they would take him. And then I had a sister. As I said, there were only the two girls and when my mother died she didn't want the girls to be separated. I was only married about a couple months when my mother died so my sister came to live with me.

R. Terwilliger: That must have been helpful.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** She was six years younger than I so of course she went to school and on days when I couldn't take him, she would take him. If I took him to a sitter, what they call a sitter now, when she came from school, she would get him. I used to get home at 5:00 or 5:30.

R. Terwilliger: That must have been very, very hard though.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Then I used to do catering work and then I would work at nights. Sometimes didn't get home until 2 or 3 'clock in the morning.

R. Terwilliger: Doing this catering work?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** I used to – I cleaned for the Allison's. Did you know the Allison's? Betty Ramsey, she was an Allison

R. Terwilliger: I see.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** I catered for one of their weddings, I think it was Darlene. I can't remember.

R. Terwilliger: Did your sister help you with your catering?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Yes, when she got old enough she helped.

R. Terwilliger: Did you prepare all the food and everything?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Well I did most of it. Someplaces I did all of it and someplaces I did some of it.

R. Terwilliger: So you really know how to order and how to handle food?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Well I don't know if I do now.

R. Terwilliger: But back then you could.

**Mrs. Emanuel: Yes, back then I could. And then I did the whole wedding for Mrs. Charles Mook – her daughter’s. I did all that cooking at home for the Mooks but most of them I went.**

R. Terwilliger: Was that the Mrs. Mook that lived up on Chestnut Avenue?

**Mrs. Emanuel: Yes, that just died.**

R. Terwilliger: Ruth?

**Mrs. Emanuel: Yes, Ruth.**

R. Terwilliger: Ruth senior, yes. She was my Girl Scout leader as a girl. She was active in Girl Scouts for years. And I went to school with Carol, the one that had polio.

**Mrs. Emanuel: I catered Carol’s wedding too. She married a McNeil.**

R. Terwilliger: Right. She lives down in the Philadelphia area. So we have a lot of mutual friends, Gardena.

**Mrs. Emanuel: What was your name?**

R. Terwilliger: My name was Ruth Melillo before I was married. I went to school with all those girls.

**Mrs. Emanuel: My son was in Betty Mook’s class.**

R. Terwilliger: She was about three or four years older than Carol? What year did your son graduate, do you remember?

**Mrs. Emanuel: I don’t know.**

R. Terwilliger: Because Carol and I graduated in 1948.

**Mrs. Emanuel: Betty was the oldest, then they had Ruth and then Carol.**

R. Terwilliger: I don’t remember Betty that much, I remember Ruth, but Carol was the one I spent most time with.

**Mrs. Emanuel: She was such a sweet girl. She loved me. She used to come and cry on my shoulder. When her mother made her angry or something she’d run to me. Now I worked for Craig’s. You know the Craig’s, didn’t you? In the house, that big house on the corner?**

R. Terwilliger: Oh right, I didn’t know them very well.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** I was the maid there. When the depression came and so many of the people's husbands was out of work and what not so then I didn't have so many day's work. So then I went as a maid at Craig's for 25 years.

R. Terwilliger: You must be a very loyal person.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** They built that house and they moved in - we all moved in the same time. They engaged me before they went. Well I did work for them before they moved there and then I moved in there and it was 25 years.

R. Terwilliger: Were you a live-in maid then, did you live with them?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Yes. You see my sister was here then so she took care of the house. She was married and she took care of the house. But I lived in there for 25 years. Even now I can't believe it was that long. I worked for her for 40 years.

R. Terwilliger: My gracious.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Because after her husband died she stayed in the house for two years; she was allowed to stay there two years. Then she bought a little house on Library Place. And then I did day's work for her, I didn't stay but I did day's work.

R. Terwilliger: She was in that last house next to where the nuns are.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** I call it the first house. And its the last one too. The Kaiser daughter, they bought it and live there now.

R. Terwilliger: Who lives there now; I'm trying to think of what their last name is. I work in the library and they come over a lot.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** I don't know them.

R. Terwilliger: But I do remember Mrs. Craig being there.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Well I worked there until she died. It was so sudden. It was such a shock to me.

R. Terwilliger: You must have been like family to these people.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** I was. I went to the funeral right in the cars with them. And the weddings, I went right with them, I always had to be right with the family, just like the family.

