

Dotty Bowe and Her Legacy

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Sharon Cooper, Editor/Compiler

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	Page
Background	2
In Metallurgy	2
At the Dean's Office	5
Working with Emily Wick at the Dean's Office	6
The Women's Forum and Bi-Weekly Workers	10
The Women's Advisory Group	16
The Carnegie Corporation Project	18
Title IX	20
Women's Admissions at MIT (1978-85)	22
WILG (Women's Independent Living Group)	27
The Advisory Committee on Women Students' Interests	30
Association of MIT Retirees	34
Conclusion	36
Appendix: Memorial Service and Remembrances	37

Dotty Bowe and Her Legacy

Background

Dorothy Leaman Bowe, known as Dotty to her friends, was born on Dec. 1, 1930 and raised in the small town of Townsend, Massachusetts. Because there was not much opportunity for employment in this town, her mother sent her to finishing school, where she would learn to walk, talk, and act in a way that did not reflect her small-town background. After finishing high school, Dotty was sent to the Fay School of Boston on Beacon Hill. Although the school insisted that Dotty stay there for long hours, they did not provide dorm space. After searching the Boston area, Dotty found dorm space at Boston College. Thus, while she was going through finishing school, Dotty enrolled at Boston College as a part-time student. Her education gave her the grace and style that her mother had wished, along with the knowledge that came from a college education.

After graduating from finishing school, Dotty took a job with a company in Kendall Square, living with a group of eight professional women. Every one of these women was career oriented and worked to help women to succeed in the workplace. Dotty claims that these women had a large influence on her life, and helped her to understand the strains and hopes of professional women. Dotty lived there until her marriage to Gerald Bowe in 1954.

In 1948, one of Dotty's roommates, who worked at MIT, heard that Professor Norton of the Metallurgy department was hiring, and asked Dotty Bowe to apply. As soon as Dotty Bowe met Professor Norton, it was clear that they got along wonderfully. Dotty Bowe was hired the next day, and that was the beginning of Dotty's work at MIT.

In Metallurgy

Even before Dotty began working at MIT, Dotty's roommate had warned her "to be low-key, not to get too involved in things, to stay within my own group; ...then I would not have to deal with politics or... things that were beyond what I could handle"¹. At first, Dotty Bowe attempted to follow her friend's advice, focusing on her work in Metallurgy with Professor Norton. However, after a short time, Dotty began to see "opportunities ...chances to expand my own knowledge and meet new people,"² and her interests and relationships quickly expanded beyond the Metallurgy Department. Dotty was working in the main corridor, and because of this, she began to make friends at MIT. She began to talk with the President of MIT, Dr. Compton, when he would stop by her office on his way to lunch. She grew to know other professors and graduate students in the Metallurgy Department.

¹ Dotty Bowe Oral History, pg 3

² Ibid

As she grew to know these students better and better, her job began to change. She was appointed as the graduate student advisor, and accepted the position on the condition that she would continue to work with Professor Norton. At first, her duties in this position were fairly limited; she was supposed to keep track of each student's progress towards his degree, and inform the student when he was off track. However, as Dotty gained more influence over other members of the department, she began to expand her role. She set up a system for reviewing graduate admissions, so that a committee, instead of just one person, would decide who was admitted to the Metallurgy Department. In addition, Dotty decided to help students with their oral exams. According to Dotty, "I enjoyed doing and I really took it on to do myself; it was not departmental policy."³ She began by talking with the student, gathering an idea about his personality and coaching him on the process. Dotty then continued by matching the student with the faculty member she felt best suited him. This way, the oral exams were easier, both for the students, and for the faculty.

Although Dotty's role as graduate student advisor resulted in many friendships between her and the male students in the Metallurgy Department, the people Dotty formed the closest bonds with were the women students at MIT. One such friend, Christina Jansen '63, remarked that she felt very close to Dotty throughout her time at MIT, as well as afterwards. Many others felt the same way.

At this time, there were very few women at MIT. The admissions process for women was limited to the amount of dorm space available for them, since all freshmen were required to live in MIT campus housing. Because the only women's dorm near campus, located at 120 Bay State Road, held only 17 women, MIT would only accept about 20 women per freshman class. Those who could not fit into the dorm would live at home or sometimes in limited MIT-approved supervised housing. Dotty connected with the students living at the dorm and made sure that they thanked Mrs. McCormick annually for her gift of a "taxi fund" that allowed women living in the dorm to take a cab back and forth if the weather was dreadful or the hour was very late. Mrs. McCormick, who always dressed lavishly and expected lady visitors to wear hats and gloves, often invited the students to her Commonwealth Avenue townhouse for tea, where they enjoyed the experience and dropped subtle hints about how substantial it would be to create a full sized dorm for women at MIT.

Dotty befriended many of these women students. They were about her age, and because she was in such a central MIT location, they would often stop by and say hello as they passed by her office.

As Dotty befriended these students, she began to understand the burdens they were carrying with them. She heard of women being completely ignored in their classes or by their fellow students, of cartoons appearing in the Tech which claimed that MIT women were unattractive and unfeminine. Even more troublesome for the women students, at that time, in January of 1955, MIT organized a committee that would decide whether or not the Institute should continue to accept women at all. This committee was headed by Professor Hamilton, one of Professor Norton's friends, so Dotty would often hear discussions between the two of them about this committee.

³ Dotty Bowe Oral History, pg 3

Over this period of time, Dotty Bowe would hear stories from the students about female students who had dropped out of MIT and refused to give a reason. During the 1950's, the attrition rate for women students was very high at MIT, and the Academic Council had trouble gathering accurate statistics on why this was occurring. Many women simply refused to talk about it.

Dotty heard, from her student friends, that one of the problems was the social pressure. One student, with whom Dotty was friendly, had arrived at MIT and done very well her first year. However, the social pressure was too much for her, and at the beginning of her second year, she walked into Dotty's office and told her, "I can't stay here another day."⁴ The student dropped out shortly afterward.

The decision about whether or not to continue to admit women to MIT was one of the most pressing issues on most women's minds. By 1956, the committee still had not come to a decision. Although Dotty would occasionally hear news on the subject, she could not tell these women students anything decisive, because the committee itself was vacillating in their decision.

Dotty was just as concerned as her friends about the decisions this committee would make. The committee was composed almost entirely of men, and Dotty worried that they were deciding women's fates without hearing a woman's opinion. Mrs. Hamilton, wife of the chairman of this committee, shared Dotty's conviction, and she pushed for the committee to hear the women's point of view. Kenneth Wadleigh, who was a young faculty member and was also a part of this committee, shared Mrs. Hamilton's opinion. The committee vacillated for so long on the issue that in October of 1956, the President of MIT, James Killian, stepped in and insisted that they either disband, or give him a report.

The result was two reports. The longer one, endorsed by most of the committee, proposed that MIT shut its doors to women. They claimed that the environment was too hostile for women, and that MIT was spending an inordinate amount of time and money educating a group that was not fitting in and would often end up dropping out. The minority report, written by Kenneth Wadleigh, claimed that MIT should continue to accept women, but that MIT should accept more of them and make them "first-class citizens."⁵ The Academic Council, of which Professor Norton was a member, discussed these two reports for a long time, trying to decide which to accept. Dotty heard much about this from Professor Norton, and told him of her concerns for the women students.

Eventually, the decision was not made by the Academic Council, but by the President of MIT. After considering both sides of the issue and with encouragement from his Chancellor, Julius Stratton, James Killian decided to accept the minority report of Kenneth Wadleigh, and implement Wadleigh's plan for creating a "women's program" that would help women to fit in at MIT⁶. Kenneth Wadleigh was appointed Dean of Students, and given the funds to develop his ideas of integrating women students with MIT culture.

Kenneth Wadleigh created the position of Dean for Women Students, and hired Jacquelyn Mattfeld, a faculty member of music at Radcliffe whose husband worked at MIT, to fill this position. He asked Mattfeld to create a written program for women students, which they could

⁴ Dotty Bowe Oral History, pg 18

⁵ Dotty Bowe Oral History, pg 9

⁶ Dotty Bowe Oral History, pg 9

implement at MIT. She spent about a year working on this, but because she was often working on writing up this program and was not in her office, women students began to feel frustrated. Dotty explained that they felt she “wasn’t visible. When [women students] made appointments to see her, [Mattfeld] wasn’t available.”⁷ The Alumnae and women students began to complain about Mattfeld’s absences from MIT and her unavailability, and in the spring of 1964, Kenneth Wadleigh decided that Mattfeld needed a strong link that would connect her with the MIT faculty and students. He began looking for a secretary that could work with Mattfeld and provide this link.

This same year, 1964, also marked the date at which Professor Norton decided to retire. Dotty Bowe, afraid she would be out of a job, applied for the position at the Dean’s Office. She wasn’t sure she had the qualifications for this job, but her friendships with women students aided her in this endeavor. Her friends all confronted Kenneth Wadleigh, rallying in support of Dotty and her many virtues. Their support convinced Dean Wadleigh that Dotty was just the person to help connect Mattfeld with the students, and that summer, Dotty moved into the Dean’s Office.

At the Dean’s Office

Although Jacquelyn Mattfeld had only been Dean of Women Students for six months, her absence from MIT campus had already ignited a large group of women students. While Mattfeld was away for the summer, Dotty Bowe soon found her office flooded with women. By the time the fall term began, the office was packed with students insisting they see Jacquelyn Mattfeld and asking Dotty what she and Dean Mattfeld were doing to help their situation. Dotty Bowe, who had just arrived and did not even know what her job was, did not know what to do. She talked with Mattfeld and explained the situation, asking what she should tell these women when they asked about Mattfeld’s progress. Mattfeld explained to Dotty that she was planning a big symposium of American Women in Science and Engineering, full of guest speakers, psychiatrists, sociologists, etc.

When Dotty told this to the women students, they informed Dotty that they would not participate. Dotty was shocked. Many women students were stoic and resistant to Mattfeld’s plans for change. They told Dotty that they felt the entire department was a “big experiment having to do with them”⁸ and intending to separate them from the male population. They insisted that they “weren’t all that different than anybody else,” and didn’t want this kind of attention drawn to them.⁹

Although Dotty’s initial impression of the student reaction to this symposium was negative, it soon emerged that women students were quite divided on this issue. Many women supported the symposium, but felt it should more specifically address the issue of women in science, not simply women in a male environment. Dotty was amazed and overwhelmed by the strong opinions on both sides, which consumed her in her first year at this job. Dotty and Mattfeld did hold the symposium in the fall of 1964, and despite a certain amount of opposition, it was a huge success. Many influential women emerged from this symposium, including Carol Van Aken ‘65,

⁷ Dotty Bowe Oral history, pg 10

⁸ Dotty Bowe Oral history, pg 10

⁹ Dotty Bowe Oral History, page 10

who edited “Women and the Scientific Professions” along with Mattfeld. Although she was only a student at the time, Van Aken was an important participant in the symposium, and later received the Karl Taylor Compton Prize on behalf of that group.

The chaos of divisive opinions continued beyond the symposium, and Dotty struggled with the issue of placating both sides. Dotty later compared these days with “being thrown in a pool without knowing how to swim”¹⁰. Despite the chaos, Dotty began to succeed in getting through to the women students and understanding their needs. Upon reflecting back on this time, Dotty felt that the issue “had to be all thrown up in the air at once [so we could] see where it landed”, adding that she felt everyone learned more from the chaos than they would have from the organized “women’s program” that Mattfeld had created.¹¹

Around this time, Mrs. McCormick, 1904, influenced by decades of MIT women (especially Ruth Pitt ’39), as well as then MIT President, Howard Johnson, donated money to create a dorm for women students. The creation of this new women’s dorm completely changed the entire situation for women. Until that time, women’s dormitories had always been temporary and short-lived, allowing very few beds for women, and women’s dormitories were run similarly to men’s dorms. Mrs. McCormick insisted that this dorm be different. She told Dotty, “I don’t want another male dormitory with women in it; I want this to shape their personalities.”¹² The dorm contained everything that women could take advantage of—a piano, a dance floor, etc. When the dorm first opened, the students living there began a student government to conduct policies for the house. Dotty attended these student government meetings as Mattfeld’s representative, and felt that “it was very useful and... a good process” which allowed the students to “begin to have loyalty to their dormitory, which was what we were trying to do—to get them to feel good about living in the hall.”¹³

In the spring of 1965, Mattfeld resigned from MIT to accept an offer from Sarah Lawrence. Upon receiving her resignation, Kenneth Wadleigh confronted Dotty and asked her what they should do next. Dotty told him that they had tried hiring an outsider as the Dean for Women Students, and she felt that this time, they should try hiring one of the women faculty. At the time, there were only two women faculty at MIT whom Dotty knew of—Sheila Widnall ’60 and ScD ’64 (newly appointed Assistant Professor in 1964), and Emily Wick PhD ’51. Dotty advised Kenneth Wadleigh that, since these women were both so different from one another, that he should pick the one he felt would offer what the students needed. Kenneth Wadleigh, after meeting with both, decided to hire Emily Wick¹⁴ as the new Dean of Women Students.

Working with Emily Wick at the Dean’s Office

Dotty Bowe first met Emily Wick on June 4th, 1965. Jacquelyn Mattfeld had just resigned, and Kenneth Wadleigh had offered Emily Wick the position as Associate Dean of Student

¹⁰ Dotty Bowe Oral History, pg 11

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid

¹³ Dotty Bowe Oral History, pg 12

¹⁴ Emily Wick still worked half time as faculty in the Nutrition and Food Science Department, devoting the other half of her time to the women students at MIT.

Affairs (with primary focus on women students) at MIT. While Emily Wick only worked part time in her new position, spending the rest of her time as faculty in the Nutrition and Food Science department, Paul Gray worked in the Dean's office as well, primarily focusing on freshmen. After Emily Wick explained that she did not know very much about undergraduate women's lives, Dean Wadleigh suggested that Emily Wick walk down to Room 5-108 where Dotty worked. If Dotty had worries that Emily Wick's part-time position would make many of the burdens of the office fall on her, she did not show it. From the very moment that Emily Wick met Dotty, it was clear that there was something special about Dotty. "I could tell she just really knew what she was talking about and was a really wonderful person," said Emily Wick, reminiscing about this moment. "Ken Wadleigh admired her right from the beginning."

