



Mary Dow
Interviewed by Lyla Collins
November 1, 2005

Lyla Collins: Wait here it goes.

Mary Dow: Okay.

Lyla Collins: I'm at the home of Mary Dow on Old Town Farm Road in White River. This is November 8th, 2005 and I'm doing an interview for Oral History Project.

Mary, would you please tell me a little bit of your background, where you were born and?

Mary Dow: I was born in Concord, New Hampshire on March 23rd, 1924. My father was born in Scotland and came to Concord when he was fourteen with his family, and my mother was born in Wells River and we moved back up there when I was very young. My dad worked on the Boston/Maine Railroad.

I went to grammar school in Woodsville and we left Woodsville the year after I finished grammar school and I lived, moved to Essex Junction and I finished high school there and

graduated from Essex Junction in 1942, the June after Pearl Harbor which made life very exciting for us.

I had full scholarship to UVM where I went for in September and November I had to leave because I had a punctured lung and I was bedridden for quite a long time after that.

Well we moved back, my parents in the meantime had moved back to West Lebanon because my father had been laid off during the Depression and was called back during the war, there wasn't any other railroad men and I went to work at Baker Library in the Catalog Department as a file clerk for a job but it was a nice, nice place to work and the benefits were a lot better than the pay but I met my first husband there and we were married in 1946 and we went to UNH together it was right, by then it was post-war and a lot of older students had gone. I finished one year of college there. He unfortunately didn't so we moved back to Hanover and I have two children by that marriage, a son John and a daughter Kate. We were divorced about seven years later.

I had a job at the Hotel Coolidge, not the Hotel Coolidge, the Coolidge Storage Garage as a bookkeeper, something I didn't know how to do when I went there but I learned fast because I was raising two children. I worked there about three years I think and I met my second husband, he was, he worked for the New England Telephone Company and we were subsequently married and had four more children, he brought two children to the marriage so we had a very large family. We bought the property that I still live on in when we were married and fifty-five acres of land and a farmhouse for \$6,300.00.

Lyla Collins: Wow.

Mary Dow: I know our mortgage, our mortgage I think it was at four percent, oh we had a GI loan anyway, anyway our mortgage payment was just under \$50.00 but it was tough scraping it up sometimes.

As my children, some of them grew up and left home and my, and my youngest daughter was in third grade I took a part-time job at Brookside Nursing Home to do some bookkeeping and I ended up working there for twenty years. I, when they built the extended care unit for Medicare they had to have licensed administrators so Mrs. Rice and I took, we went to this course at

Vermont College in, in health care administration and we both took the national test and we both passed and she made me an associate administrator and as she got older and wanted more free time I got to do more administrating. I liked, I liked the job, I liked working with Mrs. Rice, she, she and I made a, a really good team, we complemented each other, things she didn't like to do I did and vice versa so I, as I said I worked there for twenty years and my husband died thirty years ago and I stayed on there for awhile but at some point I, I when I was sixty-two, I retired from there, took a year off and then I took a job in the accounting department at Currier in Lebanon and I worked there for two years and I quit that job to take a trip to Africa.

I had been, I had had been working on some college courses for sometime at Vermont, general accounting courses and management courses, well I decided to round it off a little bit and get an Associate Degree which didn't take very long and then I, my children were all gone and my husband had died so I decided to change my college which I did one course at a time since I had a full-time job and I graduated from college fifty years from the day I graduated from high school. I'm not a slow learner. It was good anyway, but it was quite exciting to have accomplished that, something that I'd always felt I should have done a lot earlier but circumstances hadn't dictated.

Since then I have volunteered at VINS for a while, ___? dating them and showing them and then I started volunteering at Quechee Library which I've done for quite a few years. I have worked on the desk and I know, knew, I learned how to mend books when I worked at Bakers so I was able to bring a new talent to the library.

Lyla Collins: How do you mend books?

