

## Transcript for Thelma Minard

01/04/19

### *Memories of Wilmot with Thelma Minard*

Lindy Heim: It's September 9th, 2010, and I'm visiting with Thelma Minard at the Wilmot Public Library, Carol MacDonald, president of The Friends, is here. So, how is it you ended up in Wilmot?

Thelma Minard: We were living in Vienna, Virginia. We had a next-door neighbor and she and her husband came up to New Hampshire and looked around and came back and said, "Oh boy did we see a place that is made for the Minard's!"

And we said, "Oh?" and they said, "Yeah, there's this big farmhouse and it's got lots of room for the kids to run in and so forth. It's just the sort of place you ought to have."

And I said, "It sounds good. What about it"?

"Well you can't have it – there's somebody's living in it."

"Well," I said, "you didn't have to tell me then."

Okay, five years later, Bob's stepfather, sold the place in Maine that they had without telling anybody. And this was a summer place and so long as we were on the East Coast, we'd go up at summertime, the children and I would spend summers up there. And we had come home, we'd had a wonderful summer, and we came home, and they came a few weeks later and said they'd sold the place.

So, I went next door to my neighbor, because it was like somebody pulled the rug out from under me.

"What am I going to do? They've sold that place! How could they do that?" She was a very good listener.

That evening when her husband came home, she told him, and he called me up, and he said, "You know that farm I told you about? I think it's available now." He said, "Why don't you write them a letter?"

So, I wrote a letter, and yes, they were ready to sell, and I came up with my mother-in-law, an astute businesswoman, and we looked at the place, and thought it was just right for us. We came back a week later so Bob could look at the underpinnings of the house and decided it was just for us.

By then he had retired from the Navy, and we were ready to go. We came up in 1971. Before we came, we subscribed to the *Argus Champion*, which was the paper then, and we looked under *Wilmot News* in one issue, and the social column for *Wilmot News* said

that so-and-so's cow had had twin calves. And we thought, "Hmm, we are going to the boondocks, aren't we? This is the country!" (Laughs)

Lindy: That's great. How old were your children then?

Thelma: Well, we have seven children. At that time, the middle child was headed for college, south, and she never got to see the new house she was living in until Christmas time. So, we brought three with us, the other two were married, but one daughter was in the Air Force and the other daughter was in graduate school. So, we had two in high school and one in elementary school when we came.

Thelma: Winters were, they were fine, and he had a wonderful time playing with the, we called it *his toys*, you know. The snow blower and the plow on the front of the truck and he's wham into a snow bank. He thought it was great sport. No, it was fine, and I got used to it. We weren't either one of us particularly athletic. I mean Bob worked outside all the time and that was his exercise. He didn't believe that you had to exercise. He just figured working around was enough.

And me, I was never very athletic anyway. So, I tried cross-country skiing, but you know, I kept falling down, and that's not much fun. I tried snowshoeing, that wasn't much better. (Laughing) Sledding, that's fun going down, but you've got to hike back up the hill.

Lindy: Reading is a good winter exercise.

Thelma: Yeah, that was more like my speed. No, we managed very well with the winters somehow. We had a huge garden that got bigger and bigger, because he had fun plowing.

Lindy: That's wonderful! Tell me where your farm was exactly.

Thelma: North Wilmot.

Lindy: Yeah. Do you know who's there now? Probably not. Or who was there before you?

Thelma: I know who lived there before me. The house was built by Josiah Stearns, back in probably 1825-26, somewhere in there. He also built the North Wilmot Church. His nephew actually lived in that house for a long time, and the nephew's children, until it went out of the family, about in the early 1900s, I think.

I don't know how to describe it, we're about a half a mile from the church. We're on Kimball Lane. Go up the North Wilmot Road, at the top of the hill is Sawyer Road, you bypass that. The next one is North Wilmot Road, because what goes straight and looks

like it's the continuation actually becomes Atwood Road. North Wilmot Road is dirt road and goes up, and we turn off of that and go up.

We sold to a couple, since divorced, and she is living there now. Her name is Cheryl Watkins.

In 1971 the library was then on the second floor and there were books all over the floor piled up like this. They had one or two bookshelves, but they had more books than they had shelves.

Carol MacDonald: What was the downstairs used for?

Thelma: It was used for town meetings. This had been a schoolhouse, a one-room schoolhouse.

And the bookmobile came around. That was the highlight, because there was so much more choice and besides which of those books you could see what you're looking for. When they're piled up on the floor it's a little hard to do. (Laughter)

Well, it was either that year of 1971 or 1972, the school people sold this to the town for one dollar and it was decided to use it for a library. So, it moved over here.

