



## Interview with Theodore J. Narozanick

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Flora T. Higgins, Project Coordinator

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**Ms. Conohan:** My name is Sherry Conohan, and I am a reporter at the Asbury Park Press. I have covered Ted through the years and through many different phases. So perhaps we ought to begin with the beginning. Ted, please tell me where and when you were born, and where you grew up.

**Mr. Narozanick:** Thank you very much. It is nice to be able to be with you for a recording this morning. I was born and raised in Englishtown. As a matter of fact, where the Catholic Church is today in Englishtown, that was our property...our lawn. The home that we lived in is where the Rectory is now. Upon my dad passing away, my mother then didn't need all that property, so she sold it to the Diocese. We had no Catholic Church in town at that time. We would meet in various homes. But that was really the start of the Catholic Church in the Borough of Englishtown.

**Ms. Conohan:** What is the name of the church?

**Mr. Narozanick:** Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church. Of course it is a big parish now. With the advent of all the developments around Englishtown, they have got a really big parish. They have just completed a Parish Center now, and that is adjacent to the church. So they are doing very, very well.

**Ms. Conohan:** When was that approximately that your mother sold the property?

**Mr. Narozanick:** I think it could have been around the later part of 1959 or 1960, somewhere in there.

**Ms. Conohan:** Was your family a long-time Monmouth County family?

**Mr. Narozanick:** Oh yes. We were continually in Monmouth County, sure. My dad was a country auctioneer. Of course I remember that during the Depression days, many of the farmers were so bad off financially that they would hold the sales, and my dad would be the auctioneer. This was primarily an agricultural area. They would sell their produce, the farm equipment, the machinery, etc. And he, of course, got a small commission for that. He, along with a retired school teacher, and an owner of some lands where the Englishtown Auction is presently today, started that as The Englishtown Sales Company. Primarily that was to be an outlet for the farmers to dispose of their surplus stock...poultry, livestock, horses, donkeys, cows, sheep, goats, and whatever they had, plus their fruits and vegetables that they raised on the farms. Of course after the War years, it started to take on the atmosphere of a flea market, which it presently is today. But it was primarily started to help the farmers in the area around Englishtown.

**Ms. Conohan:** How did your family fare in the Depression?

**Mr. Narozanick:** Well, they fared pretty well, I would say. We didn't have an awful lot, that's for sure. It got to the point where my dad was trying to do the auctioneering, and my mother then took a job at the Karagheusian Rug Mill here in Freehold for many years. There were several ladies from Englishtown who would travel together and go to work in the rug mill here, at the Karagheusian Rug Mill. And that lasted for a few years, and of course it helped out. But it was rough going in those days.

**Ms. Conohan:** What were the roads like in those days? Did you have a lot of paved roads?

**Mr. Narozanick:** We had a lot of dirt roads and of course we also had some roads that were tar. At that time most of the road work was done by putting a coat of oil on the roadway and then treating it with some very small stones, just to give it a cover like. But it didn't last very long. Of course our major highway was the road from Englishtown to Freehold, which was a paved road at that time and still is today.

**Ms. Conohan:** Oh, that's very interesting. How old were you when World War II broke out, and how did you come to go into the Army?

**Mr. Narozanick:** Well, as you know, in 1939 and 1940, there was a lot of disruption in Europe. Hitler was invading various countries and whatnot, and I

think in 1939, he invaded Poland. And there was a lot of talk and unrest in the country here, that eventually we were going to have to go to war. And one night in Englishtown, there was very little for us young people to do. We had a few stores on the main street; the primary store where we all congregated in the evening was a soda fountain. It had a very long porch, and we'd all sit on that long porch and leave enough room for people to get into the front door to get ice cream, soda, or whatever. And that's where we would talk and discuss all kinds of issues. I think I was about twenty.

**Ms. Conohan:** What was the name of the soda fountain?

**Mr. Narozanick:** It was run by a man and woman by the name of Smith...Ferrell Smith, I think it was. It was right on the main street, and it was associated right next door to an American store, which was operated by a fellow by the name of Wilbur Erickson. We sat there on this night in particular, and somebody suggested that if we went into the service and did our year, we could be put on reserve. That way we'd only do a year and then come back. A couple of the fellows had cars. As I recall, a group of us came into Freehold to join the Army, and do our year. Where the 4-H and the agricultural section is today on Court Street, was vacant, was being used by the Army as a Recruiting Office, and it was also being used as a Branch of the New Jersey National Guard. That was the 44<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division at that time. And there were two units in Freehold, Company A and Company B of the 119<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Regiment. And those were the two units that were stationed in Freehold. So we came into Freehold that evening, and I'll never forget this. Our doctor from Englishtown, Sam Barr, was in uniform and was in the Army. We walked in, and we said we wanted to join the Army, and he swore us in, and he gave us a very light physical to prove we were in shape, and that was it. He told us to report at five or six o'clock the next morning, because we were then in the Army. I went home and told my mother that I had just joined the Army, and I would need to get up real early the next morning. And that overcame her, God bless her! That just overcame her and she sort of fainted away, and we had to revive her. Nevertheless, I got up the next morning and we came and reported at the Court Street Office here, and they took us over to Conway's Bar, which is where the Court Jester is today. And we had some breakfast, and we would drill and practice being a soldier all day long out on the streets here in Freehold. We had no uniforms, so we were all in civilian clothes. But we would go home at night and sleep, and then come back the next morning. We did that for several days and one Saturday, there were a lot of Army trucks parked out here on Court Street. When we saw the trucks, the order was given to us to get in the trucks, and we were going to Fort Dix. We were the first group to occupy Fort Dix since World War I. They still had those black tarpaper barracks. When we got to Ft. Dix my assignment was to go out on a truck and visit the various farmers and get as much straw as I could, so when we got back to Ft. Dix we could fill up bags or sacks, to make mattresses to sleep on. The other group had a detail that was sent to find where the kitchen was and clean the old stoves from World War I. Another group went out and found soft