R. Terwilliger: When you're with someone for 25 years, that's a long time and you must be considered part of the family.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** As I say, I worked 40 years for them all together, but I was a sleep-in maid for 25 years in that house.

R. Terwilliger: That was a pretty little house they had.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** A little house! That was a big house they had.

R. Terwilliger: I'll ask you again because I don't think it was on the other side of the tape how you came to build this house here. You said you bought the property from ...

**Mrs. Emanuel:** The Littersts.

R. Terwilliger: He was a lawyer?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** George Litterst, he was the lawyer. There were two of them, Alex and George. That was the girls' father and uncle.

R. Terwilliger: And you bought the property from him, this was his property?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** He owned quite a bit of this property.

R. Terwilliger: Did you have house plans drawn up?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** No I drew my own. I was my own architect and I guess I was something because I would change it and change it. But anyhow, I knew what I wanted and finally I got what I wanted. I know I came walking from work, I used to walk on Durham Avenue down, and I got to the corner and upstairs I saw they had a window cut in and I didn't want that window. So down the street I came and said no. And so of course they took it out. And then when the furnace man was here and it got to the stage where they were putting in the heating, I came to see where they were going to put the ducts over the floor and this man said, "Who is she"? The carpenter said, "That's the boss." "What, as young as she is!"

R. Terwilliger: What year did you build this house?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** '28.

R. Terwilliger: In 1928. Do you remember who the men were that built it? Their names?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Well Flemings built it, the carpenter. Then I had various different ones you know. I know the plumber was Rolland. Do you know Roland?

R. Terwilliger: Yes.



**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Well he put the plumbing in. And I can't think of the name of who did the electricity, he used to live on Amboy Avenue.**

R. Terwilliger: How long did it take them to build the house?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Well they started in March and I moved in the last of November.**

R. Terwilliger: Well you had your first Christmas in here then.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Yes.**

R. Terwilliger: Did you have your boy with you then?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Oh yes.**

R. Terwilliger: That's right, you said he brought his friends here from school.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Oh yes. He lived here until he got married. All my children lived here until they got married, all of them.**

R. Terwilliger: And how many children did you have?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **The one.**

R. Terwilliger: The one. You mean the grandchildren?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **When I say the grand because the grand was born here. And when he married he and his wife lived here and the grandchildren was born here. And they stayed here even when the mother and father went, they still stayed here.**

R. Terwilliger: You must have something special that all these kids love you so much.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Well I don't know.**

R. Terwilliger: You must make good cookies or something that keeps them around.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **I don't know but they stayed.**

R. Terwilliger: What do you think about the difference in children today from when you raised your children. Do you think parents are too easy or were you strict?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **No, everybody said I was too easy.**

R. Terwilliger: Too easy?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** They all said I was too easy because I went without to give to them and I had to in order to send them to school and they all went to college. So they said I was too easy. I did more for them. They don't do anything for me now. And if I didn't do all that I wouldn't have to even work now.

R. Terwilliger: But you're not sorry for it at all.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Oh no. No, because I've never been on relief or I've never had to ask for anything. I worked for everything I got.

R. Terwilliger: Have people been good to you?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Oh yes. All the places I've worked have been very good to me.

R. Terwilliger: So now it's just you here alone?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Yes. My sister died; it will be 12 years – its going in the 12<sup>th</sup> year. And she lived with me all the time.

R. Terwilliger: She lived with you all of her growing years.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Yes. Even after she got married her and her husband lived here.

R. Terwilliger: You sure had an open home for everyone.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** He's very good, her husband, my brother in law, he's very good to me, very good. He does whatever he can for me. He cuts the lawn out there. He don't take care of the flowers. He can't bend his back.

R. Terwilliger: Does he live locally?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** He lives in town but he has a room here and he keeps his clothing. And he comes and watches over me. He fishes, he goes fishing and he brings me fish and on the way up there he passes a fruit stand or vegetables. He'll bring them, or a basket of apples.

