



Interview with Juliette Narunsky

Under the Auspices of the
Monmouth County Library Headquarters
125 Symmes Drive, Manalapan, N.J.
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Name of Interviewer: Lydia Wikoff

Premises of Interview: Ms. Narunsky's home, Manalapan, NJ

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Ms. Wikoff: Juliette was very involved in her family's background in the Borough of Freehold, and she is going to tell us about her uncles and aunts and how very much they kind of ran the town. I would like her to tell us about her beginnings, and then we will become more up-to-date. I also remember that she married a druggist in Englishtown.

Ms. Narunsky: I was born on a farm on Route 522 that is now practically falling apart. The house is falling apart now. There used to be a house on the other side of the railroad track where my sister was born. And then they moved to this house next to the Cobb House. And we lived there a year or so, and then we moved across the road to the big house that is being remodeled now by the county.

Ms. Wikoff: This is the house that was called the Derrick Custom House now for the very early owners, and it is going to be restored for the Battlefield State Park as a woman's history site in the Revolution. Please continue.

Ms. Narunsky: Then when I was five, we moved to the big city of Freehold, and I went to the Broad Street School for the first three grades, and my teachers were Ms. Curley, Ms. Moffet, and Ms. Symmes. Ms. Symmes' father was a minister at the Tennent Church, and Symmes Drive is named after that family.

Ms. Wikoff: I'd like to say that Ms. Symmes started teaching before she really had the certificate that a teacher would eventually have to have, but evidently in those days, you could do that. But then she went on to get many degrees.

Ms. Narunsky: Then in the fourth grade, I went to the Hudson Street School. I was there for fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. I don't remember my fourth grade teacher, but my fifth grade teacher was Ms. Hulsart, and my sixth grade teacher was Ms. McNinney. I went to the Intermediate School, which is now the Police Station in Freehold, for the seventh and eighth grade. The principal was Ms. Fogerty, and we were always scared of her. When I was in, I guess it must have been the third grade, they took us for a walk to what is now the Freehold Borough High School for the dedication of the high school. And when I went to Freehold High School and graduated from there, and some of the teachers were Ms. Button, Mr. Clayton, Mr. Hoover, Mr. McKelvey. Let me see if I can remember some more.

Ms. Wikoff: I have to tell you that she said the name of the teacher was Ms. Button. I remember her name was Pearl, and we all used to laugh because she was Pearl Button, and she just died, I think just a few years ago.

Ms. Narunsky: And her fingernails were always pointed. I remember that. I never saw such pointed fingernails. Things you remember!

Ms. Wikoff: She was very active in her college after she retired from teaching. New Jersey College for Women (NJC), which is now, called Douglass College.

Ms. Narunsky: And there was a Ms. Tilton there. I forget whether she was Tilton or Vanderveer. I think she was Tilton and then married a Vanderveer. She was the stenography and typing and bookkeeping at Freehold High School. Following high school, I went to work for my uncle, Jake Zlotskin, who had a cattle farm, and I worked there for five years. And then in 1942, I went to work at Fort Monmouth for the Army. I worked there for a few years. Then I moved, and transportation was hard, so I changed jobs. I went to Earle and I worked there, where I became Supervisor of Civilian Payroll.

Ms. Wikoff: That was a mighty impressive job.

Ms. Narunsky: It sure was. When I was leaving to get married, the commander who was in charge, after I became head of the department, was thrilled because he appointed a man to head the department. He didn't think women should head a department. I met my husband at a vacation spot in Pennsylvania. He was living in Washington, and I was living in Freehold. That was a long distance romance, and after we knew each other three months, we got engaged, and in six months we got married, and I moved to Washington, where we lived for about a year. My husband bought the drug store in Englishtown, and so we moved to Englishtown. We had the drug store for twenty-two years, and we built a home on Gordons Corner Road that I lived in for thirty years.

Ms. Wikoff: I remember that house. It was right near the corner.

Ms. Narunsky: Yes, and so I have lived here in the area all my life. I am happy here. Now I live in Covered Bridge. I've been here over fourteen years.

