



MASSACHUSETTS CULTURAL COUNCIL
FOLK ARTS & HERITAGE PROGRAM

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AUDIO TAPE LOG

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Fieldworker(s): Maggie Holtzberg & Cliff Murphy

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Brief summary of tape contents: Discussion of country music in MA and New England,

Counter/ABS	Contents
	<p>Maggie Holtzberg: It's July twenty-second, two-thousand four, and we're at the home of Georgia Mae Harp in South Carver? Is that right?</p> <p>Georgia Mae Harp: Yes.</p> <p>MH: Um, thank you for having us.</p> <p>GMH: Well, thank you for coming.</p> <p>MH: What do we have? Why don't you just start by describing this wealth of stuff that's on the table.</p> <p>GMH: I took things out that I thought might be of interest to go, and I wrote the little story, and I tried to pick the things that would go. For instance, during the War, I did Bond Rallies. And WBZ, they gave aluminum to the Bond Drive. And this was, I'm right here, and these are the other, this is Mildred Carlson, she used to have a cooking program. And this is Juanita, she was a country singer, and we gave that. And I gave a half-a-ton of mail, of my fan mail, to the Bond Drive. And I have some pictures, somewhere, to show that. I think it's in here. I did, once a week I would go to the hospitals during the war, and, ah, so, and I did television. WBZ-TV. I also was on WLAW in Lawrence. And here's, here's the, gave a half-a-ton of fan mail to the war effort. The paper, what they called the paper drive, during the war. And this was, ah, the mailman that delivered all the mail. I have another picture, this one got stuck in a book. And, ah, these are the Buckaroos. Now, I had my own, when I first went on WBZ, I was on at twenty-minutes past six in the morning, and people say "oh my God, that's an ungodly hour," but I got more response from the audience at six-twenty than I did later in the day when I was on. I was also on at nine-forty-five, and one time at ten-fifteen, and they put the staff musicians. Now this, his name is Al Kitchkiss, and his name is Ernie, ah, Salken. And they were staff musicians with Ray Copp's orchestra at WBZ. And</p>

they took an awful ribbing from the boys in the band because they were dressed up in, as cowboys. [laughing] And they called it "Georgia Mae and her Buckaroos."

MH: Describe what you're wearing in this picture here.

GMH: Well, that's a white suit with black trim. At one time I had forty different outfits. But they weren't all made by Ben the Ro . . . , my best ones, that you saw in the pictures, they're made by Ben the Rodeo Tailor. He, he came to Boston with the Rodeo. And, ah, he took a fitting. And he'd made Gene Autrey's outfits, and I think he made all of Roy Roger's shirts. So, um, it was, they were the nicest outfits, but, I did a lot of theater work. And I'd go back to the same theaters every year. You'd have a tour of maybe twenty, or twenty-five theaters throughout New England. And then the next year you'd go back to the same ones, but you'd need a different outfit, and a different program. So that's why the, the, um, all the uniforms accumulated.

MH: Mmhhh. Do you still have these?

GMH: I only, I only have two left. Um, I gave one, the blue one that's in one of those pictures up there, I gave to ah, the country, the historical society. The country music historical society. And right now they're in storage. They had a museum for a while, but the museum didn't make out too well, so they had to put everything in storage. But I gave them the, ah, the hat and the suit and the boots. Cliff Murphy: Is this Gordy Brown?

GMH: Yes.

CM: Okay.

GMH: Yeah, Gordy started the historical society, and he ran it for ten years. And then, ah, things changed, and poor Gordy. He got left out in the cold, kind of. But he, he has an awful lot of material. And, ah, that isn't in the museum. But I did give them, he gave them a book, and clippings, and pictures of mine, and I gave them the uniform. So that's in storage. I don't know where it's going to go.

CM: Were you living in Boston when you on WBZ?

GMH: No, I lived in Dedham at the time.

CM: Okay. So you had to get up very early

GMH: Oh yeah. I was up every morning at five o'clock. And, um, my Dad or my Mother, at that time, I wasn't driving even, to start with. And my Mother or my Dad would drive me into the studio and, um, take me in there. And then we'd do the program, and come back. And then when I had the other program, it was on later in the day, I did the early morning show, and then I'd just wait around and we'd do a rehearsal. And we'd do a program, and then we'd do a rehearsal for the next day's show. Because I was on six days a week.

CM: Wow. So your parents must have been very supportive?

GMH: Very, very supportive. Yes. They were. And, um, my Mother traveled with me until I was married. And, ah, when I first started out I was in a kiddies review. And, ah, it was all young people. And in fact, one of the entertainers, as I put in my story, was Frank Fontaine. And it's a funny story how he got one of his most famous things that he did in his life. There were two on the show. Walter Kane and Frank Fontaine. And they both were standup, well, not really comedians, but did the standup things. And they were talking one day. My mother and the man who ran the show were listening. And Walter was complaining that a little bit that he did wasn't doing well with the audience. And he said "I don't know why?" And Frank Fontaine said "do you want to sell it?" And he says "yeah," he says "it's not doing me any good. I'll sell it." He said "how much do you want for it?" He says "I don't know, a couple of bucks." So he sold him the bit, and that is the bit that

Frankie Fontaine did all his life. Just hangin' around the house, you know, with the funny face and everything? That was the bit that he bought for two dollars. And that was on a kiddie show. And we traveled all over New England, in the summertime, and it was a good experience. I learned a lot.