In June of 1965, Emily Wick was appointed the Associate Dean of Student Affairs with a Special Emphasis on Women, with Dotty as her secretary. The two worked in Room 5-108, an office conveniently located on the corridor along Mass Avenue on the way to the Building 7 lobby; a common route for women walking from McCormick Hall to the MIT main campus. Dotty's goal was to know every woman undergraduate at MIT—not by seeking them down and forcing an introduction, but by creating an atmosphere of warmth and friendliness in her office. The door was always open, and Dotty would take the time to learn every new female freshman's name before the year began, so that she could address them personally and make them feel more at home. Paula Stone, class of 1972, once wrote that "the most valuable piece of information I ever received was scrawled in the margins of a copy of The Tech – it was a map of the Institute with an 'X' marking the spot" of Room 5-108.

Dotty later said that she felt, "those were the best days for MIT and women students. Not just because I was there but because I saw how things happened and they were carefully thought out, everyone was considered—student input—there were committees set up with students on them for judicial issues, dormitory running, and even the food program. All those things involved students."¹⁵ During this time, the second tower of McCormick was constructed, and Dotty was pleased to discover that a committee of women students had assembled to help Mrs. McCormick plan the layout for the new dormitory. Dotty often sat in on these planning meetings, allowing her and Emily Wick to pitch their own ideas about what they felt would be important or useful. Dotty felt that this project helped the women students "feel that they were part of MIT, [that] MIT cared about their interests; ... loyalty in McCormick was at an all-time high."¹⁶

At the same time, Dotty Bowe began working with a new female member of the MIT faculty, Mildred Dresselhaus (known hereafter as Millie), who came to MIT as a Visiting Professor in 1967 and joined the faculty in 1968. Together, the two assembled a series of discussion groups with women, to explain how they could have a rewarding family life and still be a successful career woman. Millie Dresselhaus was raising four young children at the time, which Dotty felt made these groups "just about one of the best things I've seen here with women students."¹⁷ These discussions were also necessary, because a study that MIT had done revealed that although most of the female students at MIT went on to get married, a significant percentage of those women ended up getting divorced. These statistics made many women at MIT concerned,

¹⁵ Dotty Bowe Oral History, pg 12

¹⁶ Dotty Bowe Oral History, pg 13

¹⁷ Dotty Bowe Oral History, pg 13

and Millie Dresselhaus reassured them that it was possible to have a healthy family relationship, and still continue to do technical work.

Many female students who attended MIT at this time can still remember Dotty Bowe, and still recall her warmth and spirit as one of their guiding lights. Jane E Karp, class of 1969, tells the following anecdote about Dotty:

In October of 1968, at about... noon, I was hit by a school bus in Central Square while riding a bicycle. My pack, with all my ID's, etc. was stolen and the only item of identification was my Brass Rat.

I was comatose, so the hospital called MIT for some idea of my name and contact information. The inscription of my name inside the band was difficult to read, so all they had was "arp" and class of 1969. Dotty was at lunch and whoever was 'covering for her' could only leaf through whatever 'lists' they could find. Even though there were only 50 co-eds in my class, they were still looking when Dotty returned. With the scant detail she was given, she knew immediately who it was and called my mother in New York.

Harriet Buris, class of 1971, added that Dotty's office was "a haven for a kid from the country overwhelmed by... MIT," and said that every time she entered, Dotty Bowe was always "warm and generous, and never made me feel like I was wasting her time". According to Emily Wick, on Fridays, just after the weekly math quizzes were given in most math classes, the office would be filled with students dropping by to chat with Dotty. While Emily Wick carried on the more official duties of her position, Dotty would welcome the female MIT community to chat and share whatever was on their minds.

Although the women students at MIT seemed far more unified than they had when Dotty first began working for Jacquelyn Mattfeld, there were still some struggles with larger MIT policies. One day, while Dotty was in her office, the president of McCormick Hall told Dotty that she had just been told, by the President of MIT, that MIT was creating a cross registration program with Wellesley, and that Wellesley students would be able to take courses at MIT. This was shocking to the women at MIT, because no one in the Dean's Office had heard about this decision or was given an opportunity to provide input. They were concerned that it might slow the process of creating equal facilities and experiences for men and women at MIT. Dotty Bowe and Emily Wick both felt that the presence of a female population which came from outside MIT might make the administration feel it did not need to recruit more women students. They inferred that the presence of Wellesley students might make the administration more reluctant to change admissions policies or to create facilities for women who were living on the MIT campus. Dotty Bowe worked hard, after the cross-registration program was implemented, to convince the MIT administration that they needed to continue to fund women's facilities at MIT, and to increase women's admissions as well.

During this period of Dotty Bowe's life, international struggles began to influence the women students on campus. In 1969, a large group of MIT students rose up in protest against the Vietnam War. The group included both men and women, and even though most members of the MIT administration felt that these students were simply bullies and troublemakers, Dotty did not share their feelings. In her position, Dotty had gotten to know many of the women who were protesting the Vietnam War, and she was unique in the administration because she was "very

sympathetic with what [the students] were doing, almost to the point where my own opinions were discounted.”¹⁸ Dotty Bowe occasionally got into trouble for her views. Because the protests were becoming wild and frequently out of control, the administration had asked every staff member to wander around the campus, identify these “troublemaker students,” and report them back to the administration.¹⁹ Dotty Bowe could never bring herself to do this. Instead, when she found these students, she would sit down and talk with them. She felt that often, the MIT administrative staff were quick to accuse these students on account of their actions, but did not take the time to listen to their reasons behind these actions. Dotty wanted to take the time to discover these reasons, but she was severely reprimanded for doing so. She was told that “that’s not what we are supposed to be doing out here.”²⁰ Despite this reprimand, she still refused to participate in the administration’s policy towards these students.

At the end of the year, two women were put on trial at MIT before a disciplinary committee for their actions protesting the war. Dotty counseled these women, and helped to calm their nerves and organize their thoughts. Despite her help, the women were dealt a harsh punishment. One was put on probation, and the other was expelled from MIT. Dotty felt horrible about this decision, and wrote a letter to MIT President Johnson, asking that he readmit this student. A year later, President Johnson agreed to readmit the student, and after a year at Brandeis, the student returned to MIT, where she earned a Ph.D. and became very successful.

Although Dotty Bowe and Emily Wick did not take much formal action during their time in the Dean’s Office, they were often able to solve many of the minor problems that women students at MIT encountered at this time. For instance, one professor was puzzled when he found that women students were falling asleep in his lectures, and asked Dotty Bowe and Emily Wick for help talking with these students. When Dotty examined the situation more closely, she found that there were just as many, if not more male students falling asleep in this professor’s class, but because of the small number of female students at MIT, they naturally attracted more attention. Dotty Bowe often helped women students who were having trouble confronting male professors or TA’s. According to Emily Wick, the two “were trying to just get [MIT] to understand there were women [at MIT], that [these women] were people, that in some ways they’re just like [men] but in others... they’re different.”²¹ Dotty offered human support to those who felt intimidated and burned out by the process of going through MIT, and this support helped many students.

Sometimes these small incidents had a large effect on MIT. Once, a woman student entered Dotty Bowe’s office, and explained that she was a senior, and had gotten a perfect 5.0 GPA, but didn’t want anyone to know about it. She asked Dotty if this was possible. Dotty, upon investigating, discovered that every year, *the Tech* published a list of names of seniors who had made the Dean’s List. *The Tech* received this list from the admissions office, who wanted to show how well they had done by admitting these students who had proved to be such successes at MIT. Dotty and the student went to the Admissions Office, and protested this. They claimed that it was an invasion of the students’ privacy. The Admissions Office laughed the matter off. Dotty Bowe, angry and insulted by this, proceeded to Kenneth Wadleigh and informed him of the situation. Dean Wadleigh was shocked that the Admissions Office was publishing this list,

¹⁸ Dotty Bowe Oral History, pg 22

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Dotty Bowe Oral History, pg 23

²¹ Emily Wick Interview

and quickly stopped them from doing so. This change had a large impact on the students at MIT, giving them additional privacy and rights.

In addition to these small acts of support for the female student body, Dotty Bowe and Emily Wick also worked on several larger, formal actions on behalf of women at MIT. The first was an investigation on the Admissions Policy at MIT from 1968-70. Emily Wick, Dotty Bowe, and Millie Dresselhaus wrote up a report reporting that it was more difficult for women to be admitted to MIT than it was for men, since the number of spots available for women at MIT was “dependent on or limited by the number of empty rooms predicted to be available in McCormick Hall in any given September.”²² The Admissions Policy had been constructed on the assumption that any women admitted to MIT would, by necessity, live on campus in McCormick Hall. However, by 1969, this was not the case. Not only was MIT beginning to allow single women students to live off campus, but some of the dormitory and independent living group housing on campus was becoming co-ed, providing women with far more options.²³ Thus, the restriction that MIT female applicants faced was outdated and unfair, requiring women to have far more academic qualifications than their male counterparts.

The final report that Emily Wick, Dotty Bowe, and Millie Dresselhaus composed on the MIT Admissions Policy recommended that MIT formally abolish all quotas for women, adopting a gender-blind admissions policy. These women argued that because women were students too, they should have just as much right to on-campus housing as male students. The Institute responded to this report by altering the Admissions Policy, and creating a system wherein all students would be accepted based on their qualifications, and not their sex.

When Emily Wick announced she was leaving, a search committee met for a whole semester to select a successor to fill the Assistant Dean’s position. Several alumnae were interviewed and Anne Ellison ‘69 was hired in the Spring of 1972. Before departing, Emily Wick, along with Dotty Bowe, Jeanne Richard (Assistant Dean responsible for women in the Dean of the Graduate School’s office), and Mildred Dresselhaus took another important action, creating the Women’s Forum. Although designed, originally, to be for female undergraduate students, the Forum turned out to be much, much more, and developed into an essential piece of the history of women at MIT.

The Women’s Forum and Bi-Weekly Workers

Although Dotty Bowe and Emily Wick had, under Dean Wadleigh, been able to help women students at MIT, when Dean Wadleigh retired, they soon faced challenges. The new Dean for Student Affairs, Sloan School Prof. Dan Nyhart, along with Dr. Ben Snyder (former head of the psychiatric service of the Medical Department and Director of the Analytical Studies Group at

²² Emily Wick’s Report, pg 2; B1F5

²³ MIT Student House was the first co-ed living group, housing women beginning in Fall 1969; in Fall 1970, Sigma Nu (now Epsilon Theta) and Delta Psi admitted women, with one floor of East Campus and one entry of Senior House being designated for women. The much larger class size in 1971 led to more dormitory housing with Connor 4 added as an all women’s floor.

MIT), had a different style of management, and different goals. They felt that a Dean focused on women students was no longer necessary, and that the Dean's office should deal with all students' affairs, both male and female. Thus, he announced to Emily Wick and Dotty Bowe that he was going to dissolve their office. Dotty Bowe was promoted to staff and took a position in the Undergraduate Financial Aid Office, just down the hall from her former position, while Emily Wick returned to her faculty position as a Professor of Food Chemistry²⁴ before departing from MIT to Mt. Holyoke. Women students started protesting to President Wiesner and his wife that they had nowhere to go, and no one that they could talk to about women's issues.

After a few smaller and informal meetings with women students in the Cheney Room, Dotty Bowe decided that something should be done for these students. She decided that there should be a way for these students to be heard, and she talked to Millie Dresselhaus and Emily Wick about her concerns.

When Millie Dresselhaus, Dotty Bowe, and Emily Wick first designed the Women's Forum, they intended it to be an activity for women students at MIT to meet one another. Having set the date of the Forum for January 6, 1972, during the Independent Activity Period at MIT, the women began posting flyers to advertise the event. However, through some error, the flyer never specified that the Forum was for students—only that it was for women. During her afternoon walk, Dotty was confronted by a woman member of the administrative staff named Jackie Casey (the Director of the Office of Design in a suite right next to Financial Aid), who “talk[ed] at length about the need for women employees to get some issues out in the open,” and asked whether the Forum might be a good place to address these issues. Dotty soon received further requests from other women staff members, who asked if the forum could address their issues as well.²⁵ Dotty, after checking with Millie Dresselhaus and Emily Wick, informed Casey and the others that this was fine.

Even with those initial conversations, none of the three women who had planned the event expected it to turn out the way it did. Instead of a small gathering of students, the Cheney Room was crowded with people—according to Emily Wick, anywhere from 75-100 women, or maybe even more—from a “wide range of ages, interests, ranks and stations.”²⁶ Although the Forum had been designed for undergraduates, Dotty was amazed to realize “that the women undergraduates were probably the ‘best off’ in terms of feeling that MIT cared about them as women.”²⁷ Mildred Dresselhaus, who ran the meeting, remarked that she was in such shock at the number of women present and the passion they brought with them, that “thoughts were racing through my mind at a most rapid rate,” adding that she felt the need “to show strength and courage” in order to hear out the various opinions held by this impassioned and diverse group of women.

The makeup of the first Women's Forum exposed several groups of women at MIT whose issues were being ignored or overlooked. The largest number of women came from the administrative and secretarial staff (about 2/3 of those present), and they protested the complexity of their employee review and employment practices. The second largest group represented were the graduate students, post-docs, research associates, and undergrads (each

²⁴ Dotty Bowe Oral History, pg 24

²⁵ Dotty Bowe Oral History, pg 37

²⁶ B2F9 Emily Wick's Notes on the First Women's Forum, 1/6/72

²⁷ B2F9, Dotty's Notes on First Women's Forum, Feb 1972

group consisting of roughly 10 members), who complained about “the lack of ladies [bath]rooms, athletic facilities, places to lie down when not feeling well, and... role models.”²⁸ In addition, about 6 or 7 faculty members were present, along with several faculty wives and a few alumnae. The large and diverse group was evidence that there was a real need, in the MIT community, for a Women’s Forum of this sort, which might tackle these various contentious issues.

The women’s bathrooms issue was a telling example. Not only the students, but all women found them lacking—from the secretarial staff to the faculty. In some cases, the lack of women’s bathrooms actually hindered women at MIT. According to Mary Rowe, MIT held whole day examinations in Walker, which were very taxing and challenging. However, the only women’s bathroom in Walker was in the basement and at the other end of the building. Women students explained that this walk took them out of their exams for 10-20 minutes, while men could simply walk across the hall and use the bathroom there. This was only one example of the lack of women’s restrooms at MIT in the early 70’s, and was one of the issues tackled at the Women’s Forum.