Ms. Wikoff: Oh, my goodness. I didn't realize that.

Ms. Narunsky: Well, I lived alone for eight years in the house until I came home from work one day, and it was snowing. Now I am very stubborn, and I got stuck in my driveway, and I shoveled snow until I got pains in my chest. And I said, "Now it is time to move." (Laughs) I sold my house and moved to Covered Bridge where a lot of my friends from Englishtown were living.

Ms. Wikoff: And from Freehold, too?

Ms. Narunsky: Yes, Freehold. There was Murray and Lil Yacknowitz, Dr. Sam and Mildred Bar. He is still living near Philadelphia in a residential home.

Ms. Wikoff: He was our doctor.

Ms. Narunsky: Elaine Kuschik. Her husband was the mayor of Manalapan for many years before he died. And Ida Slade was living here. Ida was a chicken farmer. Then she went to work for the Library. And Joe and Lil Bell live here. He worked for Washington Ford. And Elaine, who had a farm in Englishtown, lives here. I am trying to figure others who live here.

Ms. Wikoff: Well, that's wonderful. I think the next thing would be for you to tell us about your relatives who had so many different businesses in Freehold.

Ms. Narunsky: Well, my father had Lopatin Electric. My uncle had Lopatin Construction. The third uncle had a re-upholstery business. A fourth uncle had the Outlet Store in South Street in Freehold.

Ms. Wikoff: Who owned Two Brothers?

Ms. Narunsky: The Belblum family.

Ms. Wikoff: Oh, because I remember Two Brothers so well.

Ms. Narunsky: Well, Rebecca and Dorothy, the daughters of one of the two brothers, are still alive and living in Freehold.

Ms. Wikoff: Do you remember where Ballew Jewelry used to be right next to them?

Ms. Narunsky: Yes. And there is still Ballew Jewelry. The grandson is running it now. All these things. I remember when we were kids, I guess the first or second year we lived in Freehold, in the summer time, Mike's Ice Cream man used to

come with a horse and buggy and sell us ice cream cones for three cents. And a man from Tennent used to come on Saturday during the summer to sell vegetables in Freehold. And I want to remember, he was a very tall man. He was from Tennent.



Photograph of a parade in downtown Freehold

Ms. Wikoff: Alright. Wasn't he the one who played Uncle Sam in all the parades? He was unusually tall, I think seven foot. Isn't that something? I never knew he went and sold vegetables.

Ms. Narunsky: I remember him. Well now, one of my two uncles died in 1915. He was killed in a railroad accident behind where the Cobb house is now.

Ms. Wikoff: I remember reading about that.

Ms. Narunsky: And the other uncle, Max, the one that had the outlet store, was killed crossing a railroad track near the J. L. Montgomery home.

Ms. Wikoff: Because there were no flagmen and no crossing gates at all there.

Ms. Narunsky: No, just an open track.

Ms. Wikoff: That was a tragedy.

Ms. Narunsky: Well, let's see what else I remember.

Ms. Wikoff: Well you said you worked for your uncle. He would buy the calves from the local farmers. In fact, I remember him so well. He would come to the farm, and he would hang up a calf. It looked kind of cruel, but I guess it didn't hurt them, but that is the way he would weigh them, and he would pay by the weight. I have no idea how much.

Ms. Narunsky: I don't remember that. I remember working on the farm, and now when we were on the farm in Manalapan, we had a windmill.

Ms. Wikoff: Isn't that something?

Ms. Narunsky: There was a windmill where the house is being restored. I don't know who took it down.

Ms. Wikoff: I don't think there are any pictures of that either.

Ms. Narunsky: No. And my sister and brother went to a one-room schoolhouse in Tennent.

Ms. Wikoff: Yes, well that's where my brother went. And, Ms. Cicmmum was a teacher there.

Ms. Narunsky: Mrs. Woodward was a teacher there, too, because she taught when we first moved to Englishtown. She came into the store and told me that she taught my father English when he came to this country. And I went to high school with her son, Howard.

