



me. I mean, I can't even believe I own this. I mean that wasn't even in my thoughts when I was a child.

Mary Atai

How old were you when you actually made it to the United States?

Heidi

Thirteen. We were supposed to go to New York City. We applied to New York City because we were used to living in Cologne, which was a city, and in those days, you had to have a sponsor. It was more a mentor sponsor than a financial sponsor. You had to come with so much money. You could not come with two bucks in your pocket. So, it took a long time to save up whatever we had to have. During our voyage, we didn't know this, but the sponsor backed out. We were on the way, but nobody was picking us up. We didn't know what was going to happen to us. We didn't know. So, then somebody came from the Episcopalian Church in Milford who had heard about us and they were looking for a family to sponsor.

And so, we went to Milford, which was a godsend. It was a shock for people who moved from the city to go to a little place like Milford. It's not what it is today. You have to understand what it was like 65 years ago. But that's where we ended up. And it was a godsend. It was the best thing that ever happened to us. And they got you a little apartment. There was a totally furnished apartment that the Episcopalian people completely furnished with the usable things needed. So, I was thirteen and Sigi was eighteen. My mother started working. My father knew how to make furniture, so he got a job at a furniture place in Milford.

So, he worked. We had no car, so he could walk to the place to make furniture. My mother and Sigi picked apples during the day, and then at night they worked in a pizza place and saved up money. My mother wanted to get her beauty license. She didn't speak English. My English was very poor, but I went to school. I was the only one that spoke German there, so it was very difficult. It was not the best year of my life, especially for someone like me who wants to talk all the time, but you know, we survived.

My mother did get her beauty shop license. She opened up a little shop in Milford on the oval and Sigi worked for her because she was a beautician. I went to school, and then I was the one that spoke English, so it was "Heidi, go there." I'm the one that negotiated everything. It was the funniest thing when I think back. At fourteen years old, it was "Oh hey, you talk to him. You tell him." So, when my mother was working picking

apples and in the pizza place, she was saving money to get a down payment for the shop and a car. The car came first. No, I think the TV came first because of pictures. I got to say, I think the TV came first. I am really not sure what came first for us.

So, the TV was important because I think we learned English a little bit through it, you know. That's what people do. And there was no such thing as assistance back then. We didn't get anything. Anything. I mean they were proud people. They didn't want anything from anybody anyway.

While I was in high school, I met Phil Brooks. He invited me to the Fourth of July celebration in New Boston. That was how I came to get acquainted with New Boston. We spent several wonderful weekends with his folks, who had a summer camp here in New Boston. Their summer camp was off Thornton Road. If you go up Clark Hill, then make a right, then a left, there it is. They had a wonderful, very rustic camp with a little bit of running water. It was very primitive, but really charming. I came up to New Boston quite a bit, and then I went off, like we all did.

After I finished high school, my mother wanted me to go to Katharine Gibbs School, and so the two of us went over to Boston to have the interview. She had saved a little money for me to go to Katharine Gibbs. I should have gone to a four-year college, but she didn't understand that whole thing. Katharine Gibbs had two programs, a one-year and a two-year program. I had taken secretarial courses in high school. In those days, you took shorthand. I mean, when you finished school, you could at least get a job somewhere. Now you can't do anything. We went to Katharine Gibbs and I said, "Mom, I don't want to be here. This is not what I want to do, mom. I do not want to go to Katharine Gibbs." Well, you know, it was funny the things she said to me. "Well, you need to get a job. You're going to get a job. You're not going to lull around here." So, I went and got a job and a car, which she co-signed for, and I had to pay. And then I didn't like the job. And David's Hodgen's sister, Peggy, lived in Boston. David was my boyfriend at that time. She said to me, "I am just losing my roommate. Do you want to come and live with me?"

And I said, "I sure do." And then I worked at John Hancock. And I hated it with a passion. Oh God, it was awful. I then found my job at United Shoe. This guy interviewed me, the president of United Shoe and he said to me he felt I could do everything. I had done everything. I could do everything. So, he said, "I'm going to hire this one." This is what he was telling John (John Palmer) later, this whole story, because I've remained friends

with him all my life. So, he hired me. He said, "I've never met a 19 year old who knew everything. This is a challenge." So, of course, I didn't know how to spell and all this kind of stuff. But I had a ball with him. I had to go out to dinner with him almost two or three times a week with clients. He liked to drink and then he wanted to know what he said in the morning.

And then Peggy and I decided to go to San Francisco. We had my little putt-putt car, a Volkswagen, and we drove all the way to California. I liked Peggy (sister of first husband, David) a lot. I think it was sad that we broke a friendship over David (first husband). Her mother was hurt, and I understand that, having children myself. So, I met this person in California and she said, "Hey, let's go to England." They had this kind of Kelly service where you could be a secretary, like a temp, and we could go.