After this initial and unexpected first meeting of the Women’s Forum, Mildred Dresselhaus and Emily Wick let Dotty do much of the organizational work for the Forum. Dotty worked tirelessly to organize it, hunting down women faculty and staff personally so she could invite them to come and speak.²⁹ The Forum did not remain static, but grew and separated into subcommittees which would reconvene in the main Forum and discuss their complaints and make plans for changing the status quo. Soon, nearly every female demographic group at MIT was represented there.

From there, Dotty Bowe created the Committee of Sixteen, composed of sixteen women with representation from “every ‘walk of life’ at MIT,” and together they put together a program that could improve the status of women at the Institute.³⁰ They presented their program to Jerry Wiesner, the President of MIT, along with his wife, Laya Wiesner (who did much for the cause of women at MIT), and other members of the Academic Council. President Wiesner responded to this recommendation, saying that he would appoint a woman assistant to the President.³¹

After the Forum was subdivided into smaller groups, Dotty Bowe began to organize the support staff and bi-weekly worker group. The first Forum Meeting had exposed a problem inherent in the system for bi-weekly administrative and secretarial workers. Dotty’s notes on the meeting identified their complaints:

“Secretaries in particular seemed to feel their talents, ambitions, and even feelings were not being [appreciated]. There was little or no chance for promotion. That there was no mechanism for review and up grading. They felt dehumanized and underutilized.

“The session at which the personnel people spoke tended to frustrate many women employees. They raised many questions indicating mistrust and hostility. They did

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Women’s Forum Correspondence Folder evidenced many phone lists with handwritten, scribbled information about whether Dotty had talked to certain female employees/faculty or not. B2F3

³⁰ Dotty Bowe Oral History, pg 25

³¹ Dotty Bowe Oral History, pg 38

not look upon the personnel office as a place to go for help, counseling, information or even complaining.”

“Many women felt threatened by just being at the meetings unless they could be legitimized by the administration. They felt intimidated by their supervisors and not able to communicate [the] situation to them.”

Dotty insisted that, in the Women’s Forum, there should not be an official program or design. She wanted the Forum to be “self-generating,”³² and informal, designed to understand and attempt to confront issues without administrative rules or confusion. Dotty once wrote:

The Forum is the sum of its members. The direction of the Forum is purely determined by the women who comprise it... We are the Forum.³³

Dotty was determined to help the women in her support staff and bi-weekly worker group. When she had been promoted to the professional staff around 1970, she claimed that “you could count staff women on your hand.”³⁴ The system for promotion in this field was very difficult and confusing. According to Dotty, one had to convince an official committee that one was worthy for promotion, and because the committee was comprised “of men who didn’t think the jobs that we did were of staff level,” it was very unlikely for bi-weekly workers to be promoted. In addition, the personnel department was uncommunicative and sometimes hostile to the Women’s Forum. Mr. John Wynne, who was Vice President for Administration and Personnel, was not interested in any of the programs the Women’s Forum proposed, and would not even meet with Dotty to discuss the issue. Dotty found some women on the Forum who were able to get through to John Wynne, and after a while, he began to come around. However, for a long time, bi-weekly and secretarial workers at MIT felt frustrated at the Personnel Office’s refusal to promote them, with silence on their reasons for doing so.

The anger and frustration these women felt came through in interesting ways. In a note to Dotty, secretary Del Tapley informed her that if she had to do a song and dance in order to change things for bi-weekly secretarial and administrative workers, she had written two songs already. Both express the annoyance these workers felt at being misused, abused, and underpaid. One read:

“The ExecSecs Review (to the tune of House of the Rising Sun)

“There is a prison down Memorial Drive
They call it MIT
And I, oh Lord, am sentenced there
To type ‘til eternity

“No sunlight ever enters here
The air is thick and foul

³² Dotty Bowe Oral History, pg 37

³³ Handwritten paper, B2F4

³⁴ Dotty Bowe Oral History pg 40

And folks might hear as pass they by
The secretaries howl:

“Professor don’t you give me
No typing to do
I gotta take a coffee break
Professor don’t you give me
No typing to do
I gotta take a coffee break
Can’t you see how bad
My nails need filing
I’ll do it tomorrow
Let the work keep piling
Professor don’t you pass
That buck onto me
I gotta take my coffee break.”

One of Dotty’s accomplishments with this subcommittee of the Forum, was the creation of a salary review system for bi-weekly workers. Women staff members felt they were on a different salary track and, thus, were paid far lower than the men in comparable positions. When Dotty checked these suspicions, she found that they were true. Two members of Dotty’s committee, Anne Ellison (’69) and Nancy Wheatley (’71), pushed for salary equity, and appealed to John Wynne. John Wynne was appalled that the women were sharing information about their salaries, which, he claimed, was “not human nature.”³⁵ However, despite his initial shock, Dotty Bowe, Anne Ellison, and Nancy Wheatley soon convinced John Wynne to undertake a salary review system, in order to understand how salaries were determined.

On the part of the Forum, Dotty Bowe also asked the administration to hire the Hayes Company, an outside consultant, to come in and do a study. Dotty Bowe was one of only three women who sat on the Committee for this study, and even though she often felt “outshouted and outvoted,” she worked tirelessly to allow the women’s viewpoint to be heard.³⁶ Although the committee was frustrating, the study did reveal the value of many members of the support staff who were being taken for granted.

Although Dotty Bowe had set up a system of salary review, it was not perfect. In 1974, Buzzy Bluestone conducted a study on the salary review of bi-weekly workers, exposing that many of the initial frustrations that women had expressed were still present. He found that most of the secretarial workers felt the employee review system and the “grade system,” which

³⁵ Dotty Bowe Oral History, pg 40

³⁶ Dotty Bowe Oral History, pg 41

established how bi-weekly workers were paid, was overly complicated and would act as “road block[s]” for these women’s careers. The communication between the personnel office and the employees was so poor, that women would sometimes be told that they were in a dead-end job, when, actually, there was a fairly high possibility of being promoted. Some women didn’t even know that their salaries were being reviewed at all. Dotty, after reading this report, wrote that it merely confirmed what she had been hearing in the Women’s Forum, and pushed for a task force to be appointed, which would discuss “the role of the secretary at MIT.”³⁷

The result of this task force was very important. First, Dotty made sure that salary and grade level information about the bi-weekly workers at MIT, which had not been generally available, was published in the *Tech Talk*.³⁸ A bulletin board was also placed in the lobby of Building 7, where Personnel Relations could post notices of available positions, thus publicizing career opportunities that had previously been hidden.

During one meeting of Dotty’s section of the Women’s Forum, the support staff decided to debate whether or not to create a union. A subset of women split apart and met on their own to discuss the option of unionizing. Dotty, who had not been invited to this meeting, was concerned. The women thought Dotty would be more on “MIT’s side, and not on their side.”³⁹ After Dotty assured them that she would be more than willing to help their cause, they asked Dotty to set up a meeting between them and Mr. Wynne, so that they might have access to the MIT mailing list of support staff and publicize their idea. After Dotty discussed the possibility with John Wynne, he told Dotty that he would not meet with these women, and he would not give them the list. Dotty then talked with Jim Culliton, who was the director of personnel, and convinced him to meet with the women. He agreed, but when they asked for the mailing list, he informed the women that there was no such list. This bickering continued for a while, with Dotty playing the mediating role between the personnel office and the group. The group called itself AWARE, which stands for Association to Work for Active Reform in Employment, and the initial women who had created it comprised the Steering Committee on Communications, and after some time, they invited Dotty to join them.

Dotty’s work on the Steering Committee on Communications for AWARE helped to bridge the gap between members of AWARE and the MIT personnel office. Dotty attempted to help them gain support of other members of the Women’s Forum, appealing to Forum members by saying that bi-weekly workers need “support from all women,”⁴⁰ and that unity was the best way to solve these problems.

Although Dotty’s work was tireless, she found that the Steering Committee for AWARE was so divisive in itself that their discussions with the personnel department were resulting in chaos. Dotty appealed to them to “get off the issue of the [mailing] list and get on to more constructive things,” but their inability to do so led Dotty to stop attending their meetings.⁴¹

However, Dotty Bowe’s work was the foundation of the AWARE unionizing effort, and created a vital link between the personnel office and the Steering Committee. Dotty’s work not only helped to create AWARE, but also influenced the reorganization of the Personnel office,

³⁷ August 23, 1974: Letter from Dotty to James (“Jim”) Culliton (Folder: Task Force on Bi-Weekly Workers, 1974)

³⁸ Jan 1972 Notes from Dotty (Folder: Women’s Forum—Bi-Weekly Group (1972))

³⁹ Dotty Bowe Oral History pg 42

⁴⁰ Handwritten note from Dotty, from Folder AWARE 1974-76, dated 12/11/73

⁴¹ Dotty Bowe Oral History, pg 42

which made it more approachable by the secretarial and bi-weekly staff. Although this did not solve all of the bi-weekly workers' problems, Dotty's work resulted in a kind of transparency and unity that allowed many bi-weekly workers to feel more appreciated and respected in their positions at MIT.

The Women's Advisory Group

The Women's Advisory Group, or WAG, began in 1973 as a "communication link" between the "various women's groups throughout the Institute."⁴² By that time, there were about 62 groups for women at MIT,⁴³ and a means of communication was desperately needed between them. Although the Women's Forum had seemed to do this to a certain extent, its representation was uneven and did not comprise representatives from all major women's groups on campus. WAG, however, was designed to do just that.

Dotty, who joined WAG as the representative of the Women's Forum, wrote that she envisioned the Woman's Advisory Group as "as a policy making group, developing strategies using its resources[,] advising various groups within the MIT Community on how best to integrate and include its women population in the mainstream of Institute affairs."⁴⁴

The organization was supposed to act as a direct link between the women's groups on campus, and Dotty Bowe hoped that the woman assistant to the President, which the Women's Forum's Committee of Sixteen had proposed, would head this group.

For months, nothing seemed to happen. The search appeared focused on well-credentialed candidates outside of MIT. Some MIT women were concerned about the possibility that MIT might have abandoned the project completely and tried to encourage nominations, including one from Mary Rowe.

Mary Rowe, at first, had doubts. She was in a good position, with a job that she enjoyed, and she wasn't sure she wanted to engage in constant struggles with the MIT administration over women's issues. However, Mary Rowe was convinced to apply, if not in earnest, at least so that the women at MIT could see if the MIT administration was taking the women's requests seriously. The next day, Mary sent in a resume to MIT, without an accompanying letter or any other indications of interest.

Two days later, Mary Rowe received a call from Lillian Guillianna at the Chancellor's office, asking her to come in and make an appointment. Mary sheepishly admitted that she had not really meant to apply, and had only done so at the behest of her friend. Lillian Guillianna laughed, and the next day, she called Mary Rowe back and said that after explaining the situation to Paul Gray, the Chancellor of MIT, he wanted to meet Mary Rowe.

Mary Rowe was so surprised that Paul Gray still wanted to meet her that she agreed to meet him. She was impressed with Paul Gray and the MIT administration, and decided to accept the job. Paul Gray explained that they had hired a woman for the position six months ago, an African American woman psychologist who was an adamant feminist with a strong personality.

⁴² B1F29 Dotty Bowe's Meeting Minutes, May 29, 1975

⁴³ Mary Rowe's Sheet, Table 1

⁴⁴ B1F29 Dotty Bowe's Meeting Minutes, May 29, 1975

Unfortunately, she was killed in a traffic accident only a short time after accepting the position, and the MIT administration now needed to start the process all over again. It was during the interview process for this position that Mary Rowe first met Dotty Bowe, whom Mary described as “a warm luminous personality,” whose passionate work for women exceeded everyone’s expectations, and whose “low-key, friendly... advice” created an “enduring collegueship” between many women. It was in part because of the unity which Dotty encouraged in the women at MIT that Mary decided to accept the position as Special Assistant to the President for Women and Work. With Dotty’s help, Mary Rowe worked with the various women’s groups to create the Woman’s Advisory Group.

It took about a year for WAG to be organized before it could meet regularly and begin its work in the way that Dotty envisioned it. Every women’s group on campus had the right to appoint a representative to the Women’s Advisory Group, and members of the group had no set terms, but remained members as long as they had the time to commit to it. According to Mary Rowe, the group was a way of “sharing ideas and suggestions of common interest,” and, when necessary, take formal action on behalf of all women at MIT. Although the group required a unanimous vote in order to take formal action on an issue, in about 10 years, WAG managed to tackle issues of public pornography, breast cancer screening, child and dependent care, recruitment of women staff/students, sexual harassment, athletics, and more.

The Women’s Advisory Group took strong and decisive actions to battle much sexual harassment and degradation of women on campus. Women often felt uncomfortable and demoralized by the Lecture Series Committee’s public showing of pornographic movies during the Registration and Orientation period, as well as at other prominent times. The theater in which these films were shown, Kresge Auditorium, was close enough to the women’s dorms that some women felt threatened. One woman faculty member expressed her discomfort at merely walking by the advertisement for these film showings. The Women’s Advisory Group took decisive action, lobbying the administration to suppress these films and ensure the safety of women students.

It was Prof Violet Haas (’49), who, while at MIT on sabbatical from Purdue, took on this issue as a member of AMITA and caused the MIT Administration to finally take action. On September 20, 1984, MIT issued a policy statement about these films. The MIT administration conceded that although it had no wish to impede the free speech of students on campus, concerns for women’s safety and comfort at MIT made them impose the following limits on the viewing of pornographic films: that they cannot be shown at Kresge Auditorium, or on prominent days such as the registration and orientation period, and that the Lecture Series Committee must show discretion in advertising these films and take responsibility for any inappropriate behavior that resulted from them.