Ms. Wikoff: Oh, my goodness.

Ms. Narunsky: And my daughter went to grade school with her grandson.

Ms. Wikoff: How about that!

Ms. Narunsky: So you know the family as well. Now Woodward Road is named for them.

Ms. Wikoff: Yes. Well Carl Woodward was the older Woodward. He has written a manuscript about the history of this area and farming at the turn of the century, and we are hoping to get that published. It has never been published, and it is beautifully written, and documents this area so well.

Ms. Narunsky: When we first moved to Englishtown, some man came in the store and he said, in 1912 my uncle built his house in Englishtown. This was the uncle who was killed in 1915. I don't know, he was a carpenter. And, so my family has been around here a long time.

Ms. Wikoff: It really has. Do you want to stop for a moment and look at your notes?

Ms. Narunsky: Yes.

Ms. Wikoff: We have pictures here.

Ms. Narunsky: Clyde Murphy, I forget her name. Her father was a doctor, had his office on Broadway in Freehold. This is me. Do you know Bonnie Mahon?

Ms. Wikoff: No.

Ms. Narunsky: That is Marcella Ladd.

Ms. Wikoff: There are so many in this picture it seems.

Ms. Narunsky: Virginia Ladd, Virginia Hall. Her mother was a piano teacher in Freehold.

Ms. Wikoff: I remember that.

Ms. Narunsky: Ms. June Ladd.

Ms. Wikoff: Their father was a photographer, and almost all the local schools and other people people went to him to have their pictures taken.

Ms. Narunsky: And this is Arnie, Arnold Tanner. The lawyer in Freehold.

Ms. Wikoff: Right.

Ms. Narunsky: Billy Patton from the LumberYard. That is Warren Press from the Monmouth County Shop. Nick Ferman. Alex Kotko. Frank Whitman.

Ms. Wikoff: Was he the superintendent?

Ms. Narunsky: No, no, no. He was the clerk for the Board of Education.

Ms. Wikoff: Well, we have a wonderful picture here, and all these names of local Freehold people.



Eighth grade class of Freehold Intermediate School, 1931

Ms. Narunsky: See, there is another picture from 1930, in front of the school. And these are the reunion pictures.



Eighth grade class reunion, 1960

Ms. Wikoff: Are they the high school reunion?

Ms. Narunsky: And the 25th Anniversary. 1935 Class Reunion. There's me again.

Ms. Wikoff: We all dressed up in those days. (Laughs)

Ms. Narunsky: Mr. Hoover, Mr. McKelvey. His father had the Military School on South Street in Freehold. There's Arnold Tanner, the lawyer. Harry Silvert from Silvers Furniture is still in Freehold.

Ms. Wikoff: They look a lot a like.

Ms. Narunsky: There is Virginia Hall. Craig, his name was Craig. Warren Crest. Steve Subecko from Englishtown Auction.

Ms. Wikoff: Oh yes. I remember him very well. He used to be our Mayor in Manalapan. You were asking about Englishtown and the addresses and so forth. Englishtown separated from Manalapan Township in 1888, when we were right in Manalapan Township. Now, of course, Manalapan has grown large, but we still have no real hub as far as a little town goes. We lost that in 1888. Juliet has a lot of pictures here and a lot of papers. And, I was telling her that some of those should be laminated because they just won't keep otherwise.

Ms. Narunsky: Here are pictures of the shelves that we had and the drug store.

Ms. Wikoff: It was a shame when the drug store left, it kind of folded.

Ms. Narunsky: You needed a drug store in the town.

Ms. Wikoff: Now we have to get in a car and go out.

Ms. Narunsky: Well, nobody wanted to work seven days a week.

Ms. Wikoff: No, that's the trouble.

Ms. Narunsky: Well, my husband had a heart attack, well, two heart attacks, and the doctor says, no seven days a week. And, so we closed up.

Ms. Wikoff: We just hope that the town livens up.

Ms. Narunsky: We used to have a luncheonette and two banks, and a funeral home, and a clothing store.

