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**Interviews of the Margaret MacVicar Memorial AMITA Oral History Project**

**Bertha Sanford Wiener Dodge** – Class of 1922

(interviewed by Anuja H. Patel)

June 6, 1992

**MIT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

Interview with Bertha Sanford Wiener Dodge by Anuja H. Patel.

Cambridge, Massachusetts

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Transcribed by Anuja H. Patel.

Patel: This is Anuja Patel; I'm here with Bertha Sanford Wiener Dodge. We're at McCormick Hall and it's June 6, 1992.

Dodge: My name is Bertha Wiener Dodge. I came here after I graduated from Radcliffe to do further work in chemistry. That was quite a while ago and...So now I wear a label which tells, says that I am the class of '22 but I did not graduate from undergraduate work here. I had already been at Radcliffe and I graduated there. I went back two years ago but when you have been out as long as I have, that was... I graduated there, class of 1920 and when you've been out as long as I have, there are very few people that you know, either in your own class or classes that are close that if they're still alive, they're usually not around Cambridge and not inclined to make the trip.

Patel: Could you describe your childhood, your family life before MIT or Radcliffe.

Dodge: Well, that's a little hard to do. My father had ideas on education but

I went to the public schools. The school on Linnean Street. I forget. For the moment, I forget what the name was. I went there fifth and sixth grade and then I spent a while at home, where I worked under my father's supervision, and went to high school in Cambridge and after that I went to Radcliffe.

Patel: Your brother was not educated at home, why...

Dodge: Remember, he was seven years older than I and I don't remember too many details but we lived, when I was quite small, before I went to school, we lived in, I think, it was over the line in Ryer, it may have been Harvard which is out in the country. There were hills. It was by far the bottom farm and as I remember it, it had several cows; I couldn't tell you how many. We lived there for several years.

When my brother graduated from a high school in the town, we moved to Medford Hillside. He went to Tufts College and as far as I know it was before... As I remember, it was before I went to school so you know I don't remember many details about that.

Patel: What was your home life like? Were there any household rules you had to obey?

Dodge: I was next to the youngest and I don't remember much. I think children take pretty much for granted what there home is but I cannot tell you

exactly what year we moved to Cambridge but presumably after my brother graduated from Tufts the family decided to move to Cambridge and he went to Harvard Graduate School but don't ask me for years. I can't tell you that.

I think I went to kindergarten in Medford but I don't remember too much, naturally; that was quite a while ago.

Patel: What type of relationship did you have with your parents?

Dodge: It was pleasant, I can't give you more than that. There was no fighting or anything like that. I can't really tell you. Children take those things very much for granted. It's not something that you reason about unless it's what you call traumatic, which it certainly wasn't.

Patel: Were you close to your siblings?

Dodge: My older sister, Constance, my only sister, was four years older than I... and just enough older so we didn't do anything together. If you're quite close, you do things together. If it's quite far apart you don't and she was just enough older, so I didn't do many things... But there were no problems in our relationship. And there was one younger brother, but I'm the only survivor of the family now. My brothers have died and my sister has been gone quite a while.

Patel: What subjects interested you in school?

Dodge: Chemistry. I just took courses that seemed to appeal to me. I certainly was not a genius. You have certain requirements you have to meet. I took the required courses. Chemistry... I think I was interested in chemistry because none of my family were chemists and that gave me some knowledge that they didn't have. Not a very noble reason but I suspect that's why I went into chemistry.

Patel: Was it important to you to stand out?

Dodge: No, I didn't care about it a bit.

I had some friends that were both two girls about a year older than I and we used to do things together. One of them has died some years ago and the other one, I don't know. I tried to call her on the telephone the last time I was in town and she was leaving to go either to the hospital or a retirement home. I'm not sure. She had no time to talk with me so I asked her to drop me a line; let me know where I could reach her. I've had no word from her so I assume that she probably has died or gotten to be sick enough so she can't. I don't know how to find her because her family's all gone, not only the older ones but her husband and her sons and grandsons. She's the only survivor of that particular family.

Patel: What is her name?

Dodge: Edith Hovey, was her maiden name and she married a Skerrye, but he died quite a few years ago. It is very frustrating when you lose a friend like that and you don't know where she is. There is nothing I can do because I don't know how to trace her. Her family is gone, her sister, her brother. She was the youngest in the family and you can figure out that she would be, since her sister and her brother were older, considerably older. I have no way of checking where she is. I'm sure you've seen that happen but it's not very pleasant. As children we did things together.

Patel: Which high school did you attend?

Dodge: Cambridge High and Latin.

Patel: Do you remember what your high school experience was like?

Dodge: No, except that it was through one of my teachers that I got to know these other girls. I had moved here from Medford and they're both gone now. That is the frustrating thing about getting older. You either die yourself or you lose your friends to death. An experience I don't think you'd want to share.

Patel: After high school did you immediately think of going to college?

Dodge: Yes.

Patel: Did you have any alternatives?

Dodge: When I was a youngster, there weren't that many alternatives for women as there are now. I suppose, I was too young to be a school teacher. No one would take me seriously.