So, I called David, my boyfriend, and I said, "I'm on my way to England." He said, "No, we are going to get married or that's it." I said I had to think about it. I ended up coming home after working one year in San Francisco for John Hancock. My ex-boss from Boston had gotten me that good job. I came home and went back to my mother's house and she said, "You have to get a job."

She took me to the unemployment office in Manchester. I don't know if they still have those things, the state unemployment offices. But I got the job where I worked with Yvonne Gomes in Manchester. That's how we found this house again. You see, when I had met David Hodgen, he worked for Bartlett Tree Company in the summer, while he went to college. And I worked in Boston, so one weekend when I was home visiting my mother in Milford and he was home visiting his parents in Wilton, we decided to take a ride out to New Boston, because he had seen a house that he was absolutely in love with, which is the house that I'm presently living in. We weren't married or anything, but we really came by this house a lot of times. And then later after I returned from San Francisco and after David and I had gotten married, I started working at the airport in Manchester and met Yvonne Gomes, who lived here in New Boston. Her son is Skip Gomes, and she was doing one of these luncheon chats.

I asked her where she lived. I lived in Amherst. She said she lived in New Boston, and I told her how much we were in love with this house on Hooper Hill. And she said, "That's really odd. That house is for sale. Reba Locke (the owner) is my best friend." I said, "I can't believe it." I told David all about it. I knew nothing about real estate agents at that point, so we

came up to see her. We knocked on the door and said “We love your house. We’re interested in buying it.” She asked us to come in. It was a house that needed a lot of work, but we loved the integrity of the house. We loved the antiquity of it. And we were starting to get into antiques, collecting them and going to auctions.

So, we wanted to buy this house in the worst way. We had no money, but decided to buy it. And she offered it to us for \$30,000. But nobody would finance this. We didn't qualify for it. We just didn't have the money. We didn't have any collateral, no collateral in the house that we had in Amherst. Uh, so two years later there was a knock on our door.

I want to make people understand this, to sell a house in New Boston, took a long time to sell. New Boston was not hot, as it is today. It was a secondary market here where people from Boston would come up and they bought these houses with lots of land and what have you. She was unable to sell the house for \$30,000.

So, she said to us “What can you afford? What did the banks tell you?” And I said “\$22,000.” And she said “You know what? I had an offer from a very wealthy person for \$26,000 and they can afford \$30,000. I'm going to sell it to you for \$22,000.” It was one of those ridiculous situations that probably will never happen again in our lifetime, but \$22,000 was a lot of money to us. She was just a very nice person. And she also wanted to sell her house. And she knew that we could not do any more than that. It wasn't that we were trying to be conniving or anything. And we found this little bank in Greenfield, New Hampshire and the guy said to us, “You know, I don't like old houses and they need a lot of work, but I got to tell you, you're so enthusiastic, I think I'm going to give you a mortgage on this house.”

So, we bought this house. The first year the septic went. Of course, we had no money, so the in-laws gave us a loan for the septic and we finished paying that off. And then the well went, so we had to drill a new well, and again, the in-laws gave us the money to do it. And we went ahead and fixed, little by little, this little four room cape that this house was, at that point. A lot of work needed to be done, but it had Dunlap paneling, which we had no idea what that was until we studied it ourselves.

Mary Atai

So when you bought this house, you had no idea the historical value of the house at all? Did you know it had been brought from Salisbury?

Heidi We did know that because Reba Locke had all the books that she gave us and that was of interest to them, especially David who loves that kind of history about the house.

Mary Atai You did not know when you bought it that it had been Samuel Dunlap's actual house?

Heidi No, not the one who did all the carving, but we did once we bought it. Then we investigated. Of course, she gave us all the information, but we were not in love with the Samuel Dunlap concept. We were in love with the house. We actually didn't even notice the view. That's how much we loved this house. I mean, it sounds crazy to say, but that's exactly how we felt. This was the house of our dreams. It has all the antique charm that we loved. Um, yes. Hanging ceilings in the kitchen and a bathroom, I don't even call it a bathroom and, um, dirt basement, and she didn't leave any antique furniture. Nothing. No, she had a lot of nice things. She had lovely things, but she was moving to Lunenburg, Vermont and she needed to keep her own things, you know?

No, she didn't leave us anything. I mean she left little things like things in the fireplace and stuff like that, you know, but nothing. But we started to go buy our own antiques now. David was a school teacher in Milford and I worked for Judge Lincoln, so I had the commute. So, I became interested in houses. I really love the concept of houses. I decided to go into real estate because that was my calling. I think really real estate became my calling apparently.

Mary Atai Well, how did you train? Who trained you?

Heidi Well, the law is that you pass the exam and then you have to work for somebody for one year. And I worked for Marsha Foster in Milford and did very well.