MH: Talk a little bit about, I know you've written about it, but talk about your introduction to music, and what got you going, and your early beginnings with it.

GMH: Well, as I wrote, my Dad played violin, and he played piano. And he had a knack. He could listen to a song on the radio, and write it down in numbers. And then he, he would transpose the numbers to notes, and put it on sheet music. And I don't know how he did it, but he did it. And he did a lot of songs for me there. I wrote a lot of songs, and he would do that for me. I would play them, and he would put them down in numbers, and then he'd put them on sheet music. And, um, my mother played ukelele, and just liked to sing, and my brother had a nice voice. And we'd go out Sundays driving, and we'd have four-part harmony in the car. And then my grandfather came to live with us. My grandmother had passed away, and he played, my grandfather played guitar. And I had a cousin down in Connecticut who sang country music. And I, I kinda liked the idear. So I asked my grandfather if he'd teach me how to play. And that started me on the country music. And I did a lot of amature shows. They were very, very popular back then, and, um, I won some. And some I didn't win [laughs], you know? But one I won was when I was offered to do a little six-inch disc, that big, little six-inch disc, ah, on WBSO in Babson park, and do a song on their program Saturday afternoon. So, I did that, and I still have the recording, and I would never let anybody hear it. Because I don't know it won the prize. I don't know how I won with that [laughing] I guess because

MH: What song?

GMH: It was, a, well I sing a couple of songs. But one of them was a little song called, um, Rye Whiskey. Rye Whiskey. And you did hiccups with it, you know? And, course I was young, I was very young, I was in grammar, in the seventh grade, eighth grade. And, um,

CM: Too young to know about Rye Whiskey.

GMH: Right! Right. [laughing] And then I sang a country song. And I don't re, it probably was "You Are My Sunshine." I'd have to go back and look at the record. But it was one of the simple little songs. And I won the contest, and so I did the record, and I did a song on the radio. And they asked my mother and father if I would like to have a Saturday afternoon program. And they agreed, so that's how I started. And I went on Saturday afternoons on WBSO. And then when they moved to Boston, it became WORL, I went with them. And then I was with them for a couple of years. I was on six days a week, and then I got a call from a gentleman from WBZ, and wanted to know if we'd come up and talk to him, and I was offered a program on that station, which was one of my dreams. I had three things I wanted when I started singing. I wanted my outfits made by Ben the Rodeo Tailor, cause they were the best. They were the best. I also wanted to be on a fifty-thousand watt station, which WBZ was. And I wanted my pictures made by Bruno of Hollywood. And that came about, too. So those were the three things. But it was a long, a long career. I had a great time. I started out, mostly theaters, doing theaters.

MH: Like what theaters?

GMH: Oh, the EM Loew's circuit, and the RKO circuit, and a lot of interstate theaters. And, ah, down in Springfield at the time there was a one theater, the Court Square Theater in Springfield, it's no longer there. They had a beautiful

band in the, in the pit, and everything was lovely. And it was during the war, and, ah, we did late shows for the war workers. And the manager came back and told me that he thought I might like to know that I had broke the record of Smiley Burnette's for the most attendance. [laughter] And that was a big thrill, you know? Because I was broadcasting on WBZ, WBZ-A was in Springfield, and I was very well known. And I was headlined in the theater. I have, I have some pictures in my scrapbooks of the headline. And so he was very nice to come back and tell me. And of course, I was thrilled, you know, that we'd brought in so many people. And they were a wonderful audience. Ah, I did like the theaters very much. I did a lot of, besides that, I did a lot of, ah, the banquets. B---- banquets, and ladies clubs, and all sorts of sort of entertainers.

MH: Who were your role models, who were you trying to aspire to be like?

GMH: Patsy Montana. I wanted to be Patsy Montana. [laughs] I wanted to be Patsy Montana in the worst way. And every, every single show that I did, I always finished with "I Want to be a Cowboy's Sweetheart." That was my theme song, and that was a song that she wrote, and was very popular. And I had the chance to meet her at the Lone Star Ranch in New Hampshire. They brought her up to do a show, and she was so nice. My Dad had a movie camera, and he said "let me take a picture." So we were standing there, and she said "oh, that's a movie camera, we have to do something." So she said "you go over there, and I'll get over here, and we'll pass each other and we'll sort of do a double-take and then realize that we recognize each other," and she grabbed me and hugged me much like, like old friends, you know. And then she, she got close up to the camera and she tipped her hat up, and my Dad took the picture. And they were doing a mem, at the Country Music Association in Nashville, they did a memorial. And, ah, they wanted a picture of Patsy Montana, and we took, we took the film, and it's an old film that my Dad had, and I took it, and they took that piece out of Patsy throwing her hat up and smiling, and they used that on the show in Nashville. And I have a copy of that tape that they made for me. So it was a big thrill. So that was, that was my, that's what I wanted to be. I wanted to be Patsy Montana.

