

# IN HER OWN WORDS

STORIES FROM THE SALISBURY  
ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVE

Sara Wardell was the Director of the Scoville Memorial Library in 1981 when she suggested that “an oral history of the town is long overdue.”

Several interested residents explored the idea, and the result was the Salisbury Oral History Project, co-sponsored by the Library and the Salisbury Association. Holly Palmer Daboll was the first director, followed by Marion Haeberle, who served in that role from 1982 to 2006.



“My focus has broadened to government, fire department, ambulance, summer youth program, selected boards ... anyone who has done any kind of work for the town, either volunteer or paid. I have met so many wonderful people that give so much to the community. It has really been a joy!

## JEAN PORTER McMILLEN

JEAN PORTER McMILLEN, a former teacher at Salisbury Central School and the present Salisbury Town Historian, revived the oral history project in 2010. At that time 117 interviews had been recorded. Jean expanded the focus of the interviews and made sure that earlier interviews were all transcribed and digitized. She has now personally conducted, transcribed, and indexed more than 275 interviews. In her own recorded oral history on October 1, 2016, Jean expressed her great satisfaction with this work.

This exhibit, In Her Own Words, features the interviews of 19 contemporary Salisbury women and is an illustrative sampling of the nearly 400 oral histories in the collection. A QR code will connect you to each woman’s voice. The many other interviews and transcriptions can be accessed by visiting the Historical Society Section on the Salisbury Association’s website ([www.salisburyassociation.org](http://www.salisburyassociation.org)). Five volumes of Sarum Samplings from the oral history archives have been published and are available for purchase in the Academy Building.





## LORI BELTER

INTERVIEW ON MAY 1, 2018

Lori talks about her involvement with musical theater as a student at Housatonic Valley Regional High School, her association with Sharon Playhouse and Tri-Arts and her return to HVRHS as assistant director and stage manager for recent productions.

“At HVRHS, “The rehearsal process is sacred and that is the time when they can learn and explore. Nothing is ever wrong. We shape them as we go along. I think that they have come to really enjoy that process. Over the years we have done a lot of historical shows. We have done *South Pacific*, *The King and I*, ... it all brings history into the realm of theater. We are finding that is very important as well. We are also following the Tri-Arts model in which we have professional directors, choreographers, scenic design, lighting design so we give the kids a huge underpinning of experience for them. It is very professionally done.

“It is a misconception that teens and preteens don’t talk to adults. They will talk to adults if they feel they will be listened to and not judged. I would like to remember the Youth Service Bureau as being a full-scale agency. We were brought in to address the needs or gaps in services for kids in crisis or kids who were at risk. The longer we were there, the more we were able to recognize that prevention is also a big part of providing services. We would do prevention programs, fun programs that would bring kids and parents out together. Then they also know we were there if there ever was a need, or issues or problems that needed to be addressed. I would like to think that we provided the services to kids who were on the sidelines.



## CYNTHIA BIANCHI

INTERVIEW ON FEBRUARY 22, 2018

Cynthia discusses the Housatonic Youth Service Bureau and her 19 years as its director





## CAROLINE BURCHFIELD

INTERVIEW ON APRIL 18, 2018

Caroline speaks of her role as Director of Community Relations at Noble Horizons as well as her involvement with EXTRAS, SOAR, the construction of the community playground, the Girl Scouts, the Jane Lloyd Fund, the Salisbury Forum, and the Salisbury Volunteer Ambulance Service.

“It is such a privilege to live in this community and be able to do all of these things. There is faith, friendship, comradery, and we all want to make our community care for each other. We take care of each other. What an honor in this crazy world of ours to provide an oasis of kindness. It is bigger that we are. We are so fortunate to be a part of it. We do everything we can to foster, nurture and preserve it. That is where the privilege comes in: to be able to have a hand in that for future generations. We are just carrying on from what those before us left to us.

“In those days the Town Historian was located on the first floor of the library. Norm [Sills] would be sitting there reading things. I would poke my head in, ‘Is there anything I can do?’ He got me started doing some computer work. Then he would say, ‘Take a box of documents home and see if you can make order out of them.’ When Norm decided to retire there was nobody to take on the job. I said I would do the work but I didn’t want the title. I got away with that for about a year, and then I picked up the town report and found my name listed as Town Historian.



## KATHERINE CHILCOAT

INTERVIEW ON JUNE 18, 2013

Katherine talks about working at Deep Lake Farm, the Town Clerk’s office, Salisbury Central School and Fitch-Kane estate sales; her involvement with Wells Hill harness racing, the Holley-Williams letter reading program, deaccessioning the Holley-Williams House, and her years serving as Town Historian, 2005-2014.







## STACEY DODGE

INTERVIEW ON JANUARY 15, 2013

Stacey talks about the Town Grove and her job as manager there.

