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The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Bruce Barthol
Free Speech Movement Oral History Project

Interviews conducted by
Lisa Rubens
in 2000

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Interviewer: Lisa Rubens
Transcriber: Emily Chang

[Interview 1: July 21, 2000]
[Tape 1]

Rubens: I'm with Bruce Barthol. This July 21, 2000 at the San Francisco Mime Troupe building in San Francisco. When did the Mime Troupe get this building?

Barthol: '73 maybe. We bought it. We got a loan from someone with money and the profits out of *Dragonlady's Revenge* [1974] in New York. And the building was not that expensive. I mean, it was at the time. It was, like, \$50,000.

Rubens: And when did you literally start with the troupe?

Barthol: There was some tangential relationship before I went to England. I get back from England in '72, in May or June, and then joined the East Bay Sharks in Berkeley, which included Arthur Holden, who had been in the troupe and was to be again in the troupe. When I was in the Sharks, it was Phil Marsh, Arthur, Clyde Flowers, and Victoria Thatcher. And anyway, we were working on a show in September--the Sharks and some people from the Mime Troupe, including Joan Holden. I think it was Joan who rewrote a script that the Sharks had called the *Vixen Show*. We worked for the McGovern campaign and did one to three shows a day, six days a week from Monterey to Sonoma and to Sacramento.

Rubens: All right. Let me back up then. Where were you in the fall of 1964?

Barthol: I was a freshman at Berkeley, just started.

Rubens: And why had you come to Berkeley?

Barthol: Well, I was born in Berkeley. And the Bay Area--though we had moved when I was five to Pennsylvania, and then from Pennsylvania to L.A., and then moved a couple times in L.A., and lived in Spain for six months. Then, I actually started Berkeley when I was sixteen. I had started school early. I skipped a semester in elementary school and got out early from high school by going to summer school. And I had applied to a few places: Reed, Berkeley, University of Mexico, and maybe Swarthmore.

Rubens: Why University of Mexico?

Barthol: Sounded like a good idea to me. Got accepted to Berkeley, mostly on test scores since I got a non-academic diploma from high school.

Rubens: What high school, by the way?

Barthol: Grant High in the valley. But Berkeley had always sort of been my--my grandparents had lived up here in the Bay Area. San Francisco and Berkeley were like always the place we were from. And Berkeley was cool. The only beards in the United States, to my knowledge in the 1950s, were--there might have been a couple in Greenwich Village.

Rubens: Would you come up to visit your grandparents?

Barthol: Yes. Even came up in high school on the bus or with a friend and stayed with my grandparents and went and hung out in North Beach and liked that.

Rubens: So how did you know that Berkeley was cool, and why would you go to North Beach? What did you know already as a--I would say--a precocious young kid--?

Barthol: Let's see. Well, being from Berkeley, there was a certain awareness. And my father got a Ph.D. after the war and--

Rubens: At Berkeley?

Barthol: At Berkeley. And yes, actually, both my folks went to Berkeley. My grandmother went to Berkeley.

Rubens: All right, let's get some family information.

Barthol: My mom's name: Ester Annette Simpson Barthol.

Rubens: And dad?

Barthol: Richard Karl Barthol.

Rubens: By the way, what kind of name is Barthol?

Barthol: German.

Rubens: And grandma? Mother's side? Dad's side?

Barthol: Mother's side: Rebecca Cohen.

Rubens: But not Jewish?

Barthol: Yes.

Rubens: Was Jewish--

Barthol: Well, kind of Jewish, not much. [laughs] My great-grandfather, Isadore Cohen, was a Polish Jew, but didn't stay in the ghetto in New York. He basically walked across the country with a wagon train as some kind of

peddler and ended up in Lake Tahoe and Stockton, and he eventually had a saw mill. And it's his lumber that built the now ghost town of Bodi. Then he moved his whole family down to Berkeley and put all of his children through UC, including the girls, which was not usual at that time. And where they lived, I don't think there were ten Jews for a minion. I think he was real secular and a kind of Germanophile. Pre-Hitler, you know, Germany.

Rubens: Did you know him?

Barthol: No. No, he was long, long dead. But there was almost no Jewish tradition in my family. My mother was raised Presbyterian, briefly.

Rubens: So your father had a Ph.D. in--?

Barthol: Psychology. And my mother went to Cal. She got a B.A. She then went to New York when she graduated and was enrolled in the Group Theater and spent a year, 1938, I guess, with them. It was Depression time, and then she came back after a year and went to work, had a job with the San Francisco World's Fair. My dad also worked on Treasure Island and--

[There is a brief diversion about the 1939 San Francisco World's Fair]

Barthol: My dad worked at a so-and-so's little house of miniatures or something-- curios--and one of his jobs was to stand at the exit line. It was a free thing, but he said, "Everybody hold your own donation," and they kind of put on a show. It may have been a magic thing. My mom worked two different places.

Rubens: This was lucky to have a job, presumably.

Barthol: Yes. I think she worked briefly. I guess that was where she worked. She worked for United Airlines for a while and then got retired, probably for union activity--a little unclear. They didn't say that, but she'd been carousing and talking to other people working.

Rubens: So how did they meet?

Barthol: They met at Cal. They both were in a theater or acting program for no credit, interestingly enough. And so my mom's grades weren't so hot coming out of Berkeley, but that's because she spent all her time in Little Theater, which was actually for a non-credited thing at a school. If you look up theater in San Francisco in the thirties, in any kind of yearbook, they list Little Theater as one of the venues of that. Other people--for instance, Gregory Peck was there. It had a different name at that point.

- Rubens: Where was it literally?
- Barthol: Berkeley. Cal. It was part of the university, but not if you did those things. You didn't get any credit for it.
- Rubens: So you come by your profession through heredity?
- Barthol: To a degree, yes.
- Rubens: What made your father move? I assumed it was your father. Maybe I'm being sexist here--
- Barthol: No. No. He finished, got his Ph.D. and got a job at Penn State--his first teaching job. And we were there for three years.
- Rubens: And then UCLA?
- Barthol: Yes.
- Rubens: And would you say your upbringing had an academic cast? I mean were you aware of ideas--?
- Barthol: Yes, yes. My mom, when we had moved to Pennsylvania, didn't ever get a TV until '55, I think. So I remember--it must have been '54--going to the neighbor's house, our next-door neighbor's. My mom and the neighbor lady watching the Army-McCarthy Hearings.
- Rubens: Did she work when she was rearing you children?
- Barthol: Off and on. In Pennsylvania she didn't, except she was very active in politics and helped get rid of the blue laws. There were no movies on--
- Rubens: The blue laws referring to no liquor on Sundays?
- Barthol: Yes, but there was still no hard liquor. You had to go to the county seat; you had to go to Belfont to buy liquor. You could buy beer. I don't imagine they had any wine back there.
- Rubens: [laughs]
- Barthol: At that point. I'm sure they did, but it was like a farm town at that point and probably a real town-gown split. But it wasn't so apparent to me being a kid. It was kind of a great place to spend three years growing up. You know, in the winter, we'd sled down the streets. There was one row of houses past ours and then farm land, and there was a swimming hole on the outside of town. Sometimes we had trouble from another group of kids from the other part of the town who were also that kind of--pretty benign.