Mary Dow: Well very carefully, it's, it's a rather tedious job and you have to have infinite patience but if it's just a matter of a torn page a special tape, don't ever use Scotch tape on a book, there's a special tape that doesn't yellow and doesn't get brittle and you can just smooth it on, and if the pages are loose there are, there's a double face tape that you can put in the "V" and reattach them on each side, then you get to be the more complicated things like the spine is broken, the same thing, sometimes the whole cover has fallen off, has to be taken off and the spine reinforced with a sort of buckram material and lots of glue.

Lyla Collins: Is it special glue or just any glue?

Mary Dow: No, no, it's a library glue. It doesn't discolor, and it doesn't get, you know, cracky.

Lyla Collins: Cracky.

Mary Dow: Cracky, yeah, that's a good word, isn't it?

Lyla Collins: Yeah.

Mary Dow: So I did that for a long time but I now have a really serious hearing problem and find it difficult to work on the desk so most of my energy now is you know, goes into taking classes at the LLLIAD program in Dartmouth which I enjoy enormously.

Lyla Collins: Could you mention the LLLIAD people might not understand what that means, do you know what the LLLIAD stands for?

Mary Dow: It's an acronym, something about life long learning, I don't remember exactly what it, what the actual words are but it's, it's a wonderful course, all of the instructors volunteer their time so it's very inexpensive and of course it's not credit but that doesn't really matter at some point in one's life, it's just the learning experience and intellectual stimulation that you can get from it which I love.

Lyla Collins: You mentioned traveling to Africa, have you traveled other places?

Mary Dow: Yes, I've been to Russia, Greece, Spain, France, England twice, Scotland, Ecuador twice, Ecuador I went to Galapagos Island twice and one trip I did a week in the islands and the other trip I did a week in the, in the rainforest. My trip to Africa was also a study trip through the thing, the School for Life Long Learning which of course is a part of the university system and we spent a month, two weeks in, Tanzania and two weeks in, oh great, I can't even remember it.

Lyla Collins: It will come to you maybe; we'll get back to it.

Mary Dow: Yeah.

Lyla Collins: Any, of all the places you traveled to, to, which are most fascinating?

Mary Dow: I think probably hands down Africa and the Galapagos because I have a serious interest in natural history and the trip I took, Kenya was the other country, was a, a natural history study tour the natural history of Africa so it was a serious trip we had to keep a field journal, we had to do a lot of reading and work and then when we got through we had to do two research

papers on subjects of our own choosing so it was really a fascinating, very rural country, opens your eyes to an awful lot of things, including how wasteful we are.

Lyla Collins: Really?

Mary Dow: Oh, absolutely, when I watched women carrying huge, I mean enormous containers on their head and they would walk three miles to get the water, three miles back and that was their water for the day, and I thought my God I run that much down the sink every day, I don't think anything about, but it's, it's a, it's a wonderful experience to see how other people live and to get to know the history and politics of the countries and Africa has been, parliament has been badly treated by a lot of people especially the European countries that developed it, left it in pretty shabby shape.

Lyla Collins: Did you try to carry water on your head?

Mary Dow: I'm not that stupid. No, I, I couldn't get it off the ground let alone get it onto my head.

Lyla Collins: Three gallons, is that what they used?

Mary Dow: I don't know. Oh, I don't know, more than three gallons.

Lyla Collins: Really.

Mary Dow: These containers are what, two or three feet high, I mean I, I don't even know how they get them on their heads.

Lyla Collins: What are they made of?

Mary Dow: Various things, I know there are, there are a lot of plastic ones now but I saw pottery.

Lyla Collins: How do they get the plastic?

Mary Dow: Well it's cast offs from other, from you know commercial stuff and then again then some more serious ones were, were clay but they were, had to be enormously heavy and that's all the water they had for the day, they do whatever they have to.

Lyla Collins: Maybe that's why they have such straight backs?

Mary Dow: Oh, no, Maasai people are born beautiful and straight and tall and gorgeous they are, it is the Maasai that I saw the most of because that's their territory.

Lyla Collins: It's really funny when you speak about the plastic that it's really two worlds in one the, they, they're so ancient really that they have to carry their water, it's not piped or plumbed in, but still they have a plastic containers, some of them, to carry it in?