CM: Now, you said that you wrote songs as well?

GMH: I wrote a lot of songs, yeah. I have a couple on a tape here, that I could let you hear later if you'd like. Um, and, I used to write a lot. Some of them I used on my own shows. I only put one out to be published, and I didn't even ask about that. That was my theme song. And MM Cole took it. I don't know what they did with it, but they took it. [laughs] So, that was published. But the rest of them weren't. They were just songs that I used. So, um, what else? And my white guitar.

MH: Yes. Tell us about that.

GMH: Well, I had the white hat, and the white boots. Always wore the white hat and the white boots, no matter what kind of a costume I had. And I had one outfit of white leather that I, it was all white leather, which was nice. And we were trying to think of something a little different. And my Dad suggested, he said "maybe we could have a white guitar?" Well, nobody had a white guitar at that time. So we went to the Vega company, on Tremont Street in Boston, and spoke to them there. And they says "well, we'll try it. You know, we've never made one, but we can try it." But they were more known for their horns and their banjos than they were for guitars, anyway. So, um, they tried it, and it came out beautiful. But the minute I played it, it cracked, just like old furniture. You know, all the finish on it just looked awful. So they, they said "oh, something's wrong." So they called in the Dupont people, and they made up a special formula somehow, and they

made it, did it all over again. And, ah, it was fine. And that was the first one. I have it hanging in my back room. The first one.

CM: This would have been about when?

GMH: In the forties. Nineteen forties. When I was on WBZ. So, ah, it was, um, no it was before. It was on WORL when I got it, so it was before I went to 'BZ. And I had, I had three altogether. I still have two.

CM: Do you have the original?

GMH: I have the original. It's hanging in the back. My mother took it, and [laughs] I didn't know what she was doing. She put a hole in the back, and hung it on the wall. [laughter] And it's still hanging on the wall! [more laughter] But my mother and father are both gone. They've been gone for many years. And, ah, but my mother had it in her den.

MH: Now, did you ever travel down south to perform?

GMH: No, I was strictly a New England girl. And I did get a call from WSM, I think it was, in New York City. And they asked me if I would be interested in doing a daily program down there. And, ah, I just wasn't interested in it. And they, the one that they took, finally, was Rosalie Allen. She's the one that they took for her shows. And, um, I had, I was working six, I was broadcasting six days a week, I was working every night someplace. Theaters, clubs, I did a lot of fair shows in the summertime, um, the big fairs all up through New England. And I couldn't do any more work than that. And I was a home person. I didn't want to get into the, into the other end of it.

MH: Being on the road?

GMH: Right. No, I wasn't, you know, I just wan't that, you know that interested. I was happy with what I was doing. And so I'm a New England, a New England person.

MH: Can you talk a little bit about yodeling? And what, who was doing it, and were you doing some of that?

GMH: Elton Britt. Elton Britt was a big yodeler. Course, Patsy Montana yodeled. She didn't do a lot, but she did some. Ah, course, Kenny Roberts. And the funny part about Kenny Roberts - his name is Kenneth Kingsbury, originally. And my maiden name is Kingsbury. And, but we're not related. We're not even in the same, in the same line of genes or anything, because I've been into genealogy. I belong to nine different organizations, starting with DAR. And, ah, I went through the whole thing. But he went in through his mother. He didn't go in through the Kingsbury line. So that makes us, but he said the reason we both yodel is because we're Kingsbury's. [laughs] But, you know, when I first started yodeling, it wasn't very good, believe me. It was, it was, it was a practice and a, just getting it the way I wanted it. And people don't sometimes realize what a yodel actually is. A yodel is a changing of a note from a natural note to a falsetto. But, it has to have a click in it. It has to have a click, or it isn't a yodel. You hear people sing a yodel. They sing the melody of the yodel, but they don't have the click in it. And it took a long time. And the way I started with the, what I call my "triple yodel," I was, when I was first starting out with the Blue Ridge Mountaineers, the accordion player was fiddling around on the accordion one day, and he was going all these little things, and I said "what do you call that?" He said "these are triple notes." And he said "why don't you do a yodel?" I says "sure." You know? "Let me think about it." So I started trying something, and I figured out a way to do what I wanted to do, and we did call it "the triple yodel." But that's how it started. But it was just plain practice. Just plain practice. And doing,

MH: Can you demonstrate that?

GMH: Not really. No. I had a, I think I told you, I had pneumonia a few years back, and I was very, I had double pneumonia, I guess. And they had, the, ah, the, ah, life support down my throat. And, as you can tell, I sound a little husky, you know? And, ah, after I got home and I was well, one day I wanted to yodel, do a little something, and I, nothing happened. It just went, bleah, nothing. And I couldn't believe it. And, ah, so I spoke to the doctor, and he said "it's either one of two things - you either have scar tissue, or the vocal chords didn't go back together all the way." So, it's, it's, I can do it. But I can't trust it. You know. If I, I might be around the house and it'd be fine. And then I would want to do something else, and I'd get to the "yodel-ay", and it'd just be nothing. It's just, a nothing. So, I just don't, I don't try. But I can, I have a little bit on a tape here I can play for you, that you could hear. Yeah, you could hear it. It's a pretty good piece of a yodel that you could hear.