My first big commission was from selling Mrs. Mustard's house, which at this point was a house up in Frankestown, on Bible Hill, in excellent condition, with a good commission. And then I decided that I really wanted to try it on my own. There wasn't a lot of business in New Boston. It wasn't like it is today. I mean you were lucky if you sold one house every two months, but I really felt that I wanted to try this real estate business because I knew so many people, I was able to try. In Frankestown or Milford or Wilton, I sold all over the place. It was my own little business and I was all by myself for, I would say, a good four years. And then I hired David's mother, Natalie. They'd come in

here and work with me as a real estate agent and she worked with me for a year before I got a divorce from David.

But, then I think my life really started here when I married John. That's really true.

Mary Atai

Were you and David married for 5 years?

Heidi

4 years, but by the time we were divorced, five.

Mary Atai

Then when you married John, was John very interested in real estate?

Heidi

No, John was never interested. That was never in his DNA. John and I met in London. I was on the train, as people know, and he actually had no ambition to come to America. Like people always think everybody wants to come to America. John did not. He actually loved England. He worked for P&O [Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company]. He did world tours with them, and was gone for five months at a time. We met in London, and oh, love at first sight. And we decided, you know, that we were the couple that were made for each other. Then I returned to America.

Mary Atai

So you came home.

Heidi

So I later went to Portugal to meet John to see if after five months absence if there really was something for us to pursue. And my concern for John was that I did not want to move to Europe because I saw my little business, as little as it was, developing into something, and I liked it. I love doing this and I couldn't see a future for me in Europe because I came from Europe; came from Europe and love it, don't get me wrong, but I didn't want to go back. I was concerned that John, coming to a little town of 700 people would find that stifling. He came, and I have to say, he took to it like a duck to water and absolutely fell in love with New Boston.

Heidi

In those days he had a hard time finding a job. He worked for John King and he worked for my sister's husband's family business because he had to wait for three years before he could get a real estate license. So, he did plumbing for John King. He just naturally knew a lot. He was a jack of all trades. He actually could do anything. Very, very intuitive mind on anything. In the meantime, we also had a baby, Melanie. She came along and so my business was in the back room here. John became the house husband a year later after Melanie was about a year and

a half. It was so difficult for both of us. It could be any time when I came home from real estate. In those days I was all over the place. I mean I was everywhere.

Mary Atai

So you would have to find someone to take care of Melanie all the time. So, it might as well be John?

Heidi

So John decided to leave his job because we felt at this moment my business was taking off. I was doing really well. And you know, we kept up like, uh, you didn't have health insurance or anything like that. When Melanie was born, we had no health insurance. We had to pay for the birth. John started making furniture, you know, to keep us in furniture. And he started taking an interest in land. He really was interested in the preservation of buildings. He never wanted to tear an old building down because he just felt with the age of a structure, it should not be torn down.

And so he became interested in that. When our office became available, he came home and he said, "I think I found an office location for you." And it was downtown and there was a little blacksmith's shop. And he says, "I know exactly how we're going to do it, honey. I think we're going to move it on the lot. We're going to turn it around and we're going to add a little addition to it." And I could see the whole thing. We went to the bank. Souhegan Bank said to us, "I don't know, do you think you can afford it? It doesn't look like you have a lot of money." And I said, "Well I paid my car loan back with you. I paid every loan that you ever gave me, because they gave me a loan to start my business also and I paid that back.

I have good credit, I always say to everybody. So, they gave us \$40,000 to build that office and we built it. Jerry and Bobby Kennedy built the office.

Mary Atai

So you moved it from Clark Hill?

Heidi

Well, it was adjacent. We owned both properties. We owned the house next to it, but this was a blacksmith's shop. So, we found a guy that moves houses. And he came over and he lifted it up and Bo Strong came and told us how to put it all together.

In those days people were very nice how you did things and we put a foundation down and septic and built that beautiful little office. We collected old things and looked everywhere to find old beams and windows. And it was really a labor of love. It's a beautiful building, a beautiful structure.

Mary Atai

That was when Melanie was, would you say, two years old?

Heidi

I would say two years. And Vanessa came along and then we had two. And then, I don't know what happened, but my business exploded. It just exploded. And it was just one of those things. I had to hire a lot of agents. Most of them stayed with me until I closed my office, 40 years later. Well, I've been in business almost 50 years, but down there at the village, I was, I think close to 40 years and about five years here at home before. So, it was exploding and John, at this moment, was able to get his real estate license. And we hired a nanny to take care of the kids and to be at home. Then when the kids went to school, after school they walked over to the office where I had a little kitchen for milk and cookies.

And people would stop there and chat and visit like at Dodge's store. I mean there wasn't a day that went by that we didn't have at least five to six people stop by to visit. Some of those people would've been clients as well. Okay. So, it would be people from New Boston, such as Walter Kirsch would come in, who was the selectman. A lot of people that also were of course interested in real estate, but basically the people that would visit would be surveyors, etc. And, um, Kelly. Oh, Kelly Locke came in every single day because she lived next door.

Mary Atai

How about the Chanceys?