coal, and another group would be trying to clean the inside of the barracks for us. And we stayed there for quite some time. You know it is surprising, Sherry, all this period of time that we were there in Ft. Dix, it must have been a good two months, we still had no uniforms. We were still in civilian clothes. Finally we did start getting pieces of uniforms from a depot, which at that time was in Philadelphia. Some would get riding breeches that you would use when you rode a horse or a motorcycle. Others would get a campaign hat with a big brim on it. Others would get an ordinary hat. Some would get a brown pair of pants, and some got a beige shirt or pants. So we were really not in uniform completely. That was how we mustered down in Ft. Dix on September 16<sup>th</sup> of 1940, and I think it was probably the latter part of August that we signed up and came into the Army. After we were in Ft. Dix for awhile, we then went on maneuvers down South. Of course by that time, we had our uniforms. We had a great deal of equipment, a lot of trucks and vehicles, guns, and whatever we needed we had at that time.

**Ms. Conohan:** When you say you went down South, where did you go?

**Mr. Narozanick:** The Carolinas. Then when we were coming back to Ft. Dix, we stayed overnight at the Gettysburg Battleground. That was just for overnight, and then we went back to Ft. Dix the next day. That's the time that we heard that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. So we knew then that we were in the Army permanently. There was no "year" for us to do and then get back. So my service in the Army amounted to a little over five years...almost 5 ½ years.

**Ms. Conohan:** When did you ultimately get out?

**Mr. Narozanick:** I was discharged on December 28, 1945, right after the War.

**Ms. Conohan:** You went through the whole war in the Army.

**Mr. Narozanick:** I went overseas to the European Theatre Operations, and we went through the invasion at Normandy, which either was D plus 2 or 3, I just can't recall the date today. But I know all of our vehicles were prepared to go over and through the water.

**Ms. Conohan:** Were you in England?

**Mr. Narozanick:** Oh, yes, we were stationed in England. That's where we did a lot of training there. When we were in England, we were also given a lot of training on waterproofing a vehicle. That is to say we had this heavy grease, which was called kosmoline at that time. We would take that and practice every day on a jeep or a truck, and we would cover the engine with all this heavy grease. We would put a pipe in through the carburetor and position it vertically for air so that if we in water, the jeep or vehicle would still be able to operate. And it came in handy because when we got off the ship that took us across the

channel, we naturally didn't go right to the beach, so we were out in the water. And when you sat in the jeep, you were up to your waist or maybe up to your neck in water, but you were still sitting in the jeep.

**Ms. Conohan:** And you were driving through the water?

**Mr. Narozanick:** And the jeep was still going, up onto the beach.

**Ms. Conohan:** And that kosmoline grease worked?

**Mr. Narozanick:** Oh, it absolutely worked. We had no failure with any vehicle that I recall.

**Ms. Conohan:** That is amazing.

**Mr. Narozanick:** Yes. When we hit the beach, the paratroopers were coming back, because they had landed on D-Day early in the morning. And when they were coming back, they had a tremendously rough time. They had those big jumpsuits on with the huge pockets on the front side of their legs, and all the paratroopers looked like they had gone through a battle. You could tell that. But they had a lot of bottles of champagne and cognac, pistols, revolvers, and German guns stuffed in their pockets that they had picked up when they encountered the Germans over there.

**Ms. Conohan:** Did those paratroopers share some of their stories with you as you were coming ashore?

**Mr. Narozanick:** Not really. They were so anxious to get off, and we were just getting on the beach. They were all in a line two abreast, and they were all heading for the beach where there were landing crafts that were going to take them out to the boats that would take them back to England for rest and relaxation.

**Ms. Conohan:** So there were people coming off the boats, and then the paratroopers were going on those same boats to go back to England.

**Mr. Narozanick:** Yes.

**Ms. Conohan:** What did you do after you got on the beach?

**Mr. Narozanick:** Well, after we got on the beach, it was a very rough situation. We had so many vehicles in our Company. During the early part of 1942, I was stationed still at Ft. Dix, but then we were transferred to Ft. Hancock, which was right here in our own county. We were there for a short while. However, while we were in Ft. Hancock, I did make the baseball team. I still have photographs at

home that show Ft. Hancock written across my chest, with various poses of me with a bat and a glove. I was a pretty good baseball player in those days.

**Ms. Conohan:** And we should explain for people who may not remember it that Fort Hancock is out on Sandy Hook and is now part of the Gateway National Park.