Mary Dow: Unfortunately in some ways a lot of plastic is lucid in third world countries and what it, it just becomes an eye sore on the landscape that they don't have organized landfills and that sort of thing. I saw so many plastics bags blowing around it was really, especially in the cities cause the tribal people have a very difficult time when they leave their own tribe and go into the cities. They aren't trained for much of anything and a lot of them aren't very well educated, but where there is a sign of making a serious effort to educate their children they have their own schools and make, I, I was very impressed with the men that worked on the crew that was with us, spoke three languages at least, they spoke their tribal language, they spoke Swahili and they spoke English. They learn English in the school there, and I've never been able to learn another language in my life.

Lyla Collins: You, you didn't, could you pick up any of that while you were?

Mary Dow: I learned a couple words of Swahili. I learned to say good morning and I can't remember, I think thank you. I try, I try when I travel to learn four, five basic words but I do not have an ear for language, it is not one of my talents.

Lyla Collins: So you mentioned volunteer jobs, what other jobs did you have? Were you active in any town?

Mary Dow: I was, yes, I was active in a lot of school and, and civic things. I was the first woman elected chair of the Board of Civil Authority and at that time the Board of Civil Authority actually had chapter elections, that's now been switched over totally to the Town Clerk, but I was active in both the Quechee PTA where my children went to school and then we had a, all five schools that had PTAs we had a joint PTA, I've forgotten what they called it now where they, the offices, the five groups got together and discussed local issues and I, I think and there was, I was an active republican for many years before I found out I didn't have to be. Well, it's important in Vermont you know, you, you don't know that there's any other party until you grow up. So I was, I was chairman of the Board of Civil Authorities ___? on the republican town committee for a while and

secretary for it, I did a lot of that kind of thing. I, I, I was always very active in whatever committees they asked me to serve on for the school things because I had several children in school and I was, I just wanted to know what was going on.

Lyla Collins: How, how long did you say you were on the Civil -- Board of Civil Authority?

Mary Dow: I can't remember exactly. I was more than fifteen years.

Lyla Collins: More than?

Mary Dow: Yeah and I don't remember precisely. I, I remember after my husband died, it was the year he died there was a national election and I was, I, I just not in condition to run Federal election at that point so I resigned I didn't think it was fair to stay and not be able to meet the challenge so.

I, I always enjoyed working with people.

Lyla Collins: Could you name some of the other board members just for reference?

Mary Dow: Well of course Phyllis Arstein who was on it, and Esther Bachelder and Josephine Bilford, Kenny Grome was on it and man, I don't remember several, Charlie Fellows was on it, Clayton Rice, I know there are others but I just can't think, oh, I'm blocking on this one. It's been a long time.

Lyla Collins: When you moved up here with all of this acreage did you raise some farm animals for --

Mary Dow: The only thing we raised --

Lyla Collins: -- for person, for food purposes only?

Mary Dow: Well, the only thing we raised was chickens which I was not terribly fond of but we had the eggs all summer and then we'd put them in the freezer and then we had a very large garden.

Lyla Collins: But you didn't have any cows?

Mary Dow: No, I stopped, I, I put my foot down on the cow, I was not about to milk the cow, I didn't want to, it was bad enough you have to keep the chickens and all the kids.

Lyla Collins: That was a, that would be a, you had what eight?

Mary Dow: I actually.

Lyla Collins: That you fed?

Mary Dow: I, I had, I gave birth to six, I had two stepsons and I had a foster son so that was nine.

Lyla Collins: That you had to feed every morning?

Mary Dow: And night and noon.

Lyla Collins: Yeah.

Mary Dow: Of course you had to pack school lunches in those days, too.

Lyla Collins: Oh really?

Mary Dow: Oh yes.

Lyla Collins: They didn't have hot lunch program then?

Mary Dow: Not back when my, they did eventually as the younger kids got into high school but it's a long time that we, I don't think we could have afforded it anyway because I was, you know we raised most of our food. I made the, you did the things you have to do, we had a huge garden, our own potatoes, our own baking beans, tomatoes, sunflowers, lyca (?) seed.

Lyla Collins: What did you do for hobbies other than raise children?