We sat here in a meeting at a table in the library and so I kind of looked back at this little passage, and I said, 'If could just push the walls out, there's space, because the Town Hall goes back farther, the sheds go back farther, there's room back there. If we could just push it out and back a little.' Well, that was the start of it.

So, we found out what we could about Library Construction Act Grants from the State Library, and we found out about getting bids on what it might cost to put an addition on the back of the library, and what it would cost to connect to the Town Hall.

If we could connect with the Town Hall, that by then had put in bathrooms, then we can use their bathrooms and not have the expense of our own private ones. And it was also at a time when they were really starting to emphasize the handicapped access, which is why the ramp. Actually, I think that the very base of this ramp is probably where the outhouse was.

Don Lucas did the carpentry. Then we had bookshelves built. We finally had the children's little area over there built.

We also had a branch down in the Flat. In the old Community Center building down there, one room, and Margaret Loomer was, I remember was the librarian there for years. I don't know exactly when that was closed, but I told you before that we didn't even do a mileage check. We drove that way [pointing back]. We drove that way

[pointing right]. We drove that way [pointing left]. We drove that way [pointing right]. And, “This is the center [pointing down]!”

Carol: This is the center of Wilmot.

Thelma: Yup, it says so, but you know, it really is. So, when we couldn't get anybody to man the branch, when Margaret Loomer stop doing it, they wanted a library down there, but nobody was willing to do it. And we were sending, for a while, we sent somebody from here down there and we thought, “This is stupid!”

So, we just announced we were closing, and there was a furor about it, and so... But you know what? Those that really wanted to, found their way back up here, and we are perfectly happy about it.

We got \$25,000 from the library construction... anyway, it was a gift from the State Library. And we got \$10,000 from this trust fund that is set up to help people in Concord and Wilmot. Mary Kay Huntoon was the one who got the money for us.

I had a long spiel of why we should do this, and how this was the center of town and all you know. Libraries are like mom and apple pie and all this good stuff – no questions asked it just went right through. In fact, I felt rather deflated, you know!

Lindy: Tell me about your book.

Thelma: Well the book started in 1965. We were living in Vienna, Virginia. Bob was on his last tour of duty with the Navy and the children were all either in school or preschool or something. And I took a course in *Non-Fiction Writing for Profit*. And while I didn't get much profit out of it, I got a lot of experience. I started writing sort of food articles. I got a couple published in *The Washington Post*. I never quite made it to really other magazines. Also, at that time I started collecting these recipes that I came across quite by chance, but that have titles where they don't tell you what's in it or whether it's a dessert, or a meat dish, or what. I started collecting, and I've been thinking all along you know it'd be fun to put these all together in a book. And I had a most of them indexed in a card file and everything. Periodically I'd lift the lid, and I'd sort of look at it and put the lid back down again and go do something else, write for the *New Hampshire Star*, or do something else.

A year ago, January, in the newspaper, I saw an ad for a workshop in *The Fine Art of Self-Publishing*, and this was to be at a place very close to where I live, so I thought, “Okay I'll do that. I'll go see what this is about.”

So, I signed up for it, went to it. He recommended a book called *The Fine Art of Self-Publishing*. So, I went and bought the book, and I read it and I gave it to one daughter, and I gave it to the other daughter. Between the three of us, this book evaluated all

these new self-publishing companies that have sprung up and are going to help you do it. And we decided this one publishing company would be good to do. And that was the start.

So, I wrote to them and said I had this idea, and would they be interested in publishing it. Well sure, they did cookbooks too and so forth. We had a good exchange. I read their contract over and over, and I finally signed my name, sent them \$1,000 to do all that they're supposed to do, design, layout, and all this stuff. And then the fun began.

They didn't communicate. I would call up to ask a question, and they'd say, "Well so-and-so is on another line" or, "He's not here. If you'll leave your number, he'll call you back."

Well two days later he hasn't called back, so I try again. I finally send an email. That doesn't work. I mean I got so frustrated. And the first thing they did to me in their conversion, apparently, they have the Macintosh system I have Windows and Microsoft, and in their conversion, they took all the degree marks away. You know – 350° oven.

Well I'm not really smart with computers. It takes me a little while to get that degree mark up there. Then you gotta undo it all, because you don't want everything up there...and then the next recipe you've gotta go all through this again. Jiminy!

November 2018: [text on screen] It's been eight years since our interview with Thelma. On November 30, 2018, Judy Hauck gathered a few of Thelma's friends, at the Wilmot Public Library, to reminisce about Thelma Minard.