**Ted Narozanick at Officer Candidate School in Virginia, December 1942**

**Mr. Narozanick:** We were there for quite some time.

As a matter of fact, we were supposed to play our first game with Governor's Island, as I recall, and before the first game came we practiced every day. But before the first game was to take place, we were all transferred again...this time down South again. Some of us went to Virginia, some went to South Carolina, and some went to Fort Moultrie, South Carolina. I went to The Citadel at South Carolina, which was just on the outskirts of Charleston, South Carolina. And we were training there again, going through all of our rituals of being a soldier. While I was in South Carolina, I applied for Officer Candidate School. And I was successful. I went from South Carolina in the early part of 1942, I guess toward the fall or winter of 1942, to Camp Lee, Virginia. That was the Officer Candidate School, and I was in Class #11. For ninety days they gave you such intensive training that at the end of it, you

graduated and got your bars and uniform, and you were then "an officer and a gentleman." That was all in ninety days, but the training was so intensive that many of the men got to the point where they didn't want to take that regimentation, you know. You would be subject to "call out" early in the morning with a pack on your back, and you would do various things just to be tested to see what you could do and if you would blow up. Do you know what I mean? So many of the men would be washed out of the class. Nevertheless, we graduated in December of 1942. After I graduated I was sent back to Camp Lee, Virginia, to instruct officers who were receiving a commission and who were coming into the Army. If a man was a very financial expert or he had something to do with transportation like trucks or buses or rail, they were given an outright commission. They were sent down to Virginia, and we would train those people, because they had no exposure to military life at all. I was an instructor there for transportation, even in those days with trucks and vehicles. I stayed there for quite some time. You know a funny thing happened when I was in Camp Lee, Virginia. One day at the mess hall, I sat next to a colonel. We got to talking, and I asked him where he was from. He said he was from Monmouth County, New Jersey. Well, I was from Monmouth County, too. So I asked him where, and he said it was actually Sea Girt. That was where he lived and was raised, but now he was in the service as a full colonel. He said he was there to get the training,

and that was when we were training these officers at that time. He said he hoped to be transferred to the China Burma India Theatre of Operations, which was a rough assignment to get in those days. You know what the China Burma Road was? They had to build roads over the mountains to transport supplies and move men and equipment. He said he would like to take me with him if I was interested in going. He said he would try and get a transfer for me if I was. But I said no thanks, I wasn't ready for the China Burma India Theatre. I don't know whatever happened to him. But that was one experience with Colonel Bell. But I never did get his first name. But that is the closest I came to meeting someone right from our own area.

**Ms. Conohan:** When did you transfer over to Europe?

**Mr. Narozanick:** Let's see, that might have been the latter part of 1943 or the early part of 1944. I know I have all of these dates written down, but I just don't have them with me. I think it might have been January of 1944.

**Ms. Conohan:** Did you go directly to England?

**Mr. Narozanick:** No. After I left Camp Lee, I was transferred from being an instructor there to a new camp that was just being organized at Granada, Mississippi. I had never heard of it; the name of the camp was Camp McCane. I got a ten-day leave to come home, and I spent some vacation time at home. Then I reported back to this Camp McCane, Mississippi, and it was in Granada. It was a brand new camp. There were no sidewalks or anything, it was just out in the field. There were some tents and some barracks, but that is where we did our training. I picked up a Company and was then called a Company Commander. Even though I was a Second Lieutenant, I still had a Company Command to train. And we trained there a long time, and I know we had to go through our twenty-six mile hike, which was mandatory. You had to do that. After we completed that, that was the final part of our training. Then we were put on a train, and we didn't know where we were going. We had all of our equipment. But as time went by, I would try to see along the track if we could pick up any license plates from the vehicles you could see from the track. I finally started picking up a lot of Jersey plates, so I knew we were going somewhere in Jersey, which we did. We finally got off the train at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, which was on the outskirts of New Brunswick. And that morning we got off the train, I had all my troops lined up, and I was leading them down the street into Camp Kilmer. And I'll never forget this, either. They were still building that camp at that time, and there were a lot of union carpenters still working on it, for the government and developers that were building these barracks. As I was walking down the street with my troops behind me, I could hear somebody on top of one of the barracks shout, "Hey, Ted!" And low and behold, it was my uncle that lived in South River, and he was a carpenter!

**Ms. Conohan:** What was his name?

**Mr. Narozanick:** Louie Brustowitz. He is dead now, but it was Louis. He was a carpenter and had been working on a barrack, and he knew that I was there. As soon as he got home, he called my mother and father in Englishtown and told them I was at Camp Kilmer.

**Ms. Conohan:** Do you have any brothers and sisters?

**Mr. Narozanick:** Oh yes, I have two brothers and two sisters. After I went into the Army my oldest brother went into the Navy. He also participated in Normandy, but he was on a Navy ship. We trained at Camp Kilmer for only a short while. Then one day we were put on a train and taken to the piers in New York, and we boarded the *S.S. Aquitania*, which was a British Ship. There was no convoy or anything, but we got on that British ship that took us to Scotland. We embarked off the ship in Scotland, and then we got on a British train that took us into England. Again, I'm not familiar with the name of the town or anything, but I have a feeling it was near Bristol.

**Ms. Conohan:** After D-Day and before you got to the Battle of the Bulge, where did you move around to?



**Ted Narozanick in France during World War II**

**Mr. Narozanick:** Oh, Lord! After we went through France and through some of these small towns, the first time we were in combat was in an apple orchard. We tried to camouflage most of our vehicles and take cover. It was early evening. We could hear this plane coming, and it didn't sound right. We thought it wasn't an American plane. Every fourth vehicle had a ring around the top of the truck, and on that ring was mounted a 50-caliber machine gun that you could then swing around the whole 360 degrees, standing on the seats in the truck. But that ring held the gun in place. As the plane approached our area, for some reason, one of the soldiers started firing the gun, which he never should have done. But the plane went down away, and you could hear it turning. Then the sound started getting louder and it came back to just about over the apple orchard, and it dropped a lot of what they call "anti-personnel mines." These were bombs that were made up of all kinds of metal and shrapnel and whatnot. When they dropped, they just disintegrated. It hit so many of the trucks. But none of the men were injured because they were all underneath the trucks or in a hole. But that was our first taste of combat.