Mary Dow: I really didn't have any hobbies. I read, I've always read. I've been an avid reader all my life and I, I did a lot of sewing because it was, having three daughters it was a little bit difficult to get them clothes in the style in which they'd like to become accustomed and I always made, I made all those, I made all my own clothes and suits and coats and I got to be quite a good tailor.

Lyla Collins: So after your children grew up and you, that's when you went back to college?

Mary Dow: No, I didn't go.

Lyla Collins: Or after the death of your husband you went back?

Mary Dow: Well, yeah, I still had four children living at home, one still in school when he died.

Lyla Collins: Oh really?

Mary Dow: Yeah, and but they, they ___? eventually kicked it off the things they have to, because of all the good stuff they were suppose to be doing, my two youngest daughters went to college and then I, then I started thinking about something to do for myself and took a couple of

courses at Lebanon College which wasn't much of a college in those days, you know, had furniture refinishing one, stuff like, practical stuff like that which I enjoyed but then I, I wanted something else so that's when I started at COL, which is now Brandon State College, but and I was lucky because I had a years credits from UNH courses that I had taken from the, as I said kind of courses I had credits for those. So I just worked at it one or two at a time and.

Lyla Collins: But this isn't the house that you lived in?

Mary Dow: No. The house that I lived in was just down the road. It's well over two hundred years old. It was two hundred years old when we bought it so many years ago, it's a very old house locally known as the Badger place.

Lyla Collins: The what?

Mary Dow: The Badger place.

Lyla Collins: Badger?

Mary Dow: The Badger family owned a great deal of the land near the VA, some of it was passed along and some of it, well they had a big farm over the years they passed some of it on to their children and everybody always referred to it as the Badger place.

Lyla Collins: They, they decided to sell it then?

Mary Dow: Oh, they, it had been sold more than once. The Badger's granddaughter came to visit me and she was then in her '70s or '80s, so it's been a long time since it was the Badger family place. I did look it up one time in the Town Clerk's offices, and followed it back into the seventeen hundreds so it was, but it was in good shape and there was a lot of land and it was great place to bring up kids and we had very good neighbors, we had a very good neighborhood you know, and we still have a good neighborhood we have, you know now there are no young children except my two grandchildren but there were a lot of kids in the neighborhood when they developed we got to know everybody fast.

Lyla Collins: And then this, then you built this house?

Mary Dow: I didn't personally. My son bought the farmhouse and he is a carpenter and he and I designed this for my declining years so it's a beautiful little house, it's, everything in it is custom-made and exactly everything I wanted and he, we made sure that it would be right for me if I got

so I couldn't go up and down the stairs I could turn my study into a bedroom, there's a bath off it, and then with raised toilets which I, I have gotten quite used to and I like 'em, wide corridors. As you can see with all the light we positioned the house so I get the morning sun in this area which you know would be a dining area and then it goes around the house and we worked that, on that quite awhile but I have a dry basement.

Lyla Collins: You have a dry basement?

Mary Dow: Yes, I never lived in a house with a dry basement.

Lyla Collins: Your other house had a?

Mary Dow: I had a, a dirt floor.

Lyla Collins: A dirt basement.

Mary Dow: Yeah.

Lyla Collins: Well that's –

Mary Dow: Every house I lived before that had a dirt basement.

Lyla Collins: Really?

Mary Dow: Well it used to be the way.

Lyla Collins: Yeah.

Mary Dow: And then the other house is built a lot on the ledge too, there's a lot of ledge under that kitchen part, but actually the other house is two houses put together.

Lyla Collins: Really?

Mary Dow: Yeah, one of them used to be the residence ____? And it was the farmhand, the kitchen down.

Lyla Collins: Was it two houses when you, were they put together when you bought it?

Mary Dow: No, they'd been done years ago.

Lyla Collins: It had?

Mary Dow: They, they took what had been the farmhand's house and turned it into a kitchen.

Lyla Collins: Did you have a root cellar?

Mary Dow: No I didn't but I froze and canned a lot.

Lyla Collins: What particular changes have you noticed, or that you think has made the biggest impact on the Town of Hartford?