Patel: You graduated high school when you were 14?

Dodge: Yes.

Patel: Did that hamper you at all? Socially?

Dodge: No. I didn't get married until I was considerably older than that.

Patel: How did you choose Radcliffe?

Dodge: I hate to be disloyal. It was alright but I wasn't enthusiastic about it. I went back to one reunion and I still feel not enthusiastic which would not make the Radcliffe people happy. MIT is much nicer to deal with than Radcliffe and I'm perfectly willing to state that anywhere.

Patel: Did you major in chemistry at Radcliffe?

Dodge: Yes. I think they've got a fairly decent laboratory there now. When I was there, it was one of the oldest buildings. I don't imagine it was very safe but I never thought of it in those terms. Our classes were small. I don't know how they handle it now but in those days Harvard professors would teach courses at Radcliffe for a definite fee. Some of them weren't interested in Radcliffe beyond that; some were. One of my chemistry courses was one in which there were not many students. There were not many students anyway in the courses. The professor said sure he'd teach us but we'd have to come over to Harvard. He wasn't going to be bothered with coming over to Radcliffe which I don't blame him a bit. I went over there and took my course. The laboratory work we did at Radcliffe. He was perfectly willing to teach us. He had nothing against teaching women but he did not wish to come over and teach two or three of us.

Patel: So you took classes with the Harvard men?

Dodge: Yes. He was a very good teacher. Harvard at that time...The gray building just near Harvard Square, Boylson, I think was the name of it was where we had our classes. That was a pretty old building. I don't think there's any chemistry there now. I think it's an annex of the library. I suppose they use it for storage. But, at that time it was chemistry. And it was not a distinguished building. That's what happens at the older universities. They



have these buildings and they use them; you can't afford not to. But we did no laboratory work there. I think it was too crowded as it was.

Patel: Were you involved in any activities at Radcliffe?

Dodge: Not too much. I think I did a little for drama. I didn't do much but I kept busy.

Patel: Then you graduated Radcliffe at the age of eighteen. Was that odd at all; did it create any special circumstances?

Dodge: No, not particularly. What happens is as you get older, as I am now, most of the people I knew are already considerably older. Therefore, there are very few of them left. The last one in my class that I thought of, knowing who she was and what she was, died a year ago or so and she was well along in the years but I didn't know her too well.

Patel: And then after Radcliffe you came to MIT?

Dodge: Yes.

Patel: Did your family feel anything about you going from a totally...

Dodge: No! No. They were quite pleased. It was quite a ride. I lived, do you know Brattle Street? I'm trying to tell you where I lived. Do you know where the Cambridge Hospital is up on the river? Well I lived not too far from where that is now. It wasn't on Mt. Auburn Street but it wasn't too far. That meant when I came here, I don't remember whether my family had a car at that time, but it meant I had to take the streetcar to Harvard Square and then change. Anyway, it was quite a long ride. I don't think I would enjoy it today. I can remember vaguely when the subway was being built from Harvard Square on to Central Square and then beyond. I remember the big gap in the street and I was just a little girl then.

Patel: Were you not frightened at all going to MIT?

Dodge: No. I don't frighten easily. Besides you have to remember that back in those days MIT was not what it is today. They had the main building over here, building 10, and then the wings that came up. But none of the, none of the buildings in back were part of MIT. I don't think they even belonged to MIT in those days. But you can find that out in the MIT history better than I could. From the main building back to the railroad there...Do they still run railcars through on the tracks?

Patel: Yes they do every once in a while.

Dodge: Much of that in back I don't think it belonged to MIT even then. MIT had moved over from Boston. You probably have heard all about that. You haven't? One of the very tall buildings there is on old MIT ground and beside it, I haven't checked within the last few years, was a building which the, I think it was the Natural History Society, was not MIT. They just kept their eyes open and bought land as they could. But they were all over in Boston by the time I was born and when I was here the architecture students all had their classes in Boston still. That meant a long trip for them. Marjorie Pierce was over there as a student.

Patel: Were you familiar with her?

Dodge: Yes, she lives not too far from here. We have met and talked. She lives out here in the country. And she still does architecture. But she used to go over there for her classes. The architecture people would not come over and teach here. I think they flatly refused.

Patel: Why did you decide to go to MIT?

Dodge: I presume because it was close, not very flattering to MIT but I believe that was it. I was a little young in those days to get much of a job and I guess that was part of it.

Patel: What did you do here while you were at MIT?

Dodge: As a student? I wasn't active in any group, if you mean that. I shared a laboratory up on the third or fourth floor in the chemistry building at that time and the one who shared the lab or whose lab I shared was a graduate student in chemistry too.

Patel: How did you feel as a woman coming to MIT?

Dodge: It didn't bother me at all. I haven't much to tell you about that because if most of your work is in a little private laboratory which is what it amounted to when I was working there, you don't have much contact with the other students.

Patel: Did you have any resources to go to if you had any problems?

Dodge: No. One of the graduate students who was chemistry at the time I was there was this Ram Prasad. I can't tell you what part of India he came from but I presume because he was from India, I remembered his name. I can't remember the other ones.