**Ms. Conohan:** And what was your unit doing?

**Mr. Narozanick:** Basically we were carrying all the ammunition, the supplies, the food, gasoline, and whatever we needed for the troops to keep moving. We had to go many times and follow right in their footsteps to be sure that they had the

guns, food, and ammunition they needed. We had more than sixty vehicles in our company, as I recall. And we had around two hundred men in the company.

**Ms. Conohan:** You mentioned earlier about an African American unit. Were there African American soldiers with you in your Unit?

**Mr. Narozanick:** Yes, at that time it was all African Americans.

**Ms. Conohan:** That was unusual, wasn't it?

**Mr. Narozanick:** Oh yes. Of course there was segregation at that time. We didn't get desegregated until 1945, when President Truman issued that Executive Order that there would be no more African American Units but all units would be integrated.

**Ms. Conohan:** So you were commanding a Unit of African American men.

**Mr. Narozanick:** There were four Officers, and all of the four were white...myself and the other three. But we had a good unit, and we did a lot of work. We got involved in a lot of transporting...you probably heard of the Red Ball Express, which is a group of vehicles that worked twenty-four hours a day around the clock moving gasoline. We did that practically all through the War to keep up with the troops. We were part of the First United States Army, which was then commanded by General Bradley. After we got into the War quite extensively, I was then taken out of my Company Command and given a promotion, and I was sent to Battalion Headquarters. There I became like the Executive Officer.

**Ms. Conohan:** Was this before or after the Battle of the Bulge?

**Mr. Narozanick:** This was long before the Battle of the Bulge. As I was transferred to this new Battalion as Executive Officer, my job was then to try to proceed the company or the troops. I had to try to find adequate spaces for them to put their vehicles. If there was an old factory or an old building, maybe it could be suitable for housing for the troops. And that was my job then. As a matter of fact, I recall very vividly that I had a little jeep. All through my service, I had a jeep just about like that. When I had the windshield up, I had painted on the front "The Jersey." That was the name of a song at that time, and it also showed I came from Jersey. I had a driver. My job was to know where the troops were going and to try to proceed them and get them established. And my one mission was to get into Paris. We made Paris, alright, after driving quite extensively, a long period of time. Paris represents a wheel. Every avenue or street is like a spoke in the wheel, and I didn't know really where we were going. Maps were not too helpful for us at that time. I remember an elderly man on the Champs-Elysees, the biggest street in Paris. He was standing there, and I got the driver to pull up along side him. I asked him if he spoke English, and he said he spoke very good English. He said he was a personal friend of Senator Claude Pepper from Florida

at that time. He said every time Senator Pepper went overseas, they would have dinner and were very good friends. He asked where I wanted to go, and I told him I didn't really know but wanted to try to get spots for our troops. He sat in the back seat of that jeep, right here in the back like that, and he took us to spots of Paris I had never seen or had never been to before. Nevertheless, I was able to meet the troops when they got there. But can you imagine meeting somebody that knew Senator Claude Pepper from Florida?

**Ms. Conohan:** What a fortunate happenstance!

**Mr. Narozanick:** And he was very, very helpful to us. Then I got into Luxembourg, Belgium, and Holland.

**Ms. Conohan:** Where were you when the Battle of the Bulge happened?

**Mr. Narozanick:** I was in Belgium when the Battle of the Bulge took place. I was in a small town on the outskirts of a city called Liege. From there we were transferred from the First United States Army to the Third Army...to General Patton. He came in really during the Battle of the Bulge. It was up to him to try to relieve the people at Bastogne. That was the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, and a brand new Division of seventeen and eighteen year-old boys, which was the 106<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division from the United States. And they were practically wiped out during that period of time, so they called on Patton. When he started with his armored units and whatnot, it was everything we could do to keep up with him. He was using so much gasoline, and we were following him wherever he went. So the Battle of the Bulge started on December 16, 1944 and kept up until after January or February of 1945, and then it kind of receded. The Germans knew that they were done then. During that same period of time, many of the American soldiers, especially MPs, were captured. The Germans would take their uniforms and dress as Americans. Of course then when you came down with your vehicles, they wouldn't direct you to where you were supposed to go, but they would direct you to where the German troops were where they would massacre you and kill you all. There were many, many instances of this. We did lose some people in our vehicles, and we have never seen or heard from them again. And I know that could have been attributed to the Germans being dressed as Americans. They did that quite extensively, really. But it was a task to keep up with General Patton, with the amount of gasoline and ammunition that he needed. That was terrible. It got so that you could see a line of German soldiers that was maybe a quarter mile long just walking in line together. And we would pay no attention to them. They had no weapons...they had thrown them away.

**Ms. Conohan:** And they were captured by this time?

**Mr. Narozanick:** Yes, by the Americans. Many times we didn't pay any attention to them. They would be walking down the highway going somewhere. But we

paid no attention to them, because we knew they were done then, you know. They had no weapons.