MH: And Kenny, he's still yodeling, right?

GMH: Yes, he's still working. I don't know. But you know, I, I have come to the conclusion after seeing an awful lot of acts. I haven't seen Kenny lately, I worked with him, um, up at a fair up in Skowhegan or someplace, about four, five years ago. And, ah, he was fine, you know? And I was fine at the time. But, ah, I have seen an awful lot of acts that have kept going and really shouldn't. And I always told my husband, I said "If I ever get to the point where it doesn't sound like it should sound, you let me know." And he said "don't worry! I will!" [laughter] You know, because he was very supportive, too. He, I'd like to tell you about how I first met my husband. We were married forty-seven years, and he passed away three years ago, and, ah, he was in the Navy. And he was, his ship came into Boston, and it was in for repairs or something, and on the same ship was a cousin of mine. And they were friends. And one morning, my cousin went down into the mess hall, and Red, as we called him, he was down there, and he had my program on. And my cousin said "what do you think of her singing?" And he said, "geez, she's great." Of course he was, my husband was from Kentucky. So he liked the country music. And my cousin said "that's my cousin," and he said "sure, tell me another one," you know? [laughs] And he said "no, I'll call my Aunt and we'll go out next weekend." So that's how they came out that next weekend. I mean, how would a girl from Massachusetts meet a boy from Kentucky who's in the Navy? You know? So that's how we met. Yeah, yeah. And he always was one of my greatest fans, you know. I could do no wrong, which was nice, you know. But, ah, he's been gone three years now, and it's a little hard, but that's life. When you're not looking, life happens. [laughs] Yup.

MH: Did he play or sing at all?

GMH: No, no. He couldn't even play the radio sometimes. [laughter] No, but he loved the music. He did love the music. You know. But my brother, my brother just passed away this past April, and he was in barber-shopping, and he did some shows with me, on the. He wasn't interested in doing it as a career or anything like that, but he did like to sing, and he was in barbershop for years, and his son is in it, and his grandson is in it, too. But, um, my brother sang with me on Christmas shows, and he did great yodeling. He was a great yodeler, and he could yodel above me, which was, he would harmonize my yodel, you know?

MH: Oh, nice.

GMH: Yeah, yeah. He was great. And he enjoyed it that couple of times that he did it, but he wasn't interested in, you know, the music itself. So, um.

CM: So, um, you were, so you were making your living pretty early as a radio singer?

GMH: Yeah. Mmmhmm. But weren't making the money they're making now.

CM: At the time, what was it comparable to? In terms of,

GMH: It was comparable to what other people were making. You know, other entertainers that were all in the same boat. Of course, being local, it wasn't as much as being national, or anything like that. But, I had, I made a good living at it. But I lived at home until I was married, so it didn't make any difference, really. We put a lot of money back into costumes, and, you know, the guitars, and the music, and the traveling. You needed a new car every few years because you were traveling so much. When I first started out, there were no turnpikes. If you were going to Maine, you went through all the little towns, you know. I can remember one of, I think it was the Fourth of July, ah, we were going to Waterville, Maine, and we picked my Dad up for work at five o'clock, and we got there about two-minutes of twelve, because, the show was a midnight show. And I dressed in the car, and put my makeup on in the car, and I ran up the steps, and down through the audience to the stage to get there on time. Just made it. Because you were going through all the towns, and the traffic. And my Mother, at the time, my Mother and Dad were with me that time, but my Mother did all the driving. You know? And she was, was a good driver. I'd go to sleep and she'd drive.

MH: That's great. So was that unusual? Did you have friends, were you sort of different than all your friends because you were doing this as a young woman?

GMH: Yes. Yeah. I had one very, very good friend that I went to school with. And we're still best friends, and she still lives in Walpole. I met her in the seventh grade, and we're still friends. Yeah. But I didn't have, I met a lot of friends in the business, you know, but I was busy all the time. You know?

CM: Did your cousin continue?

GMH: No. She didn't. No, she didn't. She only did it for six or seven months. And she was very good. But she got married, and just decided that wasn't what she wanted to do. You know, she was very good, though.

CM: Were you involved at all in the Hayloft Jamboree stuff at Symphony Hall?

GMH: I did their Jamborees. One of them, I was at, the um, the big one, Boston Garden. I was on a Jamboree with them at Boston Garden. And I worked all the ranches throughout the country that are up here. Indian Ranch, and the ones in Rhode Island and Maine. The Bar-C Ranch with Betty Cody. She's a great singer. Lone Pine and Betty Cody. Did shows with them.

CM: She's still singing.

GMH: Yes. Yeah. She sings with her son. Her son is a great guitar player. Very good. Lenny Breau. He's a very, very good guitar player. And, ah, met a lot of nice people in the shows. Met quite a few entertainers that came through. The Sons of the Pioneers and Roy Rogers. I met them. Gene Autrey. In fact I have a picture of Gene Autrey here that was taken at Boston Garden, that, ah, see?