R. Terwilliger: How do you manage to do your shopping now? Do you still walk?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Oh I walk, yes. Well I don't have to do too much shopping; just for me alone. What I'll do is I walk and when I come through town I stop and get one or two things and the next day I stop. I love to shop so I walk to the store even if I don't buy nothing. And compare prices you know. And I do that and then some of the places I work, they will bring me home and they always say, "Do you want to stop and do any shopping?" And they'll stop and take me to the bank. And

**my brother in law if he's around and not fishing he'll take me to Redfield Village. Otherwise I have to catch a taxi or bus but even if I get a taxi or bus they pay for it. So I make out.**

R. Terwilliger: Do you feel parents today are not strict enough with their children?

**Mrs. Emanuel: Oh yes, they are not strict enough. Children just do anything they want. Because I teach Sunday School and even if you say anything to the parents – like the children missed Sunday School and you say to the parents why they missed and you'd like to have them come. And they'll tell you, "Well if they want to come they can come, and if they don't...." When mine was coming, it wasn't if they wanted to go. I taught Sunday School and we went to Sunday School and they had to go. They're not so churchy now.**

R. Terwilliger: Did you feel that religion was an important part of your son's life?

**Mrs. Emanuel: Oh yes. But as I say they don't attend so much now. One of my girls she was an organist in the church and they were all brought up in the church. My son he ushered and he taught Sunday School for a while and my girls taught Sunday School, they ushered, they sang in the choir.**

R. Terwilliger: Now what church is this?

**Mrs. Emanuel: New Hope. Reverend Dale's**

R. Terwilliger: The New Hope. I know Reverend Dale.

**Mrs. Emanuel: But the children do not come. We have trouble getting them to come.**

R. Terwilliger: That's really too bad.

**Mrs. Emanuel: But years ago they used to love to come to Sunday School.**

R. Terwilliger: Well it was almost a part of their social life.

**Mrs. Emanuel: Now they have other things.**

R. Terwilliger: Other things that they do so that it's almost like a chore more than a pleasure to go. And it is difficult. My youngest boy is 16 and to get him to go to church on Sunday, as you say I don't ask him if he's going to go, I just tell him to get dressed, we're going to whatever service it is.

**Mrs. Emanuel: Now my grandson there, they just went to Puerto Rico in June, after school. He spent the weekend with me. They live in town but he spent the weekend with me because he had to**

**go to church on Sunday mornings. Now if he stayed home, his mother don't make him go to church.**

R. Terwilliger: So it's not just the children's fault?

**Mrs. Emanuel: Oh no, mostly it's the parents. We use to have such a wonderful Sunday School and a lot of children, of course there are plenty of children in town. But they come when they want to, when they don't want to.**

R. Terwilliger: Did you know Walter Qualls that was the councilman?

**Mrs. Emanuel: Yes, sure. He lived two doors from the church.**

R. Terwilliger: But he doesn't go to that church I don't believe.

**Mrs. Emanuel: No, but his children come to our Sunday School.**

R. Terwilliger: And do they come then quite regularly?

**Mrs. Emanuel: The children come quite regularly, yes. And they come; the mother and father come every time the children are performing, you know, at Christmas and Easter.**

R. Terwilliger: I've been invited to come.

**Mrs. Emanuel: Well you should come. We'd love to have you.**

R. Terwilliger: Who plays your organ? Lottie Minor.

**Mrs. Emanuel: She doesn't play now, she used to.**

R. Terwilliger: And Reverend Dale invited me to come and I want to come some Sunday,

**Mrs. Emanuel: I'll invite you to come too. We have a beautiful church, have you seen it.**

R. Terwilliger: Yes, I had to take pictures of it when I did Perry Letsinger's tape.

**Mrs. Emanuel: Not my church. He's Second Baptist.**

R. Terwilliger: Yes, Second Baptist. But we took them of New Hope for some reason. I don't know who I did that was connected with your church but we took them of that church also.

**Mrs. Emanuel: I have a big window up there.**

R. Terwilliger: It's a beautiful church. We have one picture of it at Christmas time with those beautiful doors and the green wreathes on the doors.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Oh yes. That's from outside.

R. Terwilliger: Yes. It looks really lovely in the picture. And you spend a lot of time there I understand.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Oh yes.