Mary Dow: I don't think there's any question that the Interstate has impacted all of the Upper Valley, Hartford maybe more than some I don't know, but it has a lot of advantages but it's also brought in a lot of outsiders and it's changed our lifestyle quite a bit and of course now is the follow-up, the big chain stores over in West Lebanon, most of the local small towns have lost their stores and, and thinking back to Hartford when I came to White River there were two pharmacies on the Main Street. There was a meat market on the Main Street, there was a supermarket, well not a big one, but an A & P store and everything was right there, the newsstand, the deli and you could walk downtown and know everyone and everyone knew you.

Lyla Collins: But do you think it was the Interstate or was it the Vermont State tax that has that?

Mary Dow: Well this didn't come until after and I don't, I don't think that might, Woodstock has survived pretty much because they're far enough away from, they are still small town sort of ambiance there but the State tax has had some influence, but I don't think not as much as some people think. I think the Interstate really is the big thing; it made access to this area so much easier.

Did you ever travel south on either Route 4 or Route 5 in the good old days, and go to Boston it took you all day, but not quite but it was a long haul on a very narrow road, and of course the demise of the railroad had a big impact on White River noticeably.

Lyla Collins: That was probably contributed to the, the Interstate probably contributed to, to that too?

Mary Dow: Well it certainly didn't improve it, I don't know how much influence it had but this country is not particularly in favor of railroads. I don't know why because in Europe, Asia they have wonderful railroads and people use them, but I don't know what the deal here is, call it obsession and I think that's changed too, the lifestyle of many people too.

Lyla Collins: How long did your father work for the railroad?

Mary Dow: Almost fifty years. He was laid off during the Depression as I mentioned before because he was one of the younger men and they went by seniority, but he was called back

during the Second World War again. He loved the railroad, wonderful for children, but the Valley News, they ran an article on him the day, the day of his last run and had a picture him coming off the train but he was just smile. He hated to see it go, but he had to, his health was bad, and but Quechee and when my children were growing up it's a lovely place to raise children, you knew everyone and you know most of us went to the same church and school, we had a community club there where we had pot luck suppers and sometimes public dinners for people and musical stuff and dancing, and it was a nice.

Lyla Collins: Where were the dances in Quechee?

Mary Dow: What is now the Meeting House Restoration Building, the brick house on Waterman Hill, that the building and it had been a school at one point in time and the Town charges a dollar a year to use it, but Quechee Lakes bought it and that ended that.

Lyla Collins: Quechee Lakes owns that building now?

Mary Dow: They did, and a few of the people who own the Meeting House own it now but yeah Quechee Lakes got it.

Lyla Collins: Did your children go to the new school? They didn't, they went to the old school?

Mary Dow: They all went to the Quechee Friends School.

Lyla Collins: Yeah, the original?

Mary Dow: Yeah.

Lyla Collins: Quechee Grammar School?

Mary Dow: And my oldest stepson went to the old high school, the one that's down by the supermarket. The others all went to the new school.

Lyla Collins: And all your children live around here now?

Mary Dow: No, I have two sons and two daughters that live here. I have one son in Alaska, and two sons in Florida and California, scattered.

Lyla Collins: Have you ever been to California?

Mary Dow: Oh many, many times. My, both of my brothers moved to California in the '50s and I used to go out and visit almost every year.

Lyla Collins: And your brothers' names were?

Mary Dow: My, the older of my two brothers is James and my younger brother is Billy. They went to West Lebanon High School and my younger brother's house burned down and.

Lyla Collins: In California or here?

Mary Dow: No, here, he had a house near my father's, near my family's home.

Lyla Collins: Where was your family's home, in West Lebanon?

Mary Dow: No, well, for a short time they bought a house on Route 4 just beyond where the antique place is, the, the mall.

Lyla Collins: Oh, yeah.

Mary Dow: That was part of the farm, it was quite a big farm, they never farmed it, my brother did for a little while but he had a house on the property and it burned down, and he had a brand new car that he just bought and so he took the insurance money and his wife and his daughter and decided to go to California and he was thought he was going to work for the man that was running the Pippin, you know the backhoe franchise out there but when he got out there he looked around and he decided that with a backhoe he could make money and he certainly did.