- Rubens: Where were you in the birth order, and how many?
- Barthol: I have an older brother, four years older.
- Rubens: So the two of you.
- Barthol: That's it.
- Rubens: And then to L.A., UCLA?
- Barthol: Yes, lived in an apartment in Westwood for half a year, then moved to Van Nuys.
- Rubens: Did you go to Grant High School?
- Barthol: Actually, and then went to Spain, which I think was a very broadening experience at the age of eleven. I went to Air Force Dependent School in Madrid, which was probably a great education about America.
- Rubens: How so?
- Barthol: Full of army brats. You know, the basic units' children. And there was a split, too, between the embassy kids and the army kids. For the army kids--children of those in basic orientation--Spain was a drag, and they wanted to go back to Oklahoma, where it's really neat. It struck me at the time as bizarre.
- On my first day in school--it all took place in this giant, giant apartment complex, a big square block with a center court that it housed. Well, on the outside, downstairs, there was a lot of Spanish stuff--shops and things. But inside was the Basic Exchange, as opposed to the PX; it's the BX because the PX was on the base. And it was out on [] Air Base was the--. That's where I played baseball--little league. And my first day in class, my mom had made me a sandwich. They always brought the milk up at about ten-thirty--reconstituted milk in containers to be nice and warm by lunch time.
- Rubens: [laughs]
- Barthol: And these three boys in my class stood around me as I was opening up my sandwich. My mother made me this Spanish roll with Spanish ham, and they said, "You eat Spick food?" [laughs] And I said, "I guess so."
- Rubens: What was your father doing there?
- Barthol: He was working with some form of USAID [U.S. Aid for International Development] over there, and at that point he was an industrial psychologist. He went around Spain lecturing. There were two Spaniards who kind of were attached to him. I don't know exactly what the arrangement was. They

translated speeches and they'd read them in Spanish. And he would meet these industrialists and say things like, "If your workers know how to read and they have enough to eat, then they'll be more productive." And then the Spaniards would all go, "Oh, muy interesante." '59, Franco was in. There were soldiers outside of every town, a pair on each end. Spain was still very quiet politically. I mean, after the Civil War [1936-1938], nobody says much, nobody said much for twenty-five years. It was too brutal, and Madrid was still full of bullet holes.

Rubens: You can recall some of this?

Barthol: Oh, yes. Well, eleven's pretty old.

Rubens: Yes. I guess so.

Barthol: And I knew enough. I started to read about the Spanish Civil War when I was there. My folks had been supporters of the Republic, so I knew Franco was bad and Spain was backward.

Rubens: And surely, what these kids said was not in view--

Barthol: Well, they were just out of it. The American kids, by and large, were just--the enlisted men's kids specifically always called all adults "Sir" while they went on their various criminal rampages and whatever. [laughs] I had one teacher who was an out-and-out racist. Absolutely amazing.

Rubens: An American teacher?

Barthol: Yes. They were all American instructors. I think most of them were okay, but she was just a nut!

Rubens: Did you learn Spanish, by the way?

Barthol: Yes. Not that they particularly taught it, but at that age you absorb it. And I'd had a little bit before because of a sixth grade teacher in my elementary school who was interested in it. She made it part of the curriculum, and that gave me some basis, I guess. So I was pseudofunctional in six months.

Rubens: I'm going to bring you back to Berkeley. You had visited your grandparents; you thought San Francisco was cool. It sounds like you were pretty cool too. I mean, a bit progressive and adventurous.

Barthol: Yes.

Rubens: Was there something particularly that drew you to San Francisco?

Barthol: Well, I didn't like the San Fernando Valley very much, and San Francisco had a vibrancy. I guess I had felt it. I mean, I could compare it to other places

Back in Pennsylvania in the third grade, in class, we were going to organize a debate on evolution. There were only two kids who volunteered for the evolution: me and this kid who liked science. I remember he wore thick glasses--owly looking, a shrimpy guy, who was nice enough. We got along fine. But everybody else was like, you know, "There is no debate. The Bible says...quote..." And we would say, "But, blah blah blah," from our third grade perspective. So we lost. [laughs]

Rubens: But you're using this as an example of feeling against the grain.

Barthol: Feeling alienated from the mass culture, and why being in the Bay Area was--. [laughs] There were more like-minded people, and you knew the intelligence level was higher. That's probably not true.

Rubens: You mentioned beards--appearance as a measure. Was there anything else specifically in San Francisco that drew you? Was it music? Was it beatniks? All of it?

Barthol: Beatniks--I mean, music was not. Well, the folk scene. But the folk scene was everywhere.

Rubens: So, there you are in 1964. You're sixteen years old--

Barthol: --managed to get into Berkeley.

Rubens: Sounds like you more than managed.

Barthol: I think it was pretty much by a hair, the skin of the teeth. Test scores, and my dad and my mom were graduates, alumni. My grandmother was an alumna, and my dad taught at UCLA, so I don't know at that point--. But I did pretty well in National Merit Scholarship, and I got whatever the ranking is below where you don't get any money. You get the Honorable Mention or something, which is still enough. I was in Berkeley when I finally get a letter from Reed asking me to apply. [laughs] I had already applied and either not heard back or been rejected. But I graduated in August from high school and started Cal in September.

Rubens: And do you remember where you lived?

Barthol: On Bowditch, at a boarding house. It was destroyed and torn down a year later. That was for one semester, and then I moved to sharing a house on Oregon Street--Oregon and Telegraph. And that was '64, '65. Then in '66, where was that? Was I in that boarding house for a whole year? Possible. Then a house on Oregon, and then moved to Russell Street, you know, just a

block away, also on Telegraph, right next door to what was Jabberwock coffee house. I then moved with guys who had been in the boarding house. I'm trying to remember if it was the second semester, or if it was a whole year and then we moved because I only went to Berkeley for a year and a half, and that would have been '64 to '65. Right.

I guess the one thing that makes it hard to remember is because it was the same walk--whether I walked from Oregon or Russell--to Cal. And I don't remember still going to Cal when I was living on Russell Street.

Rubens: So let me ask you this, and we'll kind of decide which way to go: Should we start with impressions of Berkeley, or what was your musical ability at that point?

Barthol: Well, I played some. My family played. My dad played piano some, my brother played upright bass. When we were in Spain, we got a guitar. And I had played clarinet in junior high school and then got more interested in guitar and folk music. So, before I came to Berkeley, I had already been to the UCLA Folk Festival. I was pretty deep into it. Not into the Kingston Trio, past the Kingston Trio and the Limelighters and into the Carter family and Woody Guthrie and Leadbelly.

I remember hearing on the radio a guy named Bob Dylan. So I went to buy his--. I heard him on the one FM folk music show in Los Angeles--Saturday mornings from ten to one or something. They played that. And I went to White Front [a discount store] to buy--to see if they had an album by this guy Dillon--D-I-L-L-O-N. How else would you spell it?

Rubens: Did you have any formal training? In guitar?

Barthol: I had taken guitar lessons from my brother's girlfriend--now wife of thirty some odd years. And they played. They were like a little folk duo, and we used to play.

Rubens: By the way, did he go to college?

Barthol: He went to UCSB and then flunked out. [laughs] And then he went to work. I guess my dad got him a job training porpoises at Point Mago Naval Base. And then he built a trimaran [type of boat with three hulls]. He and his future wife and a friend built a trimaran and then sailed it around the world. I think they left in '67 and got back in '70, or somewhere around there.

Rubens: So, there you are in Berkeley. You know the guitar. You're pretty deep into it?

Barthol: Into the guitar, yes. Played some autoharp, plunked on the banjo, played the harmonica.

Rubens: Didn't know what you were going to do particularly, though, in school?

Barthol: Thought that I would probably--well, I had a plan that was rapidly going downhill, which was to go from college to the army, go to the Monterey language school [Defense Language Institute], learn a couple of languages in two months. And then, after the army, go into the Foreign Service. My uncle was in the Foreign Service. I already figured international life was the way to go.

Rubens: When do you first become aware of the Free Speech Movement?

Barthol: [thinking] Probably--well, I was already a member of CORE. I had joined CORE when I was fourteen, I guess. The March in Washington was '63, right?

Rubens: Yes.