“I was born and raised in this area so I grew up at the Grove. I became a lifeguard and then I worked under John Pogue as the store manager, and then he was due to retire. They weren’t sure what they were going to do. I went into the First Selectman at the time who was Bud Trotta and said, ‘I think I can do that position. If I take over, you do not have to advertise.’ He said, ‘I’ll give it a try.’ Hence 20 years later I am still here. The staff that I have also grew up here or their children have grown up here. We take it very personally here; it is very near and dear to our hearts that this is our Grove and we nurture it.

“In describing OWL, Jean says, “It was an advocacy group ... to raise awareness on issues of interest to older women.” The Lakeville chapter started OWL’s Kitchen, “the only chapter in the organization that had a food pantry. It was started to supplement the diet of people who had low income, but to bring them healthy food.” OWL’s kitchen is now known as the Corner Food Pantry.



## JEAN GALLUP

INTERVIEW ON JANUARY 20, 2016

In addition to her life as the wife of a local doctor and a busy mother of three, Jean was assistant to the Dean of Students at Hotchkiss for several years. She was a member of the Democratic Town Committee and served on the boards of several civic organizations including the Planning and Zoning Commission, Salisbury Family Services, Salisbury Central School, and the Lakeville chapter of the Older Women’s League (OWL).





## ELYSE HARNEY

INTERVIEW ON OCTOBER 20, 2015

Elyse reminisces with her daughter, Elyse Harney Morris, about the White Hart 1960-1983, John Harney Sr., and the beginning of the Salisbury Ambulance Service.

“There was this big, beautiful Christmas tree in the middle of the green. If I remember correctly, it was on White Hart property because the town owned the very end of the peninsula. I think Annie Harris was dating one of the Rockefellers. That put the idea of the Christmas tree that they light down at Rockefeller Center in my husband’s head. God forbid that any tree down at Rockefeller Center should be more beautiful than a tree that you would have in Salisbury. He at that stage of his life the first 2 or 3 years shimmied up the tree and put the lights on it himself. He was in good shape. That would have been in the 1960’s probably.

“When speaking about the Childcare Center she says, “I took my daughter there when she was 15 months old. I started out in a parents’ group there. My daughter will be 30 in November. I got to know the place that way and really it is such an important resource for the young families in our area. To have young families stay here we need to have these services for them. It is affordable housing, it is decent jobs within driving distance and it is support for the families. If they don’t have that care, they can’t stay in this area. They have to have a place they trust that is professional and that is what the center is about.



## JANET MANKO

INTERVIEW ON JULY 20, 2017

Janet describes her role as Editor/Publisher-in-Chief of the Lakeville Journal, the Tri-State Chamber of Commerce, and her years as a board member of the Housatonic Childcare Center.





## EILEEN MULLIGAN

INTERVIEW ON JUNE 18, 2012

Eileen talks about the history of Noble Horizons and describes what the facility was like when she was hired as Administrator.

“ We had 64 acres in the beginning; it has expanded to 104 acres over the years. We had 16 cottages; we had Riga Residence which is the residential hotel which had 26 beds. They were just completing the Whitridge Nursing Wing which would add 30 nursing beds to the campus. Once they added the nursing services the license required that there be a full-time nursing home administrator on the premises. We had between eight and twelve employees. We had a kitchen and that’s where most of the employees worked. We had an aide on duty twenty-four hours a day. We had a housekeeper, someone who answered the phone and a maintenance person; so outside of the kitchen there were probably five employees.

“ I think for whoever might be listening to this way down the road, growing up in this time and this town on a farm with other farms which are now gone, in a time where you rode your bike everywhere. You went out in the morning and came home for supper at night. Everybody on your street was your surrogate parent. You got to eat dinner at different people’s houses, bring home people, and get help with the chores from neighborhood children. It was a good time to grow up in this area.



## SANDRA GOMEZ OLIVER

INTERVIEW ON FEBRUARY 1, 2018

Sandy talks about her involvement with the Board of Finance, the Chamber of Commerce, the Housatonic Child Care Center, the Inn at White Hollow, the Lions’ Club, Noble Horizons, the Northwest Girl Scout Council, On the Run coffee shop, Sassafras B & B, “Solutions for Seniors,” SWSA, the Zoning Board of Appeals, and her run for selectman.





## KATHERINE (KAKI) SCHAFFER REID

INTERVIEW ON DECEMBER 2, 2013

Kaki discusses her job as a 911 district dispatcher, the Salisbury Ambulance Service, the Holley-Williams House Museum and her wedding there.

“Kaki portrayed Maria in living-history tours at the Holley-Williams House. “I’d been interested in history, even when my daughter was growing up we would go to all the historical things, and it just brings me back, it seemed like, to a much quieter and peaceful time. Maybe it didn’t seem like that to them at their time, but it certainly did to me. It seemed much more relaxing. I just enjoyed kind of getting out of character in my life and getting into someone else’s life. During the tour I would talk about Maria coming down the gorgeous staircase they had and going into the parlor to get married. I just thought it would be extremely wonderful to walk down this huge staircase.” And she did!