**Ms. Conohan:** Were they going home or where?

**Mr. Narozanick:** We didn't know where they were going, so we just kept doing what we had to do. I remember one time when we were in Belgium, although I can't swear to that for sure, this Frenchman or Belgian came to our headquarters. We were out in this field. And he was carrying a long knife, a machete. It had a blade maybe two feet long on it. And he kept hollering "Bosch," which means "German." Of course we didn't speak his language and he didn't speak English, but he kept motioning us to follow him. So I took about six or seven men, and we followed this individual. I am sure he was a Belgian, as I recall it now. And he took us into this wooded area. There was an entrance where we went down into a tunnel. And when we got into this tunnel, you couldn't see because it was so dark. You couldn't see anything! But we knew the Germans were in there because they were ahead of us. There was a concrete bunker, and we could hear them running on the concrete because they had heavy shoes with the nails in the soles and heels. We knew they were ahead of us, and we could also hear them talking excitedly. But we couldn't see them. So we kept going and following this Belgian person as much as we could. Every once awhile we would stop and look into a room, and in that room in this tunnel would be ammunition, straw, or some military equipment. But that's where the Germans were, in this tunnel. After we got towards the exit, we had an encounter where we started firing our weapons. There were several Germans in there, and as I recall it, there must have been two or three who were wounded, and some were killed. The one that was wounded the most, when we got out into the open again out of the exit, he must have been sharp enough and bright enough to get the unit that we were with. And when we got out into the open, we got the vehicle to take those that were wounded to the P.O.W. Camp, where they would get medical attention and whatnot. So when he got to the P.O.W. Camp, he must have reported to somebody what had happened. And the way he reported the story was that we purposely wanted to kill them all, you know, without even trying to give them a chance. So when I was able to leave Germany and come back to the United States, I was investigated or interrogated by what they call The Inspector General's Department. They wanted to know what the circumstances were that we got involved in an encounter with these German soldiers, and why some were wounded and some were killed. But that was the Battle! And I gave my testimony and all that, and then I was able to leave and come home to the United States.

**Ms. Conohan:** Nothing ever came of that?

**Mr. Narozanick:** Nothing ever came of that. And at the same time, I knew then that my papers were in for a promotion to a Major. I was a Captain, and my

papers were in for a Major. But I would have had to stay in Germany a period of time, and I didn't elect to do that. I came home.

**Ms. Conohan:** Now you received an Award for Valor during the War?

**Mr. Narozanick:** Yes, the Bronze Star.

**Ms. Conohan:** When you came home from the War, what did you do when you re-entered civilian life?

**Mr. Narozanick:** I got home December 28, 1945.

**Ms. Conohan:** Oh, you just missed Christmas!

**Mr. Narozanick:** Yes. I thought I would like to maybe go back to school. That's what I had in mind really. And then my dad told me one day that since there had been such a shortage of supplies and everything for the people here while the War had been going on all these years, he thought this would be an opportunity for me to open up a store. He thought it should be a hardware store with farm supplies and appliances, because we couldn't get that stuff during the War. It was just not available. You had to be on a list to get a refrigerator or a stove. He said there was pretty big store in town that was vacant, and he knew I could buy it. He asked me if I had saved some money when I was in the service, and I said I had. He told me to think about it, and the more I thought about it, I figured that it was a real opportunity. So I did buy the building and in March of 1946, we opened the store. In just that short period of time we were able to make enough contacts for the supplies, for the hardware, for paint, appliances, housewares, farm equipment, and little tractors that people could use in their gardens and farms. Then we opened it in March of 1946.



**Ted Narozanick  
returning to the US  
after the war,  
September 1945**

**Ms. Conohan:** What was the name of the store?

**Mr. Narozanick:** Enterprise Hardware. It was right on the main street in Englishtown, although there was another hardware store in the town. But we were very successful, I might say. It was a tremendously important business. While I was in the community, I got involved politically. I ran for council and made that for seven years, and then I ran for mayor. I served as mayor for twelve years, and I served on the Board of Education for nine years. So I really contributed something to the community. And I liked it. And then through those years from 1946 on, Manalapan Township started to develop. Highway 9 started coming through with the strip malls and stores, and there were big stores that were coming in at that time, like major chains. Then you couldn't, as a small, independent businessman, keep up with the stock that they had, or the capital. As a matter of fact, our business started to decrease after that. And around 1954,

it got so bad that I told my wife she would have to run the business and stay open as much as we could, and I would have to take a job. So I took a job with the State of New Jersey in the Division of Community Affairs, or Community Services, as an auditor. And my job was to go around to various communities in Monmouth County that I would be assigned to, and I was to examine their books and records to see that they were doing things right. And really, that gave me a background for knowing what municipal government is all about. This was in addition to the time I served as Councilman and Mayor of Englishtown. But this background really was of tremendous help. I took a job with them for \$3,120 a year; can you imagine that? I started there in 1954 and I served until 1957. One of the towns that I was assigned to look at their records and audit, was the City of Long Branch. At that time they had a Commissioner, Walton Sherman, who was also President of the Central Jersey Bank & Trust Company, and he was also a Freeholder. He was in charge of Finance in the County here. We knew each other from Long Branch. There was a vacancy in the Department of Finance at the County in 1957, when the chief accountant was released, so Sherman called me and told me there was a job open, and he asked if I would take the position. My first task would be to put the budget together for 1957. I had the background in budgeting and whatnot, so I said I would take the job. I started here on January 1, 1957, right downstairs. That's when I came with the County of Monmouth, and we worked together. I got \$6,420 in 1957...that was my salary. I worked there for the next twenty-seven years and three months as the Director of Finance. In 1974, I was appointed as the first County Administrator. I retired in 1984, after twenty-seven years and three months. Then in 1985, I ran for election to the Board. And we have been successful ever since. I am now in my fifth term. This November, I will be seeking my sixth term.