Patel: Where there any other subjects that stimulated you while you were here?

Dodge: Just things in general but nothing in particular; no. I think I saw on your list that you have something about my doing writing. I got into that; I'd been out quite a few years and I think I had done something, it was during the war, World War I. I taught chemistry in a nursing school and the girls who were students there were not particularly science minded. They didn't know much and I wrote this book which was not very big to use with the nursing students because you take people who have no, almost no, scientific background and try to teach them even nursing chemistry which really didn't have any particular form, I found they didn't know enough so I wrote this little book and I think I used it with my classes but I didn't think of myself as a writer at all. I went in to interview Little Brown about something, they used to be here but most of it's gone to New York now, a publishing house, and Mr. Bradford who was, I forget what his title was but he was fairly high up, talked with me and he looked at that little chemistry I'd written and he said to me, "Do you know a history of nursing for teenagers?" I said, "No, but I think there should be." He said, "Well why don't you write one?" So I did and that did pretty well. I think it went through a couple of printings. And after that I did some other books for Little Brown but that's the way I got into writing.

Patel: You were talking about World War I, how did that affect you?

Dodge: Personally I didn't have anybody in it who's close to me. My brother, the one who was here on the faculty eventually got involved but not too much.

Beyond that I didn't have too much awareness of it even. I knew it was a war but I didn't know people in it very much. Before that when I was (I think it was) eleven, my father took a sabbatical and we spent a year in Munich. So I knew Germany but I was not particularly fond of Germany. It was one of those things. So I can't feel that it affected me very much at all except as people went to war. But people I knew, the young men and so forth, none of them were very deeply involved in the war.

Patel: What happened after MIT?

Dodge: I don't remember with whom I talked about working at the hospital in Boston which is now Massachusetts Memorial Hospital, in those days Massachusetts Homeopathic Hospital. Homeopaths were, I guess you say, a sect of doctors who believed in minute amounts of drugs and they had set up, a long time before, their own medical school; there was one in Philadelphia and their own sort of practice. They were no longer really different from other doctors by the time I got involved in the homeopathic hospital which now has the title Massachusetts Memorial Hospital. They wanted somebody to do work in the laboratory there and that's where I worked several years. It was quite an interesting experience. Then after that...

Patel: Going back to that, when you were working there do you remember any specific incidences, any people?

Dodge: Not too much. The man who was in charge, the doctor, had graduated here from MIT and he's been gone a long time now. Dr. Rowe was a very loyal MIT alumnus. But I don't recall any particular episodes when I worked there that would interest you.

After that I worked in another Boston hospital for a little while, laboratory always and then I married. My husband was a professor of botany but he'd done quite a bit in medical botany. We lived not far from Harvard. He was on the Harvard faculty and then we had a chance to go to Washington University in St. Louis and we stayed there until he retired. That's a very good institution, Washington University. Named Washington because I think it was founded on Washington's birthday.

Patel: How did you meet your husband?

Dodge: You'll laugh. My father was teaching Slavic Languages and he sat in on my father's classes because he wanted to learn to read Russian literature and father always had students in twice a month for tea if they wanted to come and my husband, I wouldn't say he was a student of my father's, but he came. That's where I met him.

Patel: Was it a courtship?

Dodge: After a while. We had two daughters. The older one is Anne, she lives now in West Virginia. She's a pathologist. Mary, the one you met, really majored in music and she plays in various music groups. She comes up to Vermont and plays in the Vermont Symphony and so forth. Her husband is a musician too.

Patel: What is your older daughter's name?

Dodge: Anne Hooper.

Patel: I understand you did a lot of traveling with your husband.

Dodge: Yes, we did a fair amount. We went down to Guatemala, Costa Rica first. We were there the better part of two years. Then we were back here for a while and then we went to... As World War II started and there weren't too many classes in botany and meanwhile they wanted him to... He did quite a bit of work in bacteriology and medical mycology which is... The infecting organisms are fungi and belong in that group and he taught. During the war the State Department sent him as an exchange professor to Guatemala and we stayed there the better part of two years and then after that... It was some years later, maybe he had retired officially by then (no he hadn't) but he went to the Antarctic. Of course there are not many plants down there but there are some single-celled organisms and that's what he was interested in. He was there for



several months.

Patel: Can you describe your experience in Guatemala?

Dodge: We rented a house and we bought a second hand car to go around the country. There're no other means. You either go on a bus or a car. It would be too long a distance with his commitments in Guatemala City to go walk and hiking. Then we went around to the various towns.

Every town has it's own specific characteristic textile. The women would do their blouses that way. The skirts usually came from big looms, not mechanical. With the blouses they have little looms that they roll up and take with them. One end might be hung from the door frame and the other they'll be sitting in for the tension they need. With that type of background they wove the most beautiful fabrics, largely cotton. Traditionally they dyed them themselves but some of them are obviously not native as far as their color and texture. They're beautiful textiles. My husband and I collected them as we could. Every town has its typical pattern. I can remember one woman in a market, I forget what I was talking with her about, and she was mentioning some town and I said but that's not your town. She looked so surprised. You could tell by the blouse she was wearing where she came from. We made quite a collection of Guatemalan textiles. They had them up here at the Museum one time.

