

StoryCorps Interview at Marshalltown Public Library

Judy Oswood and Liz Adams

JO: I grew up in Marshalltown, and back in the fifties when I was growing up, my brother and I, he was two years older, every Saturday we would gather up our books from the week before and we would go to the corner right across from our house, and we would stand there and wait for the bus, and when we got about the two miles to town on the bus we'd get off at the corner where Cresky's Dime Store was and we'd go a block to the *old* Marshalltown Library and we would spend the next hour there getting books for our reading for the next week. That was just a ritual every single Saturday that I can remember.

LA: I grew up in Clarinda, Iowa. I was an only child, so I couldn't go to the library with my brother, Judy, but my mother would take me to the library and I remember the smells and I remember everything about it, and we'd check out books weekly, and so I did become a reader, and the funny thing was when I was in high school I remember reading, oh, it was a book about...I wish I could think of the title but I was upstairs and I didn't want her to know I was reading it because it was a little risqué and it was about...Valley of the Dolls, that was the book. And I was upstairs and she came up and hollered at me that I needed to get a hobby. I spent too much time with books, I needed a hobby—and to this day I still believe that reading is a hobby.

JO: As far as my childhood, I remember we had gone for the weekend to visit my relatives up in northwest Iowa and Janie was my older cousin, she was about three years older than I was and I remember my mother walking by an end table and picking up a book and saying "Oh, Forever Amber. Who's reading this?" just kind of in a kidding way and Janie said, "It's mine, it's mine." And my mother said, "Oh." And she took her fingers like this and said, "Shame, shame, shame, shame." Do you know what was the first thing I did when I got to the library?

LA: Checked out Forever Amber [laughing] — I love it.

JO: And I smuggled it home. I don't know I suppose I was a teenager maybe an early teen. I smuggled it home and I got it upstairs to my bedroom and I kept it under the bed.

LA: I used to love to read in the bathtub and I would tell my students that I loved to read in the bathtub and they'd think that was real, real funny, and one day the librarian at my school met me in the hallway, and she was holding a book that had obviously been damaged and she said, "this is all your fault." And I said why is that? And she said, "Well, one day you were talking to the kindergartener in the hallway and you told her that you read in the tub, so she tried it, and this is what happened." So after that I'd always tell the kids I read in the tub, but "don't try this at home [laughter]."

JO: Thank you, Liz. It's been fun to visit with you.

LA: Judy, let's go read.

JO: Okay, let's do.