Dotty Bowe took her role on the Women’s Advisory Group very seriously, making a Herculean effort on behalf of women’s athletics. On June 23, 1972, the United States Congress passed Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which said:

“No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance...”⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Title IX, Education Amendments of 1972, <http://www.dol.gov/oasam/regs/statutes/titleIX.htm>

Although this law was passed in 1972, a special report issued by the National Association of College and University Business Officers revealed that most of the bill was only “effective” on “June 21, 1975.”⁴⁶ Thus, when the Women’s Advisory Group began, there was much discussion and debate about Women’s Athletic facilities and Title IX in general. They asked for and then nominated members for a task force which would oversee changes caused by Title IX. Dotty Bowe served as an important member on this task force, sitting on the MIT Athletic Board and WAG at the same time and increasing communication between these three organizations. According to Mary Rowe, Dotty’s tireless work on behalf of Title IX was “one of her most significant accomplishments.”⁴⁷

The Carnegie Corporation Project

When Mary Rowe first arrived at MIT, she wrote a proposal to the Carnegie Corporation, proposing that they finance a project which would encourage women students, at various universities, to consider non-traditional career paths. Mary Rowe proposed to conduct the project at MIT, Boston College, Brandeis University, Hampshire College, and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and at Boston.

The project was composed of several parts. First, every university was to create internships for women students, in order to allow them to do work in non-traditional fields. In addition, each university would appoint a faculty member, who would take off a year from their work at the university in order to do research on why women were not going into non-traditional fields, and investigating ways to change this. Finally, the project asked every university to open an office for women, and appoint a secretary to this office who would also do research for the faculty and interns.

The exception, for most of these rules, was MIT. Faculty members were reluctant to leave off their research for a year, and asked if they could continue to work for the university while also working on the Carnegie Corporation Project. Also, of the universities selected, MIT was the only school which already had a women’s office on campus, and setting up another one seemed counter-productive. Thus, when Millie Dresselhaus, the first faculty member to accept the Carnegie Corporation’s offer, chose Dotty Bowe as her researcher, Dotty was unclear what, exactly, she had to do. MIT was asking for so many exceptions to the base rules that Dotty wondered if it were wise for MIT to participate in the program at all.

In the end, Dotty’s job involved researching and organizing information and programs for the MIT faculty, and negotiating MIT’s actions with the Project Director at Carnegie. Dotty Bowe, reflecting on the project, later explained that MIT had taken it in a direction that none of the other Universities did, and for that reason, “the project at MIT took a route of which the director wasn’t really supportive.”⁴⁸ MIT decided that it was important to emphasize the faculty aspect of the project, because “our faculty women thought that it would raise the aspiration level of

⁴⁶ Special Report by NACUBO, B1F29

⁴⁷ Mary Rowe interview

⁴⁸ Dotty Bowe Oral History, pg 34

women students. If they could get to know those women who were doing these things—they could be role models. They would see what these faculty women were really like.”⁴⁹

Dotty Bowe worked with the fellows to create new programs and reports that would help publicize that women could succeed in science and technology. At the very beginning of the project, in 1973, the Fellows convened with Dotty, and decided to put much time and effort into recruiting women to apply to MIT. Their efforts were not in vain; the applicant pool of female students rose substantially that year as a result of their efforts. In addition, in 1973, Millie Dresselhaus and Sheila Widnall, with Dotty’s help, created a seminar titled, “What is Engineering?” This seminar was designed for female freshmen students who had not been exposed or encouraged to go into engineering in high school, but were curious about what it entailed. Millie Dresselhaus and Sheila Widnall expected only about 20 people, but nearly 100 arrived on the first day. Although both men and women attended the seminar, it was particularly successful for women students. By the end of the semester, many of the male students stopped attending the seminar—which is usual for MIT freshman seminars—but almost all of the female students continued to attend the lectures.

Another successful program that Millie Dresselhaus and Dotty Bowe began in 1972 was the women faculty luncheons. This allowed the faculty to meet together and discuss issues they were having, either at MIT, at home, or anywhere else. Dotty was pleased with how many women faculty members attended, and how much they achieved. The Women’s Faculty Luncheons increased the morale of women faculty on campus, and provided a mechanism for these professors to exchange information. These two factors, together, increased the total effectiveness of women on campus.

Dotty Bowe also worked with the Carnegie Fellows to identify negative stereotypes that were given to MIT women that affected both the morale of the students and the number of accepted applicants that chose to attend MIT. Dotty assembled and distributed a survey to freshman students, then gathered the data, analyzed it, and reported back to the Carnegie Fellows. The research that Dotty Bowe did in this area also contributed to the rise of admissions in 1973.

In 1974, MIT began to reach out beyond the Institution, attempting to help female students in high school to understand that they could succeed in unconventional careers. Vera Kistiakowsky, an MIT faculty member in the Physics Department, appeared on a TV program called, “Your Place and Mine,” which discussed career opportunities for women in science and technology. Later that year, as part of the Massachusetts Science Fair, hosted for many years at MIT, female high school students were encouraged to create projects.

As part of the Carnegie Project, Dotty Bowe helped to organize a report which would dispel fears that accepting “a large number of women... [to] MIT” would cause “the undergraduate student course distribution [to] alter considerably.”⁵⁰ This report explained that “women will attend MIT for the same reasons men do, if the environment and attitudes of those administering the academic and administration programs at MIT are directed toward... supporting women to reach their career goals.” The report encouraged MIT to accept more women to the undergraduate class, and helped women gain respect around campus.

⁴⁹ Dotty Bowe Oral History, pg 34
⁵⁰ B2F24, handwritten note preceding report

Although the Project Director was nervous about MIT's approach, Dotty Bowe and the women at MIT were pleased with the final result. Not only did MIT have a chance to identify and fix problems with women faculty and students, but the project also allowed Dotty to help the other universities with their own women's programs, and gain new insight from their achievements. The project ended up being very important to MIT women, uniting the faculty and providing much-needed role models and support networks to MIT students.

Title IX

Prior to 1972, MIT had no physical education requirement for women. This was allegedly because "the athletic department did not have sufficient facilities for women to participate in the physical education program on an equal basis, and in typical vicious cycle manner, they did not have the facilities because there was no requirement."⁵¹ Occasionally, women tried to become active in athletics, but doing so proved to be very difficult. Maria Kivisild, class of 1969, came to MIT as the fourth seeded tennis player in Canada. When she showed up to play tennis, however, the coach informed her she was not good enough to play on the team and that she "better forget tennis while she was at MIT." Kivisild wrote to Dean Wadleigh and told him the situation. The dean called the director of athletics in for a meeting where Dotty was present. As she recalled in her interview in 1988, "The dean then said, we are going to give her facilities for playing tennis, and I would like to start a move in that direction."

Other women were not so successful. One woman student decided that she would like to ski with the men's ski team, and met with the same reaction. She, however, decided to appeal directly to the Athletic Advisory Board, and asked Dotty to come with her. The student explained to the board that she had practiced a lot of ballet and that she believed ballet would be good training for skiing, so she wanted to join the ski team. She and Dotty were the only two women in the room, and the request was voted down. "I often said after that, one thing I want to do is get on that board so I could speak as a board member for women who wanted to participate in athletics. And I told the chairman of the board at the time that I would like to be on the board whenever there was an opening, but I never thought that would happen." In May 1971, MIT Athletics held their 13th Annual Awards Banquet at the Faculty Club. It was the first time women had been included in the awards. Of the twenty-three students awarded as Most Valuable Players, none of them were women. Kathleen Jones '71 and Maria Bozzuto '73 each did earn the Straight T Award (of which eleven were given out) but, according to the Tech article that covered the event, they were the only two women awarded that evening. Another Tech article,⁵² from 1973, covers the Affirmative Action Plan MIT had devised in order that its athletic department was in compliance with the 1972 Title IX stipulations: "the use of MIT athletic facilities will continue to be made equally available to all...regardless of...sex." It was unclear exactly how this was to be brought about, since at this time women had, among other restrictions, only two hours a week in which they could see a trainer, and no locker or shower facilities at all in the crew boathouse. The situation in the athletic buildings was almost as bad: a

⁵¹ Article in the Tech which announced the introduction of the PE requirement for women, 1972. Note: Sandra Yulke '74 wrote that article and later wrote the section of the Ad Hoc report which caused the requirement to be implemented, along with an expansion of women's locker room space.

⁵² All Articles from *The Tech* are available in an online archive at: <http://tech.mit.edu/browse.html>

December 1975 survey of Locker and Dressing Facilities counted 4,144 dressing units for men compared to 510 dressing units for women, and this survey was completed after the 1973 renovations conducted in order to put the athletic facilities in compliance with Title IX. But conditions at the boathouse were particularly burdensome because women had to run across Memorial Drive to take their showers in McCormick because they had no facilities at all in the boathouse. The situation became especially dire in the winter, when women soaking wet and cold had to run across the busy road in freezing temperatures. In her interview Dotty remembers the day when a student who rowed on the women's crew team came into her office, "she came in to me one morning and she said, 'guess what I did.' 'I said, what did you do?' She said, 'I took a shower with the boys'...And I said, 'what happened?' She said, 'they all ran out of the shower.' Professor Smith [Director of Athletics at the time] called in such a tizzy. He'd heard that this had happened, and I said 'well, I guess it's time to put some showers in for the women.' And shortly after that there were showers in the boat house. But we can thank that woman student for bringing it all about." Dramatic actions such as these, while innovative and indubitably effective in the short term, did not address the larger issue of MIT's attitude towards its female athletes and its commitment to their success and happiness.

Then Dotty got the chance to make the larger changes that she felt were necessary in the administration. In September of 1974, her desire to be on the Athletic Advisory Board was unexpectedly fulfilled when the Board Chairman invited her to take the place of Professor William Brace, who would be on sabbatical for the semester. It was the first time a woman had ever been appointed to the board. Dotty agreed to sit on the board for a term and see if she could be useful; she and the chairman decided they would discuss whether she should remain on the board at the end of the semester. Dotty ended up serving on the Athletic Advisory Board for thirteen years. She never missed a meeting. Her role as the voice for women athletes was pivotal in the following years as MIT struggled to comply with Title IX. Many male students thought including women in the athletic program was a great idea, until they realized that having women's teams meant having space for them to practice too—space that used to belong exclusively to the men's programs. Dotty describes the tension in her interview: "...we had some real touchy times. The boat house was another good example of it—well, you can use that but it has to be between six and seven in the morning or something like that, and the same with the pool." These changes were not enough, and Dotty worked hard to make sure the Athletic Advisory Board realized that: "There were times when I spoke up when it was not easy. On the other hand, I really think that they were sympathetic and understood that's what I was there for. I think it was useful to the whole athletic program."

Dotty's presence on the board was indeed useful to more than just the female athletes. In her years on the board she became a good friend of Professor Ross "Jim" Smith, the Director of Athletics, and he went to her for advice on how best to incorporate women into athletics and what they needed for their teams' success. It was a big change from the Professor Smith of the years previous, who "was in such turmoil at the time about what to do [he had been asked to hire a woman to be the Director of Women's Athletics] that he did it without consulting anyone—either in his department or the dean's office." Professor Smith ended up hiring Mary Lou Sayles, a dance director from Brandeis. Although a good dance director, Sayles was not prepared to run an entire athletic program and it was soon clear to many people, including Professor Smith, that someone new would have to be found. In February of 1976, he decided not to renew her contract for the following year. The search began for a new Director of Women Athletics, but this time Professor Smith was very much open to advice, especially from Dotty. In correspondences that

have been preserved in the MIT Archives, he indicates that they had many meetings to discuss the state of athletics at MIT, where it was headed, and what it needed in order to get there. He clearly valued her opinion; in a letter to her from the spring of 1975 (Dotty's first year on the Athletic Advisory Board) he wrote, "Thanks for listening—and do call me if you have any ideas to help." In another (undated) letter, he says, "...my real purpose in this note is to thank you for your continued assistance and counsel to me on affairs in general and specifically in the world of women's athletics at M.I.T. I will be continuing to 'lean on you'..." Therefore when Sayles was asked to leave in the spring of 1976, Dotty was on the committee to find a new athletic director for the women's program.

In the spring of 1976, Professor Sheila Widnall decided to form a task force on the women's athletics program, to "investigate and recommend policy changes and possible solutions to the dilemma both the women students and the Athletic Department found themselves." Each member of the task force was given an assignment to research a particular area of the athletic department: the facilities, the available equipment, the current state of the boat house and its receptivity to women. Dotty was on this task force as well as on the Athletic Advisory Board, and her assignment was to research the history of women's athletics. The task force worked for a year and in February 1977, Dotty presented their report in final form to the board. Two of the most important conclusions the task force came to were "the immediate and continuing reassessment of hiring plans" and the need for more student input in policy-making decisions. When Professor Smith retired, Dotty was also on the committee which searched for the new athletic director. There were only three women on that committee: Dotty, a woman student, and a woman faculty member.

Through the 1980s Dotty continued to be a voice for the women students by acting as an intermediary between them and the athletic director. The athletic department's attitude toward women's athletics had certainly been changed by 1983, when the Advisory Committee on Women Students' Interests noted in its January meeting notes that "The Athletic Department makes women feel much more at home. They strive to discover and meet the needs of women students." In looking back over all the work she had done for MIT during her time here, Dotty ranked the fight for women's athletics as one of the most difficult and rewarding missions she worked on, "...that [getting women into MIT athletics] really was the hardest area to work on. It was one where we just didn't seem to be making progress. I feel like we really accomplished a great deal."

Women's Admissions at MIT (1978-85)

Once Professor Emily Wick announced that she was leaving her position in the DSA office to return full-time to teaching and research, Dotty was promoted to staff and took a position in the Undergraduate Financial Aid Office, just down the hall from her previous position. Despite the new job, Dotty still made it easy for women students to continue to drop by and consult with her. Meanwhile, the DSA office announced that neither Wick nor Bowe would be replaced, eliminating their positions. The woman students organized an outcry of protest at this policy, and applied pressure on the DSA, Dan Nyhart. In response to this outcry, Nyhart announced the formation of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Role of Women Students at MIT, co-chaired by

Paula Stone ('72) and Professor Dresselhaus. The committee met weekly during the Spring semester, and produced its final report before the end of the term.