At that time my daughters went to school and we saw to it that they went

to a school where they didn't talk English because we wanted them to learn Spanish, which they did. The one who was with me was just a little thing then and I can remember her correcting my accents. Children have much sharper ears for that than older people. She said, "Don't say this mama say that," and I couldn't tell the difference. But that's typical of children. We wanted them to learn while they were children when they could still do it and it does make a difference.

So we were there a year and a half. We were there when Pearl Harbor was attacked because I remember it coming in over the radio. We came back to St. Louis. We stayed there until my husband retired. Then we decided... Do you know the middle west at all? It's very hot in the summer and we didn't want to stay there and be there summers. We thought that it would be less and less pleasant to have to leave every summer. We just moved. That's when we went to Burlington. My husband was born in Vermont.

Patel: Why was it important to you that your children go to native schools?

Dodge: If you want to talk another language you'd better learn it while you're young. It's never quite the same if you're older. We figured that was the way they could do it. I think it was very good for them to know Spanish. I don't think either of them talk it much now; I don't know if they do at all but it did give them a fluency that they wouldn't have had otherwise. It doesn't really matter - the language. It's good to know another language. When my father

was a professor, he took a sabbatical year in Germany just before World War I and I went to a school there. I was very glad that I learned German. I can't talk it very well now because I'm totally out of practice but it made a difference to know another language. I think it gives you an understanding of different ways of speaking, different modes of thought.

Patel: Did you have trouble adjusting to the Guatemalan culture?

Dodge: No. We rented a house and what furniture we had to have and bought a car which was second hand but it did run. We sold that all when we left.

I have been in Guatemala since but not in the city. My older daughter wanted me to go last year. She's a doctor. She went to some medical meeting but I didn't want to go because I knew she couldn't go around with me and I just...

#### BEGIN TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO

Dodge: Now what else do you wish me to tell you?

Patel: You had written an article for the Technology Review entitled "Unconconscious Ambassadors".

Dodge: That must have been a long time ago.

Patel: Do you remember anything of it?

Dodge: I don't even remember it.

Patel: I believe you said that you felt people should get to know the culture and the country that is supporting them.

Dodge: Oh, yes. They should know the language if they can. I think some of the languages should be very hard to know particularly when there's another script because you'd have to learn the script and how to interpret it and that would be very difficult for a person who was... A child, no. Children learn but for older people it's a bit difficult.

Patel: Were there many Americans when you were staying there?

Dodge: Yes and no. They had an air squadron and we would see them. There weren't a huge number but from there they would fly out over the ocean to the east where there were quite a few German submarines there. But to show you, Mary was just a little girl then and some soldier was looking for the American embassy. She took him in tow. He was trying to ask somebody in Spanish so she interpreted for him. I wasn't there and then she took him over to the embassy. She was just a little thing. Maybe she was as much as seven.

I don't remember exactly when it happened. Even today she and her sister, although they don't talk Spanish much, feel much more home in it than they would otherwise. I didn't see her doing that; she told me about it afterwards. She was quite fluent in Spanish because they went to native schools. My older daughter stayed with some friends in Costa Rica and went to what would amount to a high school. We were there long enough so they could do it.

Patel: What did you do while you were in Guatemala?

Dodge: Kept house.

Patel: Was it hard? Was it a lot of stuff to shuffle?

Dodge: No, it was no great problem. I had no particular work beyond that. I haven't any much to tell you about that. We stayed well over a year. I had to take care of everything. Now what do you want to know?

Patel: So you moved to Burlington?

Dodge: Yes. When my husband retired from St. Louis we decided that we did not want to spend years out in the middle west because either we had to leave every summer... It can be terribly hot there. They used to have a joke that you could fry eggs on the manhole covers. We didn't like that so we decided

we would come back. He was Vermont born. For a while he worked with the botany department there but just as a courtesy. His was no appointment. Then he died quite a few years ago.

I think it was a good move for us to come back when we did. When he died we sold the house we had bought and I moved into a retirement community which is very pleasant but there's some handicaps associated with people that... all of us are old. I don't think it's too good. I don't know what else to do. I'm not in favor of segregating people by age but then you get to be the point where you either have to take care of a house yourself or move. It becomes a problem.

Patel: Did you do most of your writing in Vermont?

Dodge: I did a fair amount in St. Louis.

Patel: Can you describe your writing?

Dodge: After I did that History of Nursing which was done because the publisher wanted to make it available to nursing schools, the editor at Little Brown over here in Boston, not there any more, gone to New York. They do have an office there but they're not really Boston publishers anymore. He suggested that I do History of Nursing, which I did. Then I had done some other things.