Barthol: And I remember being in Spain and reading about lynching in the South in '59. I had an early awareness about race. In fact, one of my first fights was whether it went, "Eenie, meenie, minee, moe, catch a nigger by the toe," or "catch a tigger by the toe." And I've always been taught it was Tigger from Winnie-the-Pooh. I remember getting into a fight about that when I was about six in Pennsylvania. It may have been somehow subliminal, but one of my friends going to childcare in Berkeley, and then kindergarten in Berkeley, was a black kid. Which was--no, I don't remember it being any kind of big deal at all, but I guess--

Rubens: Well, I imagine the early sit-ins in the South must have enlightened you.

Barthol: Oh, yes. Well, that was horrendous. I mean, at marches for freedom rights, people got fire-bombed, beaten, you know, like in the restaurant sit-ins. I think there's a big revisionist history now, which puts little emphasis on this, that really ignores the cost. Again, in war demonstrations later on, the thing everybody talks about now is how the soldiers got spit upon when they got back. But I remember the early anti-war marches, where people were always attacked at the back end by soldiers. Soldiers and yahoos and assholes. It was dangerous in the back of the march because that's where they picked people off and attacked. I haven't heard that account in anything, ever.

Rubens: And I don't know that I have either, so it's important to say.

Barthol: You know, later on, when there was the famous hard hats fighting the anti-war people on the steps of New York City Hall or the draft building in New York, those people were all paid. It was a paid day off for the construction workers.

Rubens: Is that right?

Barthol: Yes. Nixon organized it. That's fact. I mean, I can't give you the source right now but--

Rubens: We'll try to find it.

Barthol: I had a conversation with a friend of my brother's--it must have been in '63, I guess--where he said, "You know what we're doing in Vietnam? We have this stuff that's like burning jelly, and we drop it on villages and it adheres to human flesh." And I said, "No we don't. One, that would be wrong; two, it would be stupid because you drop that stuff on people, and they're going to hate you, and you've alienated the entire population." Gee, was I right!

And then, it went on and on. I guess it must have been in early '64, I remember Madame Ngu, the Dragon Lady from Vietnam, who came to L.A. to give a speech somewhere. I went down with the Young Democrats, which I was also a member of. There were two picket lines: Young Democrats and a new organization I never heard of, SDS.

Rubens: You were aware of it then?

Barthol: Well, they were there. I was aware of it when we got there.

Rubens: Where was that? Do you remember where the picketing was?

Barthol: Downtown somewhere. I remember my mother was playing bridge that day with Gretta Peck--Gregory Peck's divorced wife--and Gretta Peck said something about how those Communists are down there causing trouble, and my mom said something like, "Rather my son a Communist than a Fascist." Something like that.

Rubens: And CORE. Did you do anything particularly in CORE, in L.A.?

Barthol: Yes. I went to a sit-in. We sat in at the Board of Ed a couple of times.

Rubens: Wow. Did you have any desire to go to the South, Freedom Summer?

Barthol: I was too young. I was fourteen or fifteen then. And not really--. Jesus, to go there and subject yourself to that stuff--

Rubens: You would have loved to?

Barthol: Well, it's not like--even going to demonstrations, I always--it's not like I wanted to be out there and be ridiculed, humiliated, and later, the demonstrations got so big. It didn't happen, but, you know?

Rubens: Do you remember that? At the Board of Ed being ridiculed and--

- Barthol: No, not so much right there.
- Rubens: Okay.
- Barthol: I remember it--going back to when I got to Berkeley--what was going on were sit-ins that were Friday night demonstrations at Jack London Square for fair employment because it was all white in Oakland. And how Oakland was like the South. You know, you try to get back to the Berkeley line without getting pulled over by the Oakland cops, who all seemed to be from Mississippi and look like Sheriff Clark or whatever that big ass hole's name was. And so there's a lot of excitement. And Auto Row had already happened. Also I was aware things had happened in Berkeley, like the House Un-American Activities Committee also, because my parents had had friends who had suffered behind it.
- Rubens: Had suffered from McCarthyism and the hearings?
- Barthol: Yes. And also, almost anybody with any intelligence had gotten appalled at how it was used. Even that history is not that well known. So many strikes were investigated by HUAC, where you might think it's more like intellectuals and stuff, but they went to places where strikes had taken place. And as soon as HUAC showed up, things would collapse because you couldn't stand up to it.
- We had a record called the *Investigator*, which is a bit of underground culture made in Canada, sold under the table. It is about what happened when Joe McCarthy died in a plane crash and went to heaven, and he began to purge heaven of Communists. He called Karl Marx, and it was Karl Marx, the watchmaker. And so he sent them all to hell anyway and then eventually he got sent down the chute--old Joe. You know, down to hell.
- Rubens: You played this record in high school?
- Barthol: No, no. This was elementary school, this was a record I remember. Liberals had it. And my parents also had liked Richard Dier Bennett, who was a folk singer from the forties, and probably Burle Ives and Josh White. Josh White singing "Blues in Berlin."
- Rubens: Getting back to Berkeley: You remember demonstrating in Jack London Square the first fall?
- Barthol: Yes. Probably within the first couple of weeks or something. I went there to get plugged into that stuff also. It wasn't like a big surprise. The valley was so, you know, valley-ish.
- Rubens: None of that talk about "the Valley" or "Valley girls" had--

- Barthol: --existed. No. It wasn't that long out of orange groves and farms.
- Rubens: But to anyone who was outside mainstream, even a bit, they would feel that alienation?
- Barthol: Somewhat. CORE had a small chapter at my high school. And the Young Democrats, there were enough to have--there was a split. There was the left Democrats and the right Democrats. One interesting thing is a friend of mine in high school, who used to hang with us--. I mean, there was a Folk Music Club. I was in that. And so, we were the budding pre-hippies. First smoked weed when I was fifteen.
- Rubens: In high school--
- Barthol: Yes.
- Rubens: I mean, did you smoke through high school?
- Barthol: In. That was toward the end, and it was really rare except for the Mexican kids. I mean, it was not at all common. In fact, I remember when I got to Berkeley, the first semester, my English 1A TA was Gary Snyder, and he made a reference to a joint. And two of us knew what that was in Berkeley at that time, in the fall of '64, in the freshman English class. Actually, he was the prof. I mean, he was the teacher. He wasn't like an assistant, but lecturer maybe.
- Rubens: So you were going up there to get plugged into that?
- Barthol: And to go to where the coolest university in the country was. No private school bullshit either. Didn't want to go to Stanford and any of those.
- Rubens: Maybe Reed because it was--
- Barthol: --different. Yes. Quakerish, that school.
- I was sort of a Quaker. I had gotten involved with the AFSC [American Friends Service Committee] when I was in high school. Went on a Quaker youth trip. I was a junior counselor. That was the summer before I went to Cal, I guess. Is that right? No. Summer before my last year in high school.
- Rubens: All right. You came to Berkeley to get plugged into a lot of things, and you do. You say within a couple weeks you're politically engaged?
- Barthol: Well, it was always going on, so it didn't take any convincing of me to go there to Jack London Square to join the [pickets and demonstrations].