R. Terwilliger: You're a Sunday school teacher and what else do you belong to?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** I belong to everything practically in the church. I sings in the Gospel Chorus and I've been a member of that for, I think this year is our 35<sup>th</sup> year since it was organized. Lottie was our first organist. And Missionary and President of Missionary serving two terms and President of the Choir two terms and I used to sing in the Choir and the Chorus. Now you either sing in one or the other. And what else; oh I'm secretary of the Flower Club and I was financial secretary for the church for 36 years – 36 years.

R. Terwilliger: My gracious! They must really miss you help now that you've given up some of those things.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Well I couldn't do it now because we have children coming from colleges, teachers and what not, and we do it in more of a... you know what I mean...in those years we did it in our crude way. We did it right but you know.

R. Terwilliger: Yes. Now they have such sophisticated bookkeeping.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Yes and I don't type. And this is one of my plaques up there on the wall if you want to see it.

R. Terwilliger: Gardena, I see you have two beautiful plaques on your wall for your loyal church service. The one there that says you attended Sunday School with perfect attendance for 10 years. Were there Sundays when you didn't feel so good and you made yourself go?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Well I don't know, I can't remember now.

R. Terwilliger: But that's a long time to go perfectly. What are your feelings about church work?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Oh I love church work.

R. Terwilliger: And is it just the personal satisfaction or do you really feel strongly about doing God's work?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Oh yes. And I attend the prayer meeting every week. One thing – I don't walk to church now after dark.

R. Terwilliger: No, I don't think I would.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Somebody picks me up and brings me back. But I can remember the time before we built our church. I used to walk up there. Our church was right in the back of where the new church is now. I would go up there for a prayer meeting and nobody would show up. And I'd go in there and sit and wait a while, open the door, turn the lights on and stay there for a while, come out, put the lights off and then walk home. But I wouldn't dare to do it now. Probably would be alright but I wouldn't dare to do it.**

R. Terwilliger: I've never heard of ....

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **It's the thoughts of it.**

R. Terwilliger: It's just that we live so threatened by everything today

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **They all say, "Don't do it, don't do it."**

R. Terwilliger: I used to walk even as a girl. You know where I used to live by the Ramble Inn, and I used to walk all the way to the Y.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **I used to walk from Durham Avenue up to the Litterst's to work. Do you remember when they had the horse and buggy?**

R. Terwilliger: The Litterst girls? Oh yes, yes. And across the street from them was the Richmond family. Do you remember the Richmond's who had the horses? They used to have a little riding ring out front. Who lived next door to them?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **In the big house right across from there was the Kennedy's. She's still alive.**

R. Terwilliger: Is she really?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **She used to send me a card every Christmas. And I think she's still alive, the mother and the father.**

R. Terwilliger: Did you know the Wemetts then, Harry and Helen Wemett?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Oh yes, and the Corbin's yes.**

R. Terwilliger: That's where I use to play all the time as a girl. Harry Wemett, they never had children of their own so he kind of adopted my brother and I and we used to have the best time, in those barns and on those horses and running those fields. But it was a beautiful town.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** **Yes it was beautiful. They used to have that bridge, you know.**

R. Terwilliger: Oh yes, going over the railroad right. We used to run out on the bridge when a steam engine would come along so we could stand in the smoke. Can you imagine it? So silly but we used to love to just disappear in that smoke when it came under the bridge it would come up in a big puff.

**Mrs. Emanuel: I used to work for Mrs. Kennedy across the street.**

R. Terwilliger: Did you ever work for the Wemetts?

**Mrs. Emanuel: No.**

R. Terwilliger: I don't know who they had, whether they had domestic help.

**Mrs. Emanuel: They had a girl named Camille. She's down South. And they also had Alice Thompson.**

R. Terwilliger: That was another beautiful home.

**Mrs. Emanuel: Oh yes.**

R. Terwilliger: It was really, really lovely. They certainly shaped my life by allowing us children to enjoy that farm life. We'd bring fresh eggs home and he had a big garden. I keep trying to remember the name of the man that worked for him, that took care of all his animals and his farm. He lived out back in the barn, I don't know whether he lived there all the time but he had a room that had a pot-belly stove in it and he used to make up hot chocolate.

**Mrs. Emanuel: I don't know. I never worked for them but I knew them.**

R. Terwilliger: Did you ever work for the Cockefairs?

**Mrs. Emanuel: On Amboy Avenue?**

R. Terwilliger: These lived on the corner by Grove and Middlesex, just down toward Main from the Wemett's in that kind of a stucco English Tudor house; it had a pond out front.