Lyla Collins: Good for him.

Mary Dow: And eventually his business got so big he called this other, my other, other brother and said come out here I need some help so they were in business together for awhile. Yep, he did very well. They both did well. Time matches on.

Lyla Collins: Are they older or younger than you?

Mary Dow: I was the oldest and my brother's still alive is two years younger and my youngest brother the ___? was four years younger than I am so.

Lyla Collins: What was your childhood like growing up, being the girl with two brothers?

Mary Dow: Well I was in charge of them most of the according to my mother but it was, it was a different time you know in a small town north of here you were, my grandchildren were amazed when I told them there more horses than automobiles coming into town when I was a child, but you think back in one sense in the early '30s, early '40s there were mostly farms around, Vermont, New Hampshire both and the horse and all the farmers had horses and wagons and they didn't see a need for a car, they were expensive.

Lyla Collins: Were the roads paved or dirt?

Mary Dow: I don't remember too much, I'm not, when I was very young there were very few of them were paved. They did eventually pave some of them, the main streets and stuff like that, but we always lived on a dirt, dirt street it was, but it was, it was a different kind of world.

Lyla Collins: Did you play sports or weren't girls allowed to play sports?

Mary Dow: Oh, yes, actually I started basketball and field hockey both in junior high school. I never was a great athlete. My upper grades and I moved, when I moved to Essex Junction I played three years varsity in both, in both sports and my senior year I quit sports because I was editor of the school paper which is how I finally got the scholarship, one of the reasons I got the scholarship to UVM. I assume they still do a lot scholarships for accomplishments and my school paper was judged the best small school paper in the city.

Lyla Collins: You must have liked to write then?

Mary Dow: I did. I still do.

Lyla Collins: Do you -- Have you ever written stories or novels or?

Mary Dow: I've written --

Lyla Collins: Or poetry or?

Mary Dow: I've written poetry. I've written some, I took some writing courses when I was working on my degree so I do, have done some short stories but I used to write book review for the Quechee Times.

Lyla Collins: Oh really?

Mary Dow: Yeah, and I liked doing that.

Lyla Collins: What kind of books do you like to read?

Mary Dow: Well, I fall back on the classics a lot and rereading a lot of things, so I have some favorite authors and I got, I've got enough books in my library so I never have to go ___?

Lyla Collins: So if you do a book review you can't be that selective though, can you?

Mary Dow: Well I, I pick them out totally for my own taste, what I like and what I thought other people would like and I, and all the feedback I ever got back I was very positive so I think I did the right thing. I picked, I picked out some good books, one got a, got a Pulitzer Prize.

Lyla Collins: What one was that?

Mary Dow: I can't remember the name of it. I just remember that I, that it did and that was kind of interesting, I felt quite proud myself for having picked it out.

Lyla Collins: I bet you were.

Mary Dow: But I've always been an avid reader and I like good literature, my recreational reading I'm not allowed to it trash in the library is science fiction and mystery stories, but my serious reading a lot of it is classics, and I'm very interested in Virginia Wolfe and her associates and E. Thornton and that American group, Peter Matheson is one of my favorite writers and, and I do like poetry and I do write poetry but not for publication.

Lyla Collins: Just for your own satisfaction?

Mary Dow: Yeah.

Lyla Collins: But that's nice.

Mary Dow: It started, it started as one of those things preferred, if you, if you like to write it comes to you, it's like I'm always writing in my head.

Lyla Collins: Yeah, it's good though.

Mary Dow: Yeah, I don't always put it on paper but I'm always, and I have ever since I was a child, I always done this. I didn't know what it was until I got grown up. I, I never been serious, serious about it. I never had time to be too serious about. Yep, I don't know.