Patel: Plants that Change the World

Dodge: That was a series of accounts of some of the plants for which there's been quite an important use that they've been put to. Among them for instance, rubber. Rubber was, I don't think even processed until... I'm sure where rubber trees grew, they grew native in South America. It's quite an industry drawing the rubber sap and it was quite a thing. Otherwise there would have been no waterproofs, no tires, none of... I'm sure there's rubber in some of these things here. If not, there's a synthetic that has been derived from the knowledge that has been acquired from rubber, from the chemistry. I believe there's quite a lot of rubber planted in India now. Initially it was in a rain forest in South America. It was an Englishman who got the first plants to England and from there they went to Java and India. Of course the South Americans made a great to-do about it. They never did anything with rubber until it was picked up and exploited and they love to say it was stolen. It wasn't stolen. It was taken but not stolen. That's the way countries are.

Rubber wasn't the only one. Quinine, that's a South American plant. Without quinine it would be quite a different story of malaria. Then there's that one which is not South American. I think it's Indian, chaulmoogra. That was used for leprosy. Extracted that... I think I remember rightly and there were several others. I did that, the publication date was 1959. I did that and they published it, brought it out, two printings and then I did other things but

now there's a great interest in plants. You probably noticed that. Tremendous public sentimentality. They overdo it I think but it's there. I wrote a letter to Little Brown, to the editor-in-chief. I said it would be a good time to redo that, maybe with some additions, changes but fundamentally the same. I'm really indignant. They never even answered me. Meanwhile somebody else has expressed an interest and I think I'll redo it now.

Of course the plant that everybody takes for granted is the potato and that's from South America. Perhaps you don't know that. The high, what they call the Altiplano, it's several thousand feet elevation, is where the potato is native. The only way it got to be generally known was through the Spanish invaders, the conquistadores. Then finally samples were taken to Europe and planted there and when they did there's this microscopic plant, which is of course a parasite, came too. That's what led to the Potato Famine in Ireland. Of course it sent all the Irish here. They were starving and they had had the potatoes growing there long enough so they practically lived on them exclusively. What they called the potato plague, it was a single-celled plant, botrytis infestans is the name. When it hit the plantations in Ireland, people starved because nobody knew how to handle anything then. It's a matter of history but it's a matter of science too. That's when they started emigrating. That's why we have so many Irish here now. I don't know how many of the Irish know it. The Potato Famine was a disaster. It was about 150 years ago.

Patel: Why did this interest you?



Dodge: I was in South America and I saw the amount of potatoes they had there and I got quite interested. Of course my husband was a mycologist, which made a difference. So I dug up the background material. It means reading the travel accounts, the botanical accounts and the accounts of the famine, what they call the Potato Famine which was absolutely devastating. I was appalled in reading the accounts. I forget who it was but he figured millions of pounds of potatoes were consumed in Ireland per year. It doesn't sound possible, does it? I don't think I could have gone that long but apparently they got enough nourishment out of it so they survived. When the disease, plague, hit it just absolutely took the nourishment from all these thousands of people. That's when they pulled up their roots and so many of them came to America. That's why you have so many Irish here. It's hard to believe, isn't it? I think that's an important thing to bring up in a book like that. That wasn't one plant, that was the potato and the infected one. Apparently they figured that it was already on the potatoes in South America but the conditions were not such that they... It wasn't killing off the crop, it was killing off individual plants. I don't think they were planted that close anyway. Have you been at high altitudes?

Patel: No.

Dodge: If you ever do, you'll notice the climate is very difficult because when you get to, I forget what the altitude of Bogota, Colombia is but it's high

enough so that... They used to tell us not to close our windows at night because of the altitude, the percentage of oxygen was much lower. We could easily suffocate if we didn't have free circulation of air. At that altitude you want to close your window because it's cold. All year round; it becomes quite a problem. I've been quite fascinated with that type of thing and these people who are so sentimental about natural products, I think it'd done them good to learn a little that you can't indiscriminately encourage that type of planting. It happens to be that right now is a good time to redo that book. I think Countrymen Press in Woodstock, Vermont are going to bring it out. It was so stupid of the editor at Little Brown not at least to write me. Of course it's a completely different editor from the one I dealt with. The whole company has changed. That's one of the things I'm working on now. I think it's an appropriate time for it. I think people overdo that sentimentality about plants. Since they are sentimental about it, they'd better learn the truth.

Patel: After that you did a book entitled Engineering Is Like This.

Dodge: I did that years ago. I wouldn't redo one like that. I forget. I think Little Brown wanted one. It was a lot of work. They're all work because I have to go back to the original accounts.

Patel: Why did you do that book?

Dodge: I think, I don't remember the details, the editors at Little Brown asked me to do something like that. My contact there was with an older man who took me into the editor of children's books, young people's books and I worked with her. She was a very knowledgeable person. If she were alive now, I'd have no problems at all. That's how I got into doing a series for Little Brown. They were very nice to deal with.

I finally wrote and asked them to send me a letter with a statement that the books belong to me now. If you publish with a publisher, they copyright the books and you can't use the published material unless you get an okay. That can be very embarrassing to an author because you can't quite use your own material. It's a property you've sold really. I have a letter from them listing my books and that they're mine now. That seems funny but you better know that if you're in the business. There're all sorts of odd things that come up that you have to learn. I would be so embarrassed, more than slightly, if I had brought something out and then publishers said stop it, you owe it to us and so forth and so on. They get the copyrights. They're usually very decent about returning them to you if you want that.