Ms. Wikoff: And an ice cream shop, and a ... We had just about everything in this town.

Ms. Narunsky: And shoemaker. It was a nice town. People were friendly. We knew everybody.

Ms. Wikoff: Especially you having a drug store, and you got to know their names.

Ms. Narunsky: And now every once in a while, I will bump into somebody who says, "Oh, how are you?" It's nice. But I still keep friends with one of the girls who grew up on my street in Freehold many, many years ago when I was five years old. About once or twice a year, we will call each other and say hi. That was the

Bellamy family. They lived on Bowne Avenue in Freehold. And her father and mother worked at the rug mill. I remember all the families, and there was the Filan family, they worked at the rug mill, too. And there was Walter Briggs, he was a fireman. And every time we'd hear the alarm go off, we'd see him run up the street to get to the fire. And it was nice...Freehold was a nice town to grow up in. We had a lot of friends, and we took care of each other.

Ms. Wikoff: You probably didn't have much time for hobbies in those days. It sounds like you were working all the time.

Ms. Narunsky: Well, I started working when I was eleven years old in my uncle's store. And then I used to go out with him. He used to have charge accounts at the clothing store, and I used to go on Saturday with him collecting. I was a kid, but I wasn't afraid to go with him..... Yes.

Ms. Wikoff: It must have been fun for you?

Ms. Narunsky: So, I worked a long time. I worked when there was a department store on Main Street in Freehold. I worked there on Saturdays when I was in high school. After I graduated from high school.

Ms. Wikoff: Crine wasn't it? Was it Crines?

Ms. Narunsky: No, no, no. Crine was on one side of the street, and this was further down past the Strand Theatre. We had two movies in Freehold. We had the Liberty Theatre that burned down. The Strand Theatre burned down, too. We had a bowling alley that was near the Liberty Theatre. That burned down. And my father had a store right next door to the Liberty Theatre. Then he moved to South Street.

Ms. Wikoff: Were they able to save his store?

Ms. Narunsky: They saved some of the stuff, but ... not too much. But they couldn't save the building, so then he moved to South Street. And, let me think if I can remember all the stores in Freehold. Saturday night in Freehold was a big thing. Everybody parked their cars on Main Street and sat and watched the people walk by and do all their shopping. Saturday, you got all dressed up and some people had a particular place where they wanted to park. And to park there, you'd have to get there early. I remember it so well. I remember the people would look at you when you came in the store.

Ms. Wikoff: I was going to go back to where we were talking about how she went with her uncle to collect because people paid by the week, and she and I both remember when insurance agents used to come weekly to collect ten, fifteen, twenty-five cents so that your insurance policy would be kept up. It almost makes you laugh today.

Ms. Narunsky: That's right. Money was tight and they came every week collect on your one-hundred dollar policy or whatever it was. I also have an Indian head arrowhead that my father found when he was farming the farm.

Ms. Wikoff: Called the Derrick Seddith Farm. It is now in the Battleground State Park.

Ms. Narunsky: Yes. And, I have one Indian head arrowhead left. We had more of them, but through the years, they got lost. We'd take them to school and they would disappear.

Ms. Wikoff: At Show and Tell.

Ms. Narunsky: And I have a newspaper article about the fire in 1964, where eight stores in Freehold were burned down. I have a lot of things. A copy from the Asbury Park Press announcing the wedding of my father and mother in 1914. It came from the Asbury Park Press, and they were married in a double ceremony with his sister and her husband from Asbury Park.

Ms. Wikoff: That was quite unusual to have the double ceremony.

Ms. Narunsky: Yes. And I have a lot of old newspaper clippings when my cousins were in the Army, and the honors they got. My mother saved all these things, and I saved a lot of them. But, they are beginning to fall apart. I will have to take care of them and have them fixed. I have two children.



Ms. Narunsky's brothers, Sol and William Lopatin, before their service in the war

Ms. Wikoff: Yes. Tell us about your children.