Heidi

The most wonderful neighbors I've ever had in my whole life, Georgia and Almus and the kids. I had fights with the kids who would get in my parking lot, because they were young kids with cars, but, um, I'd have to shoo them off every day, but I love the Chanceys. They were the best neighbors I've ever had.

Mary Atai

Okay. Who else do you remember over the years that you might've really liked?

Heidi

Rhoda Shaw Clark. She lived in the Priest Bradford House on Bradford Lane, which is just at a right angle to this house. Well, number one, what I remember about Rhoda was how welcome she made us feel. Uh, we certainly were the poorest people on Hooper Hill at that point. Everybody who lived on Hooper Hill seemed to have more than we had. She had lovely dinner parties and invited us. Linda came many times and did the cooking, and they were just wonderful, wonderful dinner parties. She had cocktails and dinner parties and um, I went to auctions with Rhoda a lot and Harriet Cope, who has also recently passed. I remember Chickie, her sister, and Mary Shirley.

We would go and follow Whittington's auctions and collected, you know, the things that they wanted to. We did that almost twice a month. And yeah, she loved Hooper Hill. One thing about Rhoda that we all loved. Well we all wanted to minimize the growth up here, so whenever she could buy a piece of land, she did. Her feeling was that this is so special that she didn't want to see a lot of housing up here. And, actually her relatives owned my house at one time, the Trumbulls. And so that's how the Trumbulls got to be here.

Mary Atai

Were you living here when the people who owned Wellswood lived here?

Heidi

For sure. Oh God, yes. They were darling.

Mr. Wells had a nursery, selling flowers. People would come from all over buying little pansies and stuff. There used to be a little greenhouse.

Mary Atai

What was that huge barn used for?

Heidi

You know, this is what I understand from the Wells is it used to be a chicken farm. When I came here, it was not. That was in the forties.

They were very nice. And then when they died, their children kept it for many years. They came up on the weekends and enjoyed it. And again, a lot of going down there for cocktails and sitting on the veranda and seeing the beautiful sunsets that we have up here that's indisputable.

Mary Atai

How about Homer Dodge? What do you remember about Homer?

Heidi

Well, I think that was where my husband came home and said that he had met the most interesting man that he had ever had the pleasure of meeting. He said that he sought him out, and he was gone one day for two hours. He and Homer talked for two hours about everything and John learned so much about New Boston from Homer. But he thought he was the most understated man in New Boston, that he was quiet, but he knew exactly what was going on.

Oh my God, if anybody was here from 50 years ago they would tell you Homer had a huge wheel of cheese, Vermont Cheddar, on this wooden table and you would go in there and buy a hunk of cheese. Then he had the best hamburger that you could ever

want. We all, Roger [Webber] especially, would say come over for hamburgers from Homer's and then we would have cheese and Homer's hamburger. But Homer kept this town together. I think Homer helped a lot of people financially. People would keep a tab down there. I myself kept a tab down there. People who couldn't afford it right then could buy things and pay later. And he gave it to them; he gave them food on time. And so did the Daniels. They did the same thing. They were very good to people. I think they were wonderful. Both Homer Dodge and Ella Daniels helped me out of financial problems when I couldn't afford my heat bill. They gave me an extended credit. And so, I think they are marvelous.

Ella was Wayne Daniels mother. He's been here forever, and he is just a wonderful young man. I mean, well not that young, but he's got land with his dad. The garage down there. There were two facets to the business. One was to blast for people's cellar holes or whatever was needed, and then, of course, the oil and service and you know, Daniel's Garage. It was one heck of a little business down there. I depended on them. I depended on getting my work done there. There were the two businesses. There was Daniel's and Dodge's. Yeah. Really. That's pretty much it. And then later came the bank and then Roger's little antique store. I don't know how long that lasted. Well that was a little hobby. I wouldn't say it was a moneymaker. It was a little business down there.

Mary Atai

Do you know anything particularly about where Wayne and Kathy Daniels live, because you know, that was J.R. Whipple's house. I mean, do you know anything special about it? I know that they have the old fire hydrants that J.R. put in. They have one in the front and one in the back. There's not very many left in the town. I've never been there.

Heidi

That's a house you need to see. You know, it's lovely, and then of course they have the carriage shed across the street. I mean they have been there for as long as I know. It's always been there, and they do a lot. I mean, I have to say that the Daniels have done a lot for this town. A lot. Ella did a lot.

Well, I just think without those two concerns, Daniel's and Dodge's, I think New Boston would have been lost. You know, they gave the town it's image really. They were very decent people. They really gave financially of themselves, you know, they helped people. People don't realize how much Ella helped and how much Homer helped. Homer was a person that I don't think ever took a vacation.

I don't think Homer ever knew how to take a vacation. I was very good friends with his son, Josh. And Josh just passed away, maybe 2016. And unfortunately, he was wrong for that business. He didn't want the business, which happens often.

Mary Atai

You saw where his nephew, John William, stated he didn't want the business either, and he didn't take the business. And he is glad he didn't.