- Rubens: Were you aware of this controversy over handing out leaflets, of Jack Weinberg--?
- Barthol: Oh, yes. Sure. I was basically there and down for all of it. I didn't ever man a table, but that was only because I was probably shy. And then in the sit-ins--. Are we getting ahead?
- Rubens: No. People usually remember the car sit-in--
- Barthol: I was there. I was there and I went back. Those days, I remember, it was like, Thursday night, I guess--day two or something--that the frat boys came down and surrounded the crowd. They were flicking cigarettes into it and kicking people in the back row. They didn't surround the car. They were more, like, up on Sproul steps. And then this other huge crowd was surrounding it, looking at the whole thing. And then the chant went up: "Sit down. Sit down." And the whole rest of the people looking on sat down. So, all of a sudden, the numbers seemed to double. And I remember [laughs] Savio or somebody offered to let them speak--let the frat, the Greek guys, come up and stand on the cop car and address the crowd. And the frat boys even booed their own guy. They were just, you know, drinking beer.
- One of the wonderful things about that year was to watch the fraternities plummet in coolness. Within a year, they were taking non-fraternity people into those houses just to keep them full because it was so out of it. I mean, I never went to a Cal game, but my folks are still big fans. Different era, you know.
- I suppose ours was a big political education. I remember after some minor incident in the early part, the whole thing escalated. And it was only thanks to the idiocy of the university administration doing things that were absolutely illegal and illogical. You'll be considered guilty of these charges unless you do something. It was, like, strange in the reading that the university shall be free of secular and religious control, meaning that you couldn't organize on campus. Seemed like the absolute opposite of what that would mean. To watch the university just force people into supporting the Free Speech Movement--it was just funny almost, you know.
- Rubens: And then when it had finally begun to peter out sometime in November, we went home for Thanksgiving and--
- Barthol: Oh, that's when more people got charged, right?
- Rubens: Yes. They added onto the number of people who were going to be dismissed. And it was like handing the students a club.
- Barthol: And the faculty, because it was in early December that the faculty vote happened.

- Rubens: After the sit-in at Sproul Hall.
- Barthol: After the sit-in. Right.
- Rubens: That was the turning point.
- Barthol: Where Joan Baez sang, and we marched into Sproul Hall. Then they [FSM leaders] made an announcement, if you're under eighteen, leave. And I was seventeen at that point and a friend of mine, also seventeen, did stay. I always felt kind of bad about that. But he served time. The only people who ever served any time were the juveniles.
- Rubens: Really?
- Barthol: Yes. They got sentenced immediately; there was no trial. It was like juvenile court and they got three weekends, or something like that, of time. The guy who I remember was Lance Gray, and I may even have a number, but I haven't seen him in twenty-five years. But I ran into somebody who used to know him, back then, a couple years ago.
- And also something very formative happened. Because Vietnam was starting to crank along the back pages. But then we invaded, this must have been in early '65, we invaded the Dominican Republic. That was the turning point for me.
- Rubens: For you? Why?
- Barthol: Vietnam seems complicated, who knew what was going on very well. It wasn't that big a deal yet. But Juan Bosch got elected in the Dominican Republic and we overthrew him. And it was like this paranoid anti-communism that was the ruling ethic of the day. I mean, you didn't have to be a Red to think, you know, if we hadn't overthrown Arbenz in Guatemala in '53 or whenever it was, how many Indians would be alive today as opposed to somewhere between 300,000 murdered or 500,000 since then?
- Rubens: How were you aware of this stuff, by the way? Did you read a newspaper? Was it part of your community that talked? Did you listen to KPFA?
- Barthol: Yes. Well, I listened to--well, I don't even remember if I actually had a radio in my room at that point, but yes, there was midnight special. The folk music show, Saturday nights. Even went there, played.
- Rubens: To the station?
- Barthol: Yes. Like an open mike, or if I didn't play, I went down there once, once or twice. [Barthol gives Rubens a card with Lance Gray's old address]

He actually went and became a cowboy. He went up and worked on ranches, and I think that is what he still does.

Rubens: Did you get a new set of friends pretty quickly?

Barthol: Yes. Yes. Some of the guys in the boarding house. You know, Berkeley is so big, but then I met that guy, Phil Marsh, at a sit-in.

Rubens: Is that how you met him?

Barthol: Yes. We both had guitars.

Rubens: The big one?

Barthol: No. One of the early ones. There were a few, right?

Rubens: Yes, there were.

Barthol: Yes. Through Phil I met Mara Sabinson; I met Andria Snow who later was in the mime troupe.

Rubens: This guy Gray, obviously.

Barthol: Lance--I forgot where I met him.

Rubens: But Phil Marsh and you each had a guitar. Were there many other guitars, or few, or?

Barthol: It was a regular thing.

Rubens: A lot of people had guitars?

Barthol: Part of the ethos of the hero was the folk music.

Rubens: What kind of guitar did you have?

Barthol: At that point? I think it was like a Kay. Not a very good one--adequate steel string.

Rubens: Phil had just gotten his Martin. He had just returned from Europe, hadn't he?

Barthol: Phil? I think he may have. He had just come back from Europe when I met him.

Rubens: Was there any doubt in your mind that you would sit in on the night Joan Baez sang the demonstration into Sproul Hall?

- Barthol: I felt obligated to that. I stayed, and then I went home that night on the bus because they said, "Leave." And in the morning, woke up and heard that we were getting dragged out of Sproul so I went down and ripped up my Young Democrat card on the steps of Sproul Hall.
- Rubens: Why?
- Barthol: Pat Brown sent the troops in. First recognized betrayal by a Democrat followed by many many others. I'm still a registered Democrat. [laughs] But as Will Rogers said, "I'm not a member of any organized political party." [laughs]
- Rubens: It's always the Supreme Court we're trying to protect, isn't it?
- Barthol: I may even fail this time on that argument.
- Rubens: Do you remember classes on strike, or not going to classes?
- Barthol: Oh yes, I struck. Or picketed. It was scary there also because I remember long hair was starting to come in, and I remember that there were spontaneous addresses going on by involved students, and some raised a banner outside of Wheeler Hall. But the thing was always somebody with shorter hair who got up to talk, so that you wouldn't get slammed by the--I guess who we always thought of as--frat boys. Because there was also some people who got attacked sometimes.
- Rubens: I remember news cameras coming in. That's why I asked you, did you go and see the news reports. I remember that a lot of people did go back to the dorm or their fraternities to see if they were covered on the news. And I was a straight, a pretty straight person anyway, but I always dressed extra straight because I wanted to present a good image to the press. They were always focusing on the few beatnik-types, with long skirts and sandals and weird stockings. But the cameras went right by me to that one girl who had long hair and fishnet stockings or something.
- Barthol: Oh, even the weird people look pretty damn tame, don't they? That stayed that way for quite a while. You got Jerry Rubin in his squarest suit ever made right in that era.
- Rubens: He ran for mayor then sometime?
- Barthol: Yes.
- Rubens: Were you aware of a lot of dope around, marijuana?
- Barthol: I remember the announcement, especially for the women: "Make sure you have birth control pills in Sproul Hall, and if you have any weed, get rid of it."

- Rubens: Really. No one has mentioned getting rid of weed. Did people collect it?
- Barthol: The dope, no. And there wasn't much. And there was no smoking of it that I ever smelled and didn't occur to anybody to think about--
- Rubens: So the few people who might have had some probably flushed it down the toilet?
- Barthol: Yes. Yes. I'm sure that nobody got popped for possession in those busts. It wasn't that, you know it was not that pervasive. But give it, you know, eighteen months [laughs] and the whole world had changed.
- Rubens: Are there other observations that you had?
- I love these asides--you know, the Dominican Republic as a turning point. Turn toward what? Giving up on the Democratic party?
- Barthol: Well, a more radical analysis of what was going on was that we weren't the good guys always because--
- Rubens: What kind of classes were you taking, by the way?
- Barthol: I always was a history major, always for my three semesters. I started as a Spanish minor but then I didn't really stay long. I could have been a little too young for Berkeley in some ways. I got on probation--academic probation for a semester--but I also was on strike. I got a D in Spanish. I don't think I quite knew how to study for it. And my involvement with classes was disrupted. We were taught a lot by TAs at Berkeley. The Spanish TA struck too, so we met once or twice. I got a 1.98 and was on probation for the next semester and then got above a C average.
- And then another thing that I did was that summer of '65, after my first year, my parents had a contract with the Peace Corps to check on the relationship between health training and the reality in the field of public health, so I went with them. They got me a job, essentially with them, as an interpreter so I could function well enough to ask directions and this and that in Spanish. And so we went to Panama, Venezuela. Then they also had a little job there at UCLA, some kind of cultural relativity thing I don't quite remember. Then we went to Brazil, Chile, and then we went to Peru, not to work. I think we went to Peru on the way back. So it was like six weeks in South America, and that was real interesting.
- I guess after that was the Dominican Republic. I don't remember when that exactly happened. But I remember this split inside the Peace Corps. There were a lot of really cool people, but then in Caracas, there was this whole contingent of right-wing racists in the Peace Corps. A lot of them taught phys. ed., I think. Two Peace Corps people had been killed by the Venezuelan

military checkpoint, and these guys were saying how they deserved it because they were Commies. [laughs] My mother got really livid, I remember, at them. That hardly made the news.