**Ms. Conohan:** What is it that you like most about politics?

**Mr. Narozanick:** I think meeting the people and seeing what I can help them with, regardless of their problem. I have no line of demarcation, so to speak, whether they are a Republican, Democrat, Conservative, Independent, or Liberal. It makes no difference to me. If they are county residents and I can help them, that's my responsibility and my job. And that's what I try to do. Not only is it a situation of helping somebody in governmental operations, but in other things.

**Ms. Conohan:** You are the Freeholder in charge of, among other things, Health & Human Services.

**Mr. Narozanick:** Health & Human Services and Transportation.

**Ms. Conohan:** You must get involved with a lot of very personal stories.

**Mr. Narozanick:** Sherry, it is with the homeless, the disabled, people who need food stamps, people who have no place to live; they all know that they can call Ted Narozanick. The typical case goes like this. Yesterday morning I had to do a

little extra work, but we got a call that there was a man who had served in the United States Army, served in the Pacific Theatre of Operations, and he is now confined to a nursing home. He has serious health conditions, and the family would like to bury him in a Veteran's Cemetery, but they couldn't find any of his records. No discharge or anything! And you must prove all that before you can be interred into a Veteran's Cemetery. So it meant calling the Congressman's office, getting the various forms, writing a letter, and getting somebody in the family who would take the time to fill out a form for privacy. I did all this to help them see if we could get his records out of St. Louis so that they can eventually bury him in a Veteran's Cemetery.

**Ms. Conohan:** Of course that's complicated by the fact that the Records Center in St. Louis had a big fire a few years back.

**Mr. Narozanick:** A big fire, absolutely! So that is one typical example, but it goes on. Robert Tansy has a problem in the Morganville Fire Department, and then of course there is Stanley Rippish about the Route 33 Bypass. Richard Hartshorne has got a problem with the State of Israel Bonds...he needs an honoree...and it goes on and on and on.

**Ms. Conohan:** And transportation is the other area that you are principally involved in?

**Mr. Narozanick:** Yes, that's right.

**Ms. Conohan:** You are quite an expert on that.

**Mr. Narozanick:** I don't know if I am an expert on it, but I am the first Vice Chairman of the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority. We primarily deal with the thirteen northern region counties, as far as Ocean County. We have a twenty-member voting board. We take care of more than six million people, and we have roughly about \$5.9 billion to approve and to prepare transportation improvement programs for the distribution of Federal and State money for both the Department of Transportation and New Jersey Transit and the State of New Jersey. So it's a tremendously important operation. We just adopted our Transportation Improvement Program July 10 in Newark. This covers all the various programs by county for the thirteen northern counties that we have. It shows what they are going to do during the years 2001-2003.

**Ms. Conohan:** Of course today, you were very much in the news with the progress that has been made on the 'MOM' line, as it has been called. This particular day, July 18<sup>th</sup> 2000, and you just got the legislation approved by the Legislature and signed by the Governor that puts that project for rail service to Ocean County on the circle of mobility. How long, Ted, have you been working on this?

**Mr. Narozanick:** We have been working on that for seven or eight years. The 'MOM' Study goes back many, many years. I would say fifteen or sixteen years or maybe more than that. But what a step that has been for us when the Legislature and the Governor signed that legislation providing that MOM Study in the Circle of Mobility. Because then that permits us to apply for Federal funding, and it gives us some recognition under the Inner Mode of Surface Transportation Efficiency Act. It will also help us in the Transportation Trust Fund. So we have got everything to gain! Admittedly, we do have a problem with some communities that are not in favor of it. Whether or not there is a legitimate reason, that can be debated. But I expect that there is a lot of politics involved, too, regarding it.

**Ms. Conohan:** And do you think that this rail line, which you certainly hope goes through Western Monmouth County as opposed to any other route, will come about in a reasonable amount of time?

**Mr. Narozanick:** I would be very hopeful that it would. Right now there is such a situation with commuter transportation and the impatience of people dealing with congestion. No matter where you go, you have to take into consideration the amount of time that it takes you to get from one spot to another. And the congestion today is getting worse. It's not getting any better.

**Ms. Conohan:** It's a far cry from those days when your mother was traveling to the rug mill.

**Mr. Narozanick:** Absolutely! Today the Highway 9 is our main line into North Jersey and to the City, and today you just can't get any more vehicles on it! Now they are trying to provide another opening over the river. You can see the bridge being constructed. That's going to take some time. But in the meantime, we are at least making some headway and some progress for another mode of transportation, the rail line. It will help us additionally here in our County when the State starts construction of the Route 33 bypass. You know the difficulty it is getting through the Borough of Freehold today, the way the traffic is. And especially the major truck traffic. This would be a major help to us in the Borough of Freehold. I hope they will be starting that construction in another week or so.

**Ms. Conohan:** Yes, that will be quite an accomplishment.

**Mr. Narozanick:** Absolutely.

**Ms. Conohan:** And that's also been going on for years and years.

**Mr. Narozanick:** Really it started in 1960. However, it never was completed. And we have about a mile and five eighths to finish. Hopefully now that the contract has been awarded, and I see they are starting to move equipment in already on the highway, they should start in another week or so. And that will be a tremendous help to us!

**Ms. Conohan:** Well Ted, you made mention of the fact that you are running again for re-election this year. While I am sure you have had the chance to think about your accomplishments when you campaign, what are some of the things that you are going to be mentioning?