I remember when I was, discovered the library and I was, what in the second grade, the third grade I don't remember what I was, and it was right on the edge of the playground where I went to grammar school but I didn't know what it was and one day I was watching people going in and out and being a rather curious person I asked one of my friends and she said well that's the library. I said what's a library and she explained it to me, her mother, her grandmother teaches so I went in and face the librarian and they weren't too fond of kids at one stage, at least she wasn't, she explained to me that I could join and that I was allowed to read only the children's' books and they were like, oh probably, I don't know ten, twelve foot shelf wide and about four, four shelves on it, so not knowing where to begin with I did the logical thing, I began at the

beginning and I read right through, right through and do you know how many books there are in the ___? Series? About this many.

Lyla Collins: Lot of books?

Mary Dow: A lot of things I never heard of them, but they had all of them and you know I did the Bobbsey Twins and all of that but some of them bored me and some of them didn't, but then I ran out of reading material and I was really in trouble because you weren't suppose to take out adult books.

Lyla Collins: Why?

Mary Dow: Well, it was a rule of the library.

Lyla Collins: Oh, oh.

Mary Dow: That children shouldn't be writing, reading, there really was a lot of concern about what children read. I personally think that children read and only your experience tells you what you're reading so they don't.

Excuse me one moment please.

Lyla Collins: Beautiful cat?

Mary Dow: Oh, isn't she lovely? She's not shy, the other one is.

So I decided that probably my mother would like some books to read so I took some home. I don't know if she read them or not but I did.

Lyla Collins: How would the librarian, you said they were for your mother and the librarian let you take them out or did your mother?

Mary Dow: Yes, I just said my, my mother wants me to get a book.

Lyla Collins: Oh really?

Mary Dow: Yeah, you know it's like you could send your kids to buy you cigarettes. My mother didn't smoke but you know as a child there was no restriction on that, on that kind of thing and, and you know just happily read just everything I could get my hands on and my aunts supplied a lot of books for us too, my father had three sisters, two of whom weren't married and one of them was a teacher and they used to send us books for Christmas and there was always ones for me, not that I was one of the slowest ones, you know it was.

Lyla Collins: It must have been hard for you in school though to do reading because you were so far beyond, you must have been really ahead of the other children?

Mary Dow: A lot of them but.

Lyla Collins: Did you find the reading classes in school boring?

Mary Dow: Well we didn't do much reading in school.

Lyla Collins: You didn't?

Mary Dow: Not in, not in grammar school not that I recall. It was pretty simple, you know school was always very easy for me, but it was, I liked it a lot. I was very good at math and science and I was in the sixth grade I was, did a lot what we now would call homework in class, we read geography books and history books in class time but she would.

Lyla Collins: Out loud?

Mary Dow: No we, we, she just assigned us a chapter or whatever and told to us read it, of course it kind of took a load off her whoever she was, from our sixth grade teacher used to you put a math test on the board every morning and we had to do it, well it was so easy for me that I had it done almost before it started so then she put two up there so I had to do both of them and but I could read, I was a fast reader and I had a really good memory and so once I read it I didn't ever have to go back and read it again so I had a lot of spare time in my school.

Lyla Collins: So what did you do, get into mischief?

Mary Dow: Not in the sense that I was, I wasn't, you know I wasn't disruptive kid at all. I just found new, well that's where I started writing my famous history plays in the seventh grade, the seventh and eighth grade we were separated would be like junior high school now but you are in the same building but we had a lot of activities together so I started writing historical plays and putting them on for the assemblies.

Lyla Collins: Good.

Mary Dow: Actor, director, writer. You know I look back on it I laugh but the teacher I had she was proud of anything I did because she didn't want to do much. I found some old lab equipment in the teacher's room one time and when I was out there doing one of my plays or something I put

together this ____? That I'd read about somewhere and I had an inkbottle and some glass tubing and I don't remember exactly what I did with it but my teacher was just thrilled.

(The end of side one of tape one. The beginning of side two of tape one.)