You run into this kind of American split in other places. I don't want to besmirch all of my fellow students at the Air Force Dependents school in Madrid either, but that kind of yahoo ignorant stuff is what partly drew me to Berkeley--to go to Berkeley, to go to school and to get away from that, which happened a lot. And so, I came back there and did another semester of what turned out to be my last semester. I withdrew. I didn't flunk out; I just didn't want to go to school any more for a while.

My tentative plan was to go to work, to look around for a job. My grandfather, who died in '64--my dad's dad--started as an office boy at PG&E at the age of fifteen or something. He ended up being the undersecretary of the corporation. And I went to see a friend of his at PG&E to get me a job on a crew. I was eighteen when I quit college.

Rubens: You were really going to go to work?

Barthol: Well, I was going to work for three months and then go to the Bahamas and look for Joseph Spence, the Bahaman guitar player.

Rubens: Tell me about that. How did you know about him?

Barthol: He had been recorded by Fritz Richmond of the Jim Kweskin Jug Band. It was one of the records that was around for we cognoscenti, anyway.

Rubens: I can see the cover of the Kweskin album in my mind. I didn't know Spence.

Barthol: He's great. He's got to be dead now. His wife was one of the Pindar Family, and in some of the Spence records he's playing in his house, recording them, and you can hear his wife singing in the kitchen. But in fact he's also recorded with the whole Pindar Family singing, which is just great. And Spence was a very particular kind of guitar player; he had like three parts going on his finger-picking style. Really interesting base lines and his foot tapping, too, adding another rhythmic thing. And he growled when he sang.

Rubens: So you were going to look for him in the Bahamas?

Barthol: Yes. Do some traveling and go to some place cool. But what happened is that I was then living on Russell Street, and my friend Barry Melton, who I had gone to high school with-- Well, I was sharing a room with Joe McDonald at that time. My split of the apartment was \$27.50 a month. So making a \$2.19 an hour at the phone company--

Rubens: Oh, you did get the job?

- Barthol: I got a job at the phone company, not at PG&E. Right. Worked in Oakland as an installer-repairman. Mostly they had been yanking phones out of people's houses.
- Rubens: For not paying the bill?
- Barthol: Yes. Or phones left in business. I did a lot of that.
- Rubens: You split \$27.50 a month?
- Barthol: No. \$27.50 a month was my share. I think we paid \$120, \$145 a month for the upstairs flat, three-bedroom, no living room [laughs]--three-bedroom, bath and kitchen at Russell and Telegraph, right next door to the Jabberwock, which is now a hole in the ground. The landlady there, Mrs. Shirrel, was an old lady then--she must have been close to eighty. She was very nice, and she liked us. That was the beginning of the Country Joe and the Fish. Joe McDonald was my roommate, literally, and Barry Melton my housemate. They had got together and recorded the first Fish EP, and invented the name. It was Peter Krug on one side, Country Joe and the Fish on the other. This is called a Rag Baby record [label].
- Rubens: Peter Krug was another artist? How had you met Country Joe that he became your roommate?
- Barthol: At the Jabberwock, I'm sure.
- Rubens: And the landlady--
- Barthol: Yes. Mrs. Shirrel, I think, must have been some kind of a Red from the South. I'm not really sure of her story, but she sounded kind of open and cool. When they tore down the Jabberwock, she made a garden, a spectacular garden on that corner that lasted for a number of years. She must have died by 1970.
- Rubens: When did you first start going to the Jabberwock? Do you remember? Was it that fall of '64?
- Barthol: Probably. Probably.
- Rubens: And what kind of music was being played there?
- Barthol: Folk music.
- Rubens: Who owned it?
- Barthol: Bill Ehlert. William Ehlert, known as the Jolly Blue Giant because he wore blue work shirts and jeans and cowboy boots, had a beard and was real tall. And people came through there; it was a stop in the folk circuit. There was the

Kabal on San Pablo at that point, where I saw Mississippi John Hurt. A couple of places I couldn't get into because I was underage. The Jabberwock, I think, had beer and the wine but you could get in under twenty-one. There was a pick-up band there. I sometimes washed dishes at the Jabberwock when I was next door, and there was a pick up band that would play. I don't know if they would actually have gigs there, but it was like a folk music group, slightly eclectic, and briefly called the Southern Ohio Mountain Boys, cut short to the SoHi Boys.

- Rubens: How long had he had the Jabberwock, do you know, roughly?
- Barthol: A couple years maybe?
- Rubens: And what about the Oakland scenes? Did you go to Oakland at all? Was there a black scene?
- Barthol: No. Stayed out of Oakland still at that point, by and large. [laughs] Not because it was black but because of the cops. Also, Berkeley had a little bit more. My mom was born in Oakland, actually a hospital in San Francisco, but raised in Oakland, went to Oakland Tech. My dad went to Lowell.
- Rubens: And San Francisco--I mean, that's just another country, sort of.
- Barthol: I went to Grant Street. What was the name of the club? There was a folk club there.
- Rubens: Yes. On Grant Street. Small little thing on the left. Ooh! I think I saw Mississippi John Hurt there.
- Barthol: May have been. I know Janis Joplin, when she got to town, the first thing, performed there. Wasn't a very good place to play; it was still kind of touristy.
- Rubens: So in '64, '65, there's enough going on here.
- Barthol: Yes. I went to San Francisco, definitely, for some stuff.
- Rubens: Did you play in high school at all?
- Barthol: I picked casually, yes. We had folkies.
- Rubens: So he and Country Joe then formed this and then asked you to join? How did this come about?
- Barthol: Kind of even more organically. They didn't have a bass player, they had a gut bucket player. Richard Saunders is still here. Actually, my current electric bass I got from him, and then it went electric because the first that went electric was the electric guitar: acoustic guitar, gut bucket, and tambourine.

And then actually, one night we took peyote and went down to the Kabal and had some kind of mystical experience of playing a new tune of Joe McDonald's. I played hart.

Rubens: What does hart mean?

Barthol: Harmonica. And it was one of his psychedelic--it was like section 43, or something, but I don't know what the tune was, but something happened.

I still worked at the phone company, so I rehearsed and played at the Jabberwock after hours. Rehearsed all night or something. Everybody would take acid on the weekend.

Rubens: Do you remember your first real gig at the Jabberwock, or was it just get up and play?

Barthol: The Fish played the Jabberwock for a year, one night a week. It was like our home base. And then from there, we took off to the Fillmore and the Avalon, and the Matrix, and Portland, and then Seattle, Vancouver. We were actually, more or less, told to leave Canada.

Rubens: Why?

Barthol: This was later. This must have been '67 already.

Rubens: Were you paid at all at the Jabberwock when you started, like a small percentage of the house?

Barthol: Yes. Something. We made some money. The Fish always made money. I mean, we went on minimal, but yes, we got whatever it was.

Rubens: Gee, I wonder what the cover was to get in, do you have any idea?

Barthol: Two bucks. It's on small posters.

Rubens: The first time publicly I remember seeing you was at the Vietnam Day teach-in. Is that right?

Barthol: I don't think so. Not at least, one of the first ones. Like where Phil Oaks played?