**Mrs. Emanuel: The Pecks.**

R. Terwilliger: Oh yes, they were on Grove Avenue. And the Hanniford's.

**Mrs. Emanuel: Used to be a Cockefair.**

R. Terwilliger: Cockefair used to be with the Building & Loan years ago.

**Mrs. Emanuel: Seems to me that I remember that name but I didn't know them.**

R. Terwilliger: But you used to walk all the way from Durham up Middlesex Avenue?

**Mrs. Emanuel: Not every time but when they couldn't come for me.**

R. Terwilliger: Do you think winters used to be ....

**Mrs. Emanuel: Nothing like it used to be! Although last winter was a pretty bad one. But I can remember walking to work with snow above my knees – above my knees!**

R. Terwilliger: That's right; up the center of Middlesex Avenue because, you know, people didn't shovel their sidewalks right away.

**Mrs. Emanuel: And then I remember the plough; the horse and the man would stand on it, you know, and this wooden plough would plough a path.**

R. Terwilliger: That must have been beautiful to see.

**Mrs. Emanuel: It was but it was cold.**

R. Terwilliger: Did you ever have a ride in the Litterst girls' buggy – horse and buggy?

**Mrs. Emanuel: Oh yes. They used to come for me. When they could get out to do it, oh yes.**

R. Terwilliger: That must have been nice to ride and hear the clop-clop of the horses. They were happy days weren't they, Gardena?

**Mrs. Emanuel: They were happy days, they were hard days but happy. And I had more in those days it seemed like than I have now.**

R. Terwilliger: Well, life was so much more simpler.

**Mrs. Emanuel: Food and things wasn't so expensive.**

R. Terwilliger: Yes. Do you have any kind of a pension or anything now to help you out?

**Mrs. Emanuel: Oh I get social security but that's not much.**

R. Terwilliger: It's not very much in today's world.

**Mrs. Emanuel: I don't get no pension because you don't get a pension from day's work. Of course years ago I could have gone to the Arsenal or into the hospitals and things like that but I never like working in a crowd.**

R. Terwilliger: You're a very private person. I understand that.



**Mrs. Emanuel:** I don't like a crowd and I'm very kind of... you know, sometimes I go to a meeting, I used to go to meetings and I'd sit there the whole night and not say one word.

R. Terwilliger: I like you for that.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Not one word. And they would say, "Mrs. E, you haven't said a word." And I'd say, "Yes, but I know everything you said."

R. Terwilliger: Why do you feel like that Gardena?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** I really don't know. I think because growing up I never was allowed to play with children. I can't remember whether I wasn't allowed but there weren't children around. When I went to school I went home, I had my chores to do and I never mingled. Even now as old as I am, I go to meetings....I was at a teacher's meeting last night I don't think I said three words. Of course if anybody said anything to me I answer them.

R. Terwilliger: It's not that you're antisocial or snobbish or anything it's just that you're a very private person who enjoys listening.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Then of course I was at Middlesex Convention. I was superintendent assistant president of that; I had to talk a little bit there but I still was shy. I never did any more talking than I had to.

R. Terwilliger: Well I think that's terribly important because you seem to me the kind of person who minds her own business but gets the job done.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Yes, but then I am the kind of person who don't do wrong to because when I do get angry, I am angry.

R. Terwilliger: That's very healthy.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** I'm angry when I'm angry and just don't bother me, you know what I mean.

R. Terwilliger: Well you seem to have a wonderful grasp on life and what is important, Gardena. Can I please ask you this question? What do attribute your peacefulness and good happy life that you've lived and you've been successful in what you've done -what do you think is important to being a good person?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Well I think to believe in God. I've always believed in God and I've always - my church always came first.

R. Terwilliger: Do you pray everyday?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Oh yes, in fact I walk along the street and pray. Not that I'm so good, you know, but I do. Because when the children was coming up I'd be walking the street and I'd pray and thank God for this or that and they used to say, "Grandma, who are you talking to?" You know sometimes I would say something out loud or they'd hear me mumbling. And they would say, "Who are you talking to?" and then they'd laugh. Then they'd come back and tell the other one or tell their mother, "Grandma was talking to herself, she was walking along just talking." And I sing a lot, I sing a lot. Even at work when I'm working and especially I think how good God has been to me and I just feel so happy and I just sing, sing, sing.