Judy Hauck: I'd like to introduce you to Fred Ogmundson, Carol MacDonald, and Mary Jane Ogmundson. And Fred, you had wanted to read something to start this discussion.

Fred Ogmundson: Mary Jane and I came to North Wilmot in 1973 and at that time the Minard's were already here. They preceded us by two years. They bought their farm, which was the old Samuel Stearns farm in the early 1800's. Then it was Richard J. Stearns farm. Ed Kimball owned it for a while in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Minard's, who were coming as new retirees, decided that they were going to use the farm to grow grapes. They had a very handsome south facing field, or what used to be a field, up behind their house; a four-acre field. So, they set about clearing that and they planted a four-acre vineyard. That was their first of many farm projects.

Bob always found ways to keep active around the farm. He enjoyed going back to that life, which he had known as a kid. It was perhaps a little newer for Thelma, but she really got into the gardening and to enjoying country crafts.

So, we knew the Minards starting in 1973, and they were a remarkable pair.

I would like to read what I wrote for Thelma's funeral service in 2011, which we held at North Wilmot Church.

### *Remembering Thelma*

For 28 years Thelma Minard was a creative and generous friend, a stimulating community leader, and our neighborhood social director. She was, by turns, a chef, a writer, a student of history, the mother and grandmother of a large family, a conversationalist, a book collector, a gardener, a reader, a hostess, an organizer and a general bringer-together of people. The stories could go on and on.

She published, in the 1970s, a long series of articles on cuisine in the local newspaper, and only a year ago, this was 2011 that I'm saying this, only a year ago she was here autographing her book, *Tom Piperson's Pig*. She cultivated her own gardens and she cultivated the people she met. How many times did Thelma ask, "Why don't you come up for dinner?" Every visitor or new neighbor in town was fair game, and Bob and Thelma developed many friendships.

One of Thelma's causes was this Wilmot Library, of which she became a trustee. We have to say that the beautiful addition, which we are sitting in today, was in large measure the result of Thelma's enthusiasm and Thelma's devoted work.

Another of her favorite causes, was the North Wilmot Church. It was Thelma who re-organized the Union Meeting House Society, so called, when the need arose in 1983, when the Congregational Trustees could no longer take care of the church, outside a group of neighbors did what we thought was needed to take care of the church. So, she organized this group, called it the "North Wilmot Meeting House Society," because that was the name that was used back in 1849 for a kind of neutral group that would keep all the competing sects and congregations using the building in relative peace and harmony. So, it was Thelma who did all the paperwork to get the North Wilmot Church listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1989.

For 17 years, she and Bob headed up our Church caretaker group. We all have much to thank them for. This is my North Wilmot perspective. We associate the Minards with the church. In Wilmot Center you might remember Thelma more as a Library Trustee and the driving force down here.

Mainly, I thank Thelma for being a colorful personality who was interested in life and people, someone who liked keeping the pot of life stirred, someone who would not willingly let you sit back and feel apathetic. She gave plenty of friendly encouragement and sometimes a friendly shove, and for both of those, I will always say, "Thank you, Thelma!" [End of Eulogy]

As I say, she was a remarkable person. She was a college graduate. She was a Navy officer's wife for many years. We got to meet both of her parents. She was frequently our hostess down at the farm. She loved to cook and loved to entertain. Loved to talk. Loved to laugh. She was a wonderful person to have in the neighborhood.

Judy: Thank you Fred. Mary Jane?

Mary Jane Ogmundson: Her house was always full; she took in people. If there was someone visiting in town, she would invite them up and they'd end up staying there.

She knew how to repurpose things. She didn't throw things away. She found a way of creating something else to do with it. We used to go to White Elephant sales, yard sales, and things like that on Saturday morning, and we would pick up the neatest things. She would find something useful to do with them and she would re-gift them to her children, who always came home for Christmas. I think there were seven children.

She taught me how to make jelly. They had not only grapes, they had raspberries, they had an orchard.

Fred: Blueberries.

Mary Jane: Blueberries! She had glorious flowers everywhere. She was busy every minute of the day.

They had an outdoor pool. She taught Will to swim.

Judy: Who was Will?

Mary Jane: Will is our son.

Bob would not let her swim alone. He would be working in the garden when she got her little half hour or hour to swim. She insisted, and he insisted, that someone had to swim with her. So, Will was asked to come down every afternoon at 1:30 to swim with her.

Everybody came home for Christmas, but not just them, she would invite the whole neighborhood. They had seasonal recipes that they made every year and would give out to people. One was pönnukökur, and she never would give out the recipe for that.

Judy: Well, thank you. I get a real sense of what she was like just from listening to both of you talk about her.

End of tape.