“Jane [Lloyd] died on September 14, 2005 ... within the family came this idea of a fund and how can we help others in the same way as the community had helped Jane. I had had a huge loss in my life and was struggling with what to do with that grief. At that time Jeff [Jane’s brother] came to me and asked if I would help start a fund in her honor to give back to the community. It felt so right to me to do that for people in our community. The funds would stay here and we could help our neighbors. I immediately said, ‘Yes!’ I didn’t even have to think about it at all.



## TANYA TEDDER

INTERVIEW ON OCTOBER 25, 2017

Tanya talks about growing up at Lime Rock Race Track, the Lime Rock Lodge and the founding of the Jane Lloyd Fund which helps support cancer patients and their families.





## DENISE RICE

INTERVIEW ON JANUARY 3, 2012

Denise worked as a school bus driver, as an aide at the Little Scholar School, in the prekindergarten at Salisbury Central School, as town tax collector, and as organist at St. Mary's. She talks about serving on the Republican Town Committee and the boards of the Bissell Fund, Salisbury Family Services, and the Noble Horizons Auxiliary.

“It’s funny that Bill Barnett, I believe, was in his last year as Selectman at the time. He said to me, ‘You will be Tax Collector.’ I said, ‘Really?’ And, lo and behold, I was. I was appointed on November 1, 1973 and elected on November 7th. That’s the story of how I ended up being Tax Collector. I just retired on Sept. 2, 2011, after 38 years. I really enjoyed all of those years, having worked with four or five first selectmen. It wasn’t always a happy time, but basically we kept politics out of the building.”

“Quite a few people grew up here, but there are other people who moved into the area. I guess that the members of the Salisbury Ambulance come from every walk of life. We work together unbelievably well. You have to trust because if I am hanging off a rope at Sage’s Ravine, I want the people who are belaying me down over the cliff to do it safely. We are on duty 365 days a year, seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. We have teams that run during the day; teams that run at night. My parents, John and Denise Rice, when I was young did a lot of things. They were on boards and volunteered their time and they instilled it into the four of us that you should volunteer back to the community.”



## JACQUELINE (JACQUIE) RICE

INTERVIEW ON NOVEMBER 1, 2012

Jacque talks about the Salisbury Volunteer Ambulance Service and her role as Chief of Service.





“ [In the early 2000’s] “I was casting about ... I started feeling as though perhaps God was calling me to ordained ministry. I was told ... to pick people for the discernment committee who would honestly help me understand my strengths and weaknesses. One person I did not choose was an elderly person who I knew did not approve of female ministers. I thought, ‘There is no point in asking her even.’ It was a foregone conclusion what she was going to say. Halfway through she said to me, ‘Honey, how come you never asked me to be on your discernment committee?’ I said, ‘But Gertrude, I knew that you did not believe in women being priests!’ ‘That’s for other people; I would believe in you being a priest!’”



## THE REV. HEIDI TRUAX

INTERVIEW ON NOVEMBER 28, 2017

Heidi is the current rector at Trinity Episcopal Church in Lime Rock. She discusses her first career in IBM computer sales and repair and how she found her path to the ministry.

“ Right, that’s the thing about my job that I liked ... you had to learn a lot about a lot of different things. One minute I am meeting with somebody on energy and electric rates. The next minute the thing I could be dealing with is health care, health costs, and then talking about education issues, the public justice system. You can’t fake it; you have to learn about it. You have to learn about things that you would have absolutely no idea that you would have to learn. For instance, with the environment committee I was asked, ‘Mrs. Willis what was the strangest thing I had to know?’ I had to know how big a clam shell had to be before you could harvest it because that is regulated by state law.



## ROBERTA WILLIS

INTERVIEW ON AUGUST 15, 2017

Roberta Willis, former Democratic State Representative for the 64th District, talks about her experience in the Connecticut legislature as well as her involvement with local organizations.





## SARA WARDELL AND GAILE BINZEN

INTERVIEW ON APRIL 18, 2017

Sara Wardell was the Director and Gaile Binzen was the President of the Board of the Scoville Memorial Library when it was renovated in the 1980's. In this oral history, they reminisce about the project.

**SW** “We needed to improve the lighting in [the Kobler Room] which had one of those 1950's horrible ceilings. In order to get up there they had to break through the ceiling and lo and behold, they found a beautiful plaster ceiling, an elegant plaster ceiling that had a few holes in it...We had to find a plaster mold maker who could copy from one side to the other to fill up the holes. She was up there like Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel for a whole summer. “

**GB** “Actually it was the frieze around at the top of the ceiling as far as I can remember. We never knew that [the room] had these tall windows facing front like the other side of the door... I never thought that they were covered up.”

**SW** “None of us saw it; really it is fabulous. It cost at least an extra \$10,000 -12,000 to do that. Don't try to do that today. It was wonderful because we would go in there and here would be this young woman up on the scaffolding.”

**GB** “Creating plaster fruits and leaves and things. “

**SW** “It was totally fabulous.”

**GB** “It was!”

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