



Maree Dowdey

1. Dowdey discusses lye soap and quilting traditions...(02:25)

Narrated by Rowland Alston

<Video begins with music playing and M. Dowdey by a basket of soap>

<Video shows a close up of some of M. Dowdey's soap>

<Video shows R. Alston and M. Dowdey standing together>

R. Alston: Appreciating her childhood, by teaching and remembering the folk art, that's what Maree Dowdey does, of Columbia, South Carolina.

<Video shows close up of M. Dowdey>

R. Alston: Ms. Dowdey, you consider yourself a folk artist, but what is a folk artist?

M. Dowdey: A folk artist is someone who has learned the skills through various family members and extended family members. I grew up in Richland County, out in the country, and I watched grandparents and many family members doing the old fashioned folk arts, which I dearly love, never dreaming that I would be teaching them.

<Video shows R. Alston and M. Dowdey standing together>

R. Alston: Well let's talk about some of your skills. You've got one of making soap, making soap the old fashioned way.

<Video shows M. Dowdey stirring a kettle>

R. Alston: How do you make your soap?

<Video shows a close up of the kettle>

M. Dowdey: Soap is made by recycling any grease that's generated from the kitchen. Also from grease that is gotten from rendering fat at butchering time. And then you have lye, which is gotten from dripping water through fireplace ashes, which gives you potash. Potash is another name for lye.

<Video shows R. Alston and M. Dowdey standing together>

R. Alston: Well you've got some lye soap here and it really has an unusual smell to it. It really smells clean doesn't it?

<Video shows close up of soap>

M. Dowdey: I think it does. Uh, my husband says you can still smell the pig in it *<they laugh>*. But a lot of people enjoy using it.

<Video shows R. Alston and M. Dowdey standing together>

R. Alston: Of course we go to large department stores now to buy blankets, but uh, years ago, all throughout the south, women could be seen on the porch, quilting and, uh, you put some material together that certainly reminds me of a old fashioned quilt.

<Video shows close ups of various quilts>

R. Alston: Do you just use scrap quilts or what exactly is a quilt made of?

M. Dowdey: Well since I'm a traditional artist, I use a lot of scrap materials, because I also sew.

<Video shows M. Dowdey quilting>

M. Dowdey: However, nowadays women go out and buy materials to plan certain color schemes. To me, the, uh, beauty of the antique quilts, uh, is the fact that it is scrap fabrics done from a lot of recycled clothing even.

<Video shows close up of M. Dowdey's signature on a quilt>

R. Alston: Doing things the old fashioned way really brings a lot of joy to Maree Dowdey doesn't it?

M. Dowdey: It certainly does.