What about Jay and Dot Marden? You've known them more than 40 years.

Heidi

Well, Jay and Dot I met, probably like I said, I was the first person that he met because I drove up, as any real estate agent would, and I wanted to know if he wanted to sell his house. And he said to me, "I'm just moving in." Jay has been an integral part of New Boston over the years.

Jay bought and sold land. I mean he was a developer, but he never developed these huge 30 lot subdivisions. Jay always respected the land and was very much in to conservation and put a lot of these conservation easements on land if he sold it. They lived in that big farm and he did subdivide. I think they had, at one point, 400 or 500 acres, and he subdivided, but he left a lot of the beautiful land along the river in conservation easement, which will be a benefit for the next generations forever. And in doing so, he actually lost a lot of money. He lost thousands of dollars, but he wanted to leave that land for the town and they did a lot of stuff also for the church.

They left a portion of the money to the church.

Mary Atai

Let's talk about Roger Webber. Tell me about your memories of Roger Webber.

Heidi

I think that he was by far the most influential person in New Boston, as far as breaking barriers. He would accept you for who you were. He would have the craziest, wildest parties, as everybody would know. The pool obviously was used by everybody in the town. He had lavish parties, fun parties, and he got everybody in town together. Now, mind you, we were a lot, lot smaller than we are today. I have nothing but fond memories of him. He introduced me to a lifestyle that I knew nothing about. I don't know if I should say gay. You know, he was wealthy and he was gay. Yeah, he was very wealthy. But what I must say I loved about Roger was the phenomenal taste that he had in his house. I'd never seen a house that was so

eclectic. He collected antiques, antiques from all eras and was able to pull them together with any color in any style. And it was dynamic. He had a vision. He was very extravagant. If he didn't like something, it had to go. If he didn't like a staircase, then they were going to tear it out. And that was new to me. I wasn't used to that.

Mary Atai

It sounds kind of crazy. I also read that he decided he wanted coral to be broken up and put all around the pool. They did that, but when people walked on it, it all broke into pieces. So, he kept having them replace the coral and then finally said, this isn't going to work. Then he came up with a totally new plan.

Heidi

There's been so many changes. I don't know, it was just watching somebody being able to create something, the way he did. I think it's one of my favorite houses because it's so unique. It's a unique property, you know,

Mary Atai

So I have to stay on this, on the record. I live in the Roger Webber house. We own that now.

Mary Atai

So getting back to Roger Webber. When Roger died, he owned all of this land that is across from you on Hooper Hill. Can you tell us the way that worked out after his death? How was it subdivided?

Heidi

Well, I sold it to Jay Marden. All Roger's property was comprised of the house plus the three- family or two- family house, whatever. My husband and I seriously considered buying it, but we were not really comfortable about paying that. In those days, to pay \$650,000 was a lot of money, and because we would never have subdivided it, so it would have always stayed in one parcel. I'm forever grateful for what Jay did. He took that land when he could have developed it into a major subdivision up here. I mean, that was a hundred acres that he made into 7 lots. It's a gift to the town of New Boston. Yes, I feel.

Mary Atai

Actually, even to this day, four of the lots are not developed, right?

Heidi

No, because most people who have bought here, including myself, bought the lots to protect the integrity. Not to say we wouldn't sell them ever. We enjoy it. We get taxed for it, which I think is unfair because we're giving the joy to the town here, but anyway. Because the way the property was subdivided

here, there's a lot of land on Hooper Hill. He helped us with the conservation easement because we have the great view.

Mary Atai

So what do you remember about Roger's death?

Heidi

Well, um, unfortunately he had a heart attack and died at a very young age. I think he was not even 60. And very sad for all of us because he was loved by everyone. Shock. Oh yes. I was shocked. So, he died in his bedroom and Bobby Kennedy went up to see him and knocked on the door, couldn't get a response and looked through the window and saw him slumped over. So that was a terrible experience.

You know, the other thing I did want to mention, which was also a really nice feature about New Boston was the post office. It was right next to Dodge's, so it was almost like a meeting place every morning. You would go and get your milk and then you get your mail. Then Gus Andrews was another pivotal man in my life that I thought gave so much to the town of New Boston. He was the postman. He was the postmaster and was just a charming man that I think added to the flavor of New Boston, you know, when he did that job for so many years.

Mary Atai

Now do you remember Ben Dodge, Homer's father, or had he passed away?

Heidi

No, I don't ever remember him.

Mary Atai

He was a postmaster for 33 years. So, Homer had taken over the store from his father by the time you moved here then, I think.

Okay, back to people you have known over the years, what can you tell me about Roland Sallada? Because he was a representative and a selectman and a very high-profile person.