MH: Oh wow, that's great. He's handsome.

GMH: Yeah, he was a good looking man.

CM: Did he know it?

GMH: [laughter] Well, he knew. He knew. He had, standing right next to him every minute, was his producer. He never let him out of his sight. You know, and if you wanted a picture taken, they asked the producer, and then the producer okayed it, and then they took the picture. So it wasn't that he come up and said "I'll take a picture with you" or anything like that, you know. But, ah

CM: Now, when you wrote songs, um, were they mostly about, I mean, were they mostly cowboy songs?

GMH: Yes.

CM: Oh, so they were about the West?

GMH: No, they were songs that I would say would be country songs, as we were doing country songs. Not today. Today is different. I had the Grand Ol' Opry on the other night, and I turned it off. I just couldn't stand it anymore. Some of it is not good. You know? To me it's not country music. It's a crossover to other things. So a few of them, I like, I like even the oldies I like. I love Randy Travis. I think he's fantastic. I've got a lot of his tapes, you know.

CM: Now, did you write about your own life experiences, or about local places, or was it . . .

GMH: Well, some of them, some of the songs, we at one time on the TV program we had a, we'd have a contest, and the people would send in, ah, titles. They would just send a title in, and I would write a song about the title. So those were a lot different. But the ones that I wrote that I liked myself were songs that I would consider country songs. So. And, I don't know what else to tell you.

CM: Well, who are some of the people that you, some of the more local people, people from Massachusetts, who you've played with on a regular basis.

GMH: George and Dixie. When he had the ranch down in Webster for years. Webster Ranch used to be the George and Dixie Ranch. Ah, worked with, ah, with Tony and Juanita. Trying to think of some of the other names. Um, all of the acts that are in the Hall of Fame in Massachusetts I've worked with all of them.

CM: Okay, so people like Doug Garron.

GMH: Doug Garron, yup. And he hasn't been too well lately. And, ah, Larry Sullivan, and, ah the Chisholm Brothers, and, ah, who else would it be? That's the Boston Garden show right there. And this was one of the Ranches. And that's American Airlines. I took this out. This shows that when I was doing TV programs. Yeah.

CM: Where were you doing television?

GMH: WBZ-TV. And, ah, I had one that I took this out. This is Guy Kibbee. He was on a fair show, and I did it with him. There's Kenny Roberts and his wife. Kenny Roberts and his wife. That was the studio picture there. That's Guy Kibbee again. This is a big poster they had on one of the shows. I worked up in Argentia, Newfoundland at the Air Base up there. And that was the band. The band that, ah, was, they were all in Army. Navy, whatever [laughs]. They were all service. Yeah, right, yeah. And we did a show every night at the officer's club. I was up there for two weeks. This one here I took out just to show you. This is where, Rusty Rogers, that's my brother singing with me at Rusty Rogers' place up when he lived down here. I did TV shows with Rusty down here. That's my brother and his wife. This was taken at the TV studio in Wrentham that I did with Rusty Rogers. And there's one in here. This one, I took it out. That's Dick Curless and Kenny Roberts. And they were honoring Elton Britt. That's why they had the picture there.

CM: Now, he lived in Massachusetts for a little while, didn't he? Elton Britt?

GMH: I don't think so.

CM: Oh no?

GMH: I don't think so. And this was taken, that's the one that's taken with Kenny Roberts at the show we did. And that was taken on the stage at the fair.

CM: Did you play much with Dick Curless?

GMH: I don't think so. I don't think he did.

CM: Oh, no, did you ever perform on bill with him?

GMH: Oh yeah, in the past. In the past. When he was doing the shows, we, you know, it depended upon what kind of a show. Most of the ones that I did with

other entertainers was at the fairs. Was at the fair or at the Ranches. Because, otherwise, I worked alone. Course, nowadays, most of the girls have bands with them. But I was strictly alone. In fact, I had, I did a song a few years ago for the Association when they had their, ah, Country Music Association shows, and they were at Lantana's in, where is it, in Randolph? Lantana's in Randolph. And, ah, they asked me to do a song. And they were going to put me on a show with, ah, John Penny. He has a band.

CM: Yeah. I just met with him the other day.

GMH: Yeah. And for some reason or another, John Penny decided he didn't want to break up his show. He didn't give a reason, he just said "well, I don't want to break up our show." So they come over to me, and they say "what do you want to do?" I said "I'll do my own." You know, I've always worked alone. I never worked with anybody except when I very first started, and that was just a few years when I was very young. So I went on and I did my show, and I think, not boasting, but I think I did three encores. The people really liked it, you know? And when I came down off the stage, I probably shouldn't say this, but it's the truth, John Penny was there and he says "boy, you were great." And I was a little upset, because he didn't want to split up his show and put me on, you know? So I said, "well, what did you think I was gonna do, fall flat on my face?" You know? I was a little upset. [laughs] Now, he probably had a good reason why he didn't want to split up his show, but it, you know, it had been set that way, and I was prepared to go on, and then all of a sudden I was, so when I got up on stage that time I said "well," I says, "you've been hearing these great bands," I said, "but I've always worked alone. It's just me and my little white guitar," I said, "and here I am again." And I did my show, you know? And then, in fact, a couple of the musicians got up from the audience and went in behind me. One was a bass player, and I'm trying to think of who the other one was, and they sort of filled in the back. They just sneaked in behind me and filled in. You know. But I'm used to working alone. I almost prefer it, because I know what I'm doing, and I know what I'm going to do, and the keys I'm going to do it in, and, you know [tape ends]

CM: As a woman playing in the thirties and forties, were you treated differently than the male performers?