Rubens: Yes.

Barthol: I remember being in the audience. I don't think the Fish existed at that moment.

- Rubens: Okay. You're saying, let me just get the time in. You're saying it's the fall of '65?
- Barthol: No, it would have been the spring of '66.
- Rubens: Okay. Okay. So that's when they're coming together.
- Barthol: Yes. So I got an electric bass, and six weeks later, we recorded the first Country Joe and the Fish, full EP, not the shared Rag Baby. Then it was still Rag Baby, it was Joe's label and it was Ed Denson's label; he was our manager.
- Rubens: What was his full name?
- Barthol: Eugene Denson.
- Rubens: And who recorded it?
- Barthol: We did at Sierra Sound Labs on Alcatraz Ave., in Berkeley.
- Rubens: You had to pay to have this done.
- Barthol: Yes. No, what happened was Chris Strockowitz of [] records put up the money and got half interest in fixing the entire rag, which he probably made more money off of Country Joe and the Fish than I did, although Joe early on split his writing royalties equally. Everybody in the band, including the poster artists and the manager, had an equal share of writing royalties, which impressed me to no end. Later Joe totally regretted it and I signed my rights back to him later.
- Rubens: He was not a student?
- Barthol: No. He was already older. You know, Joe is eight years older than I am or something. Eight or ten. He had already been in the navy. Married and divorced. He had gone to L.A. State. I don't know if he ever graduated.
- Rubens: Of course his mother was the treasurer of the City of Berkeley later.
- Barthol: Later they moved up after Joe moved up. Yes. Florence McDonald was great, and his dad Mack.
- Rubens: Joe has a book out about his father--maybe his family as well. I just saw it recently.
- Barthol: Well, Mack wrote--
- Rubens: Well, I think it's about his parents--

Barthol: Joe does?

Rubens: Yes. Yes. Or it in his autobiography, Mack's autobiography--

Barthol: I know that exists.

Rubens: With an introduction, yes.

Barthol: *An Old Guy Who Doesn't Feel Too Bad*. That was the name of the book, if I remember right.

Rubens: Is that right? Good name.

Barthol: And in fact, years later, I remember Florence and Mack invited the mime troupe after a park show in Berkeley over to their pad for lunch.

Rubens: Let me ask you, I'm aware we're running out of time, and there will be many things just to follow up. After the sit-in--we're now back to the turn of the year, it's now the spring of '65. a) Are you feeling like you have to buckle up and face your studies, and b) are you engaged in any kind of fundraising or paying attention to the legal case?

Barthol: I wasn't in a legal case, so no, not really. My friends were, so I knew it was happening--

Rubens: I remember Phil and Mara spending an inordinate amount of time just in meetings and preparation--

Barthol: I don't remember it being a lot, but it could have been I just remember they had some meetings, and they all got dismissed, right?

Rubens: Well, it turned out that there was only trial group, but they broke it up into three sections. A great debate over that. Some just pleaded nolo [contendere], Mara pleaded nolo on it pretty sure. Maybe one contending it.

Barthol: But nobody, I know Phil and Mara never did time.

Rubens: No. Most people were sentenced, and then the sentenced was removed, and then the big guys, Jack and Mario and all sorts of people and quite a few people at the time--

Barthol: Mario was great. If I didn't say that, he was really cool.

Rubens: Why?

[Tape 2]

- Rubens: Mario. Why was Mario great?
- Barthol: He could talk. [laughs] You know, he just could articulate the thoughts in the air. Kind of, the famous “throw your body on the levers of the machine when it becomes too odious,” that’s almost like the motivation I think that a lot of people had. The stuff was so bad that you had to do something. It wasn’t like you had a compulsion to be a troublemaker, although some people liked that. But I think most people did it almost reluctantly.
- Rubens: There was also such a groundswell. I mean, there was such a mass movement--
- Barthol: All thanks to the university administration, Free Speech Movement really became a majority position at Cal, I think, and then the war--
- Rubens: Do you remember your parents, by the way, talking to you? Or calling you?
- Barthol: Yes. You know, my dad was saying when he was at Cal before the Big Game, students would start bonfires in the middle of intersections, go into the theaters while movies were on and disrupt it and walk back out, and nobody was ever arrested. And I also remember, early on, come September even, there was a headline in the *Chronicle*, “Indian Summer Riots at UC” was the headline. Biased reporting. It didn’t get it. It was absolutely condemnatory, kind of. Remember Lucius Beebe?
- Rubens: Yes.
- Barthol: Columnist for the--he advocated doing to the students of Berkeley what they’d done at Oxford in 1562, which was “shoot them down with crossbows from the parapets.” [laughs] Something like that. So you got this absolute--the idea that you had to struggle and that people had to die to get the vote in this country, in the fifties and sixties, is kind of appalling. But the same people--you know, it’s like every step forward is met with so much resistance. And there is still so much resistance from behind. No actually, that’s the Buffalo Springfield. That’s right.
- Rubens: Your father calls up and says we used to do some of these things--
- Barthol: Yeah.
- Rubens: And they did they talk about anything at UCLA particularly?
- Barthol: They mentioned that the day of the busts that Royce Hall, the big bells, played “We Shall Overcome.”
- Rubens: Great. Well, I should talk to your father because he may know. I want to see how this new spread--

- Barthol: And the old friend of the family told me he just sat by his phone waiting to get the call to bail me out.
- Rubens: Great.
- Barthol: My parents are people who really have had, and still have, a set of friends who, I like them all--
- Rubens: You must have liked your parents enough to be going also on that Peace Corps work, or even for as a needed job.
- Barthol: Yes. Yes.
- Rubens: You're mentioning names, I want to ask you about Gleason, Ralph Gleason. Did you ever meet him early on?
- Barthol: You know, I--
- Rubens: He's a music critic?
- Barthol: Yes, sure. I remember him quite well, he was real instrumental. He gave the Fish good reviews. He covered the Fillmore. He also called Pig Pen of the Grateful Dead one of the greatest blue singers, which may have been, he may have been a little high that night, I'm not sure. But you remember Pig Pen was the original organ player that died early on?
- Rubens: Yes. Yes.
- Barthol: Ron McKernin. Anyway. He was supportive of the scene. He had been a Lenny Bruce advocate. Real progressive. Jazz. Open. Open to different kinds of music and that's maybe, could be, why San Francisco is better than New York.
- Rubens: My understanding is that he was the one who got Joan Baez up here.
- Barthol: That's possible.
- Rubens: Mike Roslin says that. And I didn't have time to ask a few others. They would go and talk to him if they needed the support of an adult.
- So you knew who Dylan was. Do you remember seeing Dylan?
- Barthol: I saw Dylan at the Berkeley Community Theater at a concert.
- Rubens: I saw that too. But I remember seeing Joan Baez a couple a times on the Sproul Hall steps and then her saying, I have a friend here. And this guy would come out, and it was Dylan. It was the first time I heard of him.

Barthol: I never knew Dylan was on the Sproul Hall steps. That's news to me. Are you sure?

Rubens: Pretty sure. I'll double check.

Barthol: I'll say not.

Rubens: Really.

Barthol: Not. He only played Berkeley, and I'm not sure when this was, it may have be '67 already. He said not one word to the audience.

Rubens: No, didn't say one word here either. I just saw him recently and it was like he was on Prozac.

Barthol: Was he?

Rubens: Oh, I don't know. It's that he talked. He introduced the whole band and talked and had a suit and performed. But really talked. Heroin now?

Barthol: But for years and years I don't know.

Rubens: But then, God?

Barthol: Yes. A lot of changes. Ever since the motorcycle accident.

Rubens: But you don't have a memory on this--

Barthol: No, I have a memory that he was never there.

Rubens: Well, you have a good memory.

Barthol: Just because I'm sure I would have--

Rubens: Exactly.