Ms. Narunsky: My daughter went to the Manalapan School. Then she graduated from Marlboro High School. She was active in the band. My son went to Manalapan School, and he graduated from Freehold Borough High School. They both live in California now.



Ms. Narunsky in the

hospital after the birth of her daughter, 1953 **Ms. Wikoff:** What are their occupations?

Ms. Narunsky: Right now my daughter is unemployed. She had a bookstore, and she closed it because the building was sold, and she is going to start looking for a job. She hasn't quite made up her mind what she wants to do. And my son is writing and reviewing movies for some man. And they both like it in California. They wouldn't come back.

Ms. Wikoff: Do you ever go to visit?

Ms. Narunsky: I went two years ago to visit, and my daughter was here in June. I'd rather they came here. It is a long trip, its tiring, and I have everything here that I like.

Ms. Wikoff: They'd probably like to come back to their roots.

Ms. Narunsky: I have pictures of my grandfather and grandmother that were taken on the farm in 1922. That was my paternal grandparents. And then I have a picture of my maternal grandfather taken in Freehold. So, I have been here all my life, and I love it.

Ms. Wikoff: And who was it that was taught English by one of the Woodwards?

Ms. Narunsky: My father. My father was taught by the Woodwards. So, you know old family names. You hear a name and you'll say, oh my daughter went to school with that one. My son went to school with that one. They used to tease me when they went to high school and I knew some of their friends, and I'd say, "Oh, I went to school with your mother or father." And they'd say, "Did you go to school with everybody?" But the Freehold High School, Marlboro High School, they were all local people. They didn't move around that much. They stayed in the neighborhood.

Ms. Wikoff: That is the difference today. And the one room school that you were talking about there in Tennent, the one room school, is still a home. It's not a school anymore, of course, but it is right there opposite the Tennent cemetery.

Ms. Narunsky: It is still a good-looking house.

Ms. Wikoff: Yes. I think the Historical Society dated that house, not that it was a century old at that time, but just because it had historical significance. Can you describe any childhood favorite things that you played?

Ms. Narunsky: That I don't remember. Oh, I had another uncle from my mother. All the uncles we have talked about were my father's brothers. My mother had a brother, Harry Cherin; he had a butcher's shop in Freehold. Then she had a sister in Freehold who was Mrs. Jacob Zlotkin, and one of her sons was in the

cattle business with his father. And the other son was a lawyer, Isadore Zlotkin. Lou Zlotkin is a doctor, retired, and my cousin, Sylvia, married a doctor. And then Harry Cherin had three children. One was a lawyer. One had a drug store in Freehold. Eli Cherin had a drug store on Court Street. The Pharmacy.

Ms. Wikoff: Oh, I remember that.

Ms. Narunsky: And Joyce Sherman lives in the Villages. I have a sister who lives in the Villages. I have a brother, Nathan, who was an electrician. He lives in Tucson, Arizona. I have a brother, Bill, who lives in East Windsor. He is a pharmacist. And, my youngest brother, Irving, lives in East Brunswick, and he had a software company. They are all retired now. So, we have been around.

Ms. Wikoff: And your family was very prominent with their positions.

Ms. Narunsky: Here we stayed. Most of us have stayed near here. My sister, Celia, lives in the Villages, which is an adult community, the same as Covered Bridge. And we all enjoy where we are living. We stayed in the neighborhood; we like it. Little by little the cousins have died off, but I have one cousin, Bill, who is eighty-nine. He lives in Applewood Estates. He was in the construction business, and he lives in Applewood. And that's that. You know we stay pretty close to home.

Ms. Wikoff: Good! Well, that's wonderful!

Ms. Narunsky: After we closed our drug store, I got a job in hardware supply, plumbing supply house for twenty years. And I was the bookkeeper, and half ran the office, and ran everybody crazy, but it nice, it was fun. I got to know all the men who did plumbing work. They used to laugh with me. You want to be a plumber. You ought to get a job as a plumber's helper. And that was fun.

Ms. Wikoff: And what did your husband do after you had to give up the drug store? I think he wasn't in good health.

