September 20 2025

**This is an interview with Mary Alice Casazza (Allie) on date February 11, 2022. By Karen Favreau and Pat Stratis and with Rita O’Brien Dee Consulting from the Tewksbury Historical Society.**

***When did you come to Tewksbury?***

My family came here from East Boston in October 1928. We came with five children. We were eight children in all with the last three born in Tewksbury. My brother Joe and my sister Peg were born in East Boston.

Then for some reason, my folks moved to Medford and had me in 1919. And in two years, they were back in East Boston, and had my sister Theresa and my brother Dick. The five children were the ones that came to Tewksbury together.

I went to the Shawsheen School. It had two classrooms with two teachers.

***And what were the grades there?***

One classroom had the younger three, and the other classroom had four, five and six. I was in the third grade. So that one, two and three were in one classroom, and then four five and six were in the other classroom. And in my 6th grade, there were five of us. Then I went to the Foster School for grades seven, eight and nine.

It had only one floor. It didn’t have the upstairs. I think it had maybe seven grades there.

***Now, can we go back to the Shawsheen School? How was it to go to class with three grades? How did you do that?***

We were all in one room. The teacher took so much time for the first grade, so much time

for the second and so much time for the third.

***Did you help, like, if you were a third grader, did you help the first graders?***

No, we didn’t. We were separate, separate from each other.

***Did you know anything about South Tewksbury when you were growing up?***

I went to school in the original Shawsheen School in the front with the fire escape. It only had one floor so we were on that first floor. There were quite a few front stairs to get up to the floor.

***OK, so then did you go to Tewksbury High School?***

No, I went to Lowell High School for my Sophomore year and I hated it. I was like a fish out of water.

***They did that for a long time, right?*** We didn’t have a high school. Then Tewksbury opened the Tewksbury High School at the Center School. It opened in 1935 which went into 1936.

***The first graduating class was 1936, right?***

Yes, I graduated in 1937, the second graduating class. There were 27 in my class.

***I’m confused about what year you actually came here? You came here, went back and came again. Is that what you did?***

Yes, we moved to Tewksbury, South Tewksbury in 1928. When I got married in 1943, I moved to Arlington for 24 years. But I came back to Tewksbury in 1967, and I’ve been here a little over 50 years in South Tewksbury.

I have four daughters, and they were all born in Arlington.

***Oh, you lived in Arlington also?*** Yes, I was on Medford Street.  ***So, you came to Tewksbury first and then you went to Arlington?***

Yes, I married a man from Arlington.

**Silver Lake**:

You know, some people, way back, thought they were coming to the Riviera when they came to Silver Lake.

A lot of people used to come up here for Silver Lake in cabins and stuff. Silver Lake in the thirties was very popular. People came from Arlington and Cambridge. My parents came too.

***Is Thompson’s Grove part of Silver Lake too?***

Yes.

***Where was Thompson’s Grove?***

Thompson’s Grove was where St Dorothy’s Church is now. It was like the Riviera, honestly. There was only a Dance Hall on Silver Lake.  ***That’s all you know about Tewksbury***? I didn’t tell you about that?

***Tell me about that.***

I would say in the thirties. I was nine when I came here, so maybe I was twelve, so that would be the early thirties. And there was a Dance Hall there, and it was very popular every day. On Labor Day weekend, at the end of the summer they would have a beauty contest. And when we were kids, we could go down there, but there was the chain fence around it, right on the edge of the water.

And when the Wilmington 08:30 whistle blew we had to get the heck home. That is when it got dark, and we had to report in. But we could go down and watch the dancing. Well, my father said they used to take the trolley from Woburn or something. ***Where did they get the trolley?*** I don’t know where they got the trolley, but they used to take it and go dancing in that Dance Hall. When it was over, you could walk to the train station.

***So, where was the Dance Hall building?***

Well, you know where the beach is now? Well, it was there on the left-hand side?

Where the houses are now?

Yes, well, that’s Grove Avenue. There was no road really from our end of the world. You had to come up Grove Avenue.

***So that’s how you got to the dance***? Yes.

***Back to the trolleys. Where did the trolleys start?***

They came from the metro station in Everett. There was a turntable that when the trolley came down from Lowell, it would wait until the other one came and then switch tracks. And the turntable was where Aubuchon Hardware used to be in South Tewksbury.

***Wasn’t there a turntable also up by Wamesit where the Indian Statue is?***

I don’t know too much about that.

And at the time, when I was young, we went to school and came home because my father never drove a car. So, if you missed the bus, you walked, really. When we went to the High School, when you got out, you had to lickety-split run home on the bus.

***Wamesit was quite a distance from South Tewksbury?***

Yes, that was almost the end and we were at the beginning. The town is seven miles long.

***And there was another church down there?***

Yes, St. Mary’s Chapel,

***Then it became the VFW, right?***

That’s right.

It used to be a movie theater years ago, really, in the thirties and in the twenties. I don’t know what kind of movies they showed. Not talkies. That was in the thirties. I would say the structure was there, but we never saw any movies there.

We went to church all our young lives and we went together. That’s in the same building. And they had a satellite at the State Hospital too. **Oh they did**? Yes, I’m sure it was a satellite.

We went there because we didn’t have the transportation. And all of us kids went there. We went to the 08:30 mass on Sunday morning. I lived on the same street the whole time. We were in South Tewksbury and we just crossed over Vernon Street, only down one end.

We had a beautiful altar. White art and it was all carved and we had wooden benches for pews.

We’d have pie parties and whist.

***Do you have any pictures of the inside of St Mary’s?***

I don’t think I do of the inside. I know Liz Carey had one from the outside right on the street.

***Was St Mary’s, the first Catholic Church in Tewksbury?***

Yes, the priest came down from the Oblate Novitiate and we went to catechism classes at St. Mary’s. They were nuns, they were nice.

And they also had a Hall on McLaren Road. And in the summertime, that was a very, very popular spot. And, you know, the priest used to come down and say mass down here at the Hall. And that was the satellite, also of the Novitiate in the summer. We had a pot belly stove that used to get so hot that the stove was red.

The one group that used to come from the Boston area were known as the Catholic Literary Association. And every Labor Day weekend, they’d have a banquet catered by Fitzpatrick’s Caterers from Malden. And we would go up after it was all over and if there were rolls left, they used to give us the rolls.

***So, they had a banquet on Labor Day?*** I just tell you, we had the best time.

***I can absolutely tell. You didn’t have a watch?***

No, but we were always together. We always went off in a group In the neighborhoods. We never locked our doors and had few fences, you know, and all kinds of dogs and cats and other animals.

It, sounds great!

Because we had a lot of land in a lot of places, you could play ball, or you could do whatever you want. It was so nice in Tewksbury then. We loved it. You may never get out of South Tewksbury. You may have to come back and do another interview.

**State Hospital.**

In 1938, I was attending class when the 1938 Hurricane came through.

When I got out of high school in 1937, there weren’t many jobs around. So I went into class, and it was known as the Attendant for 15 Months. I have my diploma. I’m going to show you.

***Thank you. I’m going to take a picture of that***. I was going to keep it as a surprise.

***Ok, thank you.***

I graduated from there in 1939. ***What did you get a diploma in?***

Attendant for 15 Months Class.

And after I had my third child, they decided to have an LPN Course. And I got a notice that I could go to it but I was living in Alington and had three girls. No way could I get out so I never continued it. But I did go to work at Metropolitan State in Waltham.

***So, when you got the diploma from the State Hospital, it qualified you to do certain things at the Hospital?***

Yes, I could care for the patients.

***You were almost like an LPN or something like an Aide, right***?

Yes.

***And you could give meds, but not too much, right?***

Right?

***So, you worked there?***

I worked before I got married, and after I got married, I didn’t work until I came to Tewksbury.

***You were at the Metropolitan State Hospital?***

Yes.

When I graduated in 1939, there were no openings for my class to stay at Tewksbury. So, a group of us went to Metropolitan State which was newly opened. They told us to take Trapelo Road in Waltham.

Yes, I know it’s funny, but I think it was the beginning of McClain’s.

I believe it was because that’s in that area.

***Yes, but its big now? That was an experience for you I bet to work at Metropolitan State.***

I loved it.

***Did you?***

Yes, I really did.

***So how did you get there? You came from Tewksbury to Waltham to go to work?***

No, I lived at the hospital. We got room and board and we got paid $10.35. $5 went home to Mum and the other $5.35, you did what you could with it.

***OK, so you got Room and Board, wow? And how long did you live there?***

In Metropolitan? I lived there from 1939 to 1942.

***That must have been an experience.***

It was.

***It was a brand-new hospital, right?***

Yes.

***Well, you had friends, too, from Tewksbury that were down there also?***

Oh yes, a group of us including Helen Kelley. Jay Kelley’s mother, not Jay Kelley. Jay Kelley is the old Jack Kelley that used to be the Selectman and she was Helen Kelley, Helen Boise. She roomed across from me. She was Helen Boise before she married John Kelley ***Did you know her?***

No, I didn’t. I know Jay Kelley, Helen’s son, Jay was married to Maureen.

I’m telling you, those nurses at Metropolitan State were like something out of a magazine. They came on duty, and they wore starched uniforms. They were meticulous, nothing like you saw then. Their caps had a black band and white shoes. They were beautiful.

***And you stayed friends too?*** Oh, yes, that was a good experience.

***We are also interested in the trains.*** We had a lot of trains that ran through the Town and a lot of stations. The trolley came from Everett Station. The trolleys didn’t last too long.

We had a train depot in Wilmington and a Silver Lake Station. There was also a train station on North Street in the Center of Town. It has been gone for a long time. There were also trains running behind the Foster School near where Town Tire is currently. (Wamesit)

The man who was in charge of the State Hospital started the trains in Tewksbury because of the State Hospital coming to Town. They wanted to have ways for patients and staff to come to the Tewksbury State Hospital.

There are also tracks that are no longer being used. They are running almost parallel to those.

Well, those are freight. Louise Gearty told me that when she was growing up, (she

grew up somewhere near the center of town) and her relatives from Boston used to come up she would meet them at the station that was on or around North Street. She would meet them there, and they would walk to her house.

At, at one time, you could go north, south and to Boston from Tewksbury. You could go everywhere.

I don’t know how, but I know people in the past have told us that, and they used to come up in the summertime. They’d come on the train. There were trains running behind the Foster School. I think freight trains still run there now.

***And you could certainly see why it would be so helpful. Of course, the stage coach was used, too, Didn’t Anne Sullivan come in a coach?*** Yes, but that was before the trains.

A lot of people don’t know about the Shawsheen School either. They take the Shawsheen School date as the one that was built behind, not the old one. Actually, I think the old one went back to 1800.

So that’s why the name is so important. ***I understand that, you know, I do understand that there are a lot of people that got upset about that name being changed***. I’ve heard it from a lot of different people, especially people who went to that school, like I knew them when they were kids, and they went to that school, and then they changed the name. They didn’t like it at all.

**Farming**

***If you drive through the different parts of town, you see farmhouses. There must have been a farming community in Tewksbury. Were there a lot of farms in South Tewksbury?***

Not so many. We had Mike Finley whose yard was set back. And he lived on Brown Street, just around the corner. And we used to go up there and pull carrots from the ground.

The girls in Tewksbury loved the boys who traveled to Tewksbury because they came from Boston, and they would otherwise be dating farmers. The Tewksbury boys weren’t too happy with this.

***There was a farmstand, John’s Farmstead now, where Salem Bank was.*** Yes, that was Carl Heidenrich’s. And then, the farm’s barn actually was where Jon Ryans Pub is. That was a barn. Now, originally, yes. ***That site was right on the outside***. Yes.

The nearest farm to us was Pop Neilsen near Silver Lake but that was in Wilmington. They’re very close to the line near Silver Lake.

***Have you ever seen Jerry O’Reillly’s book?*** Yes, I know this author. At the end of Florence Street, the Wilmington/Tewksbury line goes in a diagonal direction (not straight) right out to Lake Street and through Jerry O’Reilly’s house. So, he was were Florence, Maple Wood and then Clyde met. This is how the line went and it went through his house. So, his bedrooms decided which town he was in. I don’t know if they had a choice or not, but they ended up in Wilmington, and they were right.

***Did you have any greenhouses in your area?***

No. The ones we had were all around the Center.

***So, Allie. When you went to school at the State Hospital, when you took that course, did you live there?***

***You can tell them about how you used to come and go at the Hospital. Did you have to ring a bell or talk at the gate?***

We had to come in through the South Gate and had to be in by 11 pm.

***Where was the South Gate?*** It’s gone now. It was off of Livingston Street, where the barn was. The main entrance was straight off East Street. The other one is gone.

***So, it was on Livingston Street?*** Yes. ***The doctors lived on Livingston Street, right?***  The doctors lived in the front of the Admin Building. There were two brick houses. Duncan Hazel and his kids lived there but Duncan Hazel lived in the White House and Charlie Hazel and George Hazel lived there too, and his wife was a nurse at the State Hospital on Livingston Street.

The course was a twelve-month course called Attendant Nurses.

I may be able to find my diploma and my diploma from High School.

***You have a public-school diploma***? Allie shows Pat her diploma. (22nd June 1934) signed by Dr. Larrabee

Yes, and it’s dated 22 June 1934. Oh, that’s the Foster School. ***Oh my God, are you pretty!***

I’m the only one in the family that has these, really.

Allie also shows Pat her First Communion certificate from 1928 and Bridal Party.

**State Hospital**

***So, Allie, where did you work at the State Hospital before both buildings were down?*** The Men’s and women’s? ***And there was the green room?***

Yes. Then you walked out that door and the buildings were all surrounded. I remember. It was a big circle. There was the Women’s House, Maternity, and then the Garage was behind that. That went out to South One and Two and North One and Two and over on the left-hand side was all male.

***So, it was on the right with the women and the left with the males?*** Yes. ***There was also Two and Six that were asylums?*** Yes.

So, when you walked down into their courtyard, there was a big base in the middle of a fountain, and if you walked straight down, that’s the way you came to the little store.

So, when they were giving out classes, the Woman’s Special was right around the corner, and Hall One and Two was where the girls stayed. Then it was the Women’s Special. Three was for the Girls. That’s the whole area.

But anyhow, we had our physical exams in the Women’s Special and we were in a room with curtains around us. And of course, when I was younger, I had two pretty good legs Yes, I’m sure I was very self-conscious, right? So, I let everybody go ahead of me to be examined because I didn’t want to be first? And I was the last one.

They gave me a room down the end of the walk from the Admin Building, a side of One and Three, a room outside with a day patient. I was there for six weeks.

When I was going to shower, I had to come out of that room and walk across to another day room. Finally, they built rooms up above Two and Six and that’s where I got a room after six weeks. It’s a wonder I wasn’t insane. I mean, I’m a kid from South Tewksbury, you know, in a big family. Oh, I was so scared. That’s a totally different environment, right? Even if you go there now, it’s a totally different environment than what I’m used to, for certain.

We had a lot of people in that State Hospital. We had people that had long-term care. They handled a lot of different kind of things.

***Where did you shop?***

The first National Economy in Wilmington on the corner of Grove. And Stephens Market. We had the store that’s at State Street now. The name is Hobarts. Oh, but it’s right on the Wilmington Line. Also Bischoff’s Bakery.

We had to walk to Wilmington Silver Lake to get meat and stuff. My mother could give us a note and say, you would get some pork chops, you know, or hamburger or something. And we’d walk down to Stephens Market or the Economy National. So, Hobarts was in Tewksbury but on the line and Clark’s Convenience Stores was part of Hobarts for wine and beer as well as other stuff.

There used to be a Rainey Store, and that means, like it rains, R-A-I-N-E-Y-S. It was a Convenience Store where we could get an ice cream cones and candy. It was almost like a five and ten or something. No items or anything.

***If you had to buy a blouse or something, where did you go?*** Lowell. When we went shopping in Lowell, we would dress up. ***Of course, you did!*** Well, we would also go to Boston and we would dress up. ***How did you get there?*** We would take the Eastern Mass Bus. In the fifties we all wore gloves. And we would stand in front of Pages’ clock to get the bus. It wasn’t even a store. It was an ice cream place. But I remember my wedding breakfast function at Page’s.

***I didn’t know you worked for the Treasurer’s Collection Office.*** Yes, I retired from the Town.

***Did you also count votes?*** Yes, I counted those for years. Briefly think I counted at the High School. I also volunteered for the Red Cross for 30 years.

***Did you receive the Boston Cane***? Yes

Allie showed some of her pictures:

***Is that your Mother and Father there***? Yes. ***Just look at that dress.***

***If you have pictures like your parents or her you or anything like that, that’s the display we could set up.*** I was great for taking pictures.

Opening the album. She put them in an album. ***That’s awesome***. I have bags like that. When I moved to where I live now, I took boxes of pictures that are not in an album.

***Thank you Allie for your time and hospitaility.***