Heidi

Again, he was one of those people that made a terrific impact on my life. He was very much involved in going to auctions. So, I saw Roland at auctions a lot. He collected bottles and glassware. He and Marian belonged to the church down in the village. He was very, very interested in New Boston and was able to generate money from the state when we needed things. I'm not sure how all of this went, but I remember when I moved my office downtown, he came and said, "I have a desk for you." And he said, "It's from Mabel Hodge and I want you to have it in the office. I'm going to give it to you." Hodge had been the

town clerk and that's the desk that I had wanted to give to the Historical Society and they didn't want it.

But I had it at the office and so he gave me two desks from Mabel Hodge and an old typewriter. And he was that kind of an important part of New Boston. He was always trying to preserve everything. He and my husband wanted to preserve everything. They didn't want to tear down anything. Now it seemed like he worked so tirelessly because he was everywhere all the time. I think that the Mardens and Roland single-handedly preserved that beautiful corner of new Boston, where the river is. They got some funding from the state and preserved it.

And I think somehow that should be really noted down somewhere with more information than I have. But I think the PLC is another wonderful addition to New Boston. But Roland and Jay really did something over there by the river that will be forever. Up at the end of Lull Road extension. They were an integral part of that. You know, from a development standpoint that would have been a dream and Jay gave that away to the land conservation, and with a lot of help from Roland.

Mary Atai

Do you remember much about the beginning of the Conservation Commission because it only started at the end of the sixties.

Heidi

I don't know much about it. I'm going to be honest with you. I did not involve myself with the Conservation Commission because it conflicted in a way with my business. I never quite knew which way to go, so I'm honest with you on that, because I believe in it. I believe in it, if you can afford it,

Mary Atai

You had mentioned Walter Kirsch, that he would visit your office. Did he live in that house across from the post office that used to be the Kirsch Mill? Can you tell me anything about him?

Heidi

Walter Kirsch, in my estimation, really cared about New Boston. With all the new zoning regulations that came in, I think some of that, Walter really didn't like. He wanted to maintain an equilibrium between this and that. But the fire department overruled everything, and Walter tried to keep it even, and I think he was outnumbered.

He tried to keep it not as restricted I think. I believe in zoning, but I built my office without zoning and I think I did a pretty good job. I think that anybody who did anything in those days



I think that they have sold some of their land for next to nothing for the benefit of New Boston. Then they gave the land for the extension to the former library when they were desperate for space. I think that they, being downtown, you know, have tried to maintain Mill Street to the best of their ability. And I think Gail is one person that is involved in everything too.

She sings in the choir, which is kind of fun to watch her, like her style in the choir. I love to just watch her enthusiasm. She has an excellent voice.

Mary Atai

Yes. I call her warrior woman because she is involved in everything, and she's very strong, out there working on the landscaping all the time, like a professional landscaper. I mean they're a nice couple and a unique couple. Well, so the Parkers own the Northeast Cafe. They own the building and that building has been many things over the years.

What do you remember about that building?

Heidi

Well, when I came, it was a grocery shop. It was a little corner shop that was in competition with Dodge's. It was called Marshall's. I don't know how long that lasted but it was there, and some people went there and purchased their groceries. I mean, it was just as small can be. And then the Parkers bought it, which was smart because they are next door. And then it was a bakery, Abigail's Bakery, which was wonderful. Then there was a succession of owners. I think the town could benefit by a good bakery.

Mary Atai

I would love to have a bakery. Well, so it was a bakery and then after that it was The Good Neighbor Café, and then the Northeast Café, which seems to be holding its own.

What do you remember about the evolution of the Molly Stark?

Heidi

Well, when I moved here it was owned by Roger Babson and it was a place to study about gravity. I really don't know the whole history of that.

So, it was owned by Roger Babson (died in 1967). The Babson family contacted me to sell it and I sold it to the very first buyers, the Langhorns I think, and they were going to do something with it and then ended up calling me back that they changed their minds. And then I sold it to the Welch's who made it a restaurant called The Soup Emporium. And that was open, I believe, one week. And they closed in the middle of the

night. They closed because of money issues. They owed everybody, and they didn't have the money to pay. So, they left in the middle of the night. So then along comes Lou Maynard. I got to tell you, another integral part of the New Boston tapestry, so to speak. He was the most interesting fellow that ever came down the pike.

He had a knack for running a restaurant. He was very flamboyant. Oh my God. He had a constant fight with the fire department. I think it just became that when you came to the restaurant, you had to hear about the fire department. Lou was just incensed over it and about their rules and their treatment of him. We all got treated the same way. So, certainly all of us who had businesses commiserated together. Lou and his wife ran the business for about, I want to say 30 years. Then it was a foreclosure for Lou. It went to the Montgomerys.

Mary Atai

How about the Grossos? You have known them a very long time.

Heidi

Pattie and Don Grosso. I've known them forever. I like them very much. Very upstanding, very sweet, very caring, you know. They have a love for New Boston. Very nice people. And they used to own a hardware store where the pizza place is now. He has also rented to a succession of businesses in the building in front of the pizza place.