GMH: Not that I noticed, no. I was always well received. I had no problems. No. It was fine. I didn't have any problems at all. Maybe just because I worked alone, I didn't have to contend with anything else, you know? No, it was fine for me.

MH: And do you still play at all for pleasure?

GMH: I do myself, once in a while, but I just wouldn't trust myself now, and I don't want to do a show that isn't what I'm used to, right. Right. So I just, you know, I enjoy listening, and I play my records, and, ah, and I'm very involved, as I say, with other organizations. I belong to, as I say, nine heraldic organizations, and go back to, when we lived in Dedham, I didn't even realize it, but our ancestors signed the covenant in Dedham. And they were surveyors and gave things to the town, so it's, and to the Ames family and all the different families in Dedham that, you know, and I'm into Colonial Clergy through Reverend Samuel Mann. I'm in, I'm even in Indian Wars through a Joseph Shaddock who fought the Indian Wars. He came back to Watertown, and went on the Ferry across Watertown, and fell off the Ferry and died. Was drowned. So, I mean, I go back to a lot of them.

CM & MH: Yeah.

GMH: I have also, a, I've been a state officer on DAR, and I've been chapter regent twice. Indian Wars. I'm head of that right now. Ancient and Honorable, Women Descendents of Ancient and Honorable, the Court of Honor Colonial Clergy, New England Women, I'm president of that now. Colonial Dames 17th Century, ex-regents club, and state officer's club.

MH: That's a lot.

GMH: So I'm busy. I start in September, October, and go right through till May, and I'm out three and four days a week.

MH: Now what about the community here. Do you know other people in this?

GMH: Well I know Lincoln Circle! [laughs] No, I know a lot of the people. You know, you see them over the years. We've been here almost twenty years. Yeah.

CM: Do you have children?

GMH: No. No, my husband and I, we weren't fortunate to have children, but I have very nice neices and nephews and great neices and nephews, and great-greats.

CM: Do any of them sing?

GMH: Just my brother's boy. He and his son both sing. They're in the barbershoppers, and they're great. They're great. But the rest of them don't. No. No, it's just. But that one's my brother, in my brother's family. Just my brother and I. The only two. And, ah, he passed away in April very suddenly. In two days he was gone, so, it's been a big shock. And my sister-in-law lives right next door.

MH: Oh, that's nice.

GMH: It's, it's great. Yeah. They were, my brother and Bea were, they were a great help to me when my husband was sick, and when I was ill they were always there, you know, and we tried to be there for them when they had their problems. So it's been a good thing.

MH: Why did you pick Carver?

GMH: Because, ah, years ago we camped down here. And we camped at Cranberryville. And, ah, my mother had a big trailer. And after she passed away we sold the trailer, and we bought a motor home, and we did a lot of traveling in the motor home. And my brother and sister-in-law did too, and we traveled all over. And, ah, they had been down here for so many years that they knew the area. And we just, we came down to show it to somebody else, and decided to buy something. And I like it very much down here, but I do miss being up in the Dedham area, because every place, all my shows, all my organizations are either in Dedham, most of our meetings are at the Wellesley College Club. So we have to, you know, travel. And we go to the conferences, and they're in Marlborough and Raynham and Fitchburg, and you know, it's a long trip from here. It's fifty miles from here to Dedham for me. So, it's, a, I like the area, and I like, it's easy living. We had a big house in Dedham. My mother lived with us, and we had it built so she could have the upstairs by herself. Cause my Dad passed away very young, and my mother was widowed for over twenty years. So she lived with us, and she had her own upstairs. Little, didn't have kitchen or anything, but she had a bedroom, bathroom, and living room, and the whole thing. And after she passed away, we just didn't need that big house anyway. Although I've got three bedrooms and two baths here. So, yeah, there's another bath in there, and there's the bath down there, and there be two bedrooms. There's my sewing room, and the other one is my computer room [laughs]. Right, so, ah.

MH: Can you name some of the, I'm still trying to get my head around the kind of songs you did. Can you just name some titles of your favorite repertoire?

GMH: Tumbling Tumbleweed. Riding Down The Canyon. Empty Saddles. Um, One Has My Name, The Other Has My Heart. Ah, course Wanna Be A Cowboy's Sweetheart was always my favorite, and, ah, I had some yodeling songs. Chime Bells. And, ah, She Taught Me How To Yodel. And, ah, You Are My Sunshine. Oh, that's the type of songs, strictly the country.

CM: About how many songs would you do during a show?