**Mr. Narozanick:** Well, since I started here in 1986, I have been a full-time Freeholder. This has been my occupation. I am here to really help the people. And as I indicated before, it makes no difference to me what party affiliation they have. If I can help, then that's what I want to do. I think we have done many major things in the County of Monmouth that have been for the betterment of everybody. Things that have improved the quality of life. I am a great supporter of open spaces. As a matter of fact, I had a great deal to do with the original legislation that came about in 1987, giving us the opportunity to raise additional money for acquiring open spaces. We had another program in 1996 that made ten cents altogether. The original was four cents, and then we added the six cents, so now we have ten cents of open space acquisition funding provided in the County. So that was a major step. It was also a major issue getting some of the communities to become members of Health & Social Services, a provision for the starting of The Health Department. We could have a coordinated effort then with Health activities. I think the establishment of the Library system is one of the major components that we can be proud of today in County Government. The Park system, the Library system, the Solid Waste system are also important projects. I remember doing a tremendous amount of work on establishment of the Reclamation Center and the Solid Waste system. This was really provided for under my term as County Administrator. That is where that started, really. So there have been so many things. We are concerned about our historical heritage and are working with the Historical Commissions and the Historical Societies in the County so that our people know of our heritage. I have put a lot of attention into helping the veterans within the various organizations that we have. We try to make sure the veterans are aware of what is going on, and any benefits that they might receive, and to try to help the veterans as much as we can. We need to recognize their efforts and their service, whether it was the European Theatre of Operations, the Pacific, Korea, Vietnam, or whatever. We try to help them with whatever we can do. Basically my career has been based on a love of County Government, the knowledge of it to know what we can and cannot do, and how we can be helpful to all the people.

**Ms. Conohan:** And just one final question. I thought it might be appropriate to close with a little bit about your family. Tell me how many years you have been married now.

**Mr. Narozanick:** My wife and I were married while I was in the Service in 1942, so we are in our fifty-eighth year right now. May 7<sup>th</sup> we celebrated our fifty-eighth wedding anniversary. My wife Margaret and I have one daughter, Carol, and she has three sons. They are all doing very well, and we have seven great-grandchildren now. One of the three boys works for public service in electric &

gas in the City, one is in the heating & ventilating, and the third one is a professional engineer. He is the youngest one, and he got his license about seven or eight months ago from the State of New Jersey, so now he is practicing as an engineer. So they are all doing very well.

**Ms. Conohan:** That's wonderful! And what is your wife's maiden name?

**Mr. Narozanick:** Margaret Stillwell. She was born and raised in Matawan, New Jersey. I met her while I was in the Service at the Hightstown Country Club. It's an establishment that is still in existence. All they do is sponsor ballroom dancing one night a week. While I was in the Service at Fort Dix, I went to that dance one night at Hightstown, and that's where I met her. And we kept up a relationship and eventually got married in 1942.

**Ms. Conohan:** Congratulations! Before we close, I would like to ask you if there is anything that you would like to add to our conversation that we haven't covered?

**Mr. Narozanick:** Well, Sherry, I have often said this: I have always admired you and respected you for the way you wrote your articles in the Asbury Park Press. We have had some great times really with the press here, not only the Asbury Park Press but other periodicals. I think of all that I can remember, for the fairness of the stories, and their objectivity, and for the way you put forth the information so people can understand, you represent the highest in that field, I think. And I am very proud to be associated with you.

**Ms. Conohan:** Well, thank you, Ted. Thank you very much. I appreciate this conversation very much.

**Mr. Narozanick:** Thank you, Sherry.

Interview with Monmouth County  
Freeholder Theodore J. Narozanick At  
his office in the Hall of Records,  
Freehold, N.J. on July 18, 2000.

This is an additional conversation  
after that recorded on a disc with  
more details on life in Englishtown,  
where Narozanick served as mayor.  
The interviewer is Sherry Conohan.

(This conversation begins with talk  
about the train and tracks in western

Monmouth County.)

**Mr. Narozanick:** We had a station in Englishtown, which was very well occupied.

**Ms. Conohan:** And it would go to Trenton and kids would go to high school there.

**Mr. Narozanick:** Oh, yes. And many adults from Freehold were also riding the train at that time, who were working at business establishments in Trenton as well as banks and what not. It was a real treat to see that train. We had a station there. And some of the people I remember from years ago include the one who always picked up the mail from the train, Tilly Perrine. Tilly was a character by herself. She operated a Model T bus. That's Model T. That's in the 1900's, the early 1900's, when Henry Ford had a Model T. She'd pick up the mail, and I always remember her carrying a gun on her hip that probably was the size of a shotgun. But where she ever got it or what, I don't know, but always carrying that gun. Tilly. And she was the one that always reported to the train station to pick up the bags of mail.

Then I remember another man in town, we called him Gasoline Gus. He was in the gasoline business and he always would ride an old motorcycle or a bicycle, but we called him Gasoline Gus. Characters like that you'll never see again. And they had a heart as big as their head, do anything they can for you. So many things; people around town were so helpful.

**Ms. Conohan:** Do you remember your first campaign when you ran for the council?

**Mr. Narozanick:** Oh, yes, sure, absolutely.

**Ms. Conohan:** Was it a shock in any way when you go out there on the campaign trail or did you adapt right away?

**Mr. Narozanick:** Well, my first campaign, as I recall it, of course the town has predominantly been a Democratic town, Englishtown.