You know, the one thing that I did want to say is that the start of New Boston's development actually started with the local boys. It did not start with people coming from another area. It started with Charlie Houghton. He did a subdivision, which I believe, might have been the first one. That is off Route 13, Houghton Lane. It was easier in those days. So that started the influx of more people coming. Once you had the subdivisions, then you had more houses to deal with. Then the Colburns did a subdivision out by the Transfer Facility. Then Jerry and Bobby Kennedy built their subdivision on Kennedy Lane. So, people always say all these newcomers come in and build it up, but that's not true. It was the local people who had land and they developed it.

These are major developments with 20-30 properties each.

Mary Atai

Somebody else that I am reminded of are Candy and David Woodbury, because I know they have been good friends.

Heidi

They came maybe 40 years ago. I don't know. They came as a young couple. They had no children at that point. They bought the house where they are living still. They've done a lot for New Boston too. Candy has given her expertise in the gardening area, beautifying New Boston and is very involved with the library. She was a teacher for many, many years. Of course, David was a lawyer, and they're both preservationists. They've tried to keep New Boston as it was. We had our kids together, so our children always hung out and still do.

We went on ski trips together and we went to lots of social events at her house, like baby showers and weddings. My daughters got married, her daughters got married, so we did all the wedding work together. There were many weddings, and everybody worked on the weddings. They were home weddings and they were beautiful.

The Harvells were another integral part of my life. They also lived on Hooper Hill. They were another phenomenal family that added to the tapestry of New Boston. He owned some sort of a carpet business and Roger Webber used him for a lot of the bathrooms and tiling and all that.

Heidi

Katie and Lou were a very eccentric couple. And John and I became very close with Katie and Lou. What a shame that he had to die so young. Katie has become everyone's advisor. If you're having a hang nail, we have to call Katie to see what to do. Katie has been a friend to all of us. I mean, she is really the sweetest person you'll ever meet, but so intelligent. John and I would walk with her. John looked forward to talking with Katie and they used to have the most interesting conversations. My God, it was like over the top for me. Katie and I maintained a friendship over the years. In fact, I walked with her this morning.

Mary Atai

How about the big events over the years? Do you remember the starting of the 4-H grounds?

Heidi

Well, yes, because the 4-H grounds had a few little buildings and that was the end of it. And then they developed it over the years with more buildings. Then they have once a year a Fair and New Boston people work on it to collect money at the gates.

And I think it's wonderful. I understand the attendance is going down and all of these things, but I hate to see it because I think this is what New Boston is known for and also its fourth of July celebration. I think that is one of the biggest events. It used to

be downtown, like downtown where the parking lot is now. That's where our fourth of July was. And I loved it. You know, we had bonfires and streakers. As long as you got your nude streakers, we had to have that every year. We never knew who it was, and we've tried to figure it out. They'd have something over their heads and we never knew. We had all that comes with the fourth of July and we all looked forward to it.

We built these wonderful floats. I have to say that John and Jerry Kennedy and Jane and I and Mary Koon all built some of the best floats and we won first and second prizes many, many years in a row. Just so fun.

Mary Atai

So this year the Historical Society is entering a float. It's fun. It's work, but it's fun. And hopefully we'll at least get an honorable mention.

So, do you remember when the high school was torn down?

Heidi

Absolutely. I went down there, and Rhoda [Shaw Clark] and I voted against it. We did not want that building to be torn down. Then ever again, we don't like tearing down old buildings, because to me that old building was beautiful.

The Fire Department was very, very strong in this town and they wanted their fire station there. It's not that I didn't want the fire station down there, but they had the opportunity to build elsewhere than the high school. I just didn't want to tear that building down.

Mary Atai

What do you think that building should have been saved and used for?

Heidi

I think it could have been town offices.

Mary Atai

Do you have memories of different things that you've helped with for fundraising back in the day?

Heidi

Well, it was always the library, always a fundraising for that. And that was quite an unusual thing. I wasn't involved with the library, and I could never understand why, year after year, the library was voted down and by a large margin.

It wasn't just by 20 people. So, then of course, as we all know there was fund raising. I think I contributed some to that. Then the other thing that I thought was kind of a funny thing was the Gazebo. I think the Gazebo is one heck of an addition to New

Boston, but the Playground Association really wasn't sure whether they wanted it, because it took away some of their land. You know, but now I think they are all happy that it's there and it's beautiful. It's just a lovely addition, absolutely beautiful. And you know, in those days it was really kind of simple. I built my office, then the bank came down and built. There was Roger Webber went to downtown where the jewelry place is now (Tate's Gallery), and he had his little antique shop, and then the Molly Stark came in. Nobody hassled us in those days, like with all this zoning stuff and it was an easier way of living.

Mary Atai

What do you remember about natural disasters over the years? Like storms, floods, fires?

Heidi

See, we had several floods downtown. I think the worst one was for me, because I lived it, there might have been one before, but one storm, the whole town was under water, including my office. The water came right up to the door by the cellar. It's hard to tell which year this was.