During this time, the committee made a number of recommendations, including a request to hire a woman who would assume Professor Wick's role in the DSA. A subcommittee, consisting of Lynn Mahoney ('72), Sandy Yulke ('74), Assistant Dean Jon Hartshorn, and Dean of Student Affairs Dan Nyhart was appointed to carry out this task. They prepared a job description, and solicited and reviewed resumes. Alumnae were particularly encouraged to apply, and several did. By June 1972, the subcommittee hired Anne Ellison,⁵³ an MIT alum with a master's degree in philosophy.⁵⁴

The Ad Hoc Committee on the Role of Women was very influential, and the students who served on this committee (Mahoney, Stone, Yulke, Carol Epstein '72, Christina Jansen '63 PhD '71, Jennifer Logan PhD '75, and Michelle Millar PhD '75) received the Karl Taylor Compton Prize for their work. When, in May of 1972, Professor Wick announced that she was leaving MIT to become the Dean of the Faculty at Mount Holyoke College, her alma mater, these students used their Compton Prize to establish and endow the Emily Wick Regatta, which is still held annually at MIT. The engraving on the trophy is of a Bull's Eye sailboat, the model owned by Professor Wick.

When Dean Nyhart retired, another member of the Ad Hoc Committee on the role of women, Dr. Carola Eisenberg of the MIT Medical Department, was appointed the new Dean of Student Affairs. As the only undergraduate member of the committee left, Sandra Yulke was hired by Dean Eisenberg to spend the summer of 1972 working with all the departments addressed by the Committee's report to implement, as much as possible, the report's recommendations. Among the offices with which she worked was the Admissions Office. At that time, there were only a few women who were Educational Counselors; this was soon changed by actively recruiting alumnae to be interviewers.

In 1973 a number of changes occurred in the Admissions Office where Peter Richardson ('48) had recently become the Director. He replaced Roland Greeley, who, in response to a question from a woman student as to why all the pictures of women in the MIT admissions materials were of women in passive roles (e.g., watching a man playing a guitar) answered "we wouldn't want any women students who couldn't be somebody's girlfriend. Richardson hired Sandy Cohen ('73) to be an Assistant Director, with particular responsibility for recruiting women students.

Members of the Association for Women Students (AWS, formerly the Association of Women Students) worked with Anne Ellison to prepare a UROP proposal to create the first recruiting booklet for women undergraduate students, based on a booklet Stanford had produced the previous year. The proposal was accepted, with Anne Ellison as the UROP supervisor. The students listed in the booklet met regularly to produce, outline, write and edit text, and choose photos. They were careful to make sure that all the women in the photos were active MIT students – fixing cars, playing sports, working on problem sets, demolishing cars at Spring Weekend, dancing, welding, etc. With professional help from the Office of Design Services, the booklet was designed and produced. The following paragraph appears at the end of the text:

⁵³ Ellison would later resume her birth name, Thompson.

⁵⁴ http://tech.mit.edu/archives/VOL_092/TECH_V092_S0346_P001.pdf

Ellen Swallow Richards graduated from MIT in 1873. This booklet was prepared by the Association for Women Students as part of the celebration of the 100th anniversary of her graduation.

The booklet was well received, including short articles in *The Wall Street Journal* and *Parade* magazine. The booklet was sent to women who had scored high in the math SAT, and it resulted in an increased number of women applying and enrolling. By Fall 1974, 20% of the freshman class was women, more than the total number of undergraduate women students in Fall 1970.

However, merely creating the booklet was not enough. Women felt much pressure from society to avoid technical fields like science and engineering. Many universities dedicated to these fields only claimed to be co-ed, but in actuality, purposely restricted the number of female students. MIT's reputation as a men's university made women feel that MIT's admissions worked in the same way, and thus, many female high school students did not apply to MIT at all. High school admissions counselors also dissuaded female high school students from pursuing technical fields, and thus, many female students would not take the prerequisites they needed to be able to apply to MIT. Some claimed that because little girls played with dolls, while little boys played with cars and trucks, women simply were not meant to become engineers and scientists. Dotty Bowe and other women at MIT set out to dispel such myths and encourage women to apply to MIT.

Sandy Cohen made a number of other special efforts at recruiting, as did the Association for Women Students. The Association for Women Students contacted women who were admitted to MIT, through letter-writing campaigns and phone calls. Women students at MIT were passionate about attracting other women students, and pledged to do their part to assist the cause. Dotty Bowe remembered a suggestion that Millie Dresselhaus had given in 1968, to create telethons for women's admissions, at which women students at MIT would call up prospective freshmen, and explain to them why they should come to MIT. Dotty Bowe, Emily Wick, and Millie Dresselhaus adopted this, and began advertising the telethon in women's dorms:

"Is MIT 'A Place For Women'?"

"If you think so, help us spread the word! The Admissions Office recently mailed literature about MIT to nearly 20,000 high school seniors who may qualify for admission... (About a quarter of them are women.) Some of these students may attend your high school. If you are going home for Thanksgiving, please be sure to visit the Admissions Office and get a list of young women and men near your home who are potential applicants. The women in particular may just need an extra encouraging word from you before taking the plunge."⁵⁵

These telethons, which ran for several nights in the Bush Room, were very successful, and the enrollment among those who were called approached anywhere from 50-75%. The students found that talking with potential MIT applicants and their parents made a significant difference in the number of women who applied to MIT.

⁵⁵ AWS folder; A flyer from the AWS hung up in women's dorms.

Another program, the High School Visiting Program, was started in the spring of 1977 by the Association of MIT Alumnae (AMITA), with President Susan Kannenberg '61 leading a very successful effort to recruit alumnae participation. AMITA, in conjunction with the Admissions Office, arranged for teams of three or four alumnae to visit high schools and talk to girls about continuing in math and science classes in order to preserve as many possible options for their careers. The effort was initially limited to the metropolitan Boston area, but in later years it spread all the way to San Francisco and the Washington DC areas. Dany Siler ('68) succeeded Sandy Cohen in the Administrations Office, and continued to recruit women students using mailing campaigns, visits, etc. Because Dotty Bowe was so close to many generations of female students at MIT, she later was named an honorary AMITA member and took an active role in many of their programs.

Dany Siler and Dotty Bowe were working towards the concept of equal admissions— admitting 50% male and female students to MIT every year. But with so few female students applying to MIT, AMITA proposed the Michigan Project, which was an extension of the recruiting work they had been doing in Massachusetts. According to Dotty, “In May of 1978, the Michigan Project was organized with the goal of obtaining equal numbers of qualified male and female freshmen from Michigan entering MIT in September of 1980. This would mean an increase from 7 women of 41 accepted candidates to 25 of a projected 50.”⁵⁶

The goal was ambitious, and members of the committee decided that the best way to combat the misinformation about MIT and the public discouragement of women pursuing technical careers was to personally contact women and explain the truth of the situation. Dotty and others began to organize mailings targeted to female students in Michigan who were beginning their sophomore year of high school, and appeared to have an interest in math and science. They wanted to show these students that women could succeed in technical careers, and they encouraged them to take the required courses so they could apply to MIT. Dotty and the rest of the Committee on Women’s Admissions also held symposia for female high school students in Michigan, advertising different career options for women in scientific and technical fields.

Gathering data from those female applicants who, in the past, had filed preliminary applications but then decided not to actually apply to MIT, Dotty Bowe was distressed over the overall female perception of MIT. Of particular concern was the “unfavorable stereotypes” assigned to women students at MIT.⁵⁷ Although all co-eds, at this time, faced some negative stereotypes, the stigma attached to women at MIT was surprisingly harsh. According to Sandy Yulke '74 the male mythology about MIT was that “all women students are both stupid and ugly;” that women students wouldn’t do their homework with men, not because they were isolated and intimidated, but because “they’re too ‘stuck up;” that “because of the male/female ratio at MIT, women naturally have the social advantage position and can pick and choose;” and, most disturbing of all, that “women students have a duty to ‘share themselves’ among the male students.”⁵⁸

One faculty member, Professor McFadden, composed a “Garbage List” of negative male stereotypes towards women, which includes:

⁵⁶ Proposal from Dotty Bowe, undated, explaining the Michigan Project. From the Folder on the Ad Hoc Committee on Women’s Admissions, 1978-85 (second of the 2 folders on this subject).

⁵⁷ Reasons Female Students Didn’t Apply to MIT, undated, Folder on Ad Hoc Committee on Women’s Admissions.

⁵⁸ B1F29, WAG meeting Minutes taken by Sandy Yulke, May 8, 1975

3. Woman's temperament is not dependable. She reduces to tears over nothing...
5. Women talk too much and tell all their business and ours (men) too.
6. Ask a woman a question and she gives you the life history. Why can't a woman answer directly? I (a man) will ask for more information if I want it...
9. Women cannot handle management. It is too much of a strain on them...
11. They (women) do not have the full technical knowledge to handle high level technical and scientific jobs...
14. Women cannot be depended upon for good attendance. Their absentee record is very bad and they are always late to everything.

In the course of the survey given to students who decided not to apply to MIT, the stigma against MIT women constantly came up as a deterrent. Dotty was determined to fight this stigma, both at MIT, and outside the Institution.

Dotty found, also, that some members of the MIT faculty and staff were concerned about allowing more female students. They claimed that these women, who might be under-qualified, were taking the place of more deserving men.⁵⁹ They protested because they felt that, in order to add women to the population of MIT undergraduates, they would need to drop the minimum SAT score requirement considerably, which would hurt the university and displace men with higher SAT scores.

One day, Electrical Engineering Prof. Arthur Smith,⁶⁰ who was a good friend of Dotty, and whose daughter was applying to MIT, did research on this subject and found that women's SAT scores in math tended to be about a hundred points lower than men's, and that the test was clearly biased to favor men. He showed this to Dotty Bowe and Sheila Widnall, who proposed correcting this bias by adding an extra 100 points to female applicants' scores. The number of women admitted to MIT grew from 26% to 38% as a result of this change.⁶¹

Also of concern was the constant insistence, from those high school students who visited, but did not apply to MIT, that MIT should not change based on their own personal preferences. Many claimed that although the low ratio of female to male students created an uncomfortable atmosphere for them when they toured the school, they explained that this was only their personal inclination, and that MIT was just fine the way it was and should not change.

This attitude changed around 1983, when Title IX efforts for women's athletics began to change women's expectations. The Athletic Department created an environment where women could succeed and feel that they were necessary. Women's groups such as the Women's Forum and the Committee on Women Students' Interests began to advocate changes in other departments, which corresponded to those made in the Athletic Department—trying to

⁵⁹ Dotty Bowe Oral History, pg 52

⁶⁰ Arthur Smith served as Dean of Student Affairs from 1990-1996.

⁶¹ Sheila Widnall Interview

incorporate women into the fabric of MIT life. This advocacy also helped increase women's admissions to MIT.

With these many various programs and changes occurring at MIT, the Michigan Project proved to be a tremendous success. Dotty Bowe wasted no time in self-congratulation, however. She had a goal, and she was determined to accomplish it. At the conclusion of the Michigan Project, on Dec 5, 1978, Dotty Bowe sent a letter to Chancellor Paul Gray advocating the spread of this project into other American locations, particularly in western Massachusetts, where female admissions showed a statistical lag in the number of female applications. Dotty proposed the introductions of summer and spring programs in the New England area, designed to strengthen the interest and knowledge of high school women in math and science. Dotty's passion for the equal admission of women and men to MIT was one of the driving factors for the increase in women's admissions.

It is impossible to encapsulate all of the implications of Dotty's work in the field of women's admissions. Her tireless efforts, alongside women like Anne Ellison and Jeanne Richard, resulted in a large increase in the number of women at MIT. Because many universities look to MIT as a role model in the fields of science and engineering, Dotty's work began a nationwide increase in female admissions to other institutions of higher learning as well. This increase began, slowly, to change the way that society felt towards women in technical fields, and revolutionized women's role in the work force. Dotty was certainly not the only woman to make this change, but her reliability, her persistence, and her ability to present her goals in such a way that even the most stubborn male chauvinists agreed with her, made Dotty Bowe an essential part of the women's movement, both at MIT, and in the United States as a whole.

WILG (Women's Independent Living Group)

Even in the 1960s, sororities occasionally approached MIT "coeds" about starting a chapter on campus. MIT women students were generally too busy to find this an attractive idea, but in the early 1970's, a small group of women students, including Kate Hendricks '71, talked with Dotty and AMITA about the possibility of an all-women's living group. Marjorie Pierce '22 was enthused about helping with space design and architectural aspects. Early in the spring of 1976 Dotty, along with Elisabeth Drake '58 and former Assistant Dean for Student Affairs Nancy Wheatley '71 wrote a letter to MIT alumnae asking their support for a new kind of living space for MIT women. The letter explained that, while there were various places for women to live both on and off the campus (McCormick, several co-ed dorms, and two co-ed fraternities and Student House, the MIT co-op), there was "no way that at this time women can choose to live together in a 'fraternity' or cooperative type atmosphere.

Women have wanted to do this, and that is why we are suggesting an independent living group for women." Women students had, indeed, been proposing such an idea for the last ten years. Many of them had ended up discussing the issue with Dotty, who had remained close to students even after she left the Dean's Office and moved into Financial Aid. As Dotty explained in her interview, "It was clear that we needed another female living group besides McCormick. The numbers were too great for McCormick and not all women wanted coed living...There wasn't any living group aside from McCormick and none that women could manage themselves. So a group of us got together and asked if there was a possibility that we could bring that about."

The undergraduate really pushing the issue forward at this point was Zaurie Zimmerman '77 who, with the help of the Dean's Office, had sent out a survey to all the women students asking them to respond by March 12, 1976 to indicate whether they were interested in forming an independent women's living group.

The idea gained more momentum when Dean Wadleigh (now Dean of the Graduate School, but still interested in all students) told Dotty of a building at 351-355 Massachusetts Avenue that could potentially house such a group. Ken Wadleigh was particularly supportive of the idea as when he was an MIT undergraduate, he lived at MIT Student House, (MITSH) the MIT co-op and first coed living group. He was a long-term MITSH Corporation board member, and discussed the idea with Sandy Yulke '74 another board member. The building was MIT controlled, although owned independently by Northgate Corporation. At the time it was being used as an apartment that provided off-campus housing for MIT affiliates. MIT had already thought about purchasing this building from Northgate; twice in the past couple years they had considered converting it into an undergraduate dormitory but both times they had decided against doing so. Although the Dean's Office and many of the people supporting the idea of an independent women's living group thought the building would be perfect for such a group, Dotty was worried that the graduate students presently living there would be left without housing if it were to be used. "We wouldn't want to kick anybody out," she told *The Tech* in early April of 1976. The school newspaper introduced the idea to the general community that month, "A group of women on campus are trying to form an independent women's living group. Associate Director of Financial Aid Dorothy Bowe said that the group is the 'plausibility stage'... They have looked at a Cambridge building owned by MIT that is currently being used as apartments." However, the bigger obstacle was not re-locating the graduate students but convincing the MIT Administration that such a group was necessary for the women of MIT.