Barthol: I remember one thing about Berkeley when I got back from South America-- this would have been September '66--walking into the Jabberwock and going, "Oh, yeah, I'm back!" I remember in this hotel lobby in Caracas, I was just down there and some guy who looked like he wanted to be an English lord, some Venezuelan guy with a pencil-thin mustache, like a morning suit and some weird top hat, almost just began to assail me in the lobby. I never said a word to him. I had slightly long hair, I had a bit of sideburns, and I think I was wearing a turtleneck. And he just jumped on me for being for Fidel and a bunch of things, and my dad, who was a pretty cool guy, he went up to him and said, "Excuse me, can I help? I'm Dr. Barthol and this is my son." And

the guy just took off his hat, he said, "Oh Doctor, I'm very sorry. I didn't realize that this little schmuck, this fascist dweeb--."

Rubens: These kinds of appearances that just--

Barthol: You know, I said, "Oh, yes, I like Fidel." I told him. [laughs]

Rubens: So tell me, tell me just a little bit more about that early music scene. You're saying that you don't go to the Jabberwock until--

Barthol: I went to the folk clubs probably as soon as I got to Berkeley.

Rubens: Are you practicing now? Are you having some kind of drive to--

Barthol: Just the drive to enjoy playing. I didn't take any more lessons. It was just a thing that when you got together with your friends, and you had friends who also played, and that's what you do.

Rubens: Right. And you show each other as you're trying this, or--?

Barthol: Or just play the tunes. New tunes, old tunes.

Rubens: Right. Right. I think Phil had just learned that fall. He learned in Europe.

Barthol: He picked it up in Europe, yes, playing in the streets.

Rubens: That was the year I was living there, and people just came through.

Barthol: Yes, Paul Armstrong came.

Rubens: Paul Armstrong. Just personally, say one more thing about him.

Barthol: Phil met him in Europe and he had gone to Dartmouth. He was seen like more like a working-class kind of guy.

Rubens: But he was British, wasn't he?

Barthol: No. New Englander.

Rubens: He had an accent. Ah, that might be it. And did he play?

Barthol: Yes. He played guitar, and then he actually, if you look for the first or second Country Joe and the Fish EP, he was on it. He was in the Fish playing tambourine, some guitar, but he was really unnecessary, he was like a sixth wheel, and he became a Scientologist.

I remember years later, in '73 maybe, when Country Joe--I was in the Energy Crisis Band that was me and Phil Marsh and then a couple other people. But it was Phil in my band, pretty much, we were Joe's backup band and we performed on our own. We did a Northwest tour, and when we were in Portland, we stayed with Jack Scott and Bill Walton. They still had a post notice on there saying SLA time, right? So they were being, had some big notice on their door telling the FBI this and that, rights, and blah blah blah. We stayed there and Paul Armstrong was in Portland, and I remember he and Phil were the older friends, and then he and I were older friends, and then there was Joe. He and his wife spent all their time kind of hustling Joe and ignored me and Phil, so I just kind of severed--and then he died in '91 from a heart attack.

Rubens: I heard about that. What was your career then, you were with Country Joe for how long?

Barthol: About three years. Two and a half, almost three.

Rubens: Just parenthetically, I can remember being with Mara at the Fillmore, who knows which one, and he had a stamp on his hand, and she said, "He is"--I can't remember the words--"so magical, so interesting, so crazy."

Barthol: Who?

Rubens: Joe! Was he smart? Talented? How would you just characterize him?

Barthol: Yes. Joe was charismatic; he could sing well, wrote--

Rubens: Wrote--

Barthol: --and wrote, and had a presence, and was--what Joe wasn't was an intellectual. You could read *Echoes of the Sixties* just published, which has Country Joe and the Fish stories, but got everybody except Joe refused to cooperate. But they did get me, Barry, Chicken, and David.

Rubens: This is a book?

Barthol: Yes.

Rubens: Oh, good for you! I don't know this book.

Barthol: Uh, Billboard Press, I think, something like. It came out this year, or end of '99.

Rubens: Okay. I'll get it. Get the library to get it.

Rubens: What does it mean that he wasn't intellectual?

Barthol: Well, I think that when the band got extremely successful, we were in *Life* magazine as one of the ten greatest rock bands. We were the first West Coast band to play London or Europe. That was in Christmas '67. In less than a year, I was living there. '68 was one hell of a year. The band got more successful, then it started to lose its roots, which was uncomfortable for everyone, but I had a kind of vision of what the band ought to be, and then I got fired.

Rubens: And what was your vision?

Barthol: I thought, well, one thing that happened was in the Democratic convention in '68, we'd met with Abbie Hoffman and Ed Saunders and Rubin, I guess, in New York, like in the winter of '67, spring or fall of '67, early '68. We spent the next month ending every concert with "See You in Chicago." And then when we got near the date, we were in New York. Joe called--I forget, I think it was going to be in June or something--called a meeting and said he hadn't heard anything from Jerry Rubin or the Yippies. And he said he didn't want us to go to Chicago; it was going to be a mess. The proposal was to take out an ad in the *New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune* denouncing them for irresponsible revolutionary leadership.

That just appalled the hell out of me. First of all, I thought we should go to Chicago, because if anybody could afford to get fucked up, it was us. We could, if they smashed our equipment, we could buy new equipment. The other thing I said was, "We could sell more records. We can't lose." And we told people to go there, and given it's the movement, we ought to go.

And it turned out we played Chicago that week at whatever the psychedelic ballroom was, because all the main cities had them by then, and I remember going in and it was right before the convention started. It hadn't started yet, and you walk into O'Hare and there were there the Daleyettes welcoming you to Mayor Daley's Chicago. "Mayor Daley welcomes you to Chicago. Welcome to Chicago, Mayor Daley," Daleyettes said.

After we did the gig, we were staying at some hotel on Lakeshore Drive, I guess, and Chicken and I had our room keys already and went right to the elevator. I looked, and I saw, as I looked out, I see some guy running across the street. So I went up, went to sleep, woke up the next morning and found out that this guy had run into the lobby, punched Joe, punched Barry, punched David, and ran out the other door. He was some off-duty soldier who managed to hit three hippies without getting hit himself. Barry apparently was in the door of the elevator; he hit him, and Barry went back in the elevator, went up. So Joe called a press conference about the thing. I thought there was some kind of karma in that. And then we split. We weren't there for the convention, and I still--that's one regret. The other regret was that we never had the nerve to go to Vietnam. Just that the idea was so thoroughly frightening.

- Rubens: What about the Meeting of the Tribes? That was '67.
- Barthol: You mean the Human Be-In?
- Rubens: The Human Be-In.
- Barthol: Yes. We didn't play it. I went there.
- Rubens: Yes. All right. So your trajectory--you had been fired at that point?
- Barthol: Yes. Fired in September or August of '68.
- Rubens: And what do you do?
- Barthol: Went to England.
- Rubens: Alone?
- Barthol: Went to England to join up with a friend of mine from Berkeley, Gary Peterson, who--. I'd liked London when I was there in '67, and I'd been, you know, I had already lived in Spain and seen Europe. I liked it over there, and America was too nuts, just psychotic. So I went to England. England was neurotic. I preferred the neurotics to the psychotics, at least at that point.
- Rubens: Had you known in Gary in Berkeley?
- Barthol: Berkeley. Yes.
- Rubens: Yes. Did he play music, too?
- Barthol: Yes. He was a friend of Phil's in Europe, and that's how I met Peterson. No--I met him in Santa Barbara through Gary Salzman, who's a friend of my brother's. That's right. I knew Peterson from Santa Barbara slightly. And he moved up, I think he was Benvenue or Hillegass [streets in Berkeley], and then he went to England. Then I went over there and we decided to form a band, and Phil Greenberg came over. He was still enrolled in the criminology department at Cal, he was in the draft department; that was one bent department, I think. [laughs]
- Rubens: Oh, yes. Harry, is that right?
- Barthol: Yes. Harry was in the band. I think Greenberg was abroad studying criminal subcultures, something like that. I don't really remember.
- Rubens: I should interview Greenberg. Never crossed my mind.