**Ms. Conohan:** And you are a Republican.

**Mr. Narozanick:** And I ran as a Republican. It was a little rough to get to the people because year after year we used the paper ballot and they were accustomed to voting the Democrat line all the way down the line. My dad was very much interested in politics, and he's the one who gave me the saying, "Don't hold office, but serve in office." That's where that came from. And I tried to appeal to the people and they knew that I had just come out of the service and I

had some ideas and, well, they gave me an opportunity. And it took me some while to make the first major improvement in the town. There was no question. After I became mayor, I looked at certain things in the community and I said we have got to try to improve. We can't just be in the status quo.

The lake needs to be improved and cleaned. And I went to the County of Monmouth and we were able to get a grant of some \$4,000.00 and we dredged the lake. And that was dredged by a man in Colts Neck, Frank Singlinger, who had the equipment and was able to say, "I know you don't have a lot of money, but I'm slow right now, I'll be able to help you dredge the lake." And he did. Main Street needed to be widened so that our businesses had an opportunity to have cars park on the main street so we widened the whole Main Street by taking land off one side, and putting in a new sidewalk. But it gave us the extra width to have a widened Main Street for parking. We needed to improve the street lighting. It was dark. You could hardly see at night in the town. We put in new street lighting. Christmas time we put up Christmas lights on the poles and decorated the town.

The major improvement was when I got to know Congressman Jim Auchincloss, who lived in Rumson. And I got very friendly with Jim Auchincloss and I invited him to Englishtown many times - and he came, surprisingly. Always with a chauffeur, but always came. And we talked to him and showed him the town, how badly we needed a water supply system because in town at that time everybody had a septic tank or a cesspool and a private shallow well, and we knew the wells were polluted because when we had an inspection made by the state Department of Health, better than 80 percent of the wells in town were polluted from the septic tank and the cesspool draining into the well. Through his efforts and going to Washington, making our story known, we were able to get a little better than \$200,000.00, a grant to put in a municipal water supply system and we started that. Surprisingly enough, we had some of the people in town oppose it, didn't want it. We had a lot of people who wanted it and knew the value of drinking pure water. So we started, let the contract out, and we started. I remember putting a big sign up in town, - "Pardon our progress. This is a new municipal water supply system for the health of our people." Now it's got a beautiful water system. Now they've got sewers that they were able to attract the sewers when Manalapan Township sewerred some of the developments. So the town is coming now. We started it. We also got postal delivery service, of having our mail delivered to each house.

**Ms. Conohan:** You didn't have that? Everybody had boxes?

**Mr. Narozanick:** No. That's it. Had their own box in the post office and you had to go walk to the post office. But we got postal mail delivery service.

My biggest disappointment - I was not mayor then or anytime - it just happened four or five years ago, maybe longer. We had a beautiful post office in Englishtown. It was closed by the Postal Department and the office was moved

to Tennent to the crossroads of Tennent on Route 522. And why did you close the post office in Englishtown, now that we're having the growth, the number of elderly people, and to move it to Tennent where you have maybe 13 houses. And not only that, but a mile down the road, they built the new Manalapan Township post office with a drive-in window so that you can deposit your mail and do your business in a drive-in, like a bank. Beautiful post office, a mile away. And here Englishtown is vacant with no post office at all. I don't understand the rationale for that.

**Ms. Conohan:** It's difficult to understand, that's for sure.

**Mr. Narozanick:** But, of course that was done a few years ago, maybe five or six years ago. Why I don't know.

**Ms. Conohan:** When you were mayor you also served on the Board of Education. You were a real glutton for punishment.

**Mr. Narozanick:** Absolutely. Altogether, I gave better than 20 years, really, of my time to the town to try to help them. I think we did major things to try to help everybody. And of course politics really never entered into it so much and it's still for me today. Although I'm on the Republican ticket, if I can help people regardless what they are or who they are, I'm here to help.

**Ms. Conohan:** That's terrific, Ted.

**Mr. Narozanick:** And I go to just about a function every night in the week somewhere.

**Ms. Conohan:** And I've heard from other people that you are very active right here in Freehold in a lot of service areas, helping people and children in the borough.

**Mr. Narozanick:** Absolutely. No question.

**Ms. Conohan:** You live in Freehold now?

**Mr. Narozanick:** Yes, since 1965.

**Ms. Conohan:** Tell me a couple of the organizations you work with here in Freehold.

**Mr. Narozanick:** I'm very friendly and active in Habitat for Humanity. I always support them. I support the Center Partnership and the Chamber of Commerce. That's primarily where I give help. I'm always with the firemen and the First Aid Squad. Whatever I can do to help them, I think I should.

**Ms. Conohan:** And I know, we talked about it earlier, you're very involved in veteran's activities throughout the county.

**Mr. Narozanick:** Oh, yes. That's the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion. Yes.

**Ms. Conohan:** And just one question that I have from my personal perspective. Through the years I have always been amazed at how remarkable you are with figures. If I have ever asked you any questions with regard to what something costs or whatever, you have it precisely down to the last penny. Do you have some kind of a particular ability to absorb figures and remember this?

**Mr. Narozanick:** I don't know whether I have that or not, Sherry. But I try to remember everything that happens as far as the County of Monmouth - what our budget is, what we provide, and our indebtedness. I think they are questions I may be asked some time and it's good to have that information. And I try to stick to the figures that are relative to the operation of our county government.

**Ms. Conohan:** That's terrific. Well, thank you again.

**Mr. Narozanick:** Thank you, Sherry.