Patel: Then later in 1967 you did Hands That Help: A Career Book for Medical Workers

Dodge: That was...I think somebody wanted one like that, that general idea, for medical technicians.

Patel: Why did you feel that was important?

Dodge: It was something I knew something about because I'd worked at that. They wanted another book from me and I wanted to do something I knew something about. I wouldn't be any good at a lot of things unless I don't know about it. Some of them it wouldn't be worth my time to try to learn. It's quite a problem.

Patel: What is?

Dodge: Writing and keeping on doing it because after you've written a book, after you've done a manuscript, you have to find somebody who wants it. So if somebody comes to you and says I want a manuscript such and such. You say oh this is a wonderful break. You see what I mean? It's a little different if you write something and you don't have a place to put it. Sometimes you have a place to put it and the people that take it don't know what to do with it.

I will tell you I happened to find out about an American sailing captain during the War of 1812, probably you've heard, vaguely heard about it. He took a ship down to the Falkland Islands and was sailing during the war. It wasn't easy to get away because so many of the harbors were closed here in the States. But he went down there and while he was there he came upon a British ship. There were quite a lot of islands there. The ship was wrecked and all

the people on it were on the island and since it was on the southern part of the Falklands. (You know where the Falklands are?) It was off the southern edge. They had very little chance of anybody turning up there because these islands weren't visited much. When this American sailing captain came there, they decided to beg for help but what they really did was steal his ship and left him- there was one black sailor and three British sailors-left them on the islands and went off with his ship. He had no way of getting off. He was there for several years. It was a pretty nasty deal. I got quite interested and by writing around to-one of them was a maritime museum in Middletown, Connecticut. Every lead I got, I'd write. For instance I wrote to Australia because that British ship had called at Australia. I got the names of these various people and I followed it out and I wrote it up. Wesleyan University Press in Connecticut took the book and published it. The man who took it knew how to handle books but he left very soon for what we call a trade press, not a university press, and they got a woman. I wrote her and told her what the book was about and she didn't do anything. She let it go out of print. I got the plates from which the books are printed. They let me have them. I had them stored up in Vermont. I put them in the basement where it was cool because it doesn't do film any good to be stored in heat, as you know. I had it for a while and then I finally persuaded Syracuse University Press that it might be a good thing to republish it. I had written to the woman at Wesleyan, the new editor, and told her what the book was about but she didn't pay any attention, which was very stupid. She could at least have looked it over. So finally they brought it out at

Syracuse. University presses are not very bright about handling. As far as the subject matter, they don't know what they're doing. They get out attractive books but if they're not to be used as texts, they don't know what to do with them. They finally brought it out and they didn't do too much. Then a young British colonel who was in the war there, with Argentina (in the Falklands) he stumbled on a copy of the book and he wrote me. He wanted some more copies. I told the press to send them to him. He sent me payment for it but I didn't care. It wasn't that much. Since then he has apparently gotten people in England interested. The press could have done that but they never did. This is what I'm trying to tell you. You've got to have more than just a publisher. You've got to have a publisher who knows his or her business. The bookstore in England has ordered over a hundred copies which is pretty good for a book that's not for general circulation. This is your problem with writing books. It's no good in writing them if nobody's going to read them. You can see that. So it becomes quite a problem. As a matter of fact he's going to be... in a couple of weeks he'll be back in the States for something and he's going to come up to Plymouth. I'll meet him. I've corresponded with him but never met him. But here's an outsider who's done more for the publicity of the book (which I didn't ask him to) than I can do since my name's on the title page. It just won't work. People'll say she tried to boost her own image. So if you ever get into it, think about that because just publishing it isn't enough, you've got to handle it. Because of his military contacts, he's followed out about some of these people who stole the boat. It's no question, they did. It was built in

Pittsburgh. Can you imagine building a sailing vessel in Pittsburgh, up the river? The only way they could launch it would be in the springtime when the river is full. With the lower water level they couldn't possibly do it, in the summer. This boat that was stolen was built in a Pittsburgh shipyard. To me it's amazing. Every place struggling to establish their own industry. It's quite a story. The thing that irritated me was what was the good of publishing a book if you don't try to place it. I mean as a publisher, not as a writer but as a publisher. Here's a book that had Argentine contact because of the fact that that war was Argentine, the Falkland Island war was between Argentina and Britain. Stupid thing to fight over, the Falklands. The Falklands were important in the days when the sailing ships went around the South America via the Cape. Today they're not that important.

So you have to know a lot more than just writing a book if you want to do anything with it. Some bookstore in England has bought about 105 copies. That's amazing. The thing's been out for years. Of course it deals with history which is about 175 years old. It was quite interesting. That's one of the problems with writing a book. If you're writing a book because somebody wants a book about so and so and they know where they're going to place it, you're taken care of even though it isn't all you'd like. But if you do a book and nobody has any sense of what to do with it, it's really quite a problem.

Patel: Actually I'd like to go back to 1939 when your father died.