- Barthol: Yes, you should. He was at Cal. I don't remember him active in the Free Speech Movement, but he may well have been.
- Rubens: But this perspective, criminology--
- Barthol: Yes, I knew him kind of after that.
- Rubens: You did?
- Barthol: Yes. I don't even remember where I met Greenberg, but it was definitely in Berkeley, and I guess he was a friend of Marsh's.
- Rubens: Phil Marsh, yes.
- [discussion deleted]
- Barthol: You remember the Radical Student Union?
- Rubens: Yes.
- Barthol: Right. I joined that. They were doing the best they could. It was all the FSM honchos that they put together.
- Rubens: Right, except for Mario. The Free Speech Union, actually, wasn't that it?
- Barthol: It was called the RSU. The Radical Student Union, which was formed and died away rather quickly, I believe, but they also had a weird thing which was you showed up and they put twenty people in a room to elect a delegate. Twenty people who had never seen each other. So it was kind of--
- Rubens: Staged sort of--?
- Barthol: A staged event that was not very organic and didn't go anywhere but seemed like worth trying, I suppose.
- Rubens: Formerly Fat Harry, how long does that play?
- Barthol: '69 to '72.
- Rubens: Really? Did the three of you travel in Europe a bunch?
- Barthol: Yes, and an English Drama.
- Rubens: And in '72?
- Barthol: Then came back to Berkeley. '72, then broke up soon as the record got released.

Rubens: Who put out the record?

Barthol: EMI and Capital. We broke tradition and we got a dual release even though Andy and I had stayed. But the band broke up, and it sold two hundred records, or something like that.

Rubens: But it was a nice label. Goodness!

Barthol: Yes. It was good. We recorded at Abbey Road.

Rubens: Did you ever meet those guys?

Barthol: Who?

Rubens: The Beatles?

Barthol: Oh, the Beatles. No, although we recorded with one of their engineers.

Rubens: '72, and I think that's where we started. Did you say you--

Barthol: --came back from England in '72.

Rubens: Yes. And then went into the troupe?

Barthol: Oh, in the first association, the official association of the troupe was in the Bebe Rebozo Rolling Repertory Theater doing "Profiles in Porridge: Like it or Lump it." And that was the show for the McGovern campaign, which was the East Bay Sharks with some mime troupe--. I joined the Mime Troupe in '76.

The East Bay Sharks started in the late sixties, and they were like a street opera almost. Was highly musical.

Rubens: Who were they?

Barthol: Before me, it was--I think it had various people at various times. But the core for a while, anyway, was Phil Marsh, Clive Flowers, Daryl Henriquez. I think it was just three of them for a while. Then Victoria joined, and then Darryl quit and I replaced Daryl.

Rubens: Victoria?

Barthol: Thatcher.

Rubens: Where did she come from?

Barthol: When I got back from England she was Phil's girlfriend.

Rubens: A singer?

- Barthol: She sang, yes.
- Rubens: How long were you in the East Bay Sharks?
- Barthol: The Sharks lasted like--I know we did two Berkeley political shows, one rent control show and one city election show. "Radical rent control--waka waka Shiffenhower, Stevenson and Dudley." [chanting] That was the chant. It was pretty funny. The Sharks were good.
- Rubens: They were good. Did you ever record?
- Barthol: No.
- Rubens: And how long did the Sharks stay together?
- Barthol: Well, I think it fell apart in probably '73.
- Rubens: And so you are kicking around some until formally joining the mime troupe?
- Barthol: Well, what was I doing? Well the Energy Crisis Band started in? When was the energy crisis? '73 or '74.
- Rubens: Who was in the Energy Crisis?
- Barthol: Who was it? Phil and I were--we stayed in it. Tom Rolstan was the drummer for a lot of the time. Steve Gabori played keyboards. He was from Berkeley High, been in New York for twenty years now. Jack O'Hara, who used to be in Eggs Over Easy. He was in London and then in Marin County, Sky Blue; he was in Sky Blue here.
- Rubens: That existed for about how long?
- Barthol: It existed--it periodically reformed for a good seven years or something like that. But regularly it played for a couple years, maybe '74, '75, '76.
- Rubens: What's the decision to get into the mime troupe? How does that happen?
- Barthol: Suppose to be going on a European tour with Joe. Phil and I go down.
- Rubens: Joe?
- Barthol: Country Joe, oh sorry. Well, I told you we went to Portland, the Energy Crisis, backing up Country Joe--
- Rubens: Oh, backing up.
- Barthol: Then Joe put together his own band, I mean, Country Joe and His Band, or something.

- Rubens: All is forgiven, you can work out some way of working together?
- Barthol: I didn't hold too many grudges. In fact, after I got to England, the bass player that they got to replace me basically got the band busted in Teme, New Hampshire, by apparently saying, "Fuck you, Pig" to the cop who stopped them for speeding. So he went back and searched everybody's bags and everybody had weed. Then he got hepatitis from shooting drugs and couldn't make the European tour. Really was a strange choice for him to make. He could have gotten anybody they wanted, but he got a guy they knew on Telegraph Avenue who I never liked and wasn't that good. I wouldn't be surprised that he died; he disappeared I know.
- So anyway, it would have been in that very fall, after a couple months after I had been fired, they called me to come back. So I met him in London where I was living and played the Revolution Club and then did a tour in Europe. They offered me big money to come back and do the tour, not to rejoin the band but to play. I guess it was a phenomenal amount of bread; it was like a thousand a week they offered me. And I turned it down.
- Rubens: Really?
- Barthol: Sort of out of pride. Since I didn't really want to go back to the United States. I wanted to stay in England.
- Rubens: And Formerly was--
- Barthol: We didn't exist yet at this point. We were barely in theory somehow. The band, I don't think the band started happening until '69, and this was the end of '68 still.
- Rubens: When I listen to you, I think, boy, you went into this period, it was an extraordinary period, '64 through '67 particularly and you--what would you say? Just took every advantage of it, in the sense that it just was a good match? You already had certain politics, you're opened up, the stages keep going--
- Barthol: I guess right place at the right time with the right inclination, sensitivities, concerns, background. I mean, the Fish really didn't get into a lot of trouble. We weren't particularly raunchy, not a lot of drinking, actually.
- Rubens: And why are you making that point?
- Barthol: I know there are some bands of the era, not so much out here, but in New York there were, like, Mafia bands. I remember, I think it was Vanilla Fudge, playing with them and watching them kind of get drunk and harass the stewardess like assholes. But I remember also in like '67 or '66 being actually shocked the first time I heard about a long-haired guy killing another long-

haired guy over a dope deal. This was like unimaginable in my naivete that that would happen.

Rubens: By the way, you were in Monterey, weren't you?

Barthol: Yes. '67.

Rubens: And this is the ascent, you're just really big stuff. And then, finally, Woodstock.

Barthol: I was not at Woodstock. Woodstock was '69 and I was in London.

Rubens: Right. But Country Joe and the Fish were.

And then, the career. I mean, I was so impressed when I went to the Mime Troupe, what was that, thirtieth anniversary?

Barthol: Fortieth.

Rubens: Fortieth! And song after song after song--that was just--. It was just wonderful. I guess your income compared to what it would have been if it were private would have--

Barthol: What income?

Rubens: [laughs] I know. I'm just saying if you had recorded those songs--

Barthol: I don't know if they'd have sold.

Rubens: They might not have. They were generated in a context, but they were stunning songs.

Barthol: I think I have to record my own CDs just so that I do it.

Rubens: You should do that.