R. Terwilliger: That's beautiful.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** And I just love singing and then sometimes when I don't sing, someone will say, "Mrs. Emanuel, are you sick or is something the matter? You're not singing today." But sometimes, every time I sing, I'm not happy. Sometimes I sing when I'm sad too. When I'm trying t get my mind off some sad doings you know.

R. Terwilliger: Does it help, Gardena?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Oh, it helps me.

R. Terwilliger: Gee, maybe I should try it.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** It helps me, I don't know.

R. Terwilliger: And you haven't been lonely all these years without a companion?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Oh yes. Well no, not without a companion but I've been lonely in the house.

R. Terwilliger: You mean these years alone.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Yes, I've been lonely in the house.

R. Terwilliger: I'll come visit you anytime.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** That would be very nice. And then especially now since, you know, my son is gone.

R. Terwilliger: Yes that must be a big void.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** I think, you now what I think is, you know then if I get sick during the night, you can call your cousin or aunt or child or someone but I have no one to call.

R. Terwilliger: You can call me. You've got lots of friends.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Well some of them said that. But lots of time people say, “Call me, call me” but lots of time they don’t mean it. I find that out you know, they don’t mean it. But I haven’t had to call. Well one day I called my brother-in-law and I couldn’t get him and I called the neighbors. I had a nosebleed. I suffer from high blood pressure - not bad – but I do have high blood pressure. I go to the Doctor and get a check-up when he tells me. But this time I got up out of the bed, I didn’t wake up, I was awake but as soon as I got up the blood just began to pour.

R. Terwilliger: That must have been frightening for you

**Mrs. Emanuel:** I ran to the bathroom and grabbed some towels and I just couldn’t stop it so I called the girl over next door and she took me to the Emergency. But by the time I got to the Emergency it had stopped. They didn’t know what was wrong with me. They said my pressure had gone up.

R. Terwilliger: Your pressure had gone up and caused it to bleed?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Oh yes.

R. Terwilliger: Do you take medicine for your high blood pressure? You have to watch your salt and diet a little bit? You’re so nice and slim; do you work at that?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** No, no.

R. Terwilliger: You’ve never had to watch you weight?

**Mrs. Emanuel:** No, I’m stouter now than I’ve ever been.

R. Terwilliger: You’ve always been very slim.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** But they say that if my nose hadn’t bled like that I probably would have had a stroke.

R. Terwilliger: That was probably God’s way of saving you.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** But what caused it I don’t know. I don’t know what caused the pressure to go up.

R. Terwilliger: But you still didn’t answer my question all the way about what do you think is important to living a good life. You said believing in God and God is the center.

**Mrs. Emanuel:** Well, I think that’s the most important. I think that’s the most important to have something that you believe and something

**that you hold on to and something that you trust. You put your trust in God.**

R. Terwilliger: Did you always have that, Gardena or was that something that through years.....

**Mrs. Emanuel: Well it's something that grew. When I was younger I was like anybody else I went to parties and danced and I had a good time. I used to go to Perth Amboy and I danced and I had fun. We used to have parties here and the girls used to have their records and all and music, you know. And I would dance with them. And my son and I, we used to dance a lot. He used to like to take me out. Every once in a while he would say, "Ma, get dressed. I'm going to take you out", and he'd take me down there to the park and we'd have a good time, every once in a while.**

R. Terwilliger: This shows that you know all sides of life. It wasn't like you've lived like a saint all these years.

**Mrs. Emanuel: No. Then I used to go every once in a while to the Republican's Dinner Dance and I danced. I was the only - I don't like the word black, but colored.**

R. Terwilliger: You like colored better? Oh, I'm sorry.

**Mrs. Emanuel: No, no I don't mean for you. But I mean just ordinarily. I'm the only one I'm the only black that belongs.**

R. Terwilliger: I'm Democratic and Lottie Minor is.

**Mrs. Emanuel: Or Perry.**

R. Terwilliger: Or Perry, yes.

**Mrs. Emanuel: No, but I'm the only one. Sometimes I get razzed by somebody's friends.**

-end-