Dodge: My father had had what I presume were strokes before. I wasn't living here then. I was living out in St. Louis. So although I did see him occasionally, I didn't follow all of this. Well he finally, he just went. He had a lot of fond students but I guess they're all gone now. While he was at Harvard he was the whole Slavic Department. Now they've got several Slavic professors. Of course in those days they didn't care about Slavic. Since Russia, when Russia became communist and there was all this talk about it, it began to spread. Of course father wasn't here. I don't know how conscious they are of my dad at the Harvard Slavic Department because for some years after he died, if they had any Slavic language, all literature, it was taught by somebody who was just a temporary appointment.

President Lowell had a feeling that you shouldn't teach literature of a country except in the language of that country, which is fine but how many people would know it?. It's better to know something of it than nothing. Nobody was going to study it. Only very few, people who were going into the diplomatic service would be interested. And somebody who had some particular personal drive to learn the language would. Actually, you couldn't run a language department at a university on that basis. It just wouldn't work. Father taught Russian language and he also did Russian literature. I don't know if they teach Slavic literature any more. Sooner or later they'll have to because people will want it but it'll have to be done in translation. How many people are going to learn the Cyrillic type? That's pretty difficult. I can read it because I studied to read it but even so I get occasionally confused because



I've forgotten quite a bit. Cyrillic type is nothing that most people would bother with. Except for people who lived in Russia or worked in Russian language in some way, you're not going to find people who can use it. It's hard enough with German but there are enough people with German background who'll do it. The old German script isn't too easy but the Cyrillic is very different. But that's the way it goes.

Patel: You taught chemistry in high school...?

Dodge: I taught in nursing school when they were short of teachers. I helped out.

Patel: Did you teach college at all?

Dodge: One term they needed somebody at Washington University, a freshman course, and I did it. But again, I wasn't qualified in the sense of having a degree in it or anything. So of course they didn't want me when they could get somebody else-which didn't hurt my feelings at all. I did it because it was something I could do but in a school like the engineering school at Washington University (which wasn't very far advanced) you're getting students who haven't had enough math really to be there. So I did that for two or three years but I was right there in town. Right after the war, even during the war there was a shortage of teachers for that kind of thing but that wasn't what I was

intending to do as a career. I wasn't intending to be a writer either. It just happened.

Patel: What were you intending to do?

Dodge: As they say in Spanish, *quien sabe*, who knows. But I think there are a lot of things in life that happen that way. You don't plan for it but if you're qualified and the opportunity comes, you take it. Of course on the other side of it, the people who hire you know you have no claims. So they can let you go when they feel like it. That's the other side of the coin. But I didn't expect to do that. Those young students-they may have been through high school but they certainly didn't know algebra the way I was taught it in high school. There's a great difference between the way we had to learn it and nowadays. They just don't learn it. I was over at that education symposium today and they were being very cautious what they said because the teachers were there. But the teachers don't force you to do this. Senator Tsongas did say that when they tried to use the 1% sales tax for education, for teaching, the teachers refused because they wanted the money for their salaries. That's no good. I don't know how we're going to improve education with the present situation. I'm not going to get involved with that; I'm too old. I wouldn't live long enough. There is a great gap between what they should know and what they do know. But I don't think it's the youngster's fault as much as the teacher's. I really do. I think the whole education for teachers is wrong. My father used to feel very

strongly of the subject and I haven't felt it until recently because I didn't pay much attention. I don't think our schools are doing the kind of work they ought. They've got an entrenched corps of teachers. I don't know what they're going to do. It's not easy to remold teaching when you have teachers whose backgrounds aren't good. I don't know what the answer is.

So I was thinking all that talk this morning, they weren't really learning much, or getting anywhere because I would think, probably, at least half the audience were teachers. They can't do anything if they're going to block changes. My daughter here had four children and the younger one went to Falmoth Academy, not public school. It shouldn't be that way, but that's the only way you get a good, really adequate education. Something's got to be done about it. I'm too old to get involved.

Patel: Do you remember James R. Jack?

Dodge: Oh, Jimmy Jack, oh, yes. He and my husband were quite friendly. He was very much interested in botany, too. I think it was his collection of plant photographs that his wife turned over to me and I turned them over to the MIT museum. I figured they're old and it wasn't something I wanted to take around with me. They were his work. He was a very, very nice person. He started life working on, I don't know if it was a family business. I think he was somehow related to the firm that was building quite a few British ships in Glascow, Scotland. His wife finally went back to Glascow because she had

relatives there. They were awfully nice people.

Patel: Were you very close to them?

Dodge: My husband felt quite close but that was quite a while ago. Jimmy Jack died a long time ago. He was on the MIT faculty a long time.

Patel: But you and Eleanor corresponded a lot.

Dodge: Oh yes. I think I turned the letters over to the museum. I've gotten to the point where I realize if you don't take care of things that way, nobody else knows what to do with them. You have to think of that when you have possessions like that and I felt when I moved that the Jack things, they should go to the MIT Museum. He was quite interested in plants and the photography of them. That's how my husband got to know him.

BEGIN TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE

Patel: When did you go west?