Dotty and Dean Wadleigh were excited to move things forward, but the administration had some reservations. They were worried about the success of a living group trying to form without some sort of sponsoring organization, such as the members of Greek life rely on. They were worried that the group would flounder when the MIT Alumnae who had pledged support for the experiment lost interest. They were worried that the women couldn't handle the pressures of schoolwork at MIT while trying to manage their own house. And most of all, they were worried that this was too new of an idea, they were "nervous to back something that might not work out." Luckily for the women and alumnae putting the plans together, even though "MIT was not too happy with the idea of WILG... Dotty was also widely respected by people in the Administration as someone who was very sensible. So... the WILG project went forward." They decided to let the graduate renters remain in the building throughout summer of 1976 and re-locate them to other Northgate apartments or on-campus housing in the fall. The building was purchased in late spring and ten to fifteen women undergraduates and the Dean's Office began working with consultants to start making plans for the renovation of the house to make it suitable for their new living group.

The building ended up being too large for one living group so MIT decided to give half of it to Alpha Delta Phi (ADP), a new fraternity that was just forming on campus. They decided that the renovation would take place one half of the building at a time; while 355 Mass. Ave. was being renovated, both the women's group and the fraternity would share the living space in 351; then when 355 was finished both groups would move there while 351 was worked on. The architectural plans were drawn up that summer, and all the women who planned to live in the

house contributed their ideas. In an interview Elisabeth Drake detailed the main people who helped the women students realize their plans for a home and living group of their own, “Marjorie Pierce who was Class of 1922 in architecture. She and Dotty and I and a couple of other people—Kate Hendricks ‘71—who was our lawyer...It ended up that we formed an alumnae corporation that would get WILG launched because there were no adult WILG alums yet...Dotty was the clerk, I was the president, Kate was, I think, our treasurer and legal advisor.”

The students and alumnae (especially Marjorie Pierce) worked closely with the architects and contractors during construction. They insisted on a ramp instead of stairs for their back door so that they could have at least one handicapped-accessible floor. They had earlier asked for an elevator so they could be wholly handicapped-accessible, but it was too costly. They had input even into which kind of staircase they wanted to connect the dining room on the first floor with the living room on the second. The original plans described the second floor connected to the first floor by way of a circular staircase, and the fraternity decided that for their side of the house that was fine. But the women, very conscious that they wanted to create a cooperative community atmosphere, asked the contractors if it could be changed. They proposed an L-shaped staircase to connect the two rooms which would require a large rectangular section of ceiling to be removed from the dining room. A group of people sitting in the living room upstairs would then be able to talk with the people in the dining room downstairs; the L-shaped staircase essentially made the two rooms into one common area. There was some haggling over expenses but eventually the women’s idea was approved. The whole construction was carried out in similar fashion: the input of the students played a great role in shaping their new home.

In fall of 1976, the independent living group had its very first entry in the *Undergraduate Residence Book*, which was distributed to incoming freshmen to help them choose their living arrangements for the year. The entry explained the group’s brief history and the ongoing construction that was changing the building into a place for them to house their community, “With the help of MIT and a group of alumnae, we can now offer you a chance to live and work with a group of enthusiastic upperclassmen forming a new lifestyle...During the first year, we will be making major decisions, such as social organization, meal planning, house rules, and government. This is a terrific opportunity to get in on the very beginnings of an exciting living experience. We have a lot to offer—a challenge, a friendly atmosphere, and no overcrowding. We welcome your enthusiasm, ideas, and energy.” They began the 1976-1977 school year with ten women, and six freshmen joined that fall; during the same term four transfer students also joined. As the students made decisions on how to run their house and what was needed to furnish it, the newly formed Alumnae Corporation made decisions on how to be financially responsible for the student group and how to advise them on issues that students wouldn’t be expected to know how to deal with...When is a drain clogged enough to call a plumber? Are storm windows worth the cost of installing? How often do you need to have the house inspected? These were questions that would be difficult for a student, who had never run a house before, to answer but the alumnae in the corporation had graduated, owned homes, and could relay the basics of house maintenance on to the undergraduates. Before the house was finished being renovated, the very beginnings of the alumnae corporation—Dotty, Elisabeth Drake, Marjorie Pierce, and Kate Hendricks—met in Dotty’s office to go over the wording of the house’s lease to MIT, to discuss the progress of construction, and to write up a constitution for their corporation so they could most efficiently act as an advising committee for the new group. Finally the women and the corporation together decided on a name for the new group: the Women’s Independent Living Group, WILG for short. When asked why the name ended up being so long, Elisabeth Drake

said, "...that's what it was and that's what they wanted. And we tried to think of a better name. It could be the Women's Living Group but they really wanted the independent in there. And so it became WILG."

Mary Rowe, Special Assistant to the President and MIT Ombudsperson, said in an interview that WILG was a very central issue to Dotty and one of her most significant contributions to the MIT Community in her time here. She describes WILG as "...a big accomplishment in itself and as a metaphor." In an InFocus article from the MIT Inter-Fraternity Conference in 1984, WILG is described as "the only independent house exclusively for women at MIT, and the only residential group of its kind in the nation." Wyn Kelley, the former WILG Faculty Advisor, describes WILG in 2007 as "a place of serenity amid the creative but occasionally wearing chaos of the campus, an oasis of delicious smells, comfortable clothes, lively talk, kindness, sociability, and the abundant good will that sustains its small, highly functional, clean and organized, welcoming and nurturing community for all its diverse, vibrant, and extraordinary independent women." WILG describes itself as an, "independent living group that houses about 45 residents founded with the belief that a group of hard-working women can manage their own house, and we've been doing just that for over 30 years."

Dotty herself considered WILG one of her greatest accomplishments at MIT. Although she eventually retired from being the clerk for the WILG Alumnae Corporation, she attended every one of their meetings that she was able to, until her sickness in the late 1990s prevented her from doing so. When asked whether WILG had retained the sort of supportive community that it was originally intended to create for MIT women students, she said "It certainly does. I go there several times a year and yes, it does have that...WILG is still strong...We've really done very well there. It has good backing from its alums and from its corporation board and so it continues to be kind of an entity unto itself."

The Advisory Committee on Women Students' Interests

The disproportionate ratio of female to male students at MIT and the negative stereotypes of MIT women created an uncomfortable atmosphere for many MIT women students. Although undergraduates felt a fair amount of sexual harassment and insecurity arising from the predominantly male environment at the Institute, female graduate students received the brunt of this.

Particularly in the Electrical Engineering department, women faced many problems with sexual harassment. As a whole, female graduate students felt isolated and alone, often being singled out for sexual banter and offensive 'jokes.' Those who put up with such activity were considered to either be flirting with men, or else "too feminine... not aggressive and pushy enough" which prompted male students to inform such a woman that she would "never make it through MIT."⁶² When women protested such treatment, male students would call women "Mrs. Attila the Hun" and insist that, "You sure are bitchy today; must be your period."⁶³ This double standard created an uncomfortable atmosphere for women at MIT. In addition, many women graduate students, particularly those in Computer Science, faced blatant sexual harassment. In a

⁶² *Barriers to Equality*, Report on women in Computer Science YEAR?, pg. 12

⁶³ *Ibid.*

report on women students in Computer Science, women reported that “while talking with a male colleague in my office, he suddenly placed his hand on my breast and said that he liked me,” and that “I was kneeling in the library in front of the card catalogue [when a male student] walked up and planted himself right next to me such that if I turned to face him, my face would have been just below waist level. [The student then said to me,] ‘That’s where you belong: on your knees.’”⁶⁴

The problem extended beyond the student body, to women staff and faculty as well. Women secretaries were undervalued by many MIT professors and students. For many years, the roster of MIT employees omitted all secretarial positions, making many secretaries feel ignored and invisible to the MIT administration. One MIT secretary, Alice Seelinger, who worked in the Dean’s office under Kenneth Wadleigh, was shocked and angered at the disrespect the students showed her. Once, in 1971, a male student entered the office, barefoot, tracking mud all over the rug and ignoring Alice Seelinger completely. Enraged, Alice Seelinger stood up at her desk, pointed at the door to the office and yelled at the male student to “Get your dirty feet off my rug!” According to Emily Wick, the male student, unnerved by this outburst, shrank away, and never gave Ms. Seelinger any more trouble.

Women faculty faced issues as well. There was much concern about salary equity. Women were concerned that if they raised issues about their pay check, they would be seen as complainers, and thus, did not protest if they were not paid the same as a male coworker. In the 1970’s, the Women Administrational Organization, of which Dotty Bowe was a member, appealed to MIT for gender equity in promotions and salaries. Even after this was put into effect, although the aggregation of data showed equal pay for men and women at MIT, individuals still faced problems with gender equity. The Women’s Administrational Organization organized a method wherein women could ask Mary Rowe to check with the Personnel Office and see if individual inequity existed. This allowed women a way to insist on equal pay without appearing to be overly reliant on complaining.

The Women’s Forum, the Women’s Administrative Group, Luncheons for Women Faculty Members, and other organizations (to all of which Dotty proved an essential part) helped to alleviate problems for MIT women faculty and staff. However, while the student population was growing, it quickly became apparent that women students were still facing significant problems. Thus, in 1980, a group of 9 women, one of whom was Dotty Bowe, formed the Women’s Advisory Committee on Women Students’ Interests, and began to evaluate the situations of those undergraduate and graduate students at MIT.

Even after a scant evaluation of women students at MIT, it was apparent that the way the curriculum was taught alienated females. In the humanities courses, novels were assigned based on the Columbia book list, which included no women authors, and when women students asked why, they were told that women writers were “not viable or substantive.”⁶⁵ Women were also feeling uncomfortable because of the small number of women faculty members who could serve as mentors or advisors.

This was particularly true of graduate students. Towards the end of Dotty’s time in the Dean’s Office, Emily Wick had proposed putting the time and energy into the issue of Women Graduate students. However, since their office was dissolved soon afterwards, they had only

⁶⁴ Ibid, pg 16, 17.

⁶⁵ Jan 19, 1983 Meeting Minutes. Folder: **Advisory Committee on Women Students’ Interests (1980-85)**

begun this enormous project. Dotty hoped that her work on this Committee of Women Students' Interests would continue the work she and Emily Wick had begun, and create a more comfortable environment for MIT women graduate students.

As part of this Committee, Dotty began conducting interviews with women graduate students. These interviews revealed that women students at MIT were often under a lot of pressure, often more pressure than male students felt, but if these female students complained, they were told that MIT was a very demanding school, and that all students were under large amounts of pressure. However, this was not the case. Although MIT certainly does put its students under large amounts of pressure, women students did not merely have to deal with academic pressure, but also a large amount of social pressure. Because there were so few women at the Institute, often female students in the fields of science and engineering would find they were the only woman in their classes, and thus, they were noticed and evaluated critically in every action they took. To ease this second source of pressure, women at MIT often formed unhealthy bonds with male students. At one meeting, a staff member commented that "women students do get surrounded socially, and to relieve the pressure, often quickly develop a relationship with one male student. She has, by doing this, cut herself off from other men socially far too early and often disastrously. The pairs, so formed, are almost 'married'."⁶⁶

Dotty found, however, that even holding these interviews was a challenge. According to Dotty, many women graduate students were afraid to talk with her or to attend the meetings because "if their faculty supervisor found that they were coming, he would say that they were wasting time. They should have been spending it in the lab doing their work, and that's why their progress was slow."⁶⁷

Since computer technology was progressing rapidly in the early 1980's, the School of Engineering began to create major changes in many of its departments, incorporating computer labs and stations for undergraduate students to do coursework and take classes. However, these new labs and stations were created without regard to female students. One student explained that, when she was at MIT, she had signed up for a computer course that took place in a new computer lab. The only entrance to this lab was through a men's bathroom. She found the situation so uncomfortable, that she was hard-pressed to complete the course.

In addition, recent statistics had shown that women at MIT had roughly the same GPA as men, if not higher, in all departments. When these statistics were published, the female students at MIT were completely shocked. Many female students believed that they were failing courses in which they were maintaining high grades. The disconnect between the women students' perceptions of their performance in courses, and their letter grades, puzzled the Committee members.

With the help of various psychological experts, such as Dr. Sheila Tobias, Associate Provost at Wesleyan and well-known authority on women in STEM fields, the Committee decided that MIT's emphasis on objectivity was actually an emphasis on masculinity. Men and women students approached the learning process in different ways, and in many MIT courses, Professors rejected female approaches to problem solving, claiming that these approaches were "unobjective."⁶⁸ This resulted in women students feeling that they were less capable than their

⁶⁶ Jan 24, 1983 Meeting minutes, same folder

⁶⁷ Dotty Bowe, Oral History, pg 59

⁶⁸ Feb 16, 1983 meeting minutes, same folder

male counterparts. One female student confessed that she only realized she was smart when she took a course at Harvard.⁶⁹

Other stories surfaced which exposed the tragic state of women graduate students at MIT. One woman told Dotty that her child had meningitis, and she could not take the time off to take the child to the hospital. Eventually, the child became so ill that the woman convinced her neighbor to take the child to the hospital for her. According to Dotty Bowe, these stories were heart wrenching, but the committee was never sure how to deal with them and improve conditions.

The major problem that the Committee encountered, when trying to change the curriculum to be less hostile towards women, was the psychological inability of many male professors to change their teaching methods. One Committee member summarized the situation thusly:

...When a professor proposed a new lit course on love and friendship but included no women authors, many of his colleagues objected strenuously. However, since that professor believed that true friendship exists only between men, even if he includes some women authors, his course will have the same thrust as before.⁷⁰

The Committee found that when women asked questions in class, their points of view were often seen as “non-objective and non-masculine, and therefore not appropriate or worthwhile.”⁷¹ Thus, women would feel suppressed in lectures, with the idea that their entire way of approaching the problem was incorrect at its core.

