

Interview with Mildred

Hi, Dear. Have a seat. You like cookies? No? Yes? Heavens, everyone likes cookies. Maybe you don't feel well? Oh, I see. You one of those gluten people? No. Good. Just one? A half of one? Oh, you think they're burned? Fred was the one watching the oven. Still good, in my mind. Well, if you don't like cookies, I'm very ... maybe a taste, then? Good. Tasty, aren't they? I love baking. Oh dear, shall I make you some cupcakes instead?

You want me to sit down? Oh honey, I'm not used to sitting down. I putter around –there are just so many things to do. I've got a whole house to run. Busy from dawn to dusk, just as my mother taught me; laundry on Monday. Fred, you want to speak up here? Fred? Oh dear. Quiet like most husbands. Fred, sit up and say hello to the nice lady from the paper.

Uh, sorry, didn't know you were so tired. Gee whiz, you should've said something. No, he's not sick if that's what you're thinking. You went to college? Where? My little Hattie went to college, not far from here; farther away we figured she'd just get lost. Three thousand miles away from your parents, oh honey, they must've been worried sick.

Oh. You mind if I knit? Keeps my mind focused, I guess. Yes, I know this interview is about me, and not you, but I'm just such a social butterfly, but Fred, he's a bit standoffish – isn't that right, Fred?

Okay, where were we? Oh, we've lived here in Point Reyes on the Mesa, since, gee, I can't remember, before Hattie was born. She's forty you know, but don't tell a soul. Honestly, you think my hair is too blue? That Doris, she's always ... You get your hair dyed, dear? No? Yes? Don't feel like talking? Me neither.

Oh, gee, I'm really going to be in the paper? I don't do much. I'm not talking about the oyster problem, if you're looking for an argument. I never argue, always easy going, that's what Fred says, Fred? You still out there in the garden? Haven't you got those weeds yet? Need a meat cleaver? Oh all right, I'll stay inside with this nice girl from the paper. I am minding my own business. Fred, you need a cup of tea, coffee, a nap?

Guns? They're kind of fun. I'm a good shot, but Fred doesn't think so. He's always taking mine away. Wouldn't you know it? Every time I find a new place to hide a new weapon I bought on the Internet he always finds it. So we made a deal. No guns for me, no phone for him.

Happy? I guess he's happy. He never says otherwise. I don't know anything about handling money, Fred handles all of that, unless, you know, he's sleeping ... or watching that doggone baseball of his. That's how I used to get his credit card ... until he cancelled it. Always have my best interest in mind, eh, Fred?

I swear this is the niftiest little town. Honey, it's always been this way. We came from Michigan, years ago. I can't remember that kind of cold. 70-s maybe? You could whistle in the middle of Route One and no one would call you out. We had houses out on Limantour then; they wanted to build this big city in the Bolinas Lagoon.

Politically active? Me? I don't write speeches, if that's what you're thinking, dear, but I'm real good at stuffing envelopes. Used to do it when the kids were little, until the envelope people turned out to be a bunch of crooks. Got to read the fine print. These days I can't hardly find the print at all.

Grandkids? Sure, got a passel, and they'd come over if they had more manners. My very favorite, my Alice, I'm teaching her how to drive – and if she wasn't so

insistent on having her little pooch with us in the car all the time, I wouldn't have this scar on my elbow.

Honey, you don't seem to get it. I live quietly, simply. Here, in Point Reyes, we don't get in anyone's business, if that's what you're thinking. I've always been short, short and invisible, my dad used to say, except my mom, she always had opinions – don't let anyone push you around, she says. So I don't. Do you let people push you around? I thought so. Hang out with me for a week, honey, and we'll take care of that.