Dodge: When my husband moved from his Harvard professorship in botany to Washington University, St. Louis. Later, there was going to be a botanical meeting at Rio and the Rockefeller Foundation asked him see if he could help this Brazilian by the name of Chavez-Batista in Recife. So Carroll agreed and we went down there. What Chavez-Batista wanted in truth, it turned out, was

not help in any human sense; he wanted money. He was arrogant enough to write, after we were settled in Brazil, a letter to my husband. It was incredible, telling him what hours he should arrive. The kind of thing you'd do to a, well you wouldn't do it if you had any sense, to any employee. The day that my husband got that letter, or the next day, a representative from the Rockefeller Foundation turned up from Rio. He wanted to know how things were going. I said to Carroll, "Why don't you show him your letter?" which he did and the Rockefeller man was furious. He said, "This is insanity." It was incredible. Here was a man who wanted to get ahead but he was a communist and in those days many were a little on the violent side. I've thought of him often. The man who came up from Rio read the letter and said, "This is insanity." Of course we both had thought it was too. He said to my husband, "Don't you go back there again. You're not to go back there again." I had to go back to pick up some things we had left. When I was there, this Chavez-Batista got me in his office, sat me down, you'll laugh really, and gave me a lecture on I don't know what. I don't remember the details but it was something about what we owed him. Of course we didn't owe him anything. Rockefeller paid for and arranged it. I can remember him still. He was a great, big, blustering fellow. He said, "You agree, don't you? You agree, no?" And I said, "No." Honestly, for a moment I thought he was going to hit me. He was so furious. He was one of those very active communists. There was no question about that. And he thought that he could get Rockefeller Foundation to finance whatever he wanted to do! He was very much upset that he was sent a man; he wanted

money, not a man. So we never went back there. I had to go back to pick up our things. I said to the man from Rio, "Well we have some things there..." He said, "Well you go, but not your husband. He must not go back."

Patel: What were you there for originally?

Dodge: What we went for? There was a meeting, a botanical meeting, but I'd doubt if we'd have gone for that. Rockefeller asked my husband to do it. I'll never forget that. "You agree, no?" "No." Really I could see him tense and I thought maybe he's going to hit me. He knew he'd have plenty of trouble if he did, if I survived. He was a great, big, heavy set fellow. That's the way it went. That was funny, looking back on it. It was so clear that that's what he wanted, money. The Rockefeller Foundation people had told him what hotel to put us up in till we found a place. He wasn't going to see that money spent on a hotel. He got a very, very inferior one for us. We didn't know that, when we were told to stay there. Everything he did was to get money to do some construction for his place. Of course he got started because he thought he was going to have the money and then I don't know what he did afterwards. I do know that he did what they call "badmouthed" my husband but it didn't make any difference because he wasn't that important. But this was to be help he was going to get at any cost.

Patel: I don't understand what claim he had to ask Rockefeller.

Dodge: He didn't have any! He actually didn't. They have tried to help various institutions in South America. They have offices; they had one in Chile and they had this one in Recife which is north of Rio. Apparently they tried to help local people, which is very nice. They were furious with him of course. He got what was coming to him. Then there was a German scientist there. That was the time when a lot of Germans got out of Germany because it was risky. This was right after the war. I've often thought that Chavez-Batista really must have said some nasty things about the Dodges because the German's wife published a book to that effect. Obviously she didn't realize what they were getting into. But these Germans desperately needed a place to stay. It was too bad. That's the way things go in this world. It was very stupid. While we were still there, before he'd had a chance to find out how things were going, Chavez-Batista tried to tell my husband what hours he should be there working. You don't do that with visiting scientists. The insult was to the Rockefeller people. We didn't care.

Patel: Do you know whatever happened to him?

Dodge: He died within a few years. He could well have been killed because a man like that who's violent... In Brazil you don't do that. He might get away with it here but he wouldn't get away with it in Brazil. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if somebody shot him. If he did it to my husband who was a very

gentle and kind a person, he'd do it to anybody. You can count my husband would never have shot a flea, let alone him. That was quite an adventure. I was glad we went there because I got a feeling for Brazil. I was very sorry that it happened because you just don't like to have that kind of unpleasantness. In this world you get all kinds of adventures. The thing is to know that you're not the only one who gets it.

I think it was an Austrian. A lot of the refugees went to South America from Europe. I said to him, I think Chavez-Batista must be communist. I could just see him saying blut rot (that's German, blood red). We survived. So what the Rockefeller people did, you'll be interested in that. They figured out how much it would cost us to go the long way around, that is through South America, up the west coast, and back up to the States and for staying on the way (because that's what they'd engaged my husband for.) Then he said, "Now you can walk if you want." In other words, they weren't going to check on how the money was spent but they figured it would cover that. You see how furious they were that they would do that. It wasn't our fault. I think they felt that they had failed. I don't suppose that man ever got any help from the Rockefeller Foundation again. I think it was a good experience. It rounded out our experience. Curiously, the Brazilians have a streak of violence that you don't see in the Spanish background. Of course Brazil had a Portugese background.

Patel: At this point Ms. Dodge and I left to find her daughter Mary Cobb



and Ms. Dodge left with her for Plymouth and she very kindly invited me to visit Vermont.

[END OF INTERVIEW]