Female graduate students found they had an even more difficult situation at MIT. When explaining their situations to the Committee, female graduate students would usually discuss the same problems and concerns, and then would be shocked when they realized that these problems were situational, and not their faults as individuals.

The support networks necessary for graduate students were often missing for women. One graduate student told of a “male professor who drilled male doctoral candidates,” but when she and other female doctoral candidates asked for similar help, the professor “simply told [the] female candidates ‘don’t worry.’”⁷² Women who were alone or in the small minority in their labs or sections found themselves isolated and forced to work alone, which male students interpreted as being stuck-up or “bitchy.”⁷³ The undermining and disparaging comments made by male graduate students often had inimical consequences. One graduate student who had “had her self esteem undermined by the treatment of her colleagues,” when she was required to teach a course, she found she “literally could not speak; for a year and a half, she couldn’t speak in public.” The graduate student blamed herself for this problem, and was surprised to discover that “this [same incident] has happened to other women in similar situations, but each one, not knowing of the others, blames herself, not her situation.”⁷⁴

Jeanne Richard, Associate Dean of the Graduate School, another committee member, claimed that this was a surprising development. Ten years earlier, when there were only 300

⁶⁹ May 9, 1983 Meeting Minutes, same folder

⁷⁰ April 4, 1983 Meeting Minutes, same folder

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Nov 3, 1983 Meeting Minutes, same folder.

⁷³ CS Report “IS THIS “BARRIERS.....”

⁷⁴ Nov 3, 1983 Meeting Minutes, same folder.

women students at MIT, they had banded together and met to discuss these situations, which helped to alleviate much of the isolation. However, now that the female student population had tripled, women found themselves more isolated than before. Afraid to incur the criticism of her colleagues, women students were less likely to meet together and discuss their situations.⁷⁵

Another part of this problem was the limited opportunities that women had in the workforce. When men were at MIT, although they felt intense academic pressure, they knew that after they graduated, they were assured a well-paying job that they enjoyed. Women had no such guarantees. Women students, who were struggling through frustration and hostile social interactions to achieve their full potential at MIT, knew this would only continue in the workplace. Many employers were unsure of how to place women with technical backgrounds, and would assign them tedious work for which these women were not trained. For women, MIT was only the beginning of a long battle with societal norms, and this semi-bleak prospect of their future was daunting for many female students.⁷⁶

The Committee decided to work to correct these problems through a steady process of change. They discouraged the more misogynistic professors from teaching, offering them research opportunities in their place, thus allowing more open-minded professors (some of whom were women themselves) to teach instead. The Committee also increased the support networks for women, particularly women graduate students, hiring more female mentors and setting up peer groups. They encouraged the administration and faculty to ease women graduate students into laboratory groups, and to be more considerate of all female students' opinions during seminars and lectures.⁷⁷ In addition, the Committee encouraged MIT to offer career counseling to female students, in order to help them understand their situation in the real world.

Dotty Bowe served on this Committee until she retired from MIT in 1987. Her contributions to the student environment, and the work she did for this committee during this time, helped to change the balance of women, not only at MIT, but in the working world as well.

Association of MIT Retirees

After Dotty Bowe's time at MIT, she retired. She spent her early retirement years helping with the inclusion of the varied women's activities in the MIT archives and helping to support the organizations she had begun at MIT, such as WILG. Dotty found her early retirement far less stimulating than she would wish, and in the early 90's, she focused her abilities on the creation of an MIT Retirees Association.⁷⁸ At that time, senior vice president Bill Dickson asked Dotty Bowe and Walter L. Milne, Assistant to the Chairman and the President, to explore ways for MIT retirees to remain engaged with the Institute and to stay connected to friends and colleagues.

Dotty and Walter organized a meeting in June 1993 to discuss the feasibility of creating an MIT Center for Learning and Involvement in Retirement.⁷⁹ Dotty's research indicated that such a

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Study of Academic performance of Grad Student Women in EECS at MIT (6/6/84)

⁷⁷ A Study of the Graduate Student Academic Environment at MIT, 1981, p. 4

⁷⁸ Traci Swartz, correspondence.

⁷⁹ 1993 survey to Quarter Century Club members (who attended the summer picnic) and retirees

center could take any number of directions depending on the interests of MIT retirees. For instance, the Harvard Learning in Retirement Institute primarily focused on educational courses and intellectual pursuits. Other retirement models included opportunities for retirees to participate in the arts, music, travel and other topics of interest. Under the auspices of the MIT Office of Special Community Services (OSCS) where the Cambridge branch of the AARP was located, Dotty, Walter, and Steve Fairfield, manager of the OSCS, conducted a survey of Quarter Century Club members and retirees to evaluate interest in establishing an MIT organization for employees 50 years of age and older and retirees and to learn what activities appealed to them.

The response to the questionnaire was very positive. During the spring of 1994, Walter and Dotty harnessed this positive momentum and organized a seminar series for the coming academic year.⁸⁰ Funds were made available from the OSCS for mailings to announce the seminar series to be sponsored by the office of Joan Rice, Vice President for Human Resources. The seminar series proved to be a successful pilot project and the MIT administration supported the establishment of a comprehensive retiree organization. The Campus Activities Complex, under the direction of Phillip J. Walsh, was initially responsible for overseeing the new retiree program; later, the MIT Office of Special Community Services (since named the MIT Community Services Office) assumed responsibility of the program.

The incipient retiree organization loosely defined its purpose in an early mission statement:

To develop and carry out a program for and by members of the MIT retirement community. The program would provide an informal format for activities and study sections related to special skills and interests for the retirement years. It would also provide a link between MIT and its retirees to allow them to remain in contact with MIT.⁸¹

The Association of MIT Retirees was officially established in 1994. Founders Dotty and Walter served as co-chairs during the formative years of the Association.⁸² Dotty spearheaded the publication of the first MIT retiree directory and newsletters as well the development of an MIT retiree identification card and travel program. Dotty and Walter actively promoted the Association among retirees, introduced a variety of seminars and activities, and modeled a strong infrastructure that continues to support this thriving organization today.

Over time, the Association has expanded its scope and yet remains true to its original mission.⁸³ The Association continues to be supported by the MIT Community Services Office and routinely partners with many departments across campus and Lincoln Lab. The organization is led by a retiree volunteer advisory committee, has an active paid membership of 900, and offers a vibrant year-round program of educational and social opportunities including cultural tours, day and overnight travel, social gatherings, seminars, workshops, and community volunteerism.

To express appreciation to MIT and to recognize MIT colleagues, mentors, and friends, the Association established the MIT Retirees Association Undergraduate Scholarship Fund in 2006

⁸⁰ "Retirees group marks 10 years." Tech Talk, Volume 48 – Number 28. May 19, 2004.

⁸¹ "Draft of statement for 1995-96 program," History section, Dorothy Bowe, May 1995

⁸² Joan Loria, former director of exhibitions, MIT Museum

⁸³ Tech Talk, Feb 14, 2001.

under the leadership of co-chair Jane Griffin, former executive assistant to the vice president for finance and treasurer. The scholarship fund provides financial support to MIT students with first preference to direct descendants or family members of retired MIT employees. Since its inception, the fund has raised over \$37,000 in donations and has awarded four scholarships to MIT students.

The Association is also a member of BACURA (Boston Area College and University Retiree Associations) which includes MIT, Harvard University, Boston College, and Boston University. BACURA's purpose is to share best practices with peer organizations and provide meaningful service to retiree members.

Seventeen years and going strong, the Association of MIT Retirees serves an important role in helping MIT retirees remain active and engaged in life pursuits and remain an integral part of the MIT community thanks in large part to the foresight, organizational skills and community spirit of Dotty Bowe and Walter Milne.

Conclusion

Although Dotty Bowe died in 2001, her legacy will live on forever. She had an important role in transforming MIT from a university which primarily specialized in teaching men, into a completely co-ed university. Her ability to inspire women to enter technical fields changed the American workscape, and her encouragement helped women at MIT to gain benefits they might not have gotten otherwise. But above all, she was a close friend and support system to many generations of women at MIT. Her kind words and wisdom changed the lives of female students at MIT, and her concern for their wellbeing changed MIT forever. Dotty participated in so many incredibly important endeavors, but with an unassuming, quiet, "get the job done" attitude – especially in an academic environment where egos are often huge, the management structure rigid and flat, keeping people of "inadequate credential" permanently out of recognition. She was always approachable, friendly, willing to work very hard, listen, pay attention to your concerns, network, and avoid the limelight – a catalyst for diverse accomplishments that someone with more authority would never have achieved. Her Memorial Service on April 21, 2001 was held in McCormick Hall with many attending (including her husband, Gerald Bowe, who sadly died on Sept. 26, 2001). The program from that Service is appended, along with copies of the shared remembrances by Emily Wick, Millie Dresselhaus, Mary Rowe, and Paul and Priscilla Gray.

Note:

Ongoing gifts in memory of Dotty may be made to the MIT Retirees Assn. Scholarship Fund.

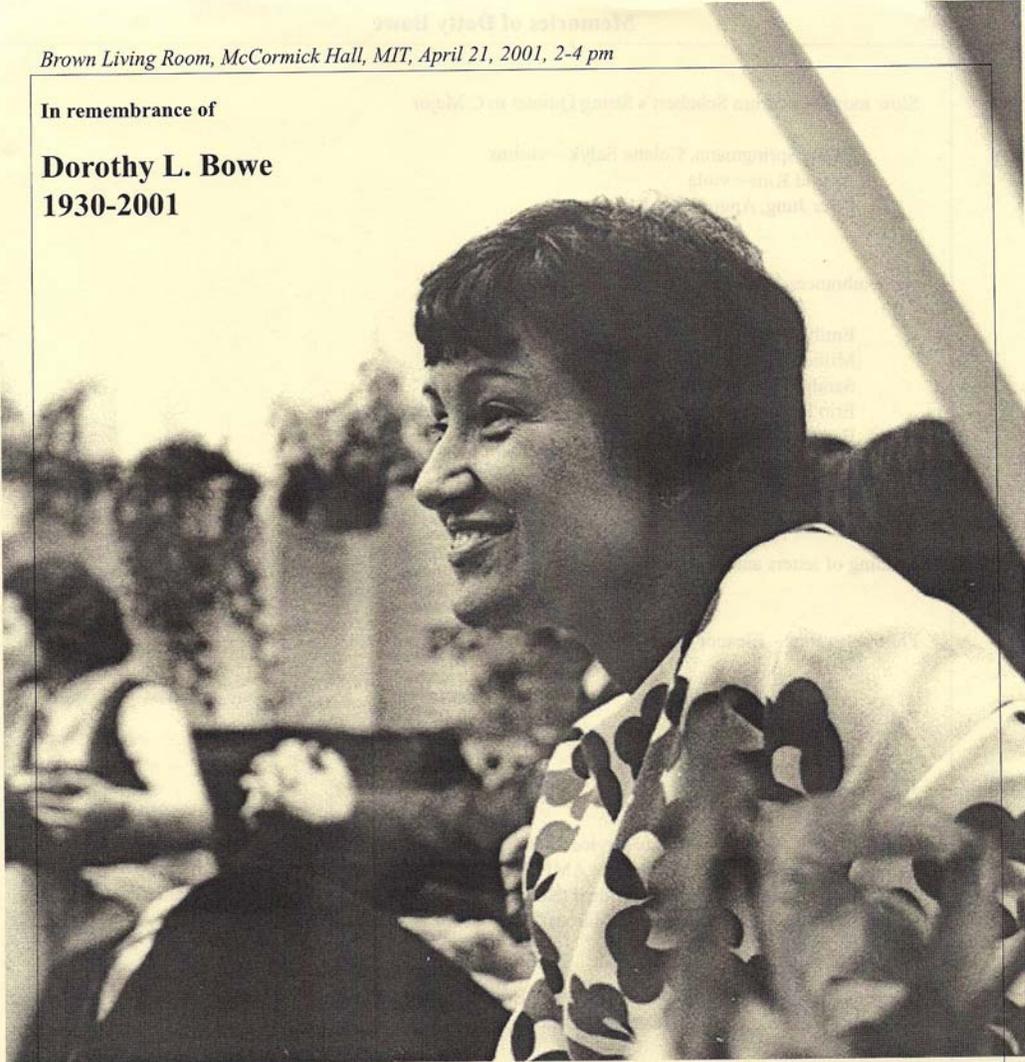
APPENDIX

Memorial Service and Remembrances

Brown Living Room, McCormick Hall, MIT, April 21, 2001, 2-4 pm

In remembrance of

Dorothy L. Bowe
1930-2001



Dotty Bowe worked tirelessly and effectively throughout her fifty years of association with MIT to advance the quality of life at MIT, for women in general and especially for women students. Her quiet power and cheerful, selfless nature enriched many lives and will be missed, but not forgotten, as an example to us all.

Memories of Dotty Bowe

Slow movement from Schubert's String Quintet in C Major

Philip Springmann, Colette Salyk – violins
Arnold Kim – viola
Peter Jung, Angus Davol – cellos

Remembrances – Margery Resnick

Emily Wick
Millie Dresselhaus
Sarah Simon
Erin Hester
Bonny Kellerman
Joanne Miller
Tony French

Reading of letters and general sharing of recollections

Flute selections – Eleanor Foltz

Refreshments

Special thanks for support of this service to the Campus Activities Complex Event Planning Group, the Women's Studies Program, AMITA, WILG, the Quarter Century Fund, and the Association of MIT Retirees. Individual thanks to Margery Resnick, Ted Johnson, Annmarie Cameron Foley, Kathryn Willmore, Marcus Thompson, Lis Drake and many others.

Contributions may be made to the MIT Dotty Bowe Memorial Fund,
c/o Bonny Kellerman, MIT Treasurer's Office.