GMH: If I did the theater shows, I usually did three. Ah, sometimes two, but usually three. And when I did other shows, I might do half an hour. Course the program, the radio program, was fifteen minutes. There was about three or four songs with talking in between. Ah, when I did shows like at the fairs, or the, ah, Ranches, I would do maybe four or five. Course, you can't do too long, cause there's too many acts that're going on. Sometimes you only did three, two or three songs because there were a lot of acts.

CM: How did you feel, when a big name person, when national groups would come through?

GMH: Oh, I enjoyed it.

CM: How did you feel your music stacked up to theirs? Were you guys equals, or?

GMH: Ah, the music was much the same. Ah, I think the very first big act that I saw was way back when I was very young, started. And it was the Lone Star Ranch in New Hampshire, and it was the Carter Family.

CM: Oh, wow.

GMH: Now, that was quite a thrill. Then we had the Sons of the Pioneers. We had, worked one place where they had Tom Mix. Ah, they had, of course Patsy Montana, and ah, Duke of Paducah. They were on the fairs and the ranches type thing. And they were always very nice people. The only one that I had, that I thought was a little different was Tom Mix. He just didn't like children. And that was odd, you'd be surprised, because his whole, you know he was Tom Mix for the kids [laughter] and he didn't like children [laughs]. You know, he just, he was okay, but I mean, he just didn't want to hang around, you know. He just wanted to get back in his little cubbyhole and get away from them, you know.

MH: When you say "Ranch," what do you mean?

GMH: Well there's, there's only one that I know of now that's really running, and that's Webster. Webster Ranch. Indian Ranch, in Webster. Oh, you don't know that? Oh, yeah, in fact they just had, or are just having, ah,

CM: I think George Jones is going to be there.

GMH: Yes, George Jones is going to be there. And they've had Daniels, the Daniels Band, and, ah, they bring in the big acts. But when I worked there, it was a, it was strictly a local with maybe one act every once in a while they'd bring in somebody, but they were too expensive. You know. But now this corporation's taken over, and it's different. They bring in the big acts. They don't, they only have one, I think John Penny works there quite a bit. But, ah, other than that the acts don't work down there. It's, it's strictly big time. And up in New Hampshire was Reed's Ferry, New Hampshire. And, ah, it was the Lone Star Ranch, and it started out with Baron West and His Lone Star Ranch, and then he died, and somebody else took it over, and, ah, Gene LaVergne, he just passed away recently, he just passed away about three weeks ago. Two or three weeks ago, ah, he ran it for a while, and then Buzz Whitaker took it over for, and I worked there practically every Sunday for summers. You know.

CM: Did you play in Rhode Island at all? Did you ever play with the Zacks?

GMH: Yes, I did a couple of jamborees with them. Yeah. Yup. Eddie Zack. Yeah. I've worked with most everybody sometime or another. Some I don't remember, but I worked with most everybody. And, as I say, all of the people in the Hall of Fame in Massachusetts, I worked with all of them. Um, way back when Peggy Darlin' and Lynn Ramsey were the, what do they, I think they call themselves the Rodeo Sweethearts, or something, I don't know what it was, but, they worked together. And I worked with most of them. Yeah.

CM: Were the Ranches indoor or outdoor?

GMH: Outdoor. Yeah, they were outdoor. And people would sit there. They would sit there in the rain, with papers over their heads, and I'd be up there on the stage singing, and I'm thinking to myself "why are they sitting out in the rain?" You know? [laughs] But, they were sitting. They'd put newspaper up, they'd stay right to the end.

CM: How many people?

GMH: Oh, hundreds. Hundreds of people. Hundreds. It was amazing. And, I have to say, that the country music fans are the most faithful fans in the world. They really are. I still get letters from people. I just got an email from a man in California that's moved out there. Used to hear my program. I have, I get Christmas cards and birthday cards from people in Florida, and Maine, and New Hampshire that, you know, that heard the program, and they're still friends.

CM: Now, when you would be traveling, and weren't in Boston, would they play, you know, pre-recorded radio shows that you had put together? You know, did the station ever record material as if you were there live.

GMH: Yes. I worked for two summers up in Glens Falls, well, it was near Glens Falls, it was Pottersville, which was near Glens Falls. And, ah, I had a radio, that's when I had a program on WLAW, and I would, I would drive down from Pottersville every Saturday, down to Glens Falls. I would do my program in Glens Falls, and they would make the record and send it to Boston, and they would play it.

CM: Do those exist anymore?

GMH: Yeah. And if I was sick and had a bad throat or something, the station had records of mine of the program they could put on.

CM: Do you have copies of those?

GMH: Yep.

CM: Oh, wow.

GMH: In fact, I can show you.

MH: It'd be great to hear something. Is there a way we can listen to something?

GMH: I can't, I can't play the big ones because I took my, I changed my recording thing here, so I could have some CDs. I didn't have CDs on the other one. But I do have the transcriptions. I took some off of the transcriptions and put them on tapes. So I can play some of that for you.

MH: Yeah, that would be fun. Just to get it in my ear.

GMH: Do you want to hear the yodel?

MH: Oh, I'd love to hear it! Sure.