Ms. Narunsky: He worked for awhile part-time at different drug stores, but he couldn't do it, and he died twenty-two years ago.

Ms. Wikoff: Yes, yes, its been a long time.

Ms. Narunsky: But, that's life. You've got to make the best of it.

Ms. Wikoff: And you kind of live with your happy memories?

Ms. Narunsky: Yes.

Ms. Wikoff: And you have so many wonderful mementos here of your life and your family.

Ms. Narunsky: Yes. And I belong to a congregation, Sons of Israel. I'm a life member there.

Ms. Wikoff: That's in Manalapan.

Ms. Narunsky: My grandfather was one of the founders of Congregation. It's on Broad Street in Freehold. First they had the synagogue was on 2nd Street what we called Texas in Freehold. And I had the last wedding there. After that, they sold the building and they moved to the new building on Broad Street, the corner of Broad and Stokes in Freehold. So, I have newspaper pictures of that event.

Ms. Wikoff: Did you realize that Hovnanian built Covered Bridge? Previous to that, he built his first building here in the Township, Holiday North. He came over from Armenia, penniless. We happened to find out a lot about him and at the time that he started this development. My husband happened to be on the Board of Education. And along with all the other members of the Board, he said, "What are we going to do with all these children?" And Hovnanian, I think, because he knew the problem that he was given, built a school to state specifications, which is an unusually difficult thing to do. And you could build a school, but to build it to the state regulations was difficult. And to tell you the truth, it was a great asset. And he not only did that, but he gave four parcels of land and your Congregation Sons of Israel

Ms. Narunsky: He gave us land to build our new synagogue on Gordon's Corner Road. He also gave a piece of property that the Saint Thomas More Church is on. That's on Gordon's Corner Road, too.

Ms. Wikoff: He also gave a piece of property that the Pine Brook School is on. And he gave one other piece of property, but I don't think it was used, and so it stood vacant for years. I just have to say that because there have been no other developers since then who have been that generous.

Ms. Narunsky: I belong to the organizations. I try to keep up with what's going on around me.

Ms. Wikoff: That's good. I just had a lot of fun looking at those nice mementos that Juliet has saved from her family and maybe she will tell us about some of them that have to do with pharmacy and some things that have been in the family for a long time.

Ms. Narunsky: I have scales that were in the pharmacy that my husband had. They are old, very old pieces, because the pharmacy was there long before my husband.

Ms. Wikoff: Mr. Hamilton had it.

Ms. Narunsky: I have my mother's set of cups and saucers that were my mother's wedding present, and that was a long time ago, and a couple of pieces of cut glass that were given to my mother and father as wedding presents.

Ms. Wikoff: And I see an Aladdin lamp there. That's a kerosene lamp. And when you polished them underneath the nickel, there is brass.

Ms. Narunsky: My father made it electric for me. I use it once in a while. And, the statue next to it was what we brought back from my trip to Israel. We enjoyed that. We traveled quite a bit. I have been to Ireland, France, Italy, Israel, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Alaska, Hawaii, Canada, and quite a bit of the United States. Still come back to New Jersey. That's what I love. (Laughs)

Ms. Wikoff: Well, I think that is wonderful to share all that information. And it's nice that you have been able to travel.

Ms. Narunsky: Yes. I took a cruise on the Mississippi. It was a beautiful. It's a lot of fun.

Ms. Wikoff: We've done that. And it is one of the trips I enjoyed the most.

Ms. Narunsky: I've been to the Grand Canyon, and I've been to Nashville. And I enjoyed them, but right now I am content to stay home.

Ms. Wikoff: I am happy that you shared all this information with us about your life. And, we are just delighted that you would participate in this oral history.

Ms. Narunsky: If they want to borrow my pictures, I will let them.

Ms. Wikoff: Very good. I highly recommend that they are laminated before they crumble.

Ms. Narunsky: I may have to take them and have them laminated.

Ms. Wikoff: Thank you again, Ms. Narunsky.