There's been several floods. I just can't remember when the one was that was just so hard. It just wouldn't let up. John thought about one way of diverting the water from my own office, went home and got the tractor and build sort of a barrier. The water got in our basement. All the way up to the edge of our door. We thought we had lost our office to be honest with you, but we didn't.

Mary Atai

What about droughts? Have you experienced many droughts?

Heidi

That was one of the things we have learned to live with in New Boston and instead, you know, we have a well that constantly runs on River Road. Do you know about that well on river road?

So, if you go down past Dodge's, you go a little bit further. I think it's before Bea Peirce's. You'll see there is a well there that keeps running all the time. You look for it the next time and you'll see it on the right-hand side going north. And you see people lined up for water when there is a drought, but I haven't lately. Sometime when you don't have enough snow, or you have a dry spring, it's a problem. I conserve my water because I think yes, it's maybe not the most luscious lawn you'll ever see in your life, but I don't waste my water, because water is a precious commodity.



think New Boston is a wonderful town. Many of us have been together for 40, 50 years and that speaks volumes in that we're like family.

When John died a lot of people came. I would hate to single out anybody because I have to really say that the support group pulled me through. New Boston was unreal, you know. People came out in droves. I didn't have a funeral at a funeral home, which I didn't want to. I don't like those kinds of things. Woody did everything.

Mary Atai

What are some of your favorite things to do now in New Boston?

Heidi

I just love this folksy stuff that goes on in New Boston. It sounds ridiculous, but I really do.

I can't even believe how much I love going with the seniors on these trips. I think all that group are so sweet. They have totally different lives from what I deal with on a daily basis. I deal with lawyers and titles and all that. And this is so simple. It's just a very relaxing afternoon that you spend with that group once a month. And I get to see things that I haven't seen for probably 20 years. I love going to the movies and to the library. I never did this. I never had time for this. I do that now and I like it.

Mary Atai

What are you most proud of in your life?

Heidi

I think what I'm most proud of in my life is my marriage and my children and the fact that I was very successful in my business. a I've had 12 agents who have remained loyal to me. Most of them worked with me for 20 to 40 years and I think they still are with me today as friends. And I think if I had to die tomorrow, I think I've done it all.

Mary Atai

Do you have any major regrets? Is there anything that when you think back, you wish you wouldn't have done?

Heidi

Oh, I'd have to think about that one. Well, I always wish I had bought this property or that property, but that's financial things. Honestly, I've done it all. I'm happy. I didn't think I would be happy without John. John is still an integral part of my life. Always will be. I just am so blessed that every day I say "Yeah, I really have no worries."

Mary Atai

You have your beautiful home and you have your health. Everything good.

Heidi

I'm just sitting here saying, "Oh my God, I have done it all."

Mary Atai

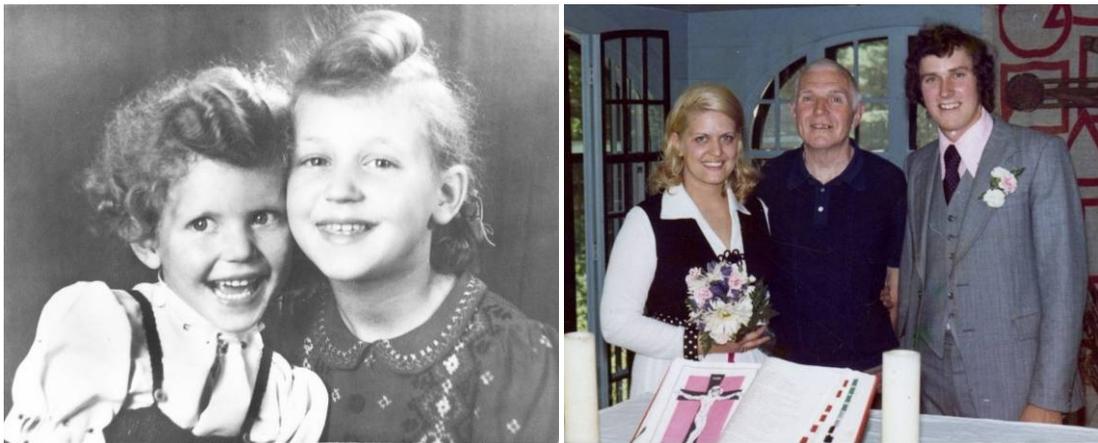
Then, is there anything at all you would like to add before we close?

Heidi

I would just say this. I appreciate the experience that New Boston has allowed me to live. I feel that the old timers have allowed me to come into their world, and I think whether I've done right or wrong, it's been a welcoming place.

Mary Atai

I feel exactly the same way. It's a very welcoming place. And I want to thank you for your time.



Heidi (left) with her sister Sigi.  
Heidi, Father Paul of the Hundred Acres Monastery, and John Palmer at their 1972 wedding.



Recent photos of Heidi. The Palmer house in 2004 with the new addition.