GMH: Okay. [starts playing recording of solo guitar and yodel, with a trilling yodel, and what I think is called a "galloping" yodel - basically the recording is a yodel showcase - sounds like 1930's] Now I'm just going to go forward a bit.

CM: That was great.

MH: It sounds really difficult to do.

GMH: [plays recording with her Buckaroos - about her Buckaroos, how Gene Autrey should "watch out"] So these were all taken from the radio station.

MH: The albums?

GMH: Yeah. [Reading] Christmas, fifty-two. And that's with my brother and my mother. The first program is the Buckaroos. [sifting through records]

CM: Were you recording for MGM at one point?

GMH: No, no that's somebody else. Now, this next one is . . . [plays a song about "you can keep your western prairies/and your famous old cowhands/because I love the hills of old New England/I've heard stories about the West/of the places I like best/are up among the hills of old New England"]. The next two songs are original songs.

CM: Did you write this one?

GMH: No.

MH: What a great song! Who wrote that, that's a great song.

GMH: I don't know, we can't find out who wrote it. Somebody sent it. [plays another song] This is my own. [plays an Iriquois love song, set on Lake Onondaga, has some sort of slap-back on the vocal, which makes it sound like it comes from the late 50's - plays another, sounds like same era recording]. This is my favorite. [slow ballad about a love who was untrue, the chorus of which is "but if you think I'll miss you/be lonely/I'm sorry you're wrong" - another song starts, with radio introduction, goes into "One Has My Name, The Other Has My Heart"] I'll skip that.

MH: How old were you when you were singing that?

GMH: That was when I was first was on WBZ.

MH: So how old?

GMH: Seventeen, eighteen? Yeah, a difference, huh? Wait'll I just go forward a bit. [laughs]

CM: When were those two original songs recorded.

GMH: The other two were at WBZ. Later, yeah.

CM: About when?

GMH: This one is my brother Bill yodeling with me. That's why I wanted to play it for you.

MH: Oh, in harmony, yeah.

GMH: Yeah. [plays another recording of "One Has My Name, The Other Has My Heart", then moves into harmony yodel]. This is good.

MH & CM: Yeah.

GMH: [plays another song - "Pardon Me If I'm Sentimental"] This was my Dad's favorite song. This was later. [sounds like same era as Iriquois song - picks up an Anne Murray CD] Anne Murray. I saw her show, and I got the tape. I sing in her key now. My voice is, I sing along with her.

MH: Huh. This is great.

GMH: Okay, that's the end of it.

MH: That was lovely.

CM: Alright! That sounds great. Was it unusual for a woman to be just accompanying herself with a guitar?

GMH: Yeah. Well, I don't think as unusual as it would be now. Because now they all have bands. But, ah, Betty Cody, of course she sang with her husband, and they had a group. Ah, I'm trying to think of any other. Most of them had, no, I don't think there were that many that had bands.

CM: You do a very nice job.

GMH: Thank you.

MH: Yes, the guitar playing's nice.

GMH: That, that was the suit that I gave to the historical society. That's the suit there.

MH: Gorgeous. It's like a deep blue.

GMH: Yeah, yeah I gave them the hat and the boots and the whole thing. Yeah.

MH: Where'd you have your boots made? Where'd you get your boots?

GMH: I got them from Texas. Just had them, sent them the form and the foot and everything.

MH: Well, maybe we can take some pictures. I'd to have a picture of the guitar. Maybe you could hold the guitar, and maybe take this out to take a picture of your picture.

GMH: Yeah, there's better ones than this one. This goes back to WORL, and I think the best pictures are in that book. That was the white leather outfit I had.

MH: It's beautiful.

GMH: Yeah, it's pretty.

CM: Now, why, were you ever approached about a recording contract?

GMH: I only made one record, and that was on a Boston record, I did a yodeling song. Ah, and I, they didn't push it. At that time they didn't, everything was Nashville, and you know, if you're from New England, you know, hey, you're a Yankee, you don't come down to [laughs] Nashville, you know.

CM: Yeah.

GMH: So, ah,

MH: Yeah, there was an attitude. That's what's so great about that song.

GMH: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. There was an attitude, oh, there still is.

CM: Would people who'd go to your shows ask you for records?

GMH: Yeah, they always did. In fact, I'm very seriously thinking about putting out a CD, because I have the records.

CM: I'm sure you could excellent sounding

GMH: In fact, Gordy gave me the name of a man that he said could take them off the transcriptions, you know? And, ah, cause these were made from the transcriptions when I had my other set here. I had a different set here. And, ah, I could play them, and I taped them and just duplicated them, you know? So they can be done, but I want them done right, you know?

MH: They could be cleaned up, too.

GMH: Yeah, and what I wanted to, I thought even, I even thought of a title for the CD was "My Best To You." Because a lot of people, even today they ask me if I have anything.

MH: That's a great idea.

CM: That is a great idea.

GMH: And I'd do it before it's too late, you know? [laughs]

MH: Yeah, that'd be lovely. Especially if it's not available.

GMH: No, it isn't, no. You wanna see the first white guitar? [leave mic area, can faintly hear GMH giving a house tour, tape ends]