Remembering Dotty Bowe
Emily L. Wick
April 21, 2001

I first met Dotty on June 4th, 1965, 36 years ago, when I walked from my lab down east in Bldg. 16 to Room 5-108 where Dotty worked with Jacquelyn Mattfeld who was about to leave for a job at Sarah Lawrence College. A few days earlier, Kenneth Wadleigh, the Dean of Students, had found his way down to my lab and asked whether I might be interested in becoming, on a half-time basis, an Associate Dean of Student Affairs who would have “primary responsibility for women students across the whole range of student activities.” The idea was a surprise to me because I knew very little about undergraduate students’ lives – male or female. In fact, because of this ignorance, I had volunteered to be a member of the Faculty Committee on Student Environment, which Ken Wadleigh chaired. I guess that is how he knew I existed. Also, when it came to finding possible women faculty members who might be candidates for the Associate Dean position, there was a very short list! There were only three of us on the faculty: Elspeth Rostow (in the Political Science or the Economics Department?), Margaret Freeman in Languages, and myself, a chemist in the Department of Nutrition and Food Science, and the only one of these who had tenure on the faculty.

So on June 4, 1965, I came to see what working in the Dean’s Office might be like. Of course, the minute Dotty Bowe welcomed me in her warm, friendly way, I began to feel positive about the prospects. Dotty, however, must have had some worries. With me being there only half time, a big burden would fall on her. Well, I decided to take the job and Dotty and I became team-mates and good friends.

Dotty knew far more about the basic functions of MIT than I did – that is, how students, secretaries, departments, and faculty were all interwoven and inter-related. Her years working with Prof. John Norton in the Metallurgy Department had taught her that, and she had a network of friends spread throughout the community. I was very fortunate to team up with her. She knew how to get things done.

Our goal was to get to know as many students as possible on an individual basis – not in any authoritarian way, but as fellow members of the community. By doing this, we hoped to help each student help herself, in her own way, to get all the riches possible from MIT. To accomplish this, we tried all possible ways to get students to drop in at the office. We also settled down to learn about all aspects of students’ interactions with MIT. A primary goal was to earn the trust of the women students and alumnae.

We were fortunate in the location of our office (5-108) on the corridor along Mass Avenue on the way to the Building 7 lobby. It was a reasonable route to take from McCormick Hall, even on sunny days, but particularly good in bad weather. And with Dotty in the outer office looking up with a smile and saying “Hi There,” it became a drop-in location. Dotty deserves the credit for this. She was there all day. The door was always open. Because of her friendly, cheerful, gentle, but strong and sensitive, ways, she got to know many students. She took away the stigma of its being “a Dean’s Office.” Some years later we learned we had had some real success in our endeavors because Paula Stone, Class of 1972, wrote that in her “first hectic days at MIT The most valuable piece of information I ever received was scrawled in the margins of a copy of The Tech – it was a map of the Institute with an “X”

marking the spot” of (our) office. Paula continued, “All freshmen coeds were given in one form or another, the directions to Emily Wick’s and Dotty Bowe’s office, and advice to feel free to talk to them, about anything, and everything that was on our minds.”

When Dotty and I heard this, we just swelled with joy – as we did some 26 years later in October 1999 at the gala 100th Anniversary of AMITA. There we were, surrounded by wonderful energetic young women, whom we had known as students, who are now university presidents, astronauts, entrepreneurs, doctors, lawyers, professors, and who knows what else! It is greatly rewarding!

Dotty and I worked together for about 6-1/2 years from July 1965 to January 1972. During that time, there had been three MIT Presidents (Stratton, Johnson, and Wiesner). A particularly tumultuous year was 1970, with protests and marches related to divestment of the Instrumentation Lab, the war in Vietnam and Cambodia, and the tragedy at Kent State. There were many challenges.

In January 1972, Mildred Dresselhaus and Paula Stone became co-chairs of a newly established “Ad Hoc Committee on the Role of Women Students at MIT.” And during that same January, the Women’s Forum quite spontaneously organized itself. Dotty moved on to the Financial Aid Office and new successes. I went back to my graduate students and department and eventually on to fascinating, rewarding work at Mount Holyoke College.

I have been greatly privileged and blessed to have known, worked with, and been Dotty Bowe’s friend for all these years. She was a very extra special and dear person. To know her was to love her.

Memories of Dotty Bowe

Millie Dresselhaus

Dotty Bowe was my close friend ever since we met in 1967, but especially during the year 1967-1977, when we saw each other daily, both because of our car pool and our common interest in MIT women students. Dotty was my closest link to the women students both because of her knowledge and interest in the students and because she saw MIT from the perspective of the students.

During the years 1967-1977, when she was the car pool driver for most of the week, we had the strongest ties. I would say that the years 1967-1970 were her happiest yet because these were the years when she worked in the Dean's Office with Emily Wick, Dean of Women Students. In her capacity as Emily's staff person she could work directly with students all day on all aspects of their campus life. She was always attracted to students with problems, and worked tirelessly to help students overcome their problems, whatever their origin - family, roommates, financial. She was happiest when she was with students and doing things to improve the quality of their lives. She was their strongest advocate on campus and knew better than anyone else whom to go to and how to organize them to solve student problems.

She did many things for me while in the Dean's Office. Initially she organized and provided staff support for my weekly mentoring sessions for MIT women students in the Cheney Room (starting in 1967, my first year in a faculty role). She played a similar role in getting me into reading admission folders for women students with Emily Wick. This led to our request to the faculty for equal admissions requirements for women and men to MIT, providing staff support and critical inputs to the preparation of a one page document, which successfully sailed through a faculty vote to bring equal admissions to MIT in the 1968-69 time frame.

When in 1970, MIT decided to close the Office of the Dean of Women's students and to consolidate the activities for women and men into a single entity, Dotty was very concerned about the welfare of the women students, particularly women students with problems and who needed more nurturing. More than anyone else, she mobilized women student leaders and faculty to unite and speak up on behalf of women students interests. From this evolved the Women's Forum as well as a large study on the quality of life for women students at MIT. I co-chaired this large study with Paula Stone, an undergraduate at Senior House, and Dotty provided a great deal of staff support and encouragement as we tackled the issues of marginalization of women students in the classroom, equal access to housing, athletic, medical facilities and many other issues. That this study was so influential in improving the quality of life for women students owes much to the effort of Dotty Bowe.

The Women's Forum started through an error in a notice calling for a meeting of women students regarding reorganization of the Office of the Dean of Women Students. By omitting the word "student" from the notice, masses of women from all walks of life arrived at the appointed meeting place, telling the MIT Administration, that there was a need to address the concerns of women employees as well as women students. Dotty Bowe was extremely influential

in organizing the Women's Forum in its early years to address the interest of women throughout the Institute.

After 1970, when the independent office of the Dean of Women Students disappeared, Dotty moved over to the Financial Aid Office. Here she officially addressed financial aid issues for all students, but unofficially this was still the place where women students gravitated when they had problems and needed an understanding consultant.

Dotty helped me with organizing a Women's Faculty group in the 1970-71 time frame. This group met approximately monthly at first and served to mentor women faculty throughout the Institute and to discuss how women faculty could serve as advocate and role models for women students. Dotty was invaluable in organizing and running the meetings of the Women Faculty Group, especially when I became increasingly busy myself as Associate Head of Electrical Engineering (1972-74) and later as Director of the Center of Materials Science and Engineering (1977-83). The various activities that we did at MIT to expand the opportunities of women for study and careers in Science and Engineering attracted national attention, leading to a grant from the Carnegie Foundation in 1973 to promote such activities.

Dotty Bowe was the person who provided the glue and staff support to make the grant a big success for women at MIT. The grant gave financial support for a number of programs, two of which I chaired: the Women Faculty Group meetings (about 6 per year) and a student seminar subject offering called "What is Engineering" which I taught along with Sheila Widnall for about 6 semesters, after which it was taken over by the School of Engineering. I continued to chair the Women's Faculty Group until about 1983, using funds from the Abby Rockefeller Mauze Chair which I held (1973-85) to support this activity. The "What is Engineering" class drew about 100 students/semester and helped many women decide to study engineering as MIT undergraduates. Dotty was a enormous help in arranging the details of all of the activities connected with the Carnegie grant, keeping records and writing reports.

Dotty had been the unofficial archivist on women at MIT ever since I knew her. She knew everything about women's activities and kept accurate and up-to-date files of everything related to women at MIT.

My close contacts with Dotty diminished starting in 1977 for two reasons. First I became Director of CMSE in 1977 and my husband Gene came down to MIT from Lincoln Lab, strongly curtailing my participation in the Dotty Bowe car pool. Secondly, I became increasingly involved with national activities starting in the mid 1970s and had less time for MIT women's activities. In 1981, I was elected to become President of the American Physical Society and the time I could spend on activities related to MIT women decreased sharply, which meant that I spent less and less time with Dotty.

As I look back over the past, I can say that Dotty Bowe has an enduring place in m life as a friend, as an advisor and consultant, and as a force who made a great difference in the quality of life for so many women students and staff at MIT. Those who knew Dotty will remember her passion and her impact forever.

MEMORIES OF DOTTY BOWE

Mary Rowe

I first met Dotty Bowe in 1972, when I was interviewing with the then Chancellor of MIT. I sat down with her to hear of the history of women students at MIT. I heard about the need for women's living space, the importance of the Cheney Room, the importance of Emily Wick's work as Dean. She told me of a President's wife checking the upkeep of the women's bathrooms, about difficulties for women in athletics. I heard for some hours of the wide scope of her concerns for the thriving of women students.

Then I began to hear about Dotty's concern for all women: especially women staff and support staff. Her support to and leadership in the Women's Forum was essential to its effectiveness. I heard about early days when most of the departmental administrative officers of MIT were women. I heard about the care and keeping of the women's lounges, almost all of which are now gone to student lounges or departmental space. I heard about the need for training and career development for women support staff.

Together with dozens of other women, we lived through the work of finding a women's sauna, staff for women's sports, financial aid for women graduate students, support for Professional Secretaries to be able to take the national exams, support for adding support staff into the MIT telephone book. We collected the stories of women whose names were left off a list, or left out of a major planning group, and worked to enhance the representation of women on committees. We encouraged women in the departments to form departmental women's groups. We applauded the formation of a section of the Medical Department for women's health services. We worked for the appointment of women in the campus police.

Later came the Women's Staff Group, the Women's Independent Living Group and serious work on the archives of MIT, and the recording of oral histories from some the earliest women graduates, like Dorothy Weeks.

I remember an important moment twenty years ago, when I sat down with Dotty and many others to make a list of some of the structures at MIT that were important for the thriving of women. Here is the list of 1983 (See Table 1). Dotty was involved in many of these initiatives..... as well as I can remember perhaps fifteen of these initiatives. What an important person she was!

TABLE 1
SELECTED PROGRAMS AND POLICIES THAT PROMOTE SEX EQUITY
AT FEATURED INSTITUTIONS

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

<p>Women's Coordinator Women's Studies Program Women's bulletin boards Several women's newsletters A women's monthly journal Numerous women's groups Black women's and minority groups Advisory Committee on Women Students' Interests <i>Women's Forum</i> Women Graduate Students in Computer Science Women Graduate Students in Political Science Ad Hoc Committee on Women's Admissions Association for Women Students (undergraduate) Women in Architecture Dean's Office Women's Group Society of Women Engineers Ad hoc Laboratory Women's Groups Chemical Engineering Women Graduate Students Personnel Women Women Faculty American Association of University Women Technology Wives Association Technology Women's Organizations Women's League Technology Matrons Organization of MIT Alumnae Administrative Staff Women Women's Advisory Group to the President Office-Clerical Work Group of Administrators and Support Staff to consider support staff issues: VDT safety, career development, harassment, etc. Lesbian women's groups Medical women's groups Telethon to recruit women students Special efforts to widen pool of women students: on- campus weekends, booklets, mailings, etc. Special freshmen orientation programs for women students Special fellowships for women students Admissions and financial aid reports on minorities and women</p>	<p>Tuition assistance (very highly used by support staff women) Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program directed by a woman and carefully affirmed for minorities and women Extensive medical services of special interest to women Groups and outreach for eating disorders, many other needs Strong harassment policies and procedures Sexual harassment programs, films, training sessions, outreach brochure Suite of rooms for women students Lounge space for women employees and students Women's dormitory Women's dining room (also open to men) Women's sauna Two chairs for women Part-time tenure ladder option Flexible time, split and part time jobs with supervisor's permission Leaves of absence with permission Informal mentoring system Posting system for all vacancies Serious search for all faculty Many in-house training programs on supervisory development, resume writing, assertiveness, etc. Systematic salary equity and promotional analyses Child care bulletin boards Family day care and center care Strong administrative Equal Opportunities Group Innovative (department based and school-based) affirmative action planning strongly backed by central administration Non-union grievance procedures (with minority and female administrators available to all) Many departmental studies on race and gender issues Workshops on gender and race issues, women's health issues, etc.</p>
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(from Bogart, Karen, ***Toward Equity: An Action Manual for Women in Academe***, Disseminated by the Project on the Status and Education of Women, Association of American Colleges, Washington, DC, 1984, pp. 9-10.)

Thoughts About Dotty

Paul and Priscilla Gray -- 20-Apr-01

We first met Dotty in the early '60s when Paul went to work part-time for Ken Wadleigh as associate dean for student affairs. As I recall, Dotty was working with Emily Wick - recently appointed as associate dean with responsibilities for women. This was at the time when women in the undergraduate classes were growing from a miniscule number toward what has become 40+ percent.

Dotty was wonderfully knowledgeable and supportive of a green dean and his wife, and was obviously greatly valued by the students who relied on her judgment and advice. She was a valued member of the office - then comprising fewer than a dozen people - and could always be relied on for wisdom and insights.

In the 80's, Priscilla had each year a cookies and milk party for incoming freshmen women. One year there was a young woman from a tiny village way up in Alaska. She was miserably homesick, she felt her clothes were hopelessly out of date, and she was overwhelmed. The few upper-class women who had come rallied round, and with Dotty's help, a shopping trip was arranged and, Priscilla believes, also included an appointment for a haircut. Dotty also quietly arranged for her to place a call to the only phone in her hometown from the Dean's Office. That little story for us was what Dotty Bowe was all about - such a wonderful and essential part of the fabric of this special place.

Much more recently, Dotty was - along with Walter Milne - a prime mover in the creation and support of the MIT Retirees' Association. In this effort, as in all her other activities at the Institute, Dotty's abiding delight with and respect for people, and her deep sense of service to others was evident throughout.

We will not soon find her equal.