Mary Dow: Not especially, I just, I just have very fond memories of growing up in a small town and the activities that we had mostly through the school and the church and in the summer the Shitaco (?) would come to town and of course the circus would come to town and we would always go to that, and in Woodsville there was an opera, there was an opera house there that didn't have much opera but they would have, frequently some kind of thing would be going on there and a lot of our, our school plays we always did in that house but and just, I remember going into the drug store and everybody knew my dad and they knew who I was and sometimes he would buy me chocolate ice cream soda and I was very old before I realized that they came in other flavors, he always said you want, you want an ice cream soda, Mary, and he was one of my, he was a friend of my father's and another friend of my father's, my, I think I mentioned this before, the people that lived on the other side of Downing Hill, Percy Burns was a, in the black lots in the Second, in the First World War and he had also was a railroad man and on Memorial Day parade coming down the street it's a man in a skirt, and I said, what is Mr. Burns doing wearing a skirt, so my father very patiently explained to me about the Scottish tradition, and I have become very fond of kilts now. I, I really my Scottish heritage just leaps out of me a lot.

Lyla Collins: When you went to Scotland did you look up any of your genealogy?

Mary Dow: I tried to, I had some leads on how to do it now that I didn't have before, but I know back to my great grandparents but it was, I was taking courses at Salem University for two weeks, it was a history and culture of Scotland so I didn't have as much freedom to do stuff on my own, but I did, one of the instructors gave me some sources, places so I am going to follow through on that. I was very fond of particularly my father's family, I always felt closer to them and I had my husband then and.

Lyla Collins: Was your mother Scottish too?

Mary Dow: No she was Irish English, she grow up in the, what was it, her, her father was from Barton and my grandfather Leland side we go back to the beginning of time in Vermont, all these

Scottish and Lelands, and the ____? but my mother's mother was, her grandfather was Irish and my grandmother was English so we are all British.

Lyla Collins: Pretty much.

Mary Dow: Yep, but the Scottish side in my family I don't know how to explain it, but it was this, I, I felt more of a pull with them. I like my mother's sisters, the ones I knew, I didn't know all of them, but she came from a very large family.

Lyla Collins: Did your father come from a large family also?

Mary Dow: No, he had three sisters all of them ____? Lovely ladies and last of them died a few years ago just about six weeks short of her hundredth birthday.

Lyla Collins: Did she live locally?

Mary Dow: No, they grew up in Concord and then she moved to Florida years ago with her husband and children and she spent the rest of her life down there. They used to come home in the summer but,

____? And, and one of the sisters was a school teacher, she went to Plymouth Normal School and also the teachers I had in grade school were Normal School Teachers and she went to New Jersey to live, eventually and lived there most of her life, and there was, one sister worked at the Labor Department in Concord, had a good job there. I always looked at them as my childhood's grandparents, I never knew my Leland grandfather, he died before I was born, but my, both my grandmothers were pretty neat ladies, I think about them a lot, wonder what they think of me.

Lyla Collins: I bet they'd be very, very proud of you.

Mary Dow: I hope they would be. I was the only granddaughter that Leland had.

Lyla Collins: Really?

Mary Dow: Yes, fortunately I didn't understand my privileged situation until I was too old to take advantage of it. I never thought of that, you know, I mean I wasn't unaware that I had no girl cousins but I, I just knew I had a lot of boy cousins. I didn't think about the rest of it and of course I didn't have a sister so.

Lyla Collins: Did you have a good sense with your boy cousins or did they sort of resent?

Mary Dow: No, the ones that, of course a lot of my cousins were a lot older than I was, my mother was bit near the bottom of her family of nine.

Lyla Collins: Oh my goodness.

Mary Dow: And she had, I actually have cousins older than my mother, so all of them, all of them seem to like me.

Lyla Collins: Well that's good, I mean they didn't mind if you tagged along somewhere then?

Mary Dow: Well, as I say it's, it's all but three of them were much, much older than I was and one cousin was two years older than I was and two a little bit younger.

Hello. This is Buttercup.

Lyla Collins: Buttercup?

Mary Dow: Yep. Noseycup. See how well he is, she is climbing on the table.

Lyla Collins: Do you have anything else you would like to add to this?

Mary Dow: I can't think of anything right now. I mean I'm sure I.

Lyla Collins: Probably other tales to tell?

Mary Dow: I can't remember them, but it was nice talking with you.

Lyla Collins: I've enjoyed talking